



sunnyvale reNews

Spring 2014 

sunnyvale's environmental news source



upcoming events

April 12 May 10 June 14
Compost Workshops

April 19 May 17 June 21
Hazardous Waste Drop-off

April 26
Paper Shredding

April 5-6 and 12-13
Extra Dumping Weekends

stay connected

on the Web
Recycling.inSunnyvale.com



on Twitter
[@SunnyvaleRecycl](https://twitter.com/SunnyvaleRecycl)



Green.inSunnyvale.com



on Facebook
City of Sunnyvale Environmental Services Department



Trash Reduction Plan for Zero Litter

Used drinking straws, empty chip bags, candy wrappers, used cups, and cigarette butts characterize the litter found on sidewalks and roadsides in street gutters, or blowing in the wind. Whether unintentional or deliberate, litter impacts our neighborhoods and environment. As it washes into storm drain systems, litter enters local creeks and channels which flow directly to the Bay. As litter journeys to the Great Pacific Garbage Patch, water currents break it into smaller pieces and reduce plastics to miniscule particles that hang suspended at, or just below, the water's surface. Once present in the environment, litter and debris can degrade water quality and harm wildlife.

State agencies, cities, community and environmental groups are partnering to reduce litter on streets and in creeks and waterways. All Bay Area cities are required to develop long term plans to reduce litter from storm drain systems by 70 percent by 2017. The ultimate goal is to eliminate virtually all litter flowing into local waterways by 2022.

Based on a regionally developed model, local land use, and field validation, Sunnyvale's

Trash Reduction Plan defined trash-generating rates throughout the City. "Very high" and "high" trash generation areas are common to retail centers, well-traveled thoroughfares, and densely-populated residential areas. "Moderate" trash generation occurs in office parks and institutional land-use areas such as schools and churches. "Low" trash generation is common to lower-density residential areas. Based on this data, the Plan outlines an eight-year strategy to address trash sources and implement clean-up actions required to reduce litter in our community. To further its goals, the Plan will also use existing storm drain infrastructure to capture litter flowing through the system.

Changing littering behavior is essential to sustainable litter reduction. Therefore, the Plan will also focus on schools and anti-littering campaigns; encouraging local businesses to reduce their litter; and promoting community clean-up events. We all need to do our part to help keep Sunnyvale and the Bay clean and litter-free.

Earth Day 2014 — Sunnyvale Launches Foam Foodware Ban

Effective on Earth Day, April 22, 2014, Sunnyvale will launch the first phase of its expanded polystyrene (EPS) foam foodware ban for restaurants and food providers. Among other Bay Area jurisdictions, Sunnyvale is committed to reducing urban litter and pollutants in local waterways where EPS plays a significant role. Inexpensive and lightweight, EPS never biodegrades, but

rapidly degrades and crumbles making it virtually impossible to retrieve when littered, and often mistaken and ingested as food by wildlife. Restaurants and other users have been advised to phase-out use of foam cups and take-out boxes. Next year, the second phase will ban retail sales of foam foodware. Visit Nofoam.inSunnyvale.com to learn more.



living the green life

Composting Saves Water

For over a decade, the City has offered monthly composting workshops to all area residents. Hundreds of residents have diverted yard trimmings and food scraps from the waste stream to cultivate nutrient-rich vegetables and fruits, and fortify landscaping replete with lush flowers and ornamentals. But, the benefits of composting go beyond edible bounty and visual beauty.

As the drought continues, water conservation concerns everyone. Soil, with added compost, becomes naturally moisture-retentive, so landscaping and gardens require less water — saving money on utility costs. Compost reconditions and aerates heavy clay soil, and actually cleans soil contaminated with chemical fertilizers and pesticides as it binds and neutralizes heavy metals. In addition, compost suppresses plant diseases and pests as it strengthens plants, reducing the need for chemical pesticides or fertilizers.

The ultimate benefit of composting is diverting organic waste from landfills. Organic materials — green waste and food scraps — generate methane when decomposing in the anaerobic landfill environment. The EPA claims that methane, a greenhouse gas 20 times more potent than carbon dioxide, is responsible for 17 percent of greenhouse gas production that contributes to climate change.

Everyone can compost no matter where they live. Residents who have gardens may prefer the backyard composting method. Residents living in apartments or townhomes with limited gardening space may opt for the worm (vermi-) composting method, letting worms eat their food scraps to produce the richest plant fertilizer available.

Register to attend a composting workshop (see *Upcoming Events*, page 15) and start saving water and money while enriching your soil — and have fun doing it!

Landscape Rebates! Free Classes Help Homeowners During Droughts

The Governor and local water agencies are asking for reductions in water use due to the drought. Landscaping accounts for at least 50 percent of most homeowners' water usage — the majority of which is watering lawns. The Santa Clara Valley Water District introduced its new, unlimited Landscape Conversion Rebate Program — \$1 per cubic foot — in an effort to encourage water conservation. Take advantage of the rebate opportunity and transform your lawn into beautiful water-conserving landscaping.

The City is hosting four classes in the Spring Landscape Education Series beginning this

month in cooperation with the Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency (BAWSCA). Homeowners, commercial property managers, landscape service providers and anyone interested in saving water and money on water bills will benefit. These FREE classes are extremely popular and registration is required, so sign up early!

April 26, 10 am – 1 pm

Garden Maintenance for Native Plants: Learn care and maintenance of native and drought-tolerant plants, soil, and irrigation devices.

May 17, 10 am – 1 pm

Water-wise Color Palette: Achieve a lush look in your garden using drought-tolerant shrubs, grasses, trees, and flowers.

June 7, 10 am – 1 pm

Water-Wise Ornamental Gardening: Learn about soil preparation, planting, and water management techniques to help plants become drought-tolerant.

June 28, 10 am – 1 pm

Irrigation Basics for Homeowners: Learn how to install and maintain a water-efficient home irrigation system, remedy common irrigation issues and proper tree irrigation.

To register, visit BAWSCA.org/classes or call (650) 349-3000; to learn more about the Landscape Rebate Program visit ValleyWater.org.



Landscaping class plants native drought-tolerant ornamentals at Full Circle Farm.

Safely Dispose of Smoke and Carbon Monoxide Detectors

As a result of the Carbon Monoxide Poisoning Prevention Act, Senate Bill (SB) 183, all residences with attached garages or natural gas appliances are now required to have a carbon monoxide detector, and all homes should have smoke detectors. Eventually, your smoke and carbon monoxide detectors will need to be replaced. How will you know? Your detectors will NOT tell you — either test them or look for their expiration date. When it comes to disposal, neither should be placed in garbage or recycling carts.

Smoke detectors commonly contain some radioactive material, making them hazardous upon disposal. Take them to a Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Drop-off Event (see *Upcoming Events*, page 15). Carbon monoxide detectors, on the other hand, have circuit boards and are considered a household electronic — less hazardous than its radioactive counterpart, but still requiring special handling upon disposal. Drop off carbon monoxide detectors at the SMaRT Station Recycling Center at 301 Carl Road, any day between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m.

Remember, each type of detector poses health risks when improperly disposed of in garbage or recycling receptacles. If you have a combination smoke AND carbon monoxide detector, consider it a hazardous item and recycle it at an HHW event.



On April 24 at 7 p.m., the Midpeninsula Community Media Center and its sponsors* will host the ninth annual GREENLIGHT Film & Fashion Festival Awards Ceremony to honor student filmmaker finalists whose videos best portray how individual actions impact the environment.

The Festival will also feature student fashion designers of "re-fashioned" clothing in a runway fashion show.

Don't miss the Festival's film, fashion and fun! Attend the Festival at Cubberley Theater (Palo Alto), or see the live broadcast on TV: Comcast Palo Alto area (channel 28), AT&T U-verse (channel 99), or webstream: midpenmedia.org/local-tv/watch-now/.

Keep up with Festival news on the *Greenlight Film Festival Facebook* page, *Like Us* and *Share!* You can even view past winners' videos on *YouTube*, *Greenlight Film Festival*.

* Cities of Sunnyvale, Mountain View and Palo Alto, and the Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) are co-sponsoring the Festival.



reNewing infrastructure

Not Just an Ordinary Storm Drain

Did you know that in certain areas of Sunnyvale, storm drains house special devices designed to trap and prevent debris and litter from flowing into the storm system? Nearly eighty storm drains now have steel screens, constructed with five millimeter holes (about the size of a cigarette butt or larger), that trap litter and debris in a catch basin, yet allow clean rainwater to pass through.

Elsewhere in the City, massive concrete vortexes are being constructed. These larger devices swirl debris and trash-laden rainwater through a chamber, forcing debris to drop into a central holding area. Meanwhile, clean rainwater continues to move through the device into the storm drain system that flows to our creeks or channels, then into the Bay.

Both systems effectively capture littered materials from flowing rainwater, but City maintenance crews must clean out the catch basins and chambers. Each of us can play a part in preventing litter and keeping our Bay and ocean clean:



Concrete vortex swirls rainwater to trap debris in the central chamber.

- Do your best to prevent litter from happening;
- If you see litter, pick it up and dispose of it in the garbage; and
- Use reusable products (water bottles, bags and coffee mugs) rather than disposables. Visit LifeWithoutPlastic.com for ideas.

Trash-Capture Device Maintenance — How Do They Do That?

"Using the right tool for the right job" is a solid piece of advice for efficiently accomplishing any task. City maintenance crews use two proprietary tools to clean and maintain both the steel screen and concrete vortex trash-capture devices installed in some of the City's storm drains. The two tools that maintenance crews employ are: a vactor truck and a "clam." Similar to a vacuum cleaner, but on a much larger scale, the vactor truck vacuums out all the water, debris and trash collected by the devices. The "clam" allows for manual scooping of the trash and debris. While tools and crews work to keep our waterways clean, the best solution for litter-free waterways is preventing litter. Help stop litter and water pollution — pick up and properly dispose of litter when found on the ground.



City crew uses a vactor truck to remove debris and keep storm drains clean.

Tour Sunnyvale's Water Pollution Control Plant (WPCP)

April 12, 2014: 1 – 3 PM

How do we clean millions of gallons of water a day, 365 days a year? Find out by taking a tour of Sunnyvale's Water Pollution Control Plant. For more information, or to reserve your spot, call (408) 730-7717 or email

WPCP@Sunnyvale.ca.gov. Reservations required.

For safety concerns, only youth aged 8 and above may attend.

Community Clean-up Events Yield Two Tons of Litter

In 2013, Sunnyvale Water Pollution Prevention staff hosted four litter clean-up events. Not only is litter an eyesore, it clogs storm drains, pollutes local waterways and the ocean, is responsible

for hundreds of motor vehicle deaths each year, and can also be fatal when consumed by marine animals.

Thanks to the enthusiastic efforts of

community volunteers, who hit the roads and waterways last year with City staff, more than 5,055 pounds of litter were collected and diverted from the Bay.

2013 Litter Pick up Events Results

Event	Date	Number of Volunteers	Event Location	Area Cleaned	Litter and Discarded Debris Collected (in pounds)
Great American Litter Pick Up	April 20	35	Columbia Neighborhood Center, Braly and Washington Parks	3 square miles	1,645 lbs
National River Clean-up Day	May 18	33	Sunnyvale East Channel and Calabazas Creek near Baylands Park	3.5 miles of creek bank	1,130 lbs
Coastal Clean-up Day	September 19	55	Sunnyvale West Channel and Guadalupe Slough	3 miles of creek bank	1,850 lbs
Knock Out Litter	October 3	20	Columbia Neighborhood Center, San Miguel School, Orchard Gardens Park, and area near Maude and Mathilda Avenue intersection	2 square miles	430 lbs

Join your neighbors for the 2014 community clean-up events beginning with the **Great American Litter Pick Up** on April 19, and **National River Clean-up Day** on May 17. Sign up at (408) 730-7177 or Green@Sunnyvale.ca.gov. Let's make a difference together!



upcoming events

Conserving Tap, Rain and Graywater — What's involved?

It's difficult to get, or stay motivated about water conservation, even with daily drought reports, when clean water readily gushes from our faucets. Water conservation is something everyone can practice. Consider these creative ways to conserve water sources at home:

Tap Water

- Install free **low-flow faucet aerators and showerheads** from the Santa Clara Valley Water District. Call the Water Conservation Hotline at (408) 630-2554 for details.
- Install a **low-flow toilet** and **water-efficient clothes washer** — and get rebates! Call the Conservation Hotline or visit Valleywater.org/programs/waterconservation.aspx.
- Three techniques to avoid wasting “warm-up” water:
 - **Low-tech** — collect running water in a bucket, use to water houseplants or landscape;
 - **Mid-tech** — install a valve to divert water outside until it warms; or
 - **High-tech** — install a unit, either recirculating or on-demand, that delivers hot water before even turning on the faucet.

Rainwater

Capture rainwater using a shortened downspout directed into a repurposed trash can or rain barrel. Or, do as Sunnyvale residents



Twinkletoes (Twink) guards access to underground cisterns that Gleason and Cordes installed to store rainwater.

Diane Gleason and John Cordes did, and install underground cisterns to capture rainwater from the roof. Their stored water lasts throughout an entire summer of garden-watering during a normal year of rainfall. Keep captured rainwater covered and shaded to avoid mosquitos or algae growth.

Graywater

Graywater is water from showers, bath tubs, washing machines and bathroom sinks. Graywater can be diverted using a simple siphon hose snaked out to a tree ~~from the bathtub~~, or can require professional installation, permits, and plans. **Contact the Santa Clara Valley Water District at (408) 630-2554 to learn about their \$100 “Laundry to Landscape” rebate.**

Diverting Graywater in Sunnyvale: When Is a Building Permit Required?

Laundry to Landscape

No permit is required when planning to divert graywater from a clothes washer whether using a hose to the outdoors, or making simple plumbing modifications.

How do I get the “Laundry to Landscape” rebate?

You will need Santa Clara Valley Water District (SCVWD) approval validating certain requirements have been met. First, schedule a pre-installation inspection with SCVWD and get a rebate application. Email Conservation@valleywater.org, or call the Water Conservation Hotline at (408) 630-2554. Prior to issuing a rebate, and as part of the approval process, SCVWD will require design plans and want to visit both before and after the project is completed. View all system requirements of the rebate program at Valleywater.org/GraywaterRebate.aspx.

Graywater from the shower or bathroom sink: Get a Permit

You will need to apply for a City construction permit to divert shower or bathroom sink graywater. Call the Building Safety Division at (408) 730-7444, or email Building@Sunnyvale.ca.gov for details.



Simple plumbing provides effective graywater diversion.

Using Your Graywater: Important Considerations

- Graywater must be used within 24 hours of diversion and able to soak in right away — no puddles.
- Avoid direct contact with graywater — bury the irrigation point under mulch, do not spray, and avoid use on root crops.
- Use non-toxic soaps and detergents, free of salt, boron, and bleach to protect plant health.

Once your system is up and running, how much water can you expect to save? In 2012, GreyWaterAction.org reported that graywater diversion can save 17 gallons per person per day. For an easy visualization, the next time you shop at a grocery store, go to the water aisle and count 17 gallon jugs of water on the shelf. Implementing graywater strategies can save money, save water, and save your landscape.

The Environmental Services Department offers events geared toward sustaining a greener, healthier environment. See *Contact Us* for services and event details. Visit Recycling.inSunnyvale.com to download a Recycling Events Calendar.

Compost Workshops

April 12 • May 10 • June 14
10 a.m. to noon

To register for a workshop, call (408) 918-4640, or register at ReduceWaste.org/Classes. Registration required.

Las Palmas Park building
850 Russet Drive, Sunnyvale

Extra Dumping Weekends

April 5-6 and 12-13
8:30 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.

SMaRT Station, 301 Carl Road

Household Hazardous Waste (HHW) Drop-Off Events

April 19 • May 17 • June 21
8 a.m. to 1 p.m.

No-cost HHW disposal. Call (408) 299-7300, or visit HHW.org for hazardous waste information.
164 Carl Road

Paper Shredding Events

April 26 • August 23 • November 1
8 a.m. to noon

SMaRT Station, 301 Carl Road

Community Clean-up Events

Great American Litter Pick Up – April 19
National River Clean-up Day – May 17
(408) 730-7717, Green@Sunnyvale.ca.gov

contact us

City Business Hours

Monday – Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.
City TDD (408) 730-7501

Recycling Program Customer Service

(408) 730-7262
Recycling.inSunnyvale.com
Recycling@sunnyvale.ca.gov
■ Recycling answers and event details

Utilities Customer Service

(408) 730-7400
Utilities.inSunnyvale.com
■ Garbage service accounts
■ Cart orders, repairs, replacements
■ On-Call Collection appointments
■ Debris box rentals

Specialty Solid Waste & Recycling

(408) 565-9900, SSWR.com
■ Missed pickups
■ Collection service issues

SMaRT Station

301 Carl Road, Sunnyvale
(408) 752-8530

Open daily 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Closed Thanksgiving Day, December 25, January 1
■ Garbage disposal fees
■ Compost availability

Water Pollution Control Plant

1444 Borregas Ave., (408) 730-7738
WPCP.inSunnyvale.com
■ Plant Tours
■ Environmental Outreach