

Greening Urban Watersheds: A Grassroots Approach to Water Harvesting and Resource Conservation

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ABSTRACT

In response to the increasing demands on Arizona's natural resources, Watershed Management Group has developed the Greening Urban Watersheds Program to implement best management practices with urban residents. At the heart of our program is the concept of urban sustainability and improving our quality of life through improving our environment. Water management and water conservation are not just a means to increase the capacity for conventional growth in Arizona. Many Arizona residents are unmotivated to conserve water because they believe water conservation equals more growth. In our program we demonstrate that resource management and conservation are practices that improve our community's quality of life through increasing natural beauty and wildlife habitat, reducing flooding, reducing energy consumption, and supporting local food production. The program identifies interested residents, small business owners, and neighborhood organizations and conducts a series of planning and implementation workshops. As residents learn basic watershed principles they plan and construct a wide range of practices best suited for their backyards and community spaces. These include rainwater harvesting systems, grey water recycling systems, soil conservation, native landscaping, and local food production. Completed practices serve as demonstration sites and the workshops are open to all area residents. Results of the first year of the program will be presented including a project evaluation and suggestions for future community-based efforts. This project was funded by the Bureau of Reclamation and the Watershed Management Group 501(c)3, with support provided by community partners including: Trees for Tucson, Sustainable Tucson, Originate Natural Building Materials Showroom, The Nature Conservancy, Ward III Council Office, the City of South Tucson, Satori Charter School, and Pima Extension Master Gardeners.