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Residential Rainwater Harvesting System,  
Los Gatos, CA Earthcraft Design

### BOBBY MARKOWITZ: RAINWATER HARVESTING

The ASLA/NCC sponsored Rainwater Harvesting lecture by Bobby Markowitz, Earthcraft Landscape Design, held at the AIA office in San Francisco on May 29 received overwhelming interest from design professionals in the Bay Area. The turn-out demonstrated the high level of excitement that is building around rainwater harvesting as well as the curiosity about the process of designing, installing and maintaining rainwater harvesting systems.

Having incorporated rainwater harvesting systems into numerous landscapes in the Santa Cruz and central coast regions, Markowitz offered an introduction to the basics and benefits of rainwater harvesting. Markowitz placed emphasis on the simplicity of rainwater harvesting, as well as noting that rainwater harvesting was historically a common practice and continues to be common in many cultures. This article offers an overview of the presentation, as well as responses to the questions spurred by the presentation.

Markowitz highlighted the numerous benefits of rainwater harvesting, including having a reliable water source, decreased water bills, the ability to store water for emergency purposes, and on-site stormwater retention and aquifer recharge. While most cities and structures within the United States have

see **RAINWATER** page 2

### SEEKING NOMINATIONS

Did you know that membership Nationwide has grown 21% since 2005? We now have over 18,000 members which represents 39% of the landscape architecture profession. This added membership has given our profession a larger speaking voice in Washington, at the state level, and in the media. The average salary for a licensed landscape architect in 2006 was \$90,000, up 20% from 2004, nearly paralleling the increase in membership.

Your ASLA Chapter has been hard at work behind the scenes. Aside from the more publicized activities such as the professional Lecture Series, the Annual Meeting and Awards Presentation we have been working to increase the public's awareness of and appreciation for the landscape architecture profession. The Executive Board and its energetic volunteers have been active advocates for the profession at the local, state and national levels on public policy issues including: licensure, livable communities, sustainable design, surface transportation, the environment, historic preservation, small business issues, and more.

Many of our active members attest that participation in ASLA has given them opportunities for professional advancement, made them feel like they were contributing to a larger good (what other profession goes to Washington and lobbies for street trees as a simple way of sequestering carbon and combating global warming?) and generally has a good time doing it.

I encourage you to get involved. Timewise, commitment can be as little as helping usher at our lecture series,

see **NOMINATIONS** page 3

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**RAINWATER** *continued*

not been designed to capture rainwater, some states are beginning to make greater efforts to harvest rainwater. For instance, the City of Austin and other cities in Texas have begun to offer rebates for the installation of rainwater harvesting systems. Select water districts in California offer similar programs, including the Soquel Creek Water District and the Monterey Peninsula Water District.

Even in parts of California where there are no incentives for installing rainwater harvesting systems, paper barriers to installing systems may be fewer than expected. Markowitz emphasized that permits for rainwater harvesting systems are only required as they relate to electrical and plumbing systems. Structural components related to the cistern may also require permitting and/or special inspection, depending upon the size, design and materials used. Markowitz is currently working with Assemblymember John Laird to develop rainwater catchment legislation that could further efforts to increase rainwater catchment.

Rainwater harvesting is the simple process of catching rainwater, storing it if it is not needed immediately, and then using it for irrigation, indoor plumbing such as flushing toilets or even for household drinking water. These systems can vary considerably in complexity and cost, but the basic components usually include: components for catchment; gutters and downspouts (best if screened); a pre-filter (first flush system) to remove debris and large sediment prior to storage; above or below-ground storage tanks, usually referred to as a cistern; vector control which screens to eliminate mosquitoes as well as larger insects/rodents; a vent and overflow; additional filters (depending upon system and use); pumps, if needed; and a distribution system (irrigation, tap).

Bobby also shared some design tips and techniques including when designing for drip irrigation you will need a minimum of 20 psi or a 50' elevation change. In most urban settings, a pump will be needed to achieve this differential; use three to four filters to prevent clogging of the emitters; don't capture the first rain of the season for drinking water as the first flush water tends to be high in phosphorous, which is great for root development in planting areas, however; and use 1/4" and 1/32" screens on the system for optimum vector control.

Markowitz shared stories of EarthCraft Design's numerous successes in implementing rainwater harvesting systems. EarthCraft Design has installed two residential systems in Los Gatos, one 30,000-gallon above ground tank system that provided the residents an alternative to trucking in irrigation water and the other a 10,000-gallon system that provides irrigation for a one-acre native garden while addressing stormwater issues. In addition, they have installed a 11,500-gallon system in Scotts Valley and a 22,500-gallon system in Aptos, both of which feature above ground tanks and supply irrigation water. The Aptos system has also reduced the amount run-off that flows into a nearby stream. As these projects suggest, many of EarthCraft's projects are for large properties that are not often served by utility infrastructure for clients.

The following Bay Area projects related to rainwater compliment the range of projects shared by Markowitz:

- ◆ The Clipper Street Residence in San Francisco by Lorax Development installed the first approved rainwater catchment system in San Francisco.
- ◆ Stopwaste.Org offices in Oakland mounted a cistern on side of building to capture sufficient runoff to irrigate their back patio.
- ◆ *Tapping the Potential of Urban*

**UPDATE** is a bimonthly newsletter, published by and for the members of the American Society of Landscape Architects, Northern California Chapter, 5 Third Street, San Francisco, CA 94103-3200, 415.974.5430, [newsletter@asla-ncc.admn.org](mailto:newsletter@asla-ncc.admn.org). All copy, including editorial, announcements, calendar, and advertising should be mailed to the Chapter at this address. Deadline for each issue is the 15th of even-numbered months. Direct all correspondence and phone calls to the Chapter office. All submitted materials are the viewpoint and the sole responsibility of the author. Acceptance of an article does not necessarily reflect the opinion of ASLA/NCC.

*Rooftops*, a study prepared by DC&E for Bay Localize, evaluated the feasibility of rooftop harvesting on existing roofs in the Eastlake Neighborhood in Oakland. The largest constraint for rainwater harvesting was available space for storage; however, even assuming smaller cisterns of 1,000-gallon were used per lot, 1,869,000-gallons of water could be harvested in a normal winter from the 623 buildings identified for rainwater harvesting ([www.baylocalize.org/?q=node/48](http://www.baylocalize.org/?q=node/48)).

*Rainwater Harvesting for Drylands* by Brad Lancaster, is an excellent guide for water harvesting and sustainable practice that outlines key issues when designing a cistern system for harvesting rainwater. Some of the key issues include ensuring adequate in-flow, outflow and use it as a resource; design your system to collect high quality water; design a closed system that passively filters itself; maintain access to your tank and its interior; vent your tank; and use gravity to your advantage

It is clear that we as Landscape Architects have an opportunity and an obligation to address the scarcity and value of water in our environment and in our projects. From a landscape design perspective, Bobby shared the following statistics: 30,000 gallons is the amount of rainwater to be harvested from a 2,000 SF roof that receives 24" of rain; 30,000 gallons a year is the amount of water needed to irrigate 1,200 SF of lawn; and 30,000 gallons a year is the amount of water needed to irrigate a 1.5 acre drought tolerant landscape.

As a source of drinking water he advocates rainwater over desalination which requires a significant amount of energy and cost to produce. Rain is free!

In addition, from a watershed perspective, any water that is allowed to find its way back into the soil, onsite, to recharge our

ground water is valuable and necessary. As professionals, we must advocate strongly on a project by project basis to keep all rainwater from being diverted into pipes and whisked offsite. Additional references to those already cited in this article include [www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20581&Cr=unep&Cr1=water#](http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=20581&Cr=unep&Cr1=water#); [www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/Green%20Building/Sourcebook/rainwaterHarvesting.htm](http://www.austinenergy.com/Energy%20Efficiency/Programs/Green%20Building/Sourcebook/rainwaterHarvesting.htm); and [www.BuilditGreen.org](http://www.BuilditGreen.org).

—*Isby Swick, ASLA and Sarah Sutton, ASLA, LEED AP, Principal, both of DC&E*

## NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to the following new and returning Chapter members, associates, and affiliates:

M. Catcherine Bainton, Michael Derksen (Phillips Farevaag Smallenberg), Desiree Garon, Steve Lauritsen (Unique Lighting Systems), Marco Lei (Robert LaRocca & Associates), Jane Martin (Shift Design Studio), Gregory McPherson (USDA Forest Service), Chad David Moffett (Mead & Hunt), John Odgen (Progressive Design Playgrounds), Nicholas Ohler, Maric Okeefe (McNear Brick & Block), Morgan Sutherland Pierce (Grace Street R.D.S.), Keith Robinson (Caltrans), James K. Stickley (Wallace Roberts & Todd).

## NOMINATIONS *continued*

taking on and organizing one of our events, or serving on the Executive Committee. You might have a topic that would interest your colleagues, if so I encourage you to bring it to the Board and we will discuss how to help you pursue it.

Your Chapter is currently seeking nominations for the 2008/2009 Executive Committee. The elections will be held in August for one year terms that commence in October. If you are interested or know of someone who is committed, experienced in the field, and has an interest in expanding the profession please contact me, your Nominations Committee chair and ASLA Trustee, Chris Kent, [kent@pgadesign.com](mailto:kent@pgadesign.com).

—*Board Nominations Committee Chair, Christopher Kent, ASLA Trustee*

## JUDITH LARNER LOWRY

The next lecture in the ASLA/NCC lecture series will be Thursday, July 31. The speaker will be Judith Larner Lowry, author of *Gardening with a Wild Heart* and *The Landscaping Ideas of the Jays*. The lecture will follow an afternoon barbeque and pool party held at Bertotti Landscaping in Petaluma. More information and registration instructions will be sent to members as the event nears.



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**LANDSCAPING**





Typical residential front yard with lawn.

Sarah Sutton



Alternative residential front yard with permeable pavers and drought tolerant plantings.

Sarah Sutton

## DROUGHT RESPONSE

The drought this year is taxing us all as we adjust to the reduced water available for our homes and gardens. As landscape architects, we can also assist our client, families and neighbors in making adjustments to their outdoor spaces that will significantly reduce water demand that are also attractive and functional. Now is the time to begin planning these transformations in time to plant in late fall.

The Bay-Friendly Landscaping (BFL) programs for professionals and home gardeners offers a comprehensive and holistic program for the design, construction and maintenance of a resource conserving landscape. The guidelines offer many suggestions to conserve water and minimize demand. While most professionals are already familiar with this information, we wanted to highlight some key BFL tips to use and share:

*Limit the Lawn.* Now is the time to encourage replacement of the lawn, especially front lawns and parking strips. This is an area where our profession can offer new and very creative approaches to design. We need to redefine the front yard aesthetic and create colorful, inviting yards and entries that are less water thirsty. Check with your water district as many are offering customer rebates to replace lawns.

*Use Sheet Mulching.* Sheet mulch turf in place, reducing waste and helping create a

more fertile growing medium as it breaks down. Some professionals remove the sod layer, turn it over and sandwich it between two layers of cardboard before topping it all with organic compost. Refer to the Bay-Friendly website for more instructions: [www.BayFriendly.org](http://www.BayFriendly.org).

*Create Drought Resistant Soils with Compost and Mulch.* Prepare the soil now for planting this fall with organic compost created from urban green waste. Mulch generously throughout the planting beds, taking care to keep away from the crown of trees and shrubs. BFL recommends a three inch minimum layer of mulch produced from urban plant waste to conserve soil moisture levels.

*Install High-Efficiency Irrigation Systems.* Now is a good time to invest in a more water-conserving irrigation system. Many advances have been made in irrigation technology including self-adjusting (smart) controllers, moisture sensors, rain shut off devices, and subsurface emitters. Once the system is installed, be sure to follow-up with your client and instruct them on how to monitor water use and maintain the system for optimal efficiency. Water districts are also offering rebates for installing water conserving systems.

*Design for on-site rainwater collection, graywater use and/or recycled water.* Rainwater harvesting can be as simple as a rain barrel at the end of a downspout or a more complex multi-gallon storage systems; see the rainwater harvesting article in this issue. Graywater systems, combined with subsurface irrigation, is gaining more attention and recycled water is becoming more available in many communities.

*Utilize hydrozoning in irrigation design and plant selection.* Pay close attention to the solar aspect of the building and isolate areas with distinct microclimates. Double



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check moisture needs of plantings and group carefully to avoid over-watering or under-watering at each valve.

*Replace moisture loving species with more water conserving plants.* Review hydro-zones and species on-site and target replacing those that require the most water. There are numerous plants that require little to no summer water; ornamental grasses are becoming extremely popular, but vary considerably with water needs.

What about maintenance? Many people worry about a proliferation of weeds in their newly planted beds and do not have the time or the interest in hand-pulling them. Sheet mulching will limit the number of weeds that appear and their ability to root deeply. Other non-toxic techniques include corn gluten, an organic product that functions as a pre-emergent. In addition, maintaining a thick layer of mulch will also limit the number of weeds able to root in the soil.

The Bay-Friendly Landscaping and Gardening program offers trainings, seminars and classes on Bay-Friendly landscaping and maintenance, as well as providing a host of reference materials and guides on their website: [www.Bay-Friendly.org](http://www.Bay-Friendly.org).

—Sarah Sutton, ASLA, LEED AP,  
Principal, DC&E

## HERMAN ELECTED AS FELLOW LAND8LOUNGE

ASLA has announced the selection of 20 members for induction into its distinguished Council of Fellows, among the highest honors the Society may confer upon a member. Members of the ASLA Council of Fellows are recognized for their extraordinary work, leadership, knowledge, and service to the profession over a sustained period of time.

New ASLA Fellows-elect include Ronald M. Herman, ASLA, principal of Ron Herman Landscape Architect Inc. in San Leandro. He was nominated by the ASLA/Northern California Chapter for the impact his residential design work has had on more than 400 private gardens since the late 1960s and for teaching and mentoring some of the most successful landscape designers working today. As the designer of the highly influential Ellison Residence courtyard in San Francisco, he is recognized as a leading expert on Japanese gardens and has been a major force in integrating that tradition into the modern American garden. He was a visiting lecturer and design studio teacher for the University of California, Berkeley, for 20 years, and is the coauthor of *A Guide to the Gardens of Kyoto* and the author of the forthcoming *The Landscape Architecture of Ron Herman*. He earned his bachelor of landscape architecture from the University of California in 1964 and was a graduate research fellow at the University of Kyoto, Japan, from 1966 to 1968.

There is a new social network for landscape architects on the web. Andrew Speiring of San Francisco, CA with the help of Kevin Gaughan of Annapolis, MD observed that there was not a simple platform for sharing work and ideas about landscape architecture on the web. They set about changing that by creating the land8lounge, a social network that is the central gathering place for landscape architects all over the world. The social network serves landscape architects world-wide including students, professors, authors, lecturers, researchers, photographers, artists and professionals practicing the craft of landscape architecture. Their mission is to build up the profession of landscape architecture by strengthening the international community through the sharing of ideas, individual work, and information related to the profession. To accomplish this, the site offers its members a wide-range of features including Personal Portfolios ("My Folio"), Personal Blogs, Photo sharing, Video sharing, Discussion forum, Groups, Events, a resource Library, and a Job Board. One member called land8lounge, "the Facebook for landscape architects". Since its induction in March 2008, the lounge has grown to over 400 members from over 40 different countries and has been viewed from over 740 cities around the world. Membership is completely free and open to anyone in the profession. Their website is [www.land8lounge.com](http://www.land8lounge.com).

### Seeing the Land: Two Contemporary Napa Landscapes

Appreciate and understand how a light touch can deliver sustainable benefits and beauty to the land. Eric Blasen, ASLA, Principal, Blasen Landscape Architecture. **Tuesday, September 16: 5-6 pm**

### The Eco-Art of Lita Albuquerque

Gain insight into how this innovative artist creates a visual language that translates the vastness of time and space to a human scale. Lita Albuquerque. **Thursday, September 25: 5-6 pm**

Both free events at UC Berkeley Extension's SOMA Center, 95 Third St., San Francisco

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# 2 Free Events

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## CALENDAR EVENTS

### JULY

**July 25-27:** LARE Review Course—Sections A, B & D: A Preparatory Course for the Landscape Architecture Registration Examination. Friday noon–6:30 pm. Saturday & Sunday 9:00 am–6:00 pm.

Fee: \$410. Inexpensive room and board options are available. Course format includes lectures, practice tests, question & answer sessions, and continuing e-mail support. For more information, or to obtain a PDF of the current course brochure, contact us at [Rayfreeman3@comcast.net](mailto:Rayfreeman3@comcast.net).

**July 31:** ASLA/NCC Lecture Series: Judith Lerner Lowry. The lecture will follow an afternoon barbeque and pool party held at Bertotti Landscaping in Petaluma. Information will be mailed to members in early July.

### NOVEMBER

**November 13–15:** ASLA is a co-sponsor of the Cultural Landscape Foundation's The Second Wave of Modernism in Landscape Architecture in America conference, occurring in Chicago. For more information and registration details please see their website at <http://www.tclf.org/secondwave/>.

### FROM ASLA HEADQUARTERS

On April 22, Rep. Doris Matsui (CA-05) introduced H.R. 5867, The Energy Conservation Through Trees Act of 2008. This legislation would establish a grant program to strategically plant shade trees in residential areas in order to reduce energy usage and improve air quality across the country. ASLA Government Affairs staff, in conjunction with Casey Trees, provided technical recommendations to the Congresswoman's office as they drafted the legislation.

MSN.com featured landscape architecture as an "Amazing Job" for college graduates. This adds to publications like *More* magazine, *Outside* magazine and *US News and World Report*.

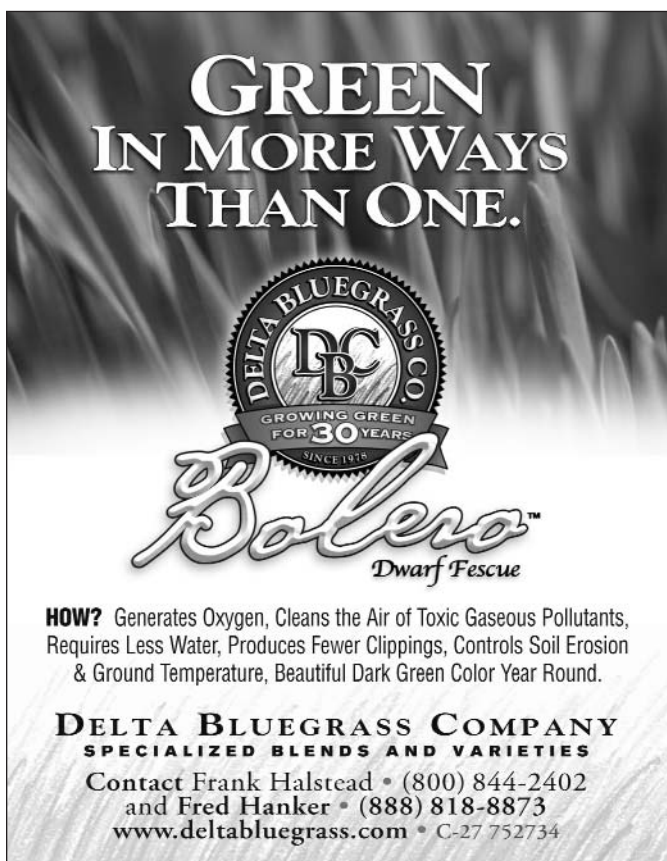
H.R. 6078, The Green Resources for Energy Efficient Neighborhoods (GREEN) Act is sweeping legislation encouraging the design and construction of energy efficient residential buildings. Section 14 of

the bill requires the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to utilize green roofs, tree planting techniques, and other site planning techniques to help reduce energy use in certain HUD facilities. The legislation specifically requires HUD to consult with ASLA on these techniques.


H.R. 3036, the No Child Left Inside Act would offer states incentives to develop Environmental Literacy Plans and integrate environmental education across their K-12 curriculums.

### LECTURE SERIES: GEORGE GIRVIN

The first of ASLA/NCC's Professional Lecture series, supported by a generous grant from Bertotti Landscaping, Inc., occurred earlier this year. George Girvin, of George W. Girvin Associates presented *Resort Planning*, a talk on the evolution of his work in domestic and international destination resorts.



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Mr. Girvin spoke eloquently about his experiences while scenes of lovely resort destinations in Mexico, California, the Caribbean, and Europe materialized on the screen behind him. There was an audience of about 70 people from both landscape and architecture fields, all hushed while being transported to infinity-edge pools overlooking migrating whales.

It was truly a lovely presentation, with both visual treats and professional development insights. One of the insights I took away was that landscape architecture is not just a profession, but that it is a lifestyle choice. There were many other insights, including the challenges of working in another culture and the best ways to communicate design intent to the client and to the construction personnel. Best management practices were discussed, such as setting up nurseries on site, with native plants.

What are the topics or people members would like to hear more about? Please let me know, or another member of the Executive Committee. We are here to serve our members, so please, tell us what you want to know.

—Juanita Salisbury, *President-Elect, ASLA*

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with experience. MIG is an equal opportunity employer with a set of complete benefits.

### ASLA/NCC JOB LISTINGS

Employers wanting to post listings in the Chapter newsletter should contact the Chapter office, 415-974-5430, 10 to 5, Monday through Friday, or at [newsletter@asla-ncc.admn.org](mailto:newsletter@asla-ncc.admn.org). Ads should be e-mailed to this address.

Classified rates for newsletter listings, are as follows: up to 50 words, \$80; 50–100 words, \$140; 101–200 words, \$200. ASLA members should contact Chapter office for member discount information.

E-mail broadcast of job listing(s) also is available and subject to additional fees.

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