

Eco-Tip for 1/21/18

Free Natural Resources...Right in Your Own Backyard

By Lisa McCullough and Lara Meeker

Free natural resources are available, and a local program can help you harvest them. Ventura County's Community for a Clean Watershed and the Ventura County Public Works Agency's Integrated Waste Management Division are offering another opportunity to purchase reduced priced rain barrels and compost bins this year.

A truckload sale Saturday, February 3, will have two pickup locations: one at the County Government Center in Ventura and the other at Calleguas Water District in the City of Thousand Oaks. This is a pre-sale event only, and the final deadline to purchase is January 28, by 11:00 p.m. Buy rain barrels and compost bins at a discount online at RainBarrelProgram.org/VenturaCounty or call (919) 835-1699 for phone orders. Bins and barrels will not be available for purchase the day of the event.

Ventura County saw the first measureable rainfall in ten months in early January; we remain in drought conditions. Recent weather patterns are consistent with La Nina, which typically results in less than average rainfall in Southern California, making rain barrels an even more important tool for residents this winter.

Without a rainwater catchment system, rainwater would typically flow off our lawns, down driveways, streets, into storm drains and out to sea. Runoff picks up pollutants like pesticides, motor oil, litter, and pet waste as it flows, carrying them through storm drains directly to our rivers and beaches...untreated. Rain barrels help residents conserve water and protect water quality by keeping rainwater onsite, available for watering gardens, trees, and lawns on drier days.

Another overlooked resource, which we all have on hand, is kitchen scraps, and many of us also generate yard waste. Instead of tossing these items, they can be placed in a compost bin in your yard. Composting is a very simple process which combines kitchen scraps and/or yard waste to decompose, yielding a beautiful, nutrient-rich top soil for your garden, trees and shrubs. Simply combine green materials rich in nitrogen (such as grass clippings, kitchen fruits, vegetables & coffee filters) and brown materials rich in carbon (such as dry plants, leaves and twigs, wood chips & shredded newspaper). Alternate these items (or other acceptable materials) into layers in your bin, add a touch of water if too dry, stir occasionally, and in time you will have a wonderful soil amendment to feed your garden. Cook time will vary based on how often material is added.

Why compost? Aside from the free compost your bin will produce, composting reduces the environmental impact of hauling food and green waste, much of which is landfilled; saving space & reducing methane gas. Adding composted nutrients to the soil prevents it from becoming too acidic, or too alkaline. Healthy plants with nutrient-rich compost reduce the need for chemicals and pesticides. Composting also promotes root growth,

allowing soil to retain water and reduce soil erosion and runoff. Finally, composting returns nutrients to the soil, promoting plant growth.

Take advantage of free natural resources by harvesting rain water and composting. January 28 is the last day to pre-order barrels and bins for the February 3 pickup date.

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Online:

rainbarrelprogram.org/venturacounty

cleanwatershed.org

pwa.ventura.org