



Nature by Design

Creating Earth-Friendly Gardens, One Yard at a Time

by Ela Lindsay

Lisa Burton, owner of Nature by Design, is on a mission to create beautiful gardens, in balance with the environment, one yard at a time. "I design garden ecosystems," she says, by working to create sustainable gardens that support birds, butterflies, beneficial insects and bees, in addition to creating aesthetic beauty for her clients.

"It's not just about making pretty gardens," says Burton, noting that most gardens need too much water, attract garden pests and diseases and require a lot of maintenance. Her gardens also are ocean-friendly—water runoff is retained on the property as much as possible to reduce the negative impact on the ocean.

Burton explains that her garden work differs from landscaping. "A landscape you look at from a distance, like it's a stage and you're the audience," she says. "A garden is a whole experience that envelops you, draws you in and helps you feel connected to a bigger world."

A lifelong gardener, Burton conceived the idea for her business 10 years ago, when she was caring for her ailing father. During that troubling time, she found herself in her garden when she needed a break from her grief. There, she discovered that a garden can be more than a place of beauty; it can be a place of comfort, too.

"They are also places to be in harmony with nature and to learn about being good stewards of our planet," she suggests. "They are places to ground oneself and find peace." Burton also believes that if people have a connection to the environment through their own gardens, they will take better care of it. She also thinks that gardens are important for children, as learning and growing experiences.

Serving western Ventura County and Thousand Oaks,

Burton strives to incorporate native plants that thrive in the local climate and sustain, rather than strain, the environment. She explains that this area is one of five Mediterranean climates in the world; so combining Mediterranean plants with native plants creates a perfect garden in these surroundings.

Burton regards each garden as an ecosystem in itself, and she hopes to see whole neighborhoods and eventually, whole cities filled with beautiful, environmentally friendly plots. "Imagine the cumulative effect if everyone changed the way they view their garden landscapes," she says. "Imagine the huge impact we can collectively have on our local environment, the amount of water we can save."

Currently, Burton says, approximately 50 to 70 percent of residential water is used on landscapes, and lawns in particular. She is affectionately referred to as "the lawn killer" among friends and colleagues. "Be bold, go lawnless," she advises. Considering the current drought and water rate increases, she notes that reducing lawns, or eliminating them altogether, is a good place to start to reduce water use and save money.

Burton, who quips that "passion" for gardening is her middle name, was recognized by the Ventura County Board of Supervisors this year as part of their 2010 Climate Action Awards ceremony for her commitment to, "Think global, Act local."

"The gardens I create are all about the environment, meaning that they contribute to the environment, rather than take from it," she says.

For more information on Nature by Design or a free consultation, contact Lisa Burton at 805-643-2954 or visit NBDGardens.com. See ad on next page.

