

## Watershed Approach Features

*These features conserve water, reduce runoff and non-point source pollution, and increase the health of your watershed!*

**Rain Barrel/Cisterns** – Rain barrels and cisterns - essentially large-scale rain barrels - are storage tanks that capture runoff water from your rooftop. In order to satisfy the Sustainability Approach requirement, the property must have existing gutters throughout the entire perimeter of the roof, as well as existing downspouts. Rain barrels and cisterns must then be properly installed, connected to the downspout, and meet all local and regional requirements. Existing rain barrels and cisterns will meet the sustainable approach requirement, provided they have been properly installed.

**Rain Garden** – A rain garden is a garden of CA native or friendly shrubs, perennials, and flowers planted in a small depression that helps capture rainwater and allows runoff from impervious areas, such as roofs, driveways, and walkways areas, to be absorbed into the ground. Rain gardens are versatile features that can be installed in almost any unpaved space, and are also referred to as bioretention or bio infiltration cells. Compared to a conventional lawn, rain gardens allow for 30% more water to soak into the ground. When using native plants, irrigation requirements for your rain garden will be minimal.

**Dry Creek Beds** - A dry creek bed, or dry stream/river, uses stones and/or pebbles to mimic a natural stream and is designed to slow heavy flows from rainfall. The dry creek bed reduces erosion by slowing water, capturing it, and giving it time to soak into the soil, which helps improve the drought tolerance of your garden. A dry creek bed can improve the drainage of your landscape, making it more hospitable to CA native plants, and can be used to increase aesthetics and divide space in your landscape.

**Swales**– Swales, also known as bioswales or vegetated swales, are vegetated, mulched, channels that capture and redirect rainwater, allowing it to infiltrate into the ground. As linear features, they are particularly well suited to being placed along parkways or the edges of a turf removal project, and can be used to direct water to other landscape features, such as a rain garden. To maximize the effectiveness of a swale, line the lowest point with rocks and add deep-rooting plants to the slopes.

**Rock Gardens** – A rock garden consists of aesthetically arranged rocks with room for plants to be rooted and grow. Rock gardens have high infiltration rates and reduces evaporation from the soil. This feature slows and reduces runoff by allowing water to fill the void space among the rocks, and then filter down to recharge the water table. Rock gardens are decorative, water efficient, and beneficial to the watershed.

**Berms** – Berms are vegetated mounds with sloping sides that are used to direct and redirect stormwater. A berm can become a focal point of your landscape, and be used to create subtle, natural looking privacy. When installing a berm, it is important to consider the drainage of your landscape and to make sure water will be redirected to a permeable and retentive area.

**Grades** – Grades are surface grading of an area so that water collects and flows to a lower elevation. Grading your landscape will keep rainwater on-site and can redirect water to collect in a highly permeable, vegetated area, such as a rain garden. These areas should have a minimum slope of 2 percent to be effective.