

5 KEY BENEFITS!

Of a Water-Smart Garden

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Did you know? The Municipal Water District of Orange County (MWD OC) offers water-saving rebates to [residents, schools, and businesses](#)! RH Dana Elementary in Dana Point is an inspiring example of how you can transform your yard into a beautiful, water-smart garden that brings lasting benefits. Facing low enrollment, RH Dana rebranded with a focus on environmental stewardship. “Schools need spaces of natural beauty for learning,” shared Assistant Principal Juliana Mittino-Smith. With help from their local water agency, [South Coast Water District](#), and MWD OC’s Turf Replacement and Spray-to-Drip rebate programs, the school converted

2,600 square feet of grass into a thriving outdoor space. Parents, including a landscape architect and a butterfly expert, played a key role in designing the space, blending functionality and sustainability. “The students now know how they can help the environment,” said Mittino-Smith, highlighting the lasting impact of the garden. Water-smart landscapes aren’t just for schools—they offer incredible benefits for OC residents looking to transform their own outdoor spaces.

Here are five (5) benefits the school has gained from its water-smart transformation:



1

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP.

Hands-on learning is important for teaching the next generation about good water stewardship. The school garden demonstrates how water from runoff and rain moves through a bioswale (a shallow, vegetated channel), where it is naturally filtered before percolating into the ground, nourishing the garden instead of flowing into the ocean. Implementing these sustainable practices in your garden can contribute to cleaner waterways and a healthier environment.

2

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING.

Each grade level tends to a raised garden bed, helping students gain practical knowledge about sustainable landscaping practices like choosing the right plants, using water wisely, and caring for soil. Seeing a successful water-smart garden in action inspires visitors to adopt similar techniques at home.

3

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT.

Working together in the garden has strengthened teamwork, communication, and shared responsibility among students and staff. Interested in getting involved? Reach out to your local schools, cities, and parks to help create more sustainable outdoor spaces. It’s a community effort and a great way to experience firsthand water-saving tools and techniques for your space!

4

NATURE EXPLORATION.

A water-smart garden is an inviting space for education, creativity, relaxation, and reflection. The school garden has inspired teachers to use the space to extend classroom learning and encourage environmental exploration. This practice has led to a deeper understanding of scientific principles and the critical importance of water stewardship.

5

PROMOTES SUSTAINABILITY.

By planting California native and low-water-use plants, the school has created a pollinator habitat. Providing a practical example of water-smart landscaping inspires discussion and equips students with ideas and lessons to apply throughout their lives. This garden serves as a model for sustainable landscaping that can be replicated in any space!