

# Ewing and Aquascape Provide Support in Response to New Rainwater Harvesting Ordinance

By Nancy Snyder, Ewing Irrigation



With the passing of an ordinance that will soon require new Tucson commercial property developments to include on-site rainwater harvesting systems, Ewing hosted a free seminar and build featuring Aquascape's RainXchange system.

Rain, a treasured commodity in the Desert Southwest, is now a lifeline for Tucson commercial landscape designers as they face a new rainwater harvesting ordinance requiring new commercial properties to incorporate rainwater harvesting into their sites.

On the early morning of March 26, 2009, over 30 contractors gathered in Tucson for Ewing Irrigation's free seminar on the Economic Significance of Rainwater Harvesting, which included speakers Ann Audrey, environmental projects coordinator for the City of Tucson's Office of Conservation and Sustainable Development, and Ed Beaulieu, chief sustainability officer for Aquascape, Inc.

Much interest has been generated for rainwater harvesting following the ordinance's requirements for new commercial property builds to have 50 percent of their landscape water demand supplied by rainwater harvested on site.

Seminar participants were educated on the new ordinance, which will take effect June 1, 2010, and supplied with information on simple and low-cost techniques for passive water harvesting, as well as available rainwater harvesting products, including Aquascape's RainXchange which incorporates a subterranean water collection basin with an above-grade water feature component to add both beauty and functionality into the landscape.

Introducing Aquascape's RainXchange as the new face of rainwater harvesting, Beaulieu explained that harvesting water doesn't have to translate to a large, unsightly tank on your property.

"Because many of us don't have to think about water on a regular basis, we waste it," said Beaulieu. "We want consumers to not only recognize rainwater harvesting as a solution, but to change their perspectives on water. Having a decorative component gives the consumer a mind-body connection. Rather than a sitting tank, water is moving and biologically available for wildlife and the consumer comes to enjoy and respect the water. When you respect something, you want to protect it—and I think that is the bigger picture."

The RainXchange System combines a recirculating decorative component—such as a water feature or pondless waterfall—with a sub-surface rainwater harvest filter and storage system. The captured water can then be used for future landscape irrigation use in addition to providing a sanctuary for wildlife. In addition, rainwater provides improved irrigation for plants; because it lacks mineral deposits found in most city water, rainwater is very soft, won't kill the microorganisms in the soil and is more conducive to a plant's uptake of nutrients.

The Tucson ordinance, which is the first of its kind in the nation, could help resolve several problems currently being faced by the city including street flooding, stormwater management and quality issues, flash flood peaks, erosive runoff, and most notably, municipal water depletion. Tucson receives 12 inches of annual rainfall on average,

which could be captured, stored and used in place of municipally-supplied water.

"With a low water demand plant palette and a water harvesting design that routes runoff water from hardscape areas to planting areas, new commercial sites should be able to meet the 50 percent harvested rainwater requirement," said Audrey.

Following the seminar, contractors reconvened at Ewing's Tucson branch where Beaulieu led the demonstration build of a 3,000 gallon RainXchange system. Contractors gathered to participate in the step-by-step process from the excavation to the placement of the decorative water feature—all in a day's work.

"The simplicity of the RainXchange is that the base structure remains the same no matter what size the installation is," said Ed Beaulieu. "For contractors just getting into the business, once you've installed a 500-gallon system, you can install a 3,000-gallon system."

Walking away from the build, Tucson contractors and property developers were eager to take their newfound knowledge of rainwater harvesting and incorporate it into their own business development strategy, whether they were a contractor looking to add on a service to their current service offering, an individual looking to reduce their water footprint or a property developer ensuring they stay in compliance with the new ordinance.

"The Tucson community greatly supports this new ordinance," said Ilene Grossman, commercial conservation coordinator for Tucson Water. "But many still have questions that we hope to clarify for the community in the coming year."

To assist the landscape industry with inquiries and offer further clarification, Tucson Water will provide several workshops and publications. In addition, Tucson's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) is creating development standards to assist commercial property builders with a broad range of topics to offer assistance in determining landscape water requirements, system design and available rainwater harvesting technologies.

Ewing will soon be hosting an additional rainwater harvesting seminar and build in Tucson. To learn more, contact Steve Montano, Ewing's water conservation specialist, at 520.465.1313 or by email at smontano@ewing1.com.



## Susan Chase Promoted to President of Desierto Verde

DV Acquisitions LLC, dba Desierto Verde proudly announces the promotion of Susan Chase to President. Susan has worked for Desierto Verde for the past 10 years and served as Vice President for the last 5 years.

Susan is active in the Arizona Landscape Contractors' Association as she volunteers her time and expertise by serving as a judge for the annual "Excellence in Landscaping" awards program. Susan has also been honored and awarded ALCA's "Outstanding Customer Service Award" after being nominated and voted by her peers. Susan demonstrates her commitment to the landscape industry as Desierto Verde maintains the highest rank of Platinum Sponsor of the landscape association.

Susan has more than 30 years in the green industry. Currently, Susan proudly serves as the President of the Board of the Arizona Nursery Association.

