Field study

Home Gardening Boot Camp teaches ways to adjust to drought

By Kathryn McKenzie
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Aptos — There’s no doubt that California’s arid year is weighing heavily on local gardeners, so it’s only natural that the theme of the fourth annual Home Gardening Boot Camp is “Coping With Drought.”

The June 21 boot camp, a day full of classes in horticultural and gardening topics, offers a wealth of information on surviving the dry times with sessions focusing on water conservation, xeriscaping, succulents, salvias and California native plants.

Sponsored by the Monterey Bay Master Gardeners and held at Cabrillo College in Aptos, the boot camp is an ideal opportunity for gardeners to hone their skills and get answers to their gardening questions. Some spaces are still available.

Boot camp instructor Barbara Osen said this is just a continuation of the water-wise house that began with the Master Gardeners’ Smart Gardening Fair in April.

“It is important, and it’s on everybody’s mind,” said Osen of the need to conserve water this year. “This year’s boot camp will be more realistic. We’ve found some great folks to talk about the topic of water conservation.”

The boot camp can be a vital source of ideas, advice not only from the instructors, but from talking to the other gardeners who attend. Getting information on coping with the water shortage is half the battle; taking a new approach is another important step, Osen said.

“Some of it is adjusting our thinking and getting away from the mindset that we need a lawn out in front of the house,” said Osen.

Event proceeds help support educational activities of the nonprofit Monterey Bay Master Gardeners and will be shared with the Cabrillo College horticulture department.

Popular (and essential) classes and instructors from previous years will return, with sessions on irrigation, soils, integrated pest management, propagation, pruning, composting, fruit trees, and beekeeping.

If you go

Robin Stockwell, owner of Succulent Gardens near Castroville, will discuss how to keep those drought-tolerant gems looking their best.

What: Home Gardening Boot Camp, presented by Monterey Bay Master Gardeners.

When: 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. Saturday, June 21

Where: Cabrillo College Environmental Horticultural Center, 6500 Soquel Ave., Aptos

Cost: $40

Info/RSVP: 763-8027; mbmg.org or bootcamp@mbmg.org

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ing and soil science.

Those who want to attend the Home Gardening Boot Camp can see a list of classes when they sign up online, and they can select which ones they would like to take as well as

This is necessary because classes are offered on a first-come, first-served ba

One new instructor who is well known to plant lov

ers in Monterey County and beyond is Robin Stock

well, owner of Succulent Gardens near Castroville and one of the West’s lead

ing authorities on succulents growing and propagation.

Stockwell will discuss how to keep those drought-tolerant gems looking their best, and will talk about the importance of climate, soil, water, fertility and care, as well as pests and diseases, pruning, dividing, transplanting and thining.

Other classes include successful container garden

ning with Claudia Rosi

n, laundry-to-landscape graywater systems with Sherry Bryan, and Medi

terranean mound gard

ning with Jeff Rosenfeld, owner of Sierra Azul Nursery in Watsonville.

Irrigation expert Mr. Michael Johnson will explain how to operate and maintain an efficient home irrigatio

r system, with emphasis on keeping plants looking good with less water. Viola Campbell will show participants how to use the WaterSmart Gard

dening website to its max

imum effect to increase the water efficiency of their gardens.

Lisa McAndrews, a Ca

briglio College horticulture instructor, will lead classes in lawn removal and sheet mulching as well as California native plants for waterwise landscapes. Another offering will be a cooking class with Joe Rints of India Joe restaurant in Santa Cruz, called “The Garden Giveth, The Cook Transformeth.”

The day will begin with registration, a welcome and orientation, followed by classes commencing at 9:30 a.m. A break for lunch from 12:30 to 1 p.m. includes a plant sale at the Cabrillo College horticultur

al facilities, which are open for growing many unusual varieties of salvias, and live music in the courtyard.

Lunch items by Cruz N Gourmet are available for sale, or participants can bring their own lunch.

After the last class, boot camp attendees are invited to stay for a silent auction and raffle for garden items, plants, gift cards and other goodies.

Several classes are held outdoors in areas that have unseen terrain, and some classes require wearing either to the class venue or around the grounds of the Cabrillo College Horticulture Center. A hat, layered clothing and comfortable shoes are recommended, and any individuals with mobility impairments should read the full class descriptions before registering.

Scholarships are available to the first 25 residents of the Soquel Creek Wa
ter District who register for boot camp, thanks to a district grant in support of water conservation efforts.

To determine eligibility before registering, email mlholt INgardenscenario.com with name, address and contact information to find out details about receiving one of the scholarships.