
Developing New Displays – A Watershed Stewards’ Tale

When the Watershed Stewards began, we often carried an old display board filled with photographs mounted on foam core from one event to the next. While this approach was simple and provided basic information on the program, it lacked visual interest and the photographs often looked ragged after only a couple of events. Additionally, large events like the Home and Garden Idea Fair and the Clark County Fair demanded high impact displays to compete with the many commercial vendors.



Our fountain at the Clark County Fair in 2003

Over the years, many Stewards worked on the problem and helped develop new ideas, but nobody has worked more tirelessly than Janice Ferguson. A landscape designer by trade, Janice turned her artist’s eye to the display and suggested a variety of ways to add depth and excitement, starting with a small fountain made from a half whiskey barrel. The fountain is surprisingly portable and adds not only visual interest but the sound of splashing water to any event where electricity is available.

A simple fountain was nowhere near enough for Janice and when the Watershed Stewards managed to secure a display space 25 feet long and 10 feet deep at the Home and Garden Idea Fair in 2003, she went to work. Taking a cue from the publication *Clean Water Begins at Home*, Janice designed a booth that included a variety of best management practices that people could easily

implement in their own homes including growing native plants, vehicle maintenance, and picking up after dogs. Janice designed two cedar planter boxes which two other Stewards built.

Another key to improving the impact of Watershed Stewards displays is the development of partnerships. While large companies can afford to rent huge display spaces at shows, limited free space and budget mean the Stewards have to work with other agencies and organizations to get the kind of space that facilitates a great display. During the Clark County Fair, where space is always scarce, the Stewards team up with the Clark County Endangered Species Act office to secure display space.

While working with other organizations can make it difficult to develop a coherent message, our display at the 2004 Clark County Fair is one example of how different messages can be combined into one high impact display. After several meetings with the ESA office and the Clark County Composters, we decided on the message *Seven Steps to a Salmon Friendly Garden*. This theme satisfied the program goals of all the participants and provided a framework to tie all the different messages together. The seven steps were carefully arranged all through the display space, with the Watershed Stewards demonstrating rainwater collection, fertilization without chemicals, and the use of native plants.



Our display at America Recycles Day in 2004

The display at the fair was so successful that planners of America Recycles Day decided to feature Salmon Friendly Gardening throughout the event and highlight a new and improved version of the display at the Water Resources Center in November 2004.

It's hard to say what improvements Janice will make on the display in the future, but it's certain she has ideas. Janice is just another Watershed Steward inspiring us to new heights by creating ideas that make public outreach fun as well as educational. Come see us at the Home and Garden Idea Fair in April, the Sturgeon Festival in May, or the Clark County Fair in August. We're bound to have something new and exciting.

Janice went to work and designed a display that not only incorporated rain barrels and rain gardens to collect and infiltrate stormwater, but added recycled garden art and the use of native plants and alternatives to chemical fertilizers. Each of these components was carefully designed to fit into the framework of *Seven Steps to a Salmon Friendly Garden* and even included numbered signs to drive the point home. The display was a smashing success and won the award for *Best Educational Exhibit* the first day of the fair. The award was judged and awarded directly by the board of the Clark County Fair.



The 2004 Clark County Fair display included information on a wide variety of ways to garden naturally.

For more information or to get involved in Watershed Stewards projects contact:
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