Expanding Opportunities for Urban Agriculture in San Diego County
The RCD Mission

“To help people protect, conserve, and restore natural resources through education, information, and technical assistance programs.”
The RCD of Greater San Diego County

- Covers nearly 3,000 square miles or 1.8 million acres.
- Region encompasses mountains, deserts, forests, and coast.
- Includes urban, agricultural, and suburban areas.
Our Programs

The RCD of Greater San Diego County runs a variety of programs addressing the unique needs of our region:

- Fire Prevention & Education
- Conservation Plans & support from Forester
- Storm Water Pollution Prevention
- School Gardening Programs
- Tijuana River Valley Community Garden
- Milkweed for Monarchs
- RCD Conservation Scholarships
- District Headquarters Conservation Garden
Tijuana River Valley Community Garden
About the garden

- Located in the Tijuana River Valley Regional Park – a county park.
- RCD manages garden on behalf of the county.
- Planning began in 1999; opened to the public in 2002. Started with a grant of $40k from NRCS to establish 90 plots, expanded to 136 plots in 2005, and two more added in 2015.
- All plots are 30’ x 30’, on a 23 acre parcel, water included.
- Historical land use – agricultural connection.
- All plots are full – expansion has been a long-term goal.
- Diversity – ages and backgrounds.
- Quiet, natural space at urban fringe.
Garden management

• Garden managed through regular visits and communication with gardeners.
• Community events, clean-up days, newsletter, and workshops.
• Coordinating repairs, site improvements.
• Response to huge demand from community for more space – demonstrated by waiting list and public consultation process.
• Lots of room for expansion & great potential for projects.
Planning the expansion

• Started talking to the County early 2016 about expansion. Lots of meetings, phone calls, and time...

• NACD grant was perfect opportunity to move the idea forward.
  • Provided support for staff time for planning and conservation & education components – helped to leverage funding.

• Dept of Parks & Recreation and local County Supervisor were supportive – started talking about funding opportunities and ongoing management plan.

• Support from SD Community Garden Network and other partners.

• Support from NRCS – irrigation and conservation planning.

• County Supervisors granted funds for the infrastructure.

• Official ‘go-ahead’ on 12/30/16 – no permits required.

• Contractors lined up and expansion is now underway! Started on 1/25/17.
Expansion details

• 72 new 30x30 plots to enable more residents to access land for growing.
• 6 quarter-acre plots to support urban ag on larger scale and tie in with other local UA efforts (AB551). Incubator farms.
• Space for learning and demonstration.
• New water meter – we will have to start paying for some of our water use.
• All new gardeners will be on micro-irrigation.
• Improved compost system.
• LOTS of education and outreach with new and existing gardeners.
• Pollinator hedgerow and other native plantings.
• Storage container for equipment and tools library.
• Help Park with trails maintenance.
• New garden sign & interpretive signage.
Challenges & Opportunities

**Challenges**

• Paying for water.
• Maintaining equal access for all.
• Developing strong criteria and being consistent.
• Takes time to get things done.
• Managing expectations and communicating change.
• Keeping the site weed-free and clear of trash.

**Opportunities**

• Site has great potential.
• Opportunity to get really good gardening practices in place.
• Further build the garden community through more events, meetings, workdays, and collaboration.
• Create a space for demonstration e.g. irrigation practices, carbon farming practices, school programs, etc.
Thank you!

Ann Baldridge  
Program Manager  
ann.baldridge@rcdsandiego.org  
619-562-0096  
www.rcdsandiego.org

Kaylie Caires  
Program Coordinator  
kaylie.caires@rcdsandiego.org