



Contours for Rain Capture

Every garden can become a **Sponge**.

Many front yards are just flat lawn, but this space could be a last chance to capture and filter your seasonal rain before it runs into the storm drain and right into creeks, rivers and eventually, the ocean! By contouring the land to hold on to at least the first inch of rain after a dry period (known as First Flush), we create landscapes that are far more interesting than flat expanses of lawn, and provide an opportunity to create conditions for some of California's most interesting native plants.

Meet your **Contour** (aka Swale!) Sounds fancy, but really, it's very simple. Your Contour is just a little soil basin to slow, spread, and sink the first inch of rain water from your roof into the plants in your front yard. Direct your downspouts into the depression. Your soil and plants will thank you! There are two main components of this watershed wise landscape: **Basins & Berms**. **Boulders** are optional, and a lot of people like the look of them. If you don't like the look of them, skip them and just add mulch.



Basins and Swales are shallow depressions, or channels no more than 6"-24" deep, on gently sloped or nearly flat landscapes that move water around over short distances. The plants in and around the depressions capture and sink small volumes of surface water. Small, shallow depressions (6"- 12") are best used in clay soil areas, while sandy soils may accommodate the deeper (up to 24") depressions. Channels can be filled with mulch, planted (vegetated swales), and/or lined with rocks and small boulders to resemble natural water features.

Berms are mounds of raised soil, usually planted, that can border basins and swales or be used alone. Berms help contain and move water around, increasing the holding capacity of basins and swales, and providing good drainage for certain plants.

Boulders may be used to retain small berms or edges of swales and to create "dry creekbed" interest in the landscape.

