



Rain Matters

"Rain rain go away; Come again another day"

BY: **MARY FRENCH**

During springtime in Tualatin, when all it seems to do is rain, there are many days we completely agree with the sentiment of this nursery rhyme. Tualatin averages nearly 40 inches of rain a year - roughly on par to the rainfall amount in Seattle, and much more than the 12 inches that falls on sunny San Diego every year.

What does 40 inches of rain a year mean to Tualatin residents, other than moss covered roofs and muddy shoes? A functioning and healthy watershed. Tualatin is in the Tualatin River Watershed, which is part of the Willamette Basin Watershed. Rain is not the entire process involved in a watershed, but it is an important piece.

So, what is a watershed?
And why should we care?

A watershed is an area of land where water flows across and through into a common body of water. The source of this water includes rivers, creeks, wetlands, lakes, drainage ditches, sewers, rain, and snow (the smidgen we might see in a year). The Tualatin River Watershed is 712 square miles and includes our city plus places such as Beaverton, Hillsboro, Sherwood, Tigard, and West Linn. Locally, Saum Creek, Hedges Creek, and Nyberg Creek function as primary or secondary tributaries to the Tualatin River, which is the common body of water for our watershed.

Keeping our watershed healthy is important. Why? Well, think about all the ways you use water everyday - drinking, bathing, cooking, watering the flowers or washing the dog, we depend on clean water. The plants, trees, and grasses within our city help to filter, clean and recycle surface water back into the watershed. Plants of all kinds help keep the soil together, so it doesn't wash away in the rain, and also holds water and releases it slowly, which can help prevent flooding. Lastly, plants complete a process called transpiration, where they draw water up their roots to their leaves, and release it as water vapor. When enough water vapor gets together we get clouds and, you guessed it - rain. The process then begins once more of recycling water over and over for all of us (people, fish, plants, and animals) to use again.

Here are some ways you and your family can help our watershed to be healthy:

■ **Become a water conservationist.** One way to maintain an abundant supply of clean water is to use it carefully. The City of Tualatin is a member and partner of the Regional Water Consortium, which promotes indoor water conservation. As a partner, Tualatin residents can request a kit of devices such as aerators and low-flow showerheads to reduce indoor water usage. In addition, Tualatin sponsors a yearly Water Conservation Calendar Contest, where local elementary school students submit artwork showing how we can conserve water. You will find information about indoor water conservation and about the conservation calendar at the City of Tualatin website, under Public Works.

■ **Put Down Roots.** Participate in one of Tualatin's Put Down Roots events and help plant trees in our parks, trails, wetlands and greenways. The next event will be Saturday, April 6 - individuals, families and groups are all welcome. It's a great way to get outside, get dirty, and do something positive for the watershed and the community. Plus you'll be helping to continue the Tualatin tradition of being tree friendly. At the March 25 City Council meeting, as part of the City's 2013 Arbor Week Celebration, Tualatin was recognized for its 26th consecutive year as a Tree City USA for its care and management of our urban trees, including trees that line our streets, shade parking lots, purify and cool our water, provide shelter and food for wildlife and fish, protect us from the summer sun and the winter winds, and beautify our city. To find out more about Put Down Roots, visit the Volunteer Opportunities section of the City of Tualatin website.



Community Park rain garden

■ **Create a rain garden at your home, office or school.** A rain garden is a sunken garden bed that collects and soaks up water from roofs, walkways, streets, and other hard surfaces. The rain garden is planted with native trees, shrubs, flowers, and other plants. When water is collected in a rain garden, it is filtered by the plants as it releases back into the groundwater, helping to keep our creeks and rivers clean. To view a local rain garden, visit the picnic shelter located just north of the railroad trestle in Community Park. This park also includes a porous pavement parking area, and native vegetation, both important for the watershed. Visit Metro's website for information on how to create your own rain garden.

The City of Tualatin employs another version of a rain garden to help maintain the health of our watershed - storm water management facilities. You may even have one of these in your neighborhood. These facilities provide a natural place for rain and surface water runoff to collect and be cleansed as it filters back into the watershed. These storm water management facilities, as well as the city's parks, greenways, and wetlands are also essential to the preservation of the natural environment, the improvement of water quality, and provide fish and wildlife habitat.



Keep the watershed clean; no dumping!

■ **Properly dispose of household items** such as motor oil, paint, and solvents. Never dump these in your sink, on the ground, or pour them down a storm drain - take them to a local Metro Household Hazardous Waste site. Further information and a listing of these hazardous materials can be found in the Recycling area of the City of Tualatin's website - click on Hazardous Waste to view the list.

So instead of wishing "rain rain go away", we see how spring rains are part of nature's recycling service - helping us have a healthy and thriving watershed for all to enjoy. If you would like more information on the Tualatin River Watershed, please visit the Council's website at www.trwc.org.



Mary French is a native Oregonian who lives in Tualatin. She is a Volunteer Naturalist with the Tualatin River National Wildlife Refuge, and is currently enrolled in the Oregon Master Naturalist program with Oregon State University.