



Harrison and 23rd Streets

Native and drought-tolerant plants thrive while receiving only rainwater.



Twin Peaks elevation +910'

San Francisco's Twin Peaks ridge line divides the city main watersheds. All rain on the eastern side flows toward the San Francisco Bay. Rain flowing from the hills to lowlands over impervious surfaces such as streets and sidewalks enters the city sewer system unless diverted into the ground by permeable surfaces such as planting areas. These areas naturally filter pollutants and recharge aquifers.

Garden elevation +50'

Plant*SF Featured Project: 'Corner Stormwater Diversion Garden'

Harrison at 23rd Street
Mission District, San Francisco

In the late 1970's, several sidewalk extensions were created along Harrison Street by the San Francisco Planning Department in an attempt to humanize this extremely wide residential street. In October 2007, Plant*SF partnered with neighbors at Harrison and 23rd Streets and the Department of Public Works to remove a total of 1,000 sf of concrete and underlying roadway at two of these "bulb-outs". At the same time, five property owners added sidewalk landscaping to their frontages, adding 1,100 sf.

The resulting garden features plants that bloom year-round. The layout of paths is especially popular with young children and creates a separate succulent area. The landscape design by Shift Design Studio devised a 'pot luck' planting approach with donated materials, keeping costs down and participation "up." Neighbors contributed cuttings from backyard plants; a featured succulent had been a houseplant, and landscaping materials from a "green home show" were donated.

In addition to environmental benefits, this project resulted in a significant social transformation of the block - reinforcing the pedestrian scale, making a more hospitable and interesting walking experience, and inviting neighborly interactions.

Long-time residents of the neighborhood met for the first time while pitching in to plant the gardens and a newborn's first experience of the outside world introduced him to a world of butterflies, bees and birds.

The success of this project has led to a second phase of plantings in January, 2009 by 23 households. In November, 2009, Phase III comprised of 20+ property frontages and two bulb-outs at Harrison and 24th Streets will be planted.



The acronym "Plant*SF" stands for: Permeable Landscape as Neighborhood Treasure in San Francisco. The premise of the organization is that a sustainable approach to reducing stormwater volumes on the city's overloaded sewer system can also function as a community beautification asset.

Founded in 2004 by Jane Martin, Plant*SF has pioneered sidewalk landscaping, initiated a permit process to encourage it and sought to reform public space policy in support of citywide de-paving of excess surfaces, especially on public land. Working primarily "behind the scenes" on advocacy and visioning for a comprehensive plan, Plant*SF supports property owners in undertaking individual and group efforts. Online resources, including a popular "how-to" guide at www.PlantSF.org, aid this process.

Since 2003, Ms. Martin has designed and built examples of sustainable sidewalk gardening. These important pilot projects challenge notions of 'dry' gardens, using native and drought tolerant species and have led the way for creativity in public space gardening.

To date, the work of Plant*SF has resulted in more than 400 locations being converted from excess pavement into sidewalk gardens, in every district of the City. This not only sparks grassroots neighborhood investment but also brings back nature to our doorstep.

Plant*SF is a 'Parks Partner' of the non-profit San Francisco Parks Trust.

Project Transformation

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Before



During Concrete Removal



During Planting



After 18 months

Colorful species in the garden - April 2009



Lavender & Poppy, Mallow & Agonis, Blue Hibiscus, Alyssum & Ginger, Anigozanthus, Red Hot Poker, Salvia (Sage), Bird of Paradise, Echeveria, Echinaria, Beach Strawberry, Echeveria & Crassula, Aeonium & Hen/Chicks, African Daisy & Yarrow, Aloe & Sedum, Salvia (Sage), Echeveria

Neighborhood Involvement



During Planting

After 18 months