
LOS ANGELES COUNTY

Descanso Gardens Stormwater Masterplan & Water Balance

La Cañada Flintridge, California



Descanso Gardens is a well known botanical and demonstration garden located in La Cañada Flintridge, north of Los Angeles. The site was developed initially by E. Manchester Boddy, the owner of the Los Angeles Daily News. Boddy cleared the land of oak and built a large mansion on the site. The mansion overlooks 25 acres of live oak forest and a camellia-lined driveway. Boddy ran a camellia nursery on the property until 1953, when he ceded the site to Los Angeles County.

The natural “bowl” in the San Rafael hills has been further developed by Los Angeles County to include a world-class rosarium, Japanese tea house, lilac garden, bird sanctuary, and xeriscape. The garden regularly offers a range of family driven entertainment, including concerts, chamber music, and art events.

In conjunction with the Portico Group of Seattle, Washington, Biohabitats was retained by Descanso Gardens to generate a stormwater masterplan. Through a series of charrettes and work cycles Biohabitats developed a master drainage plan that calculated storm flows in major drainage channels and also provided strategies for the management of storm water to improve infiltration and limit erosion. Biohabitats assisted in the improvement of the water bodies onsite. Pond and riparian areas were improved based on examination and redesign of the existing edge conditions.

In addition to stormwater design, Biohabitats prepared a water balance that examined both sources and uses of the water. The water balance is a powerful planning tool that steers future development decisions on the property

conservation planning
ecological restoration
regenerative design



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