

This presentation premiered at WaterSmart Innovations

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Lessons Learned

From a Nearly 10-Year Old
Water Conservation Garden



History

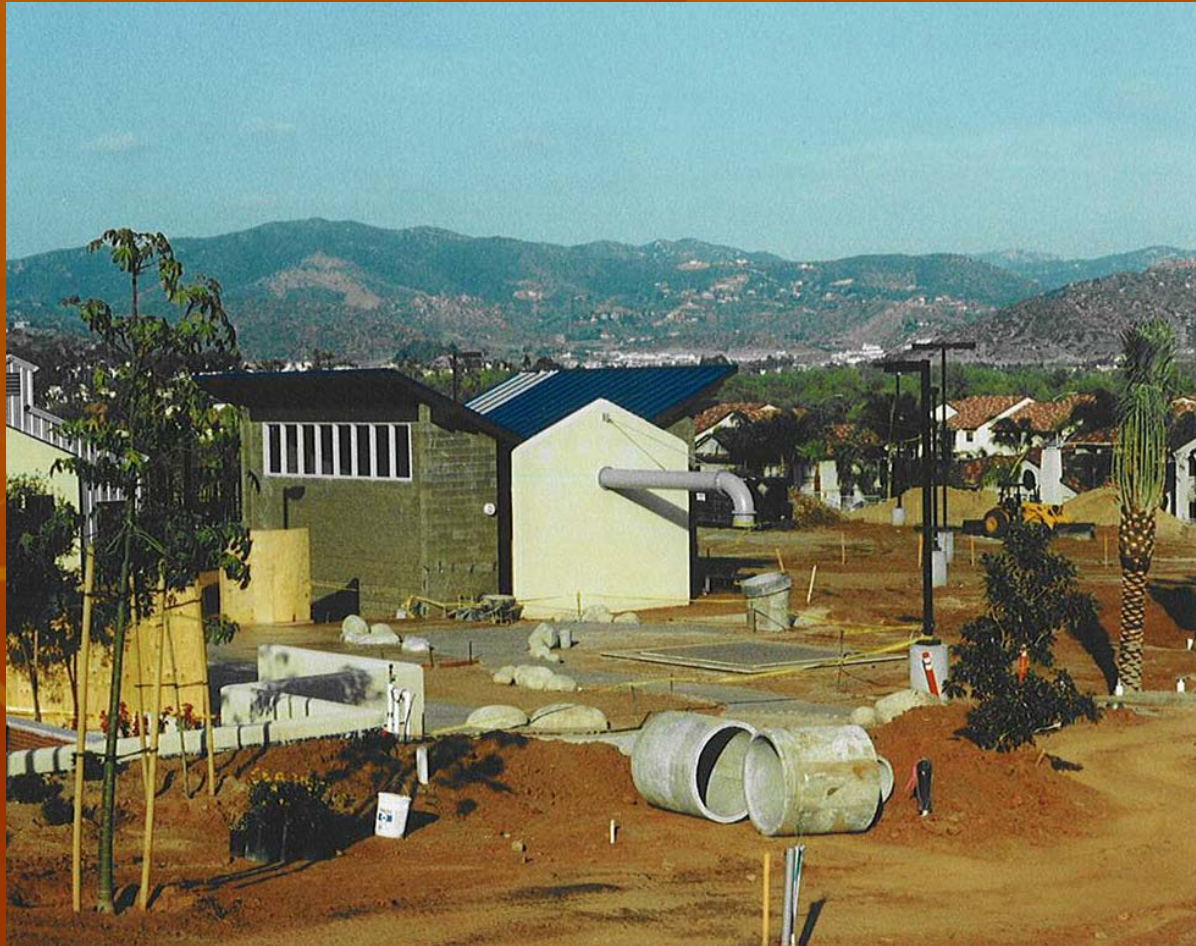
- Garden was conceived in response to the drought of the late eighties-early nineties in San Diego County.
- Founding partners were the Helix Water District, the Otay Water District, and the Grossmont- Cuyamaca Community College District.
- The college donated 41/2 acres, and the water districts each put in about \$1.6 million in capital expenses.



Mission Statement

Promoting water conservation in the southern California landscape through excellent programs and exhibits that educate and inspire the public.

Garden opened in 1999



“If You Build It, they Will Come”

A too-secret garden

By Irene McCormack Jackson
STAFF WRITER

A lovely garden tucked away in Rancho San Diego might be a little too tucked away.

After opening two years ago, the Water Conservation Garden has won several architectural and design awards. But it hasn't been able to attract a steady stream of visitors.

The situation was so bad last spring, the Otay Water District considered pulling out of the joint agency that governs the garden.

"When I came onto the district there was some concern about this being a boondoggle," said Terry McComas, Otay's water conservation manager since last

February. "Here we had spent \$3 million for something that no one was going to."

The three members of the Water Conservation Garden Authority decided it was time to open the garden gate and welcome water and government agencies from throughout the region to join the joint powers authority.

New members to the joint agency would share the \$250,000 cost for annual operations.

Invitations were sent out. The County Water Authority accepted and joined in November. The San Diego City Council is expected to vote later this month. The county Board of Supervisors will vote in June. And the Sweetwater Authority water district is considering the

move.

"All of these agencies practice these water conservation programs, so it was just logical to bring all of them in on this one place," said Karen Stauffer of Helix Water District, a founding garden member.

Helix and Otay water districts built the garden on land donated by the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District. The college district is also a member of the joint agency.

The garden focuses on the seven steps of xeriscape, or desert landscaping. It's comfortable and quiet. Hummingbirds hover near delicate blooms overlooking an amphitheater. Large colorful sculptures, benches and gazebos

dot the winding paths.

The garden hosts groups who tour the four-acre site with docents, the core volunteer group. On weekends, visitors tend to roam, sometimes lunching or taking notes on the plants that are known by conservationists as small drinkers.

There is no admission charge, but donations are welcome. There is a small gift store and a conference room that holds about 30 people. The garden authority and local groups meet there.

The concept for the educational garden was born during the drought that gripped the region for six years in the late 1980s and

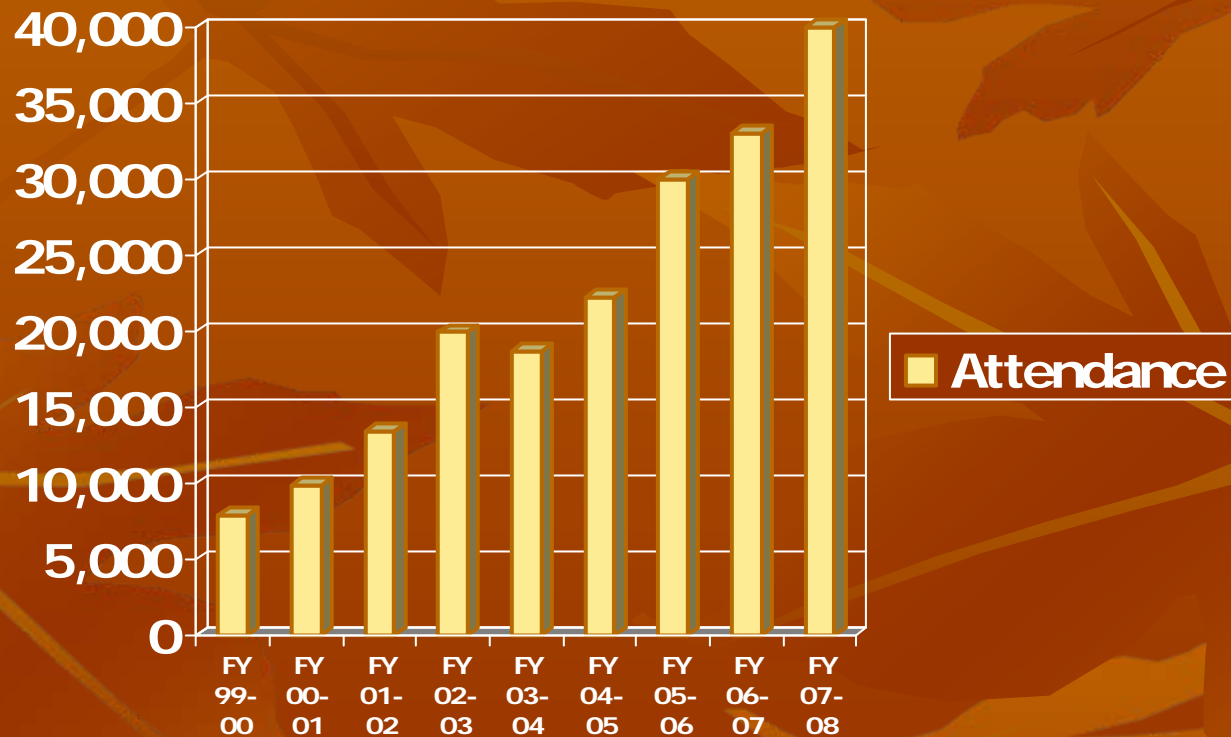
SEE Garden, B4

Governing group recruits financial help for lightly used site



Pergola frames the view at the Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca College. The peaceful, water-conserving garden has won design awards but has failed to bring in a significant number of visitors. *Nelvin Cepeda / Union-Tribune*

Fast forward 10 years....



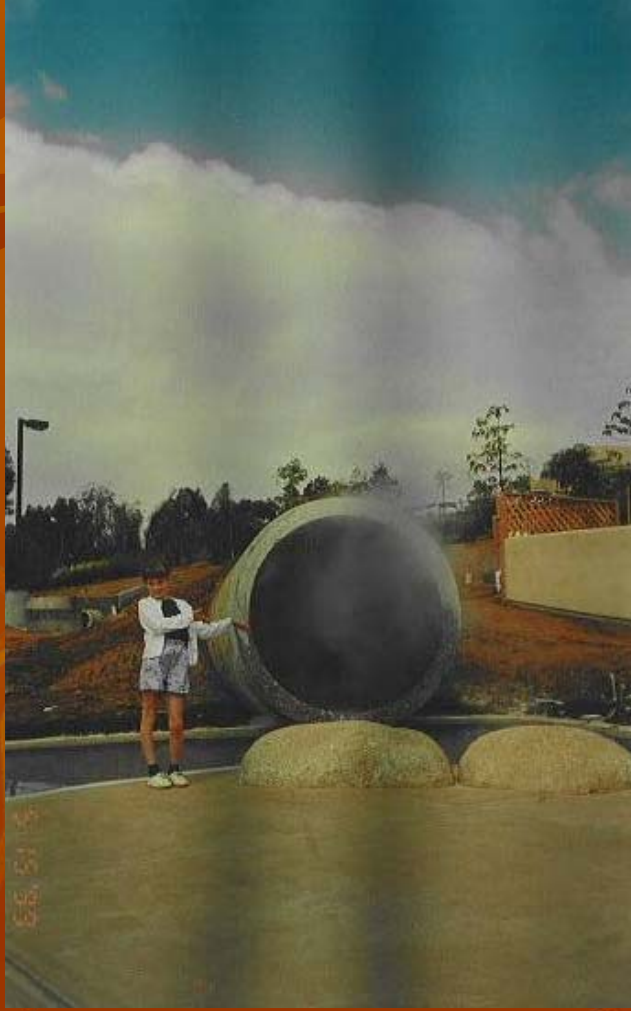
Groundcover exhibit



Water tanks through cactus garden



“End of the Pipeline “ display



The Garden is now a 6 member Joint Powers Authority

- San Diego County Water Authority (lead agency)
- Helix Water District
- Otay Water District
- Sweetwater Authority
- City of San Diego
- Grossmont- Cuyamaca Community College District

Operating Budget

- For FY 2008-2008 is nearly \$700,000; 54% provided by member agency water districts
- 16% donations
- 30% earned income (class fees, gift shop, facility rental, event fees, contracts, etc.)

Diverse Programs and Exhibits

- 16 individual garden exhibits
- Open daily 9-4; free admission
- 60 adult classes per year
- Children's tours nearly daily during the school year
- Outreach classes to North San Diego County
- Participation at fairs and outside events serving hundreds of thousands of people
- Web site with resources for the public
- Regularly scheduled adult tours
- Adult tours by appointment
- Three major public events attracting 10,000 people; smaller events throughout the year

What Have We Learned?



1. As the water conservation message becomes more urgent, your audience changes



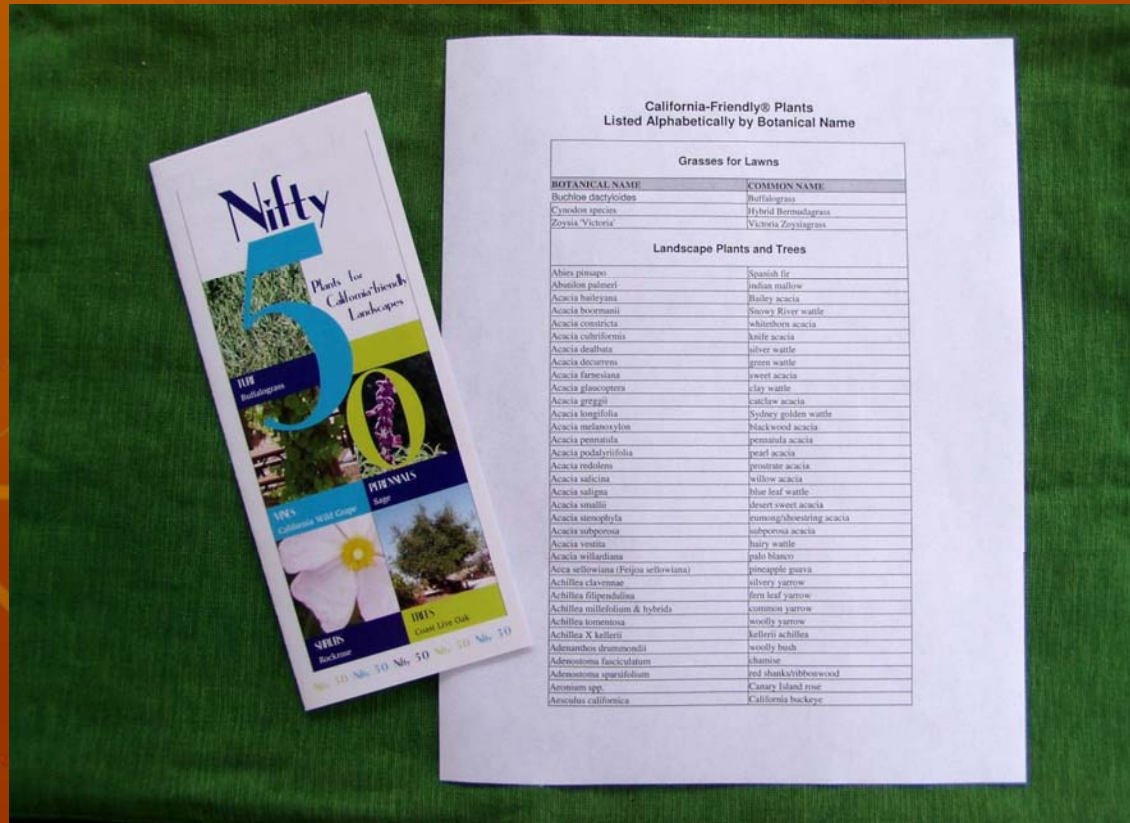
2. You must have messages for all levels of learningon the grounds



The right exhibits can make a difference!

- For two years running, Otay Water District studies have shown that of their customers who visit the Garden , *nearly half* have made changes in their landscapes as a result of that visit.

You must also handouts for different learning levels



Classes need to target different levels of understanding

- Toss the Turf!
- Bye Bye Grass I and II

3. It is important to be family - friendly



Children bring our messages home to their parents

- In a San Diego County Water Authority focus group, the way most of these randomly selected customers had heard of the Garden was through their children.



Large festivals appeal to people who might not visit otherwise

- Edutainment can bring in thousands



water-wise gardening lectures

native american dancing

water-wise demos

prizes

college info

tree care consultations

free admission

tours

free parking

craft vendors

children's activities

plant sale

garden clubs

expert design advice




horticulture demonstrations

books

food

live music

Presented by

Spring Garden Festival

ON THE CAMPU.S OF

Cuyamaca College

Saturday
April 26, 2008
9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Conservation In Bloom

900 Rancho San Diego Parkway, El Cajon, California 92019



4. If you find a class that hits a nerve, offer it, again and again. And take it on the road!

- *Bye, Bye Grass!*
- *Saving Money and Water for Your Homeowners' Association*

**5. Make sure you think way out...how many staff will you need?
Work space? Education space?**



6. Make friends with the media

WINNING ROSES Annual rose show is part of weeklong events / **D16** SUCCULENT DESIGNS Debra Lee Baldwin's book is a keeper / **D18**

Homescape

style • garden • home improvement

SUNDAY
May 13, 2007

D
Ten Good Deals
Under \$500
Plus 15 off



A swallowtail butterfly perched on a purple coneflower, a favorite source of nectar. Ann Haverhill / Associated Press

Luring butterflies depends on how and what your garden grows



A painted lady butterfly landed on a California poppy (Eschscholzia) at Quail Botanical Gardens. Eduardo Contreras / Union-Tribune

FLIGHT PLAN

By Karen Darrick

Plant them and they will come — painted ladies, gold Dillards, monarchs, dainty sulphurs, woodpeckers and skippers. All are among the many colors of butterfly species that fly through San Diego gardens. If you're tired of butterflies landing on your own garden, you can persuade them to linger by including a few of their favorite plants.



PLANT A BUTTERFLY BANQUET: Insect plants such as marigolds, gladioli and red alder provide food for butterfly larvae. Bring winged visitors to your garden. Page D18

vation for Gardens Wildlife), a nonprofit corporation dedicated to creating backyard environments favorable to butterflies, birds and other wildlife. Austin, who has led Alpine's annual Sage and Song Birds Festival for 10 years, is currently helping with new plantings and signage for the Zoro butterfly garden in Balboa Park. A butterfly release will help celebrate the garden's reopening in July. For more information, please see Page D18. On a sunny spring or summer day, Austin steps into her Alpine garden and the flutter of hundreds of butterflies, skipping nectar from blooms to ground level. "Colorful plants will attract them; they can land on and they will cover, and plants for their larvae that they can grow on and they will stay," she said. There are two main types of butterfly plants —

SEE BUTTERFLIES, D18



The newly refurbished bird and butterfly garden at Cuyamaca College's Water Conservation Garden is planted with drought-tolerant plants. Peggy Poston / Union-Tribune

Connecting with nature



Laura Artillo, 3, of Rancho San Diego pretended to be a frog as she walked with her parents yesterday in the Water Conservation Garden for the opening of the Children's Discovery Trail at Cuyamaca College. Officials are trying to make the garden more appealing to families. Laura Artillo / Union-Tribune photo

Officials hope new garden trail at Cuyamaca College serves as retreat for children



Jackie Orozco (left) and Daniel Assaf, both 4, saw birds while hanging from a tree as preschoolers from Cuyamaca College's Early Childhood Learning Center toured the new trail.

By Leonel Sanchez

STAFF WRITER

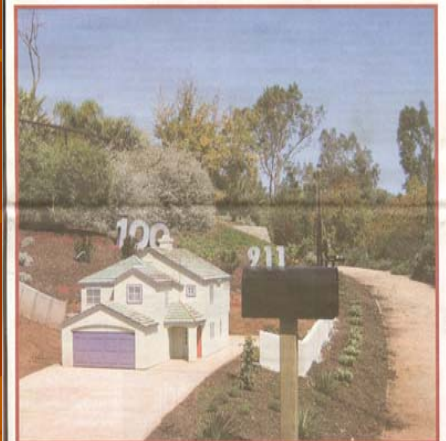
RANCHO SAN DIEGO — The Water Conservation Garden's newest attraction is billed as a fun getaway for children. The 3- and 4-year-olds who ventured there yesterday could attest to that. "Can we take our shoes off?" Marilyn Downing, 3, asked when she saw the large sandboxes along the new Children's Discovery Trail, which opened yesterday. "Auntie Forrester, I jumped out of the sandbox and ran to take a close look at the rabbit figure he saw next to a tree with a funny-looking face on it. The tree drew another boy, who waved and said 'Hi' when he spotted the bee." The children's reactions drew smiles from officials who say they've been working to

make the water garden at Cuyamaca College more appealing to families. Tucked behind the garden's irrigation displays, the new trail is meant as a welcomed retreat that will teach children about trees, plants and animals that are able to survive with little water. "Kids have very little contact with nature today," said Marty Eberhardt, the garden's executive director. "We have to provide opportunities for kids to have contact with nature." The trail is a nod to children's understanding the garden's water conservation message when they have an appreciation for nature. New interactive signs along the garden's main path that are aimed at older children also were unveiled yesterday. The trail and signs were funded with grants from San Petronio

SEE TRAIL, B2

APRIL 11-17, 2007

Be 'Firewise' this summer — new exhibit shows us how



Exhibits show the safe distance from the house when planning your landscaping of your home and property. A must for every homeowner, especially those who live near fire-prone areas, near hills and canyons. This exhibit is at Cuyamaca College. Photo by San Miguel Fire Captain Theresa Cates

A new exhibit at Cuyamaca College will open Thursday, April 12, with a grand opening ceremony at 10 a.m.

The Firewise Landscaping and Home Design Exhibit will assist residents living in or near a Wildland Urban Interface area by providing them information and a "visual"

display that will help them prepare for, and reduce the risk to, wildland fires. The exhibit will focus on basic steps toward protecting homes, specifically firewise landscaping design and home construction.

The San Miguel Fire District partnered with the Water

Conservation Garden to design this exhibit, which was funded by generous grants by FEMA (\$50,000) and the Stanley Smith Horticultural Trust (\$15,000).

CALFire (formerly California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection) and the Cuyamaca Community College District also

assisted in the design of the Firewise exhibit.

This special exhibit will be open to the public daily from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m.

This special exhibit is located in the Water Conservation Garden at the college located at 12122 Cuyamaca College Drive West.

You have a great product!

- People need help, and you have solutions that are enjoyable.
- Never lose sight of the fact that you're promoting something wonderful!
- Show psa.....

