

UUCOD Sacred Grounds July 2023 Update

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We're excited to announce that the UUCOD board approved our proposal to create the Celebration Garden and the first native plant garden, a Desert Canyon Garden. Both gardens will be built this Fall.

Many thanks to all of you who dreamt along with us and provided your ideas and enthusiasm. And now we're ready to GO!

We wanted you to hear this news first before it is announced in the August newsletter. Plus, we're including details that we hope you'll find interesting and provide some additional ways for you to connect with Sacred Grounds.

Steering Committee

We mentioned the new Steering Committee in the June email update. That is working extremely well, with a great blend of skills and interests. We are happy to announce that Sue Engle has joined, as well as Jerry L'Hommedieu as the Board liaison. He was instrumental in helping us develop a proposal that had the content the Board required. If you would like to attend the Steering Committee meetings just let Diana or Rod know.

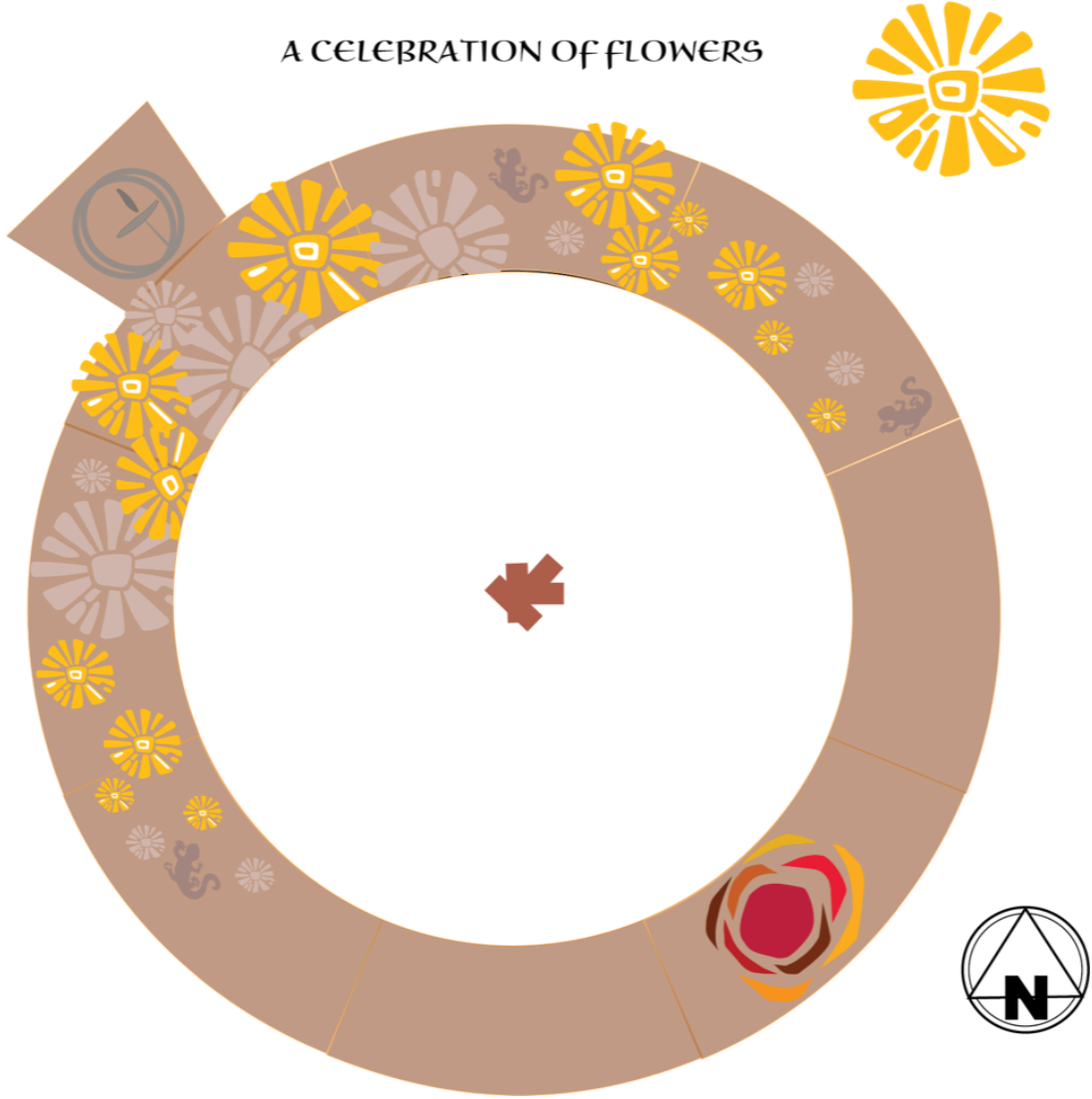
Celebration Garden

This Garden described in the June email update is becoming real!

The Celebration Garden will honor the commemorative pavers currently in the plaza patio and the newer Sacred Stones. The circular walkway will allow visitors to linger and reflect as they reminisce, contemplating the

pavers while surrounded by art and the distant view of the mountains. A short native hedge (bladderpod) will provide semi-privacy and screen the parking lot.

The Garden will be easily accessible from the plaza with an ADA fully compliant circular walkway around one of Gene Kain's beautiful statues (Tilt #2). John Ressler's colorful Encelia design will be stamped and colored in the walkway. John spent hundreds of hours (literally) researching every possible way to make that dream come true and found dyes and sealants that are lovely, affordable, and do not present future maintenance problems.



The commemorative pavers now on the patio along with newer Sacred Stones will be placed on both sides of the walkway, much more of a position of honor than the current situation. It should be lovely! Addition of a trail to a bench under the adjacent Palo Verde is a possible future extension.

Paving will occur in early October. **There will be opportunities for you to join in**, perhaps moving the pavers, painting the dye, or helping cleanup, or helping build excitement with the rest of the congregation. We will let you know more about these opportunities in September.

If you are interested in purchasing a Sacred Stone for the Celebration Garden, please contact Randy Steele. They cost \$250 each and can have 3 lines of up to 15 characters including spaces. He will place the order for the next batch as soon as he has a couple of more orders.

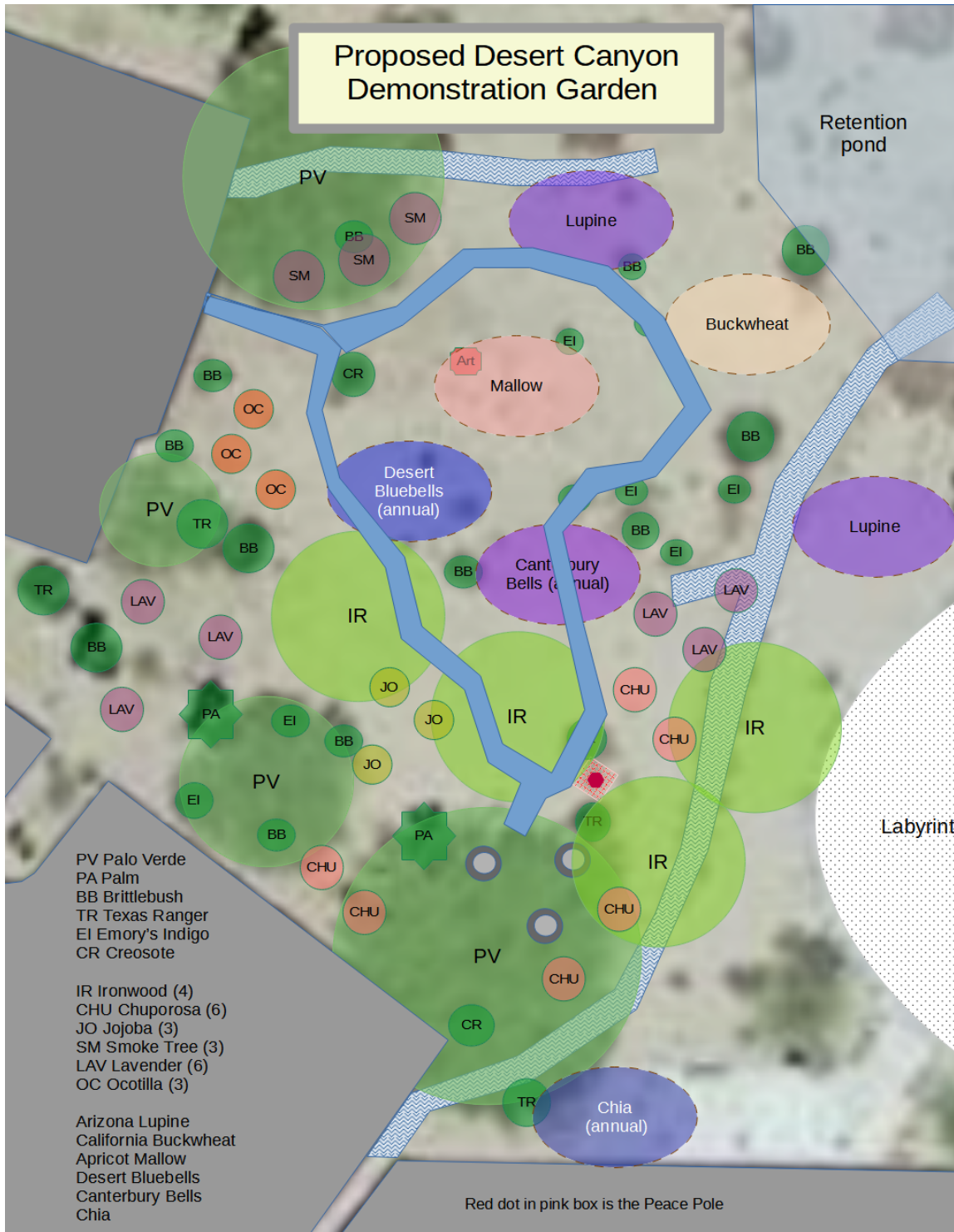
With Mel representing Facilities on the Steering Committee, we will extend the patio at the same time to provide much needed outdoor gathering space for the congregation.

Desert Canyon Garden

The essence of the Sacred Grounds vision is to provide native habitat for our pollinators, lizards, birds and other critters by creating demonstration native gardens that also engages and educates people to promote conservation.

Our long-term plans call for creating possibly five native plant demonstration gardens, and this fall we will begin with a Desert Canyon Garden. It will be located between the picnic area by the labyrinth, the retention pond, and the parking lot and be about 7,500 sq. ft. in size. To simulate the feel of a desert canyon, we will bring in some boulders of

different sizes. Native plantings will include ironwood and smoke trees, ocotillo, lavender and other bushes and shrubs and some annuals.



The Desert Canyon Garden could be enhanced by increasing the quantity and size of boulders, but they are very expensive to buy. Several other gardens have acquired boulders for free by watching construction sites - sometimes boulders are unearthed and the contractors are happy to dump them at our site rather than drive further out and pay for disposal.

Everyone, please keep an eagle eye out and ask if they can be donated!

Acquiring native plants can be challenging. Huge kudos to Sue Engle for lining up a half dozen different sources to meet our plans, though the final list of plants may change based on what's available. We are purchasing many of the plant materials at wholesale prices through the California Native Plant Society and are very grateful to Katie Barrows for all her help. In exchange, **we will ask for a number of you to volunteer to help her set up the UCR Garden Day event on October 20** (which is a great event to go to anyway!).

The big planting activity will start October 21 and take perhaps a week or two. From now until then Dave has been doing (legal) rock collecting - **if you would like to take a drive to nearby BLM land and pick up a few rocks, give Dave a call**. There will be many other opportunities to volunteer as well. Getting your hands dirty is a great way to feel connected to the land.

Funding

With deep thanks to Leslie Gebhart for her fundraising efforts over the past three years plus donations from many of you there are sufficient funds for these first two garden projects. Generosity is a blessing!

We are asking those of you who have been dreaming and planning Sacred Grounds and others in our congregation to help us fund our future dreams. We never ask for donations that conflict with UUCOD

fundraising such as the auction, pledge drive or yard sale, so we are hoping to raise \$8,000 between now and October 31 to fund the next steps in advance. These include creating several more native plant gardens – we envision an interconnecting Desert Dry Wash Garden in the retention pond area and a Creosote Bush Scrub Garden just uphill to the northwest, with a trail connecting all three demonstration gardens. As well, we can enhance the current efforts, such as a bench for the Celebration Garden.

Opportunities for Engagement

"We will conserve only what we love; we will love only what we understand; and we will understand only what we are taught." (Baba Dioum, 1968.)

We've also dreamt together about providing opportunities for our congregation and the wider community to connect with these Sacred Grounds and those who live here – plants and animals alike. These initiatives to learn how to care and protect native habitats as well as encouragement to spend time meandering the paths and sitting in quiet reflection.

We will propose events with LifeSpan such as guided garden walks to connect people with our seventh principle, and with Social Justice such as the Environmental Film Festival. You can join in to make these ideas happen.

There are many possibilities and you will be an important part of dreaming the Sacred Grounds Initiative into the future.

Again many thanks for your support.

Sacred Grounds Steering Committee – Rod Belshee, David Emmerson, Sue Engle, Jack Fitzsimmons, Jerry L'Hommedieu, Diana Leslie, John Ressler, and Mel Wilkinson.