

Sacred Grounds Update, August 2023

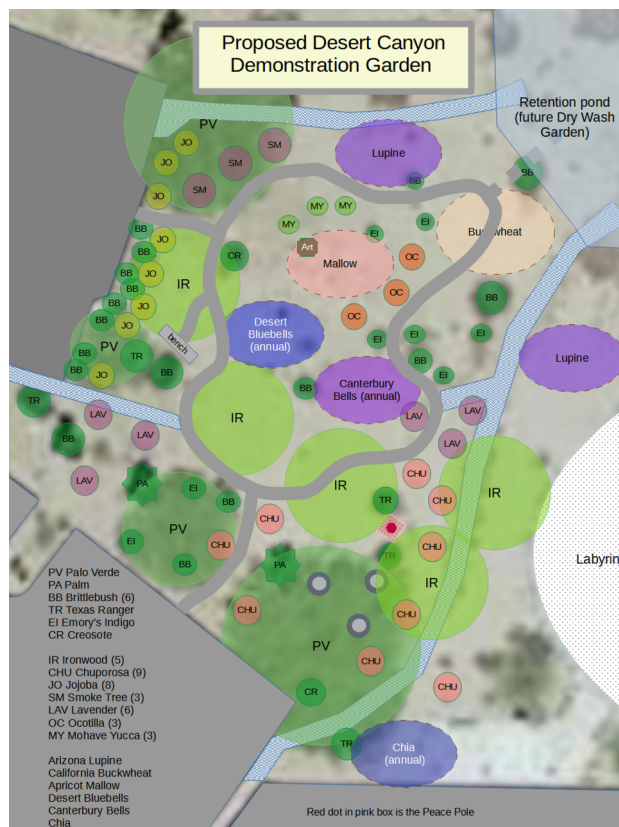
Greetings! A lot has been happening with Sacred Grounds so let's catch you up.

The Steering Committee (Rod B, Diana L, John R, Dave E, Sue E, Mel W, Jerry L, Jack F) has been working hard to get ready for Fall 2023, when we will implement our first two gardens, plus the patio expansion.

Desert Canyon Demonstration Garden

The demonstration Desert Canyon Garden will be the first of perhaps five demonstration gardens that will reflect the unique natural communities of the desert. Located near the picnic area by the labyrinth, this garden will eventually lead down into a Desert Dry Wash Garden in the retention pond and a Creosote Scrub Garden to the north. With climate change, creating these refugia, no matter how small, provides critical habitat for native flora and fauna. The Gardens also create connection between people and the land, embracing the interconnected web of life.

We have a final landscape design including all plantings and paths. Sue is working on the plant materials order, coordinating with Katie Barrows of the California Native Plant Society to combine our order and get wholesale prices. In appreciation, we would like several of us to help them with the CNPS Garden Day at UCR Palm Desert on October 20.



Our biggest worry for this garden was how to get enough affordable rocks to create the feel and habitat of a Desert Canyon. Estimates from SW Boulder & Rock reached into the tens of thousands of dollars and yet there were still too few boulders. We found a construction project in Banning that was unearthing tons of beautiful boulders and needed a place to dump them. Viola! For the price of transport, we secured five dump truck loads of boulders: 25 tons!

In case you are out of town, here's a picture of the boulder pile. And there is a second pile that is even bigger!

Local landscape designer and illustrator Moira Williams created this visualization of what the Garden might look like. The Garden will have two entrances: one by the picnic area and one off the parking lot to the west, which this view depicts. In addition to the plantings in this depiction, the Garden will include more boulders and ironwood trees.



The recent hurricane was quite handy as it clearly showed the routes of water runoff from the pavement. We were able to incorporate that into planning our paths, dry creeks, and rock mounds.

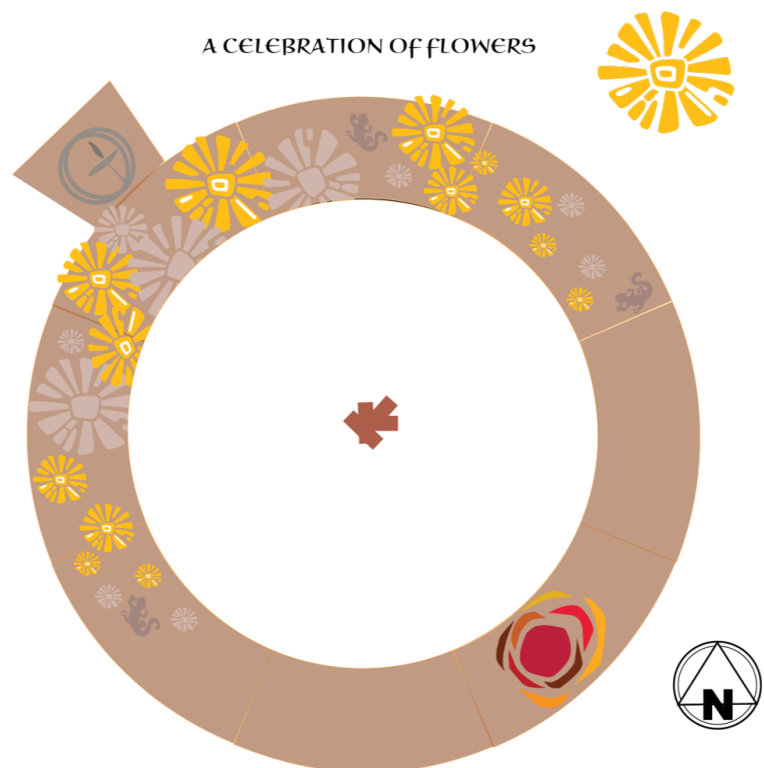
The Garden will start taking shape immediately. A contractor will begin grading and placing the boulders within the week. At that point you will start to see the shape of the Garden and the paths. Planting will wait until cooler weather at the end of October or into November. Dave has designs for tasteful and informative signage ready.

In October and November there will be several opportunities for you to join in the fun. Plans for the Garden can be found on the UUCOD website at [Desert Canyon Demonstration Garden | UUCOD](#).

Celebration Garden

The Celebration Garden will finally provide a proper place to honor the commemorative pavers and new Sacred Stones. Instead of under-foot on the patio, they will be placed in a lovely garden surrounded by art. The ADA-accessible walkway will be embedded with the art designs of native brittlebush (*Encelia farinosa*) from John Ressler and will circle the metal sculpture of Gene Kain. Native bladderpod (*Peritoma arborea*) plantings will provide semi-privacy helping create a place of remembrance, reflection and celebration. This will become a very special place.

The major work is the walkway. John has been researching various stains and sealants, and techniques for lightly embossing designs in the concrete. He is hard at work creating stamps for his brittlebush (*encelia*) patterns so that we can test and refine the process in advance.





The patterns are in three sizes and will be recessed about 1/8 inch. Some will be stained yellow, others left natural.

Construction is planned for October. The concrete pour for the patio expansion and the Celebration Garden happens together. Immediately after the pour we will begin stamping the brittlebush designs. That will require a few volunteers (those of us that can bend over and still get back up!).

Following the pour, we will have work parties for staining and then later for sealing the concrete. We will also have an opportunity for volunteers to plant the native bladderpod, providing a semi-private low screen between the parking area and the Celebration Garden.

Involvement

As you can see, there will be numerous opportunities for you to get involved in work parties this Fall. In addition, there are opportunities to help with communication or other non-physical tasks: [Get Involved with Our Sacred Grounds | UUCOD](#).

We will also be doing some fundraising. Building these two gardens this Fall will drain the Sacred Grounds reserve account. We do not fund raise for Sacred Grounds during the auction or Pledge Drive, so we hope to refill the coffers in September and October to carry us forward so that we can build out perhaps two more gardens next year. You will hear more about this from Diana soon.