



UCD gets seed money for new garden

Sales will highlight native plants set to star in landscape

By Cory Golden

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The UC Davis Arboretum recently learned it would receive a \$150,000 federal grant to help pay for a new California native plant garden focusing on wildlife habitat.

Planting won't start for about a year, but plant sales on Saturdays, Sept. 25 and Oct. 16, will provide a chance to glimpse some of what's to come. Think of them as a kind of movie trailer — with the chance to take home some of the future garden's star attractions.

The new California Native Plant Discovery Garden, measuring about a half-acre,



NIK JOSHI, JOHN CLOVER AND ELLEN ZAGORY/COURTESY PHOTOS

Native plants to be showcased at the UC Davis Arboretum are, from left, penstemon margarita BOP, a nursery hybrid of a native species from the coastal foothills that blooms over a long period; concha California lilac, a drought-tolerant native shrub with midnight-blue flowers, great for providing food and nectar to beneficial insects that will eat pesky aphids on roses; and pink buckwheat, a native plant that attracts native Acmon blue butterflies.

will be at the Arboretum's east end, adjacent to the Davis Commons shopping center at First and E streets.

Though native plants grow throughout the Arboretum in collections based on

geographical themes, the new garden will be distinct in its horticultural focus, said Carmia Feldman, the Arboretum's assistant director.

"I think the focus that it has on attracting native wildlife is

a little bit different," she said. "The plants are going to be chosen specifically with that in mind. This will be a great place to see birds, butterflies,

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bees and other beneficial insects and we'll be interpreting for that, so I think it will really come alive."

The grant from the federal Institute of Museum and Library Services will pay for pathways, irrigation, signage and some project staff salaries. It will be matched by the university through faculty and staff salaries, garden design fees, site preparation and plants.

Ellen Zagory, director of horticulture, said the planned garden also will be more "museum-esque than landscape-esque," complete with family-friendly, hands-on investigation stations where visitors can learn from students and volunteers. Casual discussions with faculty also are planned.

Interpretive signage will be more prominent, and the new garden will be added to both a cell phone tour and maps on the Arboretum website.

What look the garden eventually will take on will begin with professor Heath Schenker's landscape architecture students, who will gather community input and develop preliminary designs that will then be turned over to UCD alumnus Ron Lutsko of Lutsko Associates, who will complete the final design.

Projects for students in other classes include designing an elementary school curriculum for the garden, creating signage about chemical properties of plants used by Native Americans and even writing and performing songs about the plants. Sculpture by art students may be put on display there from time to time.

California fuchsia, which attract hummingbirds and carpenter bees; goldenrod, which attracts butterflies and native bees; and California wild currant and manzanita, which provide winter food for hummingbirds, are among the



CARMIA FELDMAN/COURTESY PHOTO

Shoppers peruse plants for sale at the Arboretum Teaching Nursery. California natives are the stars of the upcoming sales, scheduled for Saturdays, Sept. 25 and Oct. 16.

Details

What: Friends of the Arboretum plant sale

Where: Arboretum Teaching Nursery, on Garrod Drive near La Rue Road

When: Saturday, Sept. 25, from 9 to 11 a.m. for members only and from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. for the public, with a special focus on native plants; and Saturday, Oct. 16, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Note: New memberships will be for sale at the door on both days. Benefits include early entry on Sept. 25 and, on either day, a 10 percent discount and a free plant

plants, shrubs and trees likely to be featured in the garden, Zagory said.

Another example: buckwheat, which attracts small native bees and spiders. In turn, they draw dragonflies, spider wasps and

birds, Zagory said.

Though the planting of the garden remains months away, visitors to the Arboretum's fall sales will be able to get a sneak peak in demonstration beds Zagory has planted at the nursery featuring natives as well as plants to attract hummingbirds, butterflies and bees.

"Those are the templates we're going to be using for the east end (garden)," she said. "They'll be able to see what their garden can look like in the fall. If they come back in the spring (for a sale), they'll see something completely different."

Zagory and Feldman said they see gardening with native plants not just as a way to save water and create a beautiful if less fussy garden, but as a way to give something back to species facing dwindling habitat and home and agriculture pesticide increase.

"There's some evidence

that if you string together enough of these gardens, you can really make a difference for native wildlife," Feldman said.

The new native plant garden is also part of the ongoing Gardens, Arts and the Environment Project, or GATEways, which seeks to build up the Arboretum as an entryway both to the campus and its programs.

An Oct. 23 Arboretum GATEways Arts Festival featuring music, art, dance and more will provide a sort of early start to the Arboretum's 75th anniversary in 2011-12.

— *On the Net:* <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>

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