

# Arboretum Progress

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Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum



"Arboretum Progress" is written to report activities and concerns relative to the operation of the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum. A major concern in the current economic downturn must be the acquisition of funding necessary to support current Arboretum programs and the vigorous improvement programs underway.

One aspect of the requirements of funding improvements not always recognized is that one improvement project often generates a chain reaction of additional needs. A good example is the one hundred vehicle parking lot constructed last summer about one-eighth of a mile from the visitor center. It was necessary then to construct a foot path over that distance. A course was selected that provided a magnificent view over the gardens to scenic Picket Post Mountain. Specifications called for an eight foot wide walk-way with a hard packed surface suitable for children's strollers and other wheeled conveyances. But it was desired that the walk-way maintain the appearance of a rustic trail. It was necessary to cut over 100 feet of the walk into a hillside as much as 4 feet deep to avoid a grade too steep for comfortable walking. This was all accomplished with the labor of Arboretum staff members and enrollees of the Young Adult Conservation Corps (YACC) using Arboretum or rental equipment. A mixture of soil and cement was chosen to give a surface that is hard, smooth and weatherproof but yet natural in appearance. Such a "soil cement," although not widely known as a construction material, is durable and has certain advantages. The path was completed about January 1, allowing the parking lot and trail to be put into service in time for the winter and spring peak months of visitor utilization.

The new entrance trail approaches the front of the Visitor Center directly so that the visitor is introduced to the building's picturesque facade in a way which would have pleased the original architect. Previously visitors approached the building from the side from what is now a service parking lot. (Handicapped visitors are encouraged to use this service parking lot where they can disembark from their vehicles only a few feet from the Visitor Center.) The front approach has necessitated a reorganization of the gathering area in front of the center. To define this area and to enhance it, a stone seat wall has been constructed along the entire length of the building. We are now encountering some problems in keeping visitors on the new entrance trail. There are some inherent potential short cuts that seem to be irresistible. This problem will have to be dealt with in order to protect some fine native areas from destruction by a few thoughtless individuals.

One contribution to the solution of that problem would be an entertaining and informative movie or slide film orientation presentation to introduce the Arboretum to the visitor. The fragile nature of the desert and an appreciation of the garden aspect of the Arboretum would be brought to the visitor's attention.

A visitor orientation complex providing for a contact station, orientation displays and a small auditorium located at the head of the trail from the new parking lot to the gardens is planned and would make this possible.

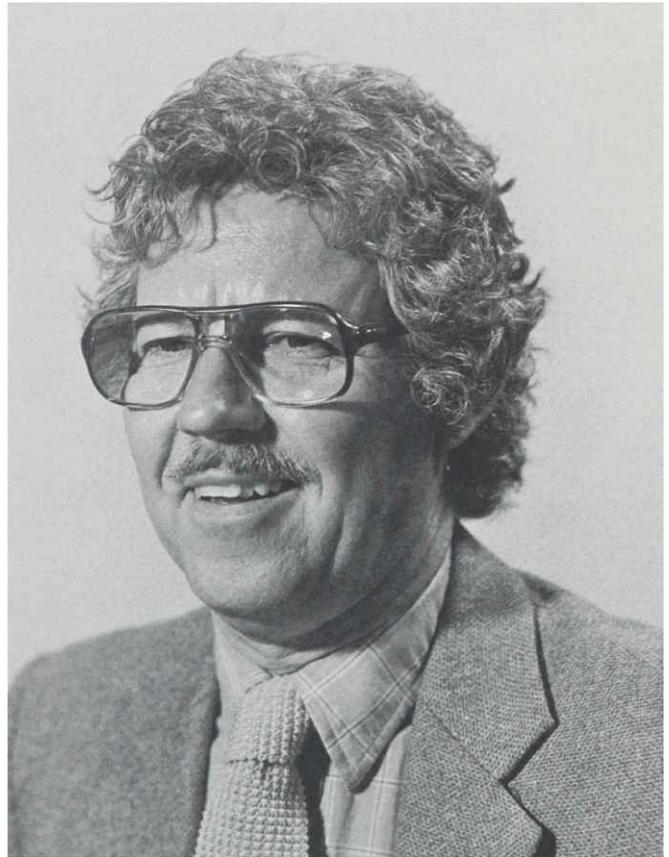
An initial set of 15 study plots constructed to test a variety of ground covers for desert landscaping have been so successful that an additional 15 were added, and 15 more have been requested. The Arboretum has cleaned and started grading land for a demonstration garden. This project will provide a number of landscape situations in which the desired effect will be accomplished by the use of water conserving plants. It will, without doubt, generate its own set of related improvement projects.

Another area of improvement that continues to grow is our interpretive-education program. Daily lecture series introduced last summer were continued during the winter and spring. A Fall Landscaping Festival was added last November. Over 200 very interested persons attended a series of lectures on selecting desert plants and planning their arrangement in landscaping situations. Out of these programs has grown a great demand for our botanists and horticulturists to lecture away from the Arboretum. This is a service the Arboretum to date has provided without charge. Another opportunity for improvement in this area is the development of a discovery garden to provide a hands-on learning experience with plants.

This is the kind of momentum that has grown at the Arboretum over the past 15 years. Over that period we have been dependent upon federal funding only for the YACC Program. That program, which has been very helpful to the Arboretum and to the enrollees (and to the economy in view of the number of enrollees who have gone on to be self-supporting) was, regrettably, discontinued March 26, 1982. The Arboretum has not, in the past, vigorously sought private contributions to augment the support it has received from its tripartite sponsorship. We have, however, received some very significant unsolicited support from the private sector over the past fifteen years.

It is clear now that if the current momentum in the effort to improve the Arboretum is to continue, much of the funding must come from private contributions. In order to attract more of these contributions, a Friends of the Arboretum association has been formed to publicize the needs, solicit contributions and to provide a vehicle through which they can be deposited and expended. This organization has been formed as a part of the University of Arizona Foundation. Several levels of membership are available, beginning at \$25 yearly, and include: a one year subscription or subscription extension to "Desert Plants"; free member admission to the Arboretum; two free guest admissions; and invitations to a special preview of the Annual Spring Plant Sale and to Friends Day in the fall.

The office of Executive Secretary of the friends organization has been created to coordinate its promotional



*Leverett T. Clark*

activities. This office will receive, record and acknowledge all membership applications and keep members informed of activities. Leverett T. (Tim) Clark has been appointed to this post. Tim is an enthusiastic supporter of the Arboretum and its mission to popularize the use of desert plants in desert landscaping. As a cooperater in the ground cover trials in progress here for several years, he is well acquainted with the Arboretum. Clark is a graduate of Duke University, and is now pursuing a Master's degree in Environmental Horticulture in the Plant Sciences Department of the University's College of Agriculture. He is the President of the Arizona Native Plant Society.

Contributions to the Friends of the Arboretum are tax deductible and eligible for employer matching contribution programs. Both the contributions and the match may also be used to establish membership in the University of Arizona Foundation honorary organization.

To become an Arboretum benefactor or to obtain more information on the "Friends" movement, write or call:

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