



The Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum lies in a hidden canyon and adjacent valley at the base of Picketpost Mountain, about 50 miles east of the Phoenix metropolitan area. Photo by Leslie Ely.

The Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum

Plants from dry areas of the world have been brought together near Superior, Arizona to form a living museum without compare. The Arboretum, founded in the 1920's, is the oldest institution in the world devoted to the study of desert plants.

Resident scientists and visiting investigators mingle on the grounds with the general public and classes from public schools, colleges and universities. The Arboretum serves as a mecca not only for seekers of peace and quiet, nature-lovers, bird watchers and conservation-minded citizenry, but for professional plant scientists and biologists as well.

Aside from the artificial plantings, there are many areas in which the natural vegetation is maintained, including areas of Sonoran Desertscrub, Interior Chaparral, Semidesert Grassland, Sonoran Riparian Deciduous Forest, Sonoran Marshland, and Interior Strand. In places the scrub cover is so dense as to suggest Sinaloan Thornscrub.

The Arboretum can be many different things. Out-of-the-way shady trails provide quiet and solitude for meditation and reflection, a place for decision-making and learning where perfection can be measured against flaw. In other areas, sunny landscapes with vivid colors and bold desert plant life forms can send a thrill deep to the soul of any visitor. And on all sides opportunities for learning abound. While a high school teacher from Peoria, Illinois watches Pipevine Swallowtail larvae feeding on leaves of

Aristolochia watsonii in the cactus garden, a stockbroker from New York suddenly comes to a firm market decision leaning on a railing looking down into the waters of clear bubbling Queen Creek. A tourist in the Canyon marvels at a giant Saguaro cactus growing precariously from a cliff. Meanwhile at the visitor center a scientist with the Soil Conservation Service discusses apple varieties grown by pioneers in Arizona and New Mexico with an Arboretum horticulturist. A fifth grade class from Phoenix is in the Arboretum lecture room listening to a talk on how plants make sugar from air and water through photosynthesis. Dr. Charles Sacamano from the University of Arizona is taking measurements of the growth of experimental ground cover plants in specially constructed plots in the Arboretum research area. Four senior citizens on the trail near Ayer Lake are standing next to the largest Boojum Trees in the United States, reading the nameplate sign "*Idria columnaris*."

Virtually all who have visited the Arboretum hold fond memories of it. Those who have not yet visited have much to look forward to. To allow the Arboretum to be on a sound economic footing and to increase the likelihood of it being available to our children and our children's children, friends are invited to formally join FRIENDS OF THE ARBORETUM by sending an annual contribution of \$25 to \$1000 to Friends, P.O. Box 3607, College Station, Tucson, Arizona 85722. Members receive the journal *Desert Plants* free and have access to numerous other benefits, but most of all will forever have the knowledge that they cast a decisive vote in favor of perpetuation of the Arboretum.