

A Report on Special Events at the Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum

Carol D. Crosswhite

Boyce Thompson Southwestern Arboretum

To promote in-depth learning experiences centered around desert plants, the Arboretum annually stages a number of special events. They are scheduled primarily in the cooler months to coincide with peak visitation periods and with most comfortable outdoor temperatures. A variety of topics are treated, changing from year to year. Generally special events last through the day, and guests are presented with a smorgasbord of learning experiences from which to choose. Often certain topics are repeated several times during the day, allowing visitors to devise individual schedules based upon their interests and needs. There is no charge made to attend special events other than the normal admission fee for entering the Arboretum itself (\$1.00 for adults, children under 17 free when accompanied by adults).

As examples of the types and range of material covered, Arboretum special events for the Fall of 1982 through the Spring of 1983 are summarized below. Events each year are different although a few are repeated annually because of popularity. *Desert Plants* subscribers receive advance notice of scheduled events. Flyers are either stuffed in the envelope with the journal or mailed separately to subscribers. Friends of the Arboretum are notified through the FOTA Newsletter not only of the special events open to the general public, but of the extra special events which are planned just for them. Thanks and deep appreciation go to the many people who have given freely of their time and knowledge to help with our programs.

Fall Landscaping Festival. This was held on Saturday, November 18, 1982 from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. This event celebrated the fall planting season, ideal for establishment of perennial landscaping. The focus was on drought-tolerant plants, with presentations geared to their selection, kinds, care and use. Guest experts and Arboretum staff gave 45-minute talks, demonstrations and slide presentations. During morning hours, some of the topics were 1) Planting and Care of Trees and Shrubs, 2) the Basics of Landscaping with Desert Plants, 3) Native Drought-tolerant Plants to Use in Home Landscaping, 4) Propagation Techniques for Desert Plants, 5) Common Pests of Landscaping Plants and How to Control Them, 6) How the Environment Affects our Plantings. After lunch, participants could choose between a slide presentation or a garden walk of some kind. For instance, at 1:00 p.m. "A horticulturist's tour through Australia and New Zealand" was shown in the lecture room. Some guests were conducted on an Arboretum walk to view specimen plants of drought-tolerant trees and shrubs. Others were given a tour of the Arboretum experimental ground-cover plots.

Vegetable and Fruit Workshop for Desert Families. This was held Saturday, January 22, 1983 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. A sluggish economy has encouraged more and more families to take up home gardening. Because special cultural practices, planting schedules, and plant varieties must be used in the Desert Southwest, a workshop was arranged to help gardeners moving to Arizona from other areas as well as to aid first-time gardeners or those wishing to improve their skills. Dr. Paul Bessey of the University of Arizona Department of Plant Sciences was asked to serve as chairman of the event. The experts he assembled spoke hourly from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. on such topics as 1) Vegetable Gardening Through Frost and Sun, 2) Garden Fruits and Nuts, 3) Fertilizing and Watering, 4) Citrus at Home, and 5) Container and Small Space Gardening. Participants could also choose to view slide presentations on 6) Varieties of Fruits and Vegetables for the Desert, 7) Birds and Beasts in the Garden, and 8) What is a Desert? Red onion sets and seeds of virus resistant Columbia tomato, a variety recommended for Arizona, were given free to people attending the event.

Arbor Day Weekend. The formal activities took place on Saturday, February 12, 1983 from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. The Arboretum honored trees in general and promoted "tree appreciation" on this day. The following presentations were repeated at 10:00 a.m., 11:00 a.m., and 1:00 p.m.: 1) How to Plant a Tree, 2) Importance of Trees, 3) The State Tree Seedling Program for Private Landowners, 4) Budding and Grafting, and 5) What Tree Rings Can Tell Us. A special tree-planting ceremony was held at 2:00 p.m., with honored guests Joseph Thompson Jr. and William Thompson ("Wallace" of "The Wallace and Ladmo Show" on Phoenix TV) representing the founder's family. Dolan Ellis, Arizona's official State Balladeer,



Mary Dieterich demonstrates tapestry weaving at the Arboretum's workshop on dyeing and weaving last May. Natural plant dyes from desert plants produce beautiful soft colors. Photo by Carol D. Crosswhite.

concluded the ceremony with a selection of his own songs. Free tree seedlings were given to children who attended the event, along with care instructions written especially for the youngsters to use. During the course of the day, over 1,500 seedlings were given away.

Arid Land Plant Show (ALPS). This event was held Saturday, April 2, 1983 from 8:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. The Arboretum is charged with teaching about drought-tolerant plants, providing information about them, and encouraging their use. To help accomplish these, a multi-faceted event was designed and coordinated, involving many cooperating individuals and institutions. The main attraction was a series of displays on arid land plants, staged in an area adjacent to the arboretum picnic area. Exhibits were colorful, informative, and manned by experts in the subject matter, so that visitors had a chance to ask questions as well as to learn on their own. The following partial list of display titles gives an idea of the types of subjects that were treated: Food Plants of the Desert; Cacti and Succulents for Landscaping; Ground Covers for Arid Regions; Plant Adaptations to the Desert; Halophytes—Salt Tolerant Plants; Propagation of Plants by Tissue Culture; Plants of the Arizona Chaparral; Arboretum Wildflowers; Drip Irrigation; Meet the Sonoran Desert; Xerophytic Plants for House, Porch, and Patio; Seed-grown Cacti; and others.

Other learning opportunities were also available. A series of slide presentations occurred hourly in the Arboretum lecture room, and there were several screenings of the new motion picture dealing with the Arboretum. Well-known botanical illustrator Lucretia Hamilton displayed and demonstrated some of her works at a booth in the Visitor Center patio area. Nearby was the Authors' Autograph Table where visitors could ask various authors of botanical works to sign copies of the books they had written. In addition, guided tours of the Arboretum were offered at 9:30 and 10:00 a.m. and at 2:00 and 2:30 p.m.

Dye Plant Day. This was scheduled for Saturday, May 14, 1983 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. On this day, two very knowledgeable experts gave us fascinating insights into the use of plants as dyestuffs. The day began with Mary Dieterich talking about basic principles of dyeing with plant materials. As she talked she illustrated with her own samples and work. Next Susan Clark gave a demonstration of dyeing wool with a representative plant dye. After lunch Mrs. Dieterich talked about her own specialty, tapestry weaving, as well as weaving in general, and demonstrated her craft as she worked on a tapestry piece in progress. The day was concluded by an Arboretum walk led by Susan Clark to show plants from which dyes can be obtained.