

Botanical garden to break ground on pavilion to host weddings, special events

By Emily Cameron The Clovis Independent

Clovis Botanical Garden will break ground on its new pavilion Thursday, Oct. 22.

Volunteers at the Botanical Garden are eager to begin work on this major project, as it will become a much-needed income source and add to the sophistication of the gardens, said Patricia Wynne, a member of the garden's board of directors.

Drought-tolerant plants can bring pops of color to a garden. Provided by Clovis Botanical Garden

"We don't get any government money or any funds from the city, and we struggle," Wynne said. "It's costly to maintain this, even with the volunteers that do most of the work. There's water lines, there's the water bill, there's electrical that has to go in. It's costly, and if we ever want to expand, we have to raise the money.



What: Water Wise Plant Sale

When: 8 a.m. to 1 p.m., Saturday, Oct. 17

Where: Clovis Botanical Garden, 945 N. Clovis Ave.

Proceeds benefit the maintenance and growth of the garden.

"We're building a structure, which will be landscaped beautifully around it, and we want to rent that out for weddings and parties ... any special event, really. There are limited venues for events in the area."

Donations and assistance from local businesses have been essential to the development of the pavilion, which is estimated to be completed by February or early March.

"Clovis Community Foundation has donated \$30,000 for the structure and Clovis Rotary is pouring the cement. Mark Wilson construction has waived his fee and is overseeing the project. Granville Homes has given us a lot of help. The community has stepped up," Wynne said.

Clovis Botanical Garden hopes to attract more people to the space to raise awareness about low-water gardening and demonstrate what types of plants can thrive in our environment. Wynne believes this approach of leading by example is crucial to teach the citizens of the entire region that the Valley can still be beautiful without being wasteful.

What you'll see in the Clovis Botanical Garden are plants that we like to call 'San Joaquin Valley-friendly.' Those are things that will grow well in this area.

Pat Wynne, member of Clovis Botanical Garden board of directors

"We want to show people low-water plants and low-water gardens. We have cactus, but it's not all cactus. A lot of it can be very colorful, very beautiful, and you can really cut back on water use. If you want a nice lawn or something, then you'll have the extra water to use on your lawn," Wynne said.

Future projects aim to continue this message and educate the public about which plants California has to offer.

“We’re going to have a new, totally-native plant garden planned for November. That will be all California-native plants. What you’ll see in the Clovis Botanical Garden are plants that we like to call ‘San Joaquin Valley-friendly.’ Those are things that will grow well in this area,” Wynne said. “Now, if you want to talk about native plants, some things that are native to California will grow well here, but some things won’t. If you’re talking about something that’s native to Northern California, that won’t do well here. If you’re talking about a more tropical thing that’s native to the L.A. area, that won’t grow well here.”

Wynne and the Clovis Botanical Garden board believe that mistaking native-to-California plants as San Joaquin Valley-friendly is perhaps one of the most common problems people make during the drought. Wynne urges the community to look outward and draw inspiration from other countries before redesigning one’s landscape.

“In addition to native plants we have things from other parts of the world that are a similar climate to ours. Our new Mediterranean Garden has plants that grow well in areas like Central Italy, Greece, Spain ... that part of the world. They have hot summers, limited amount of water, fairly mild winters,” Wynne said.

The Central Valley Water Awareness Committee, whose generous \$6,000 donation funded a majority of the project, made the Mediterranean Garden possible. Other donations, such as the donation of the stone wall by Home Depot, have been deeply appreciated. Wynne emphasizes that the Clovis Botanical Garden runs purely on donations and the volunteers do not receive compensation.

“Nobody is contributing to anybody’s high salary here, because nobody has a high salary. I was actually mayor of Clovis when the idea was put forth by Gordon Russell, who was the founder. This was all supposed to be part of that park. Gordon had big dreams; he wanted a whole 8 acres. He said he’d like a botanical garden for Clovis, and, well, he came to the right person because that was right up my alley,” Wynne said.

The City of Clovis gave the Botanical Garden a total of three acres, but only one acre is developed so far. Two spring fundraising events, in addition to the Water Wise Plant Sale this Saturday, Oct. 17, are the primary lifeblood of the gardens and will bring in the necessary funds for even more land to be developed.

Gordon Russell, Clovis Botanical Garden founder, passed away in 2009 but the volunteers have been pushing to keep his vision alive.

“I would really like to emphasize that we service the entire region. We are a garden for the entire region, not just for Clovis,” Wynne said. “We have a big responsibility.”