

Outdoors

Arboretum plans for birthday bash

This diamond jubilee comes with presents that keep on giving.

UC Davis' beloved arboretum marks its 75th anniversary next Saturday, the start of what will be a near-yearlong party.

Known for its drought-tolerant, easy-care Arboretum All-Stars, the 100-acre facility has a lot to celebrate.

"Our focus on Valley-wise gardening made a huge difference in the community and the region," said arboretum director Kathleen Socolofsky, who joined the facility's staff 14 years ago. "We did Valley-wise gardening before it was popular. We're very proud of that.

"We've also had so many plant specialists, scientists and botanists working with us," she added. "We started testing these plants that could survive with little water and little care. We've built up a huge portfolio of knowledge of plants that we know will do well in our environment while helping our environment, too. That's one of our big contributions."

Of course, a plant sale will officially kick off the festivities next Saturday. The arboretum is renowned for its plant sales, attracting hundreds of local gardeners.

In honor of the arboretum's 75th birthday, its staff asked volunteers and longtime customers to nominate plants for a new collection.

Edited down from hundreds of suggestions, that long list became the arboretum's new "Community Favorites."

"It's 75 plants for 75 years," Socolofsky said.

These plants – which will be revealed next weekend – come community-tested.

"A lot of people have been growing these plants for 30 years or more," noted Ellen Zagory, the arboretum's director of horticulture. "They developed very strong

Seeds

DEBBIE ARRINGTON



darrington@sacbee.com

opinions over that time. They know they will be good here."

Some of the favorites are All-Stars, "but quite a few are not," Zagory said. "I think of them as rising stars."

Today, the Arboretum Teaching Nursery will offer a pre-birthday guided tour, whetting gardeners' desires as well as stimulating their imaginations.

The nursery's demonstration gardens have responded beautifully to September's mild weather, Zagory added.

"Purple dome asters are blooming in big drifts against a backdrop of Mexican deer grass, that looks like fireworks," she said of one demonstration garden. "It contrasts with Goodwin Creek gray lavender, which is so round and very gray. The autumn sage is just beginning to bloom, too. It's really spectacular."

During next Saturday's plant fair, the Community Favorites will be featured with notes from their nominators. That personal touch leads to another part of the jubilee – a chance to share memories.

"The arboretum is a wonderful place for community engagement," Socolofsky said. "Over its 75 years, it's meant so much to so many people. We've hosted so many weddings, baptisms, memorials, celebrations of life.

"Many people have also told us that they found comfort here," she continued. "Former students, professors, visitors; when they were going through a hard time, they used the arboretum as a



Florence Low Bee file, 2006

Ducks congregate at the arboretum, a place inhabited by many other creatures.



Lezlie Sterling Bee file, 2009

Ellen Zagory, the UC Davis arboretum's director of horticulture, said the staff has compiled a list of volunteers' and customers' 75 favorite plants.

place to retreat and think. It shows that the arboretum is a special place for our community."

So, the arboretum staff invites you to share your memories, too.

Send a few sentences along with your name, hometown, phone number and, if possible, a photo to arboretum@ucdavis.edu or by mail to UC Davis Arboretum, 1 Shields Ave., Davis, CA 95616.

"People are sharing funny as well as touching anecdotes," said Carmia Feldman, the arboretum's assistant director. "We'll use these memories throughout the year in our newsletter, on our website and

on signs in the gardens. What we're trying to show is people's connection to the arboretum in many ways."

So far, the funniest may be the tale of a camel seen walking one night through the arboretum's drought-tolerant Storer Garden. The 8-foot-tall visitor was a patient at the nearby large animal hospital.

Said volunteer Nancy Foster, "Only in Davis would you see a camel in the arboretum."

Call The Bee's Debbie Arrington, (916) 321-1075.



Ellen Zagory

The purple dome aster, one of the UC Davis Arboretum All Stars, is in bloom right now.

ARBORETUM BIRTHDAY SALE

What: 75th anniversary plant fair and sale

Where: Arboretum Teaching Nursery, Garrod Drive across from the small-animal hospital, UC Davis

When: Friends of the Arboretum members-only sale, 9-11 a.m. next Saturday; public sale, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. next Saturday

Admission: Free; new members can join at the door and receive an immediate 10 percent discount plus a free plant

Details: <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu> or (530) 752-4880

Also: Catch a preview of the sale's plants at 10 a.m. today at the Arboretum Teaching Nursery. This guided tour will highlight the drought-tolerant Arboretum All-Stars plus the 75 "Community Favorites" chosen by staff and volunteers in honor of the arboretum's diamond anniversary.