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Cover story

Happy 75th birthday, UC Davis Arboretum

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From a few oaks and shrubs, a mighty arboretum grew. And it's going to get bigger. Back in 1936, science students at what's now UC Davis started a small campus garden. Lugging bucket after bucket, they watered their precious plants by hand, hoping for the best.

Today, the UC Davis Arboretum celebrates its 75th anniversary as one of the nation's leading institutions of its kind. With 100 acres of gardens, the arboretum collection boasts more than 60,000 documented plants representing almost 2,500 species.

"It's appropriate for our 75th year to look back and celebrate what we've done," said arboretum director Kathleen Socolofsky. "But we also are developing a strong vision of the future."

This actually will be a yearlong anniversary party, kicked off by a huge plant fair and sale today at the arboretum's teaching nursery. More than 1,000 people are expected to attend.

A highlight will be the introduction of Community Favorites, 75 "can't fail" plants for Valley gardeners nominated by the arboretum's longtime volunteers, staff and friends. Topping that list is the 2011 All-Star of the Year: Pink Grüss an Aachen, a fragrant floribunda rose.

"It's just a wonderful plant," said Ellen Zagory, the arboretum's horticulture director. "It's tough. People don't think of roses as drought-tolerant, but we only irrigate every two weeks, and this rose just keeps blooming. I think of it as cast iron, a plant that will succeed in many different situations."

While readying for the diamond jubilee, arboretum staff are in the first phases of a major project: making the whole 5,300-acre campus a public garden.

"This truly is ground-breaking," Socolof-



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Volunteers Franceska Claverie, Gerald Dickinson and Kathryn Medley, top, unload plants to prepare for today's plant sale. Above, rows of plants await purchasers. Walt Moseley, right, also a volunteer, sorts through a collection of drought-tolerant Arboretum All-Stars.



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PHOTO GALLERY

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Candace Cross-Drew, left and Gerald Dickinson pull wagonloads of potted plants to the sale area. Members of Friends of the Arboretum can start shopping at 9 a.m. today; it's open to the general public at 11 a.m.

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Ellen Zagory UC Davis Arboretum

Community Favorite

Pink Grüss an Aachen floribunda rose (*Rosa 'Grüss an Aachen'*)

Size: 3 to 4 feet tall

Bloom season: Spring, summer and fall

Exposure: Full sun to partial shade

Pruning needs: Prune in winter. Remove spent flowers throughout season to promote bloom.

Water needs: Once established, water deeply every one to two weeks.

Snapshot: Originally introduced in 1929, this may be the perfect Sacramento rose for an eastern exposure. That's one reason why the staff of the UC Davis Arboretum chose it as 2011 "All-Star of the Year" and the featured plant for the Arboretum's 75th anniversary celebration.

It's a "sport" (a natural mutation) of the first floribunda rose, Grüss an Aachen (which means "greetings to Aachen," an ancient cathedral city in Germany). This variety boasts beautiful pink flowers in showy sprays April through November. The blooms smell as good as they look. In fall, the rose hips (fruit) look attractive, too. And the stems are nearly thornless.

In hot Sacramento summers, this bush prefers afternoon shade to protect the leaves from sunburn. It also grows well in areas of the garden that receive less than six hours of sun a day – a rarity for roses. You can see specimens in the Ruth Risdon Storer Valley-Wise Garden on the UC Davis campus.

For more on the Community Favorites and the Arboretum All-Stars, see <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>.

75th Anniversary Plant Faire and Sale

What: The UC Davis Arboretum will introduce you to the 75 Community Favorites – plants that do well in Sacramento-area gardens – as well as the drought-tolerant Arboretum All-Stars. Today's plant sale includes children's activities, a Q&A table and live music.

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

When: Today, 9-11 a.m. for members of Friends of the Arboretum (membership available at the door for \$40; \$15 for students), 11 a.m.-1 p.m. for the general public

Details: For a list of plants available and directions, click on <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>. Call (530) 752-4880 for other information.

Admission: Free

Upcoming sale: If you miss today's sale, many of the same plants will be available from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. Oct. 9. That sale will focus on sustainable gardening.

sky said. "We don't know of anything to this scale, where a whole public university campus becomes an arboretum. Swarthmore College (in Pennsylvania) has its whole (425-acre) campus as arboretum, but it's a much smaller, private college. This is *big*."

"Our goal is for the entire campus to transition into public garden. What that means is the conversion of a lot of lawn area. Turf that's not used for athletics or recreation will become new eco-friendly landscaping.

"It's a great demonstration of what the public can do with their own landscaping in the Central Valley. Obviously, this is the right time to do this."

Starting this fall, traditional strips of lawn along campus roads will be transformed into sustainable flower beds, offering a year-round colorful show. Such beds already line the street next to the nursery.

"This landscaping takes less labor as well as less water," Socolofsky said. With all the budget cuts happening right now in the

university, this makes sense, she said.

Garden courts – featuring art and floral tie-ins to topics – will sprout next to academic buildings as part of an expansion of the arboretum's Gardens, Arts and the Environment program. Such courts help bring teaching and learning outdoors.

"Our plant science people are so excited," she added. "The courtyards and landscaping will reflect academic studies. ... Between all our resources, we should make a significant impact quickly."

The university recently combined its grounds and landscape services department, Putah Creek Reserve and the arboretum into one unit. Eventually, the creation of a campuswide arboretum will draw more people onto UC Davis' grounds, strengthening its ties to the community.

Those ties are already tight. Hundreds of volunteers support the arboretum and its programs.

"I love plants, and I wanted to be involved with kids," said Christy Dewees, who has been

leading children's arboretum tours since 1987. "I grow lots of these plants in my own garden. I know what works and doesn't work."

"I really love doing the plant sales," added Walt Moseley, another volunteer. "Everybody from Davis comes here."

To honor volunteers as well as help local gardeners, the arboretum staff came up with its 75 Community Favorites, available at today's anniversary sale.

Succulents expert Dick Bruga, a retired veterinarian from Woodland, nominated as favorites two succulents – Estrella del Mar aloe and ghost plant (*Graptopetalum paraguayenses*) – along with the native grass Siskiyou blue festuca.

"My wife and I are collectors," he said. "We like to experiment with different plants. But these three are my best for dry gardens with afternoon shade, such as under oak trees."

Like those oaks that gave birth to this arboretum 75 years ago.

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