

*Anatomy of a CVAS-City of Thousand Oaks
Native Plant Park Collaboration*



Conejo Valley Audubon Society
www.conejovalleyaudubon.org

Concept: Provide New Habitat
One Yard or Park at a Time!



CVAS: Lawns to Habitat in a Nutshell

- *2013: Dee Lyons proposed sponsoring a contest to the CVAS board*
 - *Concept: Develop Lawns-to-Habitat demonstration yards*
 - *Provide plants and volunteer labor to help*
- *We whole-heartedly approved and funded the concept*
 - *First winners were the Brian and Amy Stark in 2013*
 - *Scott Trautman was the 2014 winner with Tricia Munro as designer and \$300 worth of plants*
 - *25 applicants received a one hour consult with our landscape designer, Tricia Munro*
 - *We had about 100 people contact us during 2013-2014 efforts*
- *The 2015 water rebate program really kick-started folks interest*
 - *We have been promoting CA Native Plants at Earth Day, Arbor Day, and in our speaking engagements to local libraries and other groups*
- *In 2015, we received a grant of \$2,000 from National Audubon*
 - *Used to convert 3 lawns to habitat (emphasis on Hummingbird habitat)*
 - *Now completed*
- *CVAS's big new project is in the planning stages for the changeover to California Native Plants at Heritage Park, Thousand Oaks*
 - *Start 2015 and finish 2016*
 - *Successfully completed phase I*

Municipal Outreach - Inception

- Conservation Chair, Dee Lyon, networked the TO City sustainability lead, John Brooks, senior environmental analyst, at the TO Earth/Arbor Day Fest. (April 2015) She asks him about a piece of land to plant CA Native landscaping for the birds.
- John gets back to Dee with an offer of planting Heritage Park, a pocket park on Thousand Oaks Blvd.
- Board approved and funded effort ~\$3K
 - CVAS provides: Design, signage, native plants, volunteers for planting
 - City provides: Removal of non-natives, hardscape changes, boulders, mulch and required labor and maintenance
- Dee meets with John Brooks and they flesh out general details. John says that the plants must look attractive, aka green, year round as a selling point to the city. John agrees that the city will place large sitting boulders and they will allow CVAS to post an interpretive sign about the bird-friendly, CA native garden.

Municipal Outreach – Early Days

- Bonnie, Richard, and Dee meet on site with City Officials. They are asked to submit a CVAS landscaping plan, before the project will be approved.
- City will provide wood chips and possibly other necessities. CVAS point out turf, ornamental grasses, and non-native plants that need to be first removed before planting.
- They also identify good plants that should stay including a stand of 3 native coast live oaks, 1 valley oaks, and a sycamore that were planted after the site was converted from a haz mat site (old gas station) to a city pocket park in the late 90s.
- Bonnie, Richard, and Dee measure the site. (150' X 150' X 75') Richard creates a map using aerial photographs. Dee and Bonnie start visualizing which plants will work at this location, taking photographs from many angles and copious notes.

Heritage Park Landscape Proposal – Designed by the Conejo Valley Aububon Society



Under Oak & Sycamore Canopy: Leave all Deergrass.

Remove society garlic, cotoneaster, asparagus fern, and other non-native plants, except fern patch in southeast corner.

KEY:  - Over 10 feet tall  - Between 3-10 feet tall  - Under 3 feet tall

- AB - Ashy-leaved Buckwheat (3-6' tall X 3-10' across)
- A - Indian Mallow (3-5'tall x 3-5'across)
- CB - Coyote Brush (3-8'tall x 8' across)
- CC - Ceonothus "centennial"(8-12"tall x 4-5'across)
- CO - Ceonothus "Concho" (6'tall x 6'across)
- D - Deergrass, new plants
- DL - Deergrass, old plants, leave in place
- DU - *Dudleya caespitosa* "Frank Reinelt" (6-9"tall x 12" or more across)
- E - Saffron Buckwheat (1-2'tall x 2-3'across)
- FD - Fairy Duster (1-3' tall x 3-4'across)
- GF - Island Snapdragon "Firecracker"(2-3'tall x 3'across)
- GU - Island Snapdragon (upright 3-4'tall x 5-8'across)
- H - Island Alum Root (2-3' tall x 2'across)
- J - *Juncus patens* (1-2'tall x 2' across clump)
- MC - Manzanita "Carmel Sur" (1-2'tall X 6' across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MD - Mananita "John Dourley"(4'tall x 6'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MP - Manzanita "Pacific Mist" (2'tall x 6'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- MS - Manzanita "Sunset" (5-8'tall x 8'across) or equivalent manzanita variety
- PP - Pigeon Point-Coyote Brush (2' tall x 8'across)
- R - Redberry (3-8'tall x 8'across)
- RH - Lemonade Berry (4-20' tall x 4-20'across). May substitute Sugarbush
- T - Toyon (8-15' tall x 8-15' across)
- W - Desert Willow "Burgundy Lace" (12-20'tall x 12-20'across)
- Z - California Fuchsia "Hurricane Point" (1-2'tall x 2-4' across) or equivalent variety
- Q - Valley Oak (40 feet in height and width in 25 years.)

Municipal Outreach - Planning

- Dee and Bonnie walk the site with the map, and mark plant selections and locations.
- Bonnie takes the hand-written map and converts it into a digital map using Microsoft Power-Point. (She changed from a google image to a Bing image to get the best lighting.)
- Dee prepares photographs with a brief description of each plant.
- A phone call to the city reveals that they are willing to remove the turf and do other deconstruction CVAS can do all of the planting.
- Bonnie and Dee walk Heritage Park again, and discuss the needed work to prep the sight. They prepare a scope of work.

Municipal Outreach – Scope of Work

- Bonnie combines the map & plant key, scope of work, and plant descriptions into a neat packet using PowerPoint. Converts the final draft into a .pdf doc. (There were several “final” drafts as changes were made.)
- Dee submits the packet to John Brooks and Kevin Wilson, Landscape Maintenance Supervisor. Two weeks later he approves everything on it, except for having milkweed between the shrubs.
- Bonnie and Dee start shopping for the plants. Supplies are low, and need to purchase all the plants from five different native plant nurseries. (4 – 5 of the plant selections were changed, due to unavailability.) and Anna Huber, a local restoration ecologist, helps CVAS gain access to El Nativo, a wholesale nursery that normally does not deal with retail buyers.
- Bonnie goes to a Conejo Open Space Foundation (COSF) seed ball making volunteer workshop and learns that this will work for Heritage Park. COSF offers to collaborate with CVAS for making future wildflower seed balls for between the shrubs. They will supply all the organic seed ball materials, and CVAS the seeds. (Anna Huber, ends up donating the 1 lb. CA Poppy and 1 lb. Arroyo Lupine seeds that she acquired at wholesale. ¼ of low meadow mix from the Theodore Payne Foundation was added, too.)

Municipal Outreach – Execution

- Dee and Bonnie meet with Kevin Wilson onsite at Heritage Park, in advance of deconstruction. (November 2015) TO City will do everything listed in the scope of work, including adding drip bubblers for each plant.
- Dee and Bonnie purchase plants incrementally. This involved at least two visits to Theodore Payne, a delivery from El Nativo, an order and pickup from Matilija Nursery, a visit and purchase of a 24'' boxed oak from Boethlings Treeland, and a visit and purchase of hard to find Conejo Buckwheat from Tree-of-Life Nursery. (Bonnie was going there on an unrelated visit.) There were approx. 120 plants total.
- Bonnie places signs for plant identification, similar to the ones used by TO City at their drought tolerant garden at the Civic Arts Plaza.
- CVAS publicity chair contacts KCLU public radio and a couple of newspapers to cover the story.

Municipal Outreach - Finals Weeks

- Bonnie attends City Council meeting and during general comments, she recognizes John Brooks and Kevin Wilson, and thanks the city staff and city council for offering Heritage Park and for the collaboration. She invites them and everyone in the room to the planting day, which is about 1.5 weeks away. She also emphasizes that there will be a new valley oak on Thousand Oaks Boulevard, which is a big deal.
- After TO staff have denuded site of non-native plants and rototilled biochar into the soil (only a few inches deep due to hard ground), Dee and Bonnie mark each plant's locations with labeled pin flags a few days before planting. Some large spaces between plants are discovered, and the plant palette and map are adjusted.
- To City contractors add bubblers to each flagged spot.

Municipal Outreach - Final Days

- TO City picks up Oak tree at nursery, meets CVAS at Heritage Park and plants this 24'' boxed oak two days in advance of volunteer planting day. (Logistically this had to be a weekday.)
- Native plant order picked up by Dee and Bonnie after oak is planted from Matilija Nursery. Plant order adjusted, to fill in large spaces.
- Dee and Bonnie also go back to Theodore Payne and Boethlings Treeland to buy additional plants to fill in large spaces.
- El Nativo Nursery delivers plants to Dee's home one day before the planting. (This plant order was also adjusted.)

Municipal Outreach - Planting Day

- On volunteer planting day, December 12, 2015, several CVAS members meet at Dee's Home to transport the plants in two pickup trucks to the planting site.
- The city has closed the right lane of TO Blvd. CVAS and the city use the closed road as a safe loading/unloading zone. The CVAS canopy is set up there.
- Plants are staged next to pin flags.
- Approx. 24 volunteers arrive to help with the planting, including the Mayor of TO, Joel Price. The city supplied 3 staff to help, plus Kevin Wilson joins CVAS. (CVAS was going to have new plants double up on bubblers, but TO City staff added needed bubblers while volunteers dug holes and planted.)
- All the plants are in the ground in approx. 2 hours.
- KCLU/local NPR reporter covers the story

Municipal Outreach - Planting Day

The Dynamic Duo
Bonnie and Dee



Municipal Outreach - Planting Day

The Super Shovelers



Municipal Outreach - Planting Day

T.O. Mayor
Joel Price



Municipal Outreach - Planting Day

Cia Frank Joel Tony Kevin Dee Thelma Bonnie



Municipal Outreach - Planting Day



Municipal Outreach - Post Planting

- TO City staff mulches between plants approx. 1 week later.
- Seed balls are made at Gary's house in early January 2016. (COSF led this work session with CVAS board members and volunteers) Seed balls were left to dry in Gary's garage, where they await the ongoing rains. They will be distributed about 4 – 5 feet apart between the plants.
- Phase 2 – Interpretive signing. Dee and Bonnie will be working with TO City other board members, specifically graphic artist Chrystal Klabunde, on interpretive signing. There will be one large interpretive wayside, and many signs with plant names (and probably QR codes, so visitors can find out more about each plant.) They will be seeking grant money to fund Phase 2