This brochure was compiled by Philippe Waterincks, Geography PhD student, from interviews with people who played key roles in the development of the campus botanical landscape. These interviews were conducted in the Fall of 2003 by graduate students from Anthropology 595 (Environmental Decision Making in Applied Anthropology).

We wish to thank the following individuals who contributed their time and shared their memories:

- Diane Breit-Harte, former UA staff member La Que Pasa
- Mary Rose Duffield, Landscape Architect
- Steve Fazio, Professor Emeritus, Horticulture
- Richard Felger, Botanist, Drylands Institute
- Bill Havens, Professor Emeritus, Landscape Architecture
- Warren Jones, Professor Emeritus, Landscape Architecture
- Chuck Raetzman, former Assistant Head of Grounds Services
- Eric Schaff, Landscape Architect, former staff member Architect for Facilities Design and Construction
- Jim Turner, Historian, Arizona Historical Society
- Ray Turner, Botanist, Carnegie Desert Laboratory

We gratefully acknowledge support from the Southwestern Foundation for Education and Historical Preservation.

The tapes and transcripts of the interviews can be found at the UA Libraries Special Collections.

- UA Libraries Special Collection

Additional resources
- The UA Campus Arboretum website arboretum.arizona.edu includes Campus Arboretum’s interactive map and on-line Campus Plant Walk.
- The UA Campus Arboretum, created in 2002, is now preserving and enhancing this unique and living legacy of historical landscapes which feature a rich collection of drought-tolerant plant species and ecosystems from around the globe.
MEMORIES…

1920s
“The desert was perceived as a hostile … scary place.” — Jim Turner.

To attract faculty and students, the University founders made the campus landscape and architecture look like that of an East Coast university. Ivy covered many buildings. Yet the desert was not ignored. President Shantz introduced plants from other arid parts of the world and Professor Toumey’s cactus garden became a prominent campus feature.

1930s
Lava rock walls and gates, many of which are still present to this day, were built to mark the campus perimeter. The cactus garden was moved to the east of Old Main.

“When Homer Shantz was president, the campus had a great and famous botanic garden… it was a destination.” — Richard Felger. “[As children] we would run along the rock walls … play in the cactus garden … climb all over the birdcage to look at the parrots.” — Mary Rose Duffield.

1940s
The Mall extended from Old Main to Cherry Street and was entirely occupied by the cactus garden.

“My favorite spot on the campus was the fish pond, early in the morning, when the blue heron came to fish.” — Chuck Raetzman.

1950s
“The campus was mostly turf and tree … a serene and pretty park, incredibly lush.” — Jim Turner.

“The campus acquired a California-style, high water use landscape featuring mostly palms and lawns on which no one walked. The Mall’s palms became the campus’ signature trees. Flood-irrigation caused high humidity but provided much entertainment for children. Bicycles were rare on the campus.

“People were looking specifically at how to garden in the desert.” — Steve Fazio.

While lawns in many campus locations continued to be removed, the remaining half of the Mall’s was grassed over. Only a small cactus island remained in front of the Student Union.

“We had a winter with a lot of snow and it broke the branches on most of the [olive] trees.” — Ray Turner.

1960s
With the start of the conservation movement, the campus appearance began to change. Flood irrigation was gradually replaced by drip irrigation and lawns were removed to make room for desert landscaping with eucalyptus, acacia and mesquite trees. The flood-irrigation berms in the Olive Grove have remained and are now a preserved historic feature. The University of Arizona became known as the Great Desert University.

1970s
As appreciation of the aesthetic qualities of desert landscapes grew, many plants from other arid parts of the world were introduced.

“We had marijuana [seedlings coming up] all over. I had to line up the entire grounds staff side by side and we had to walk the entire field… You had to hand pick it.” — Chuck Raetzman, remembering the weeks following the 1977 Fleetwood Mac concert in the football stadium.

The campus grounds became less experimental and more a maintained and managed space.

“We had people calling to say, ‘I have guests coming to town, and I’d love to use the plant walk’ and it was great, it was just wonderful.” — Dianne Bret-Harte, on the Campus Plant Walk, which first appeared in Lo Que Pasa in 1989.

“The development of the campus as a botanical laboratory was made possible through a close working relationship between researchers and grounds crew.

“They are probably not going to make it anyway.” — Warren Jones, when he planted small exotic and more tender trees in Magic Alley, behind Old Chemistry. Those trees now stand taller than the building.

1980s
“We had people calling to say, ‘I have guests coming to town, and I’d love to use the plant walk’ and it was great, it was just wonderful.” — Dianne Bret-Harte, on the Campus Plant Walk, which first appeared in Lo Que Pasa in 1989.

The western half of the Mall’s cactus garden was grassed over in 1950. Public spaces and social movements: the Vietnam War protest on the Mall, 1970.

“We had marijuana [seedlings coming up] all over. I had to line up the entire grounds staff side by side and we had to walk the entire field… You had to hand pick it.” — Chuck Raetzman, remembering the weeks following the 1977 Fleetwood Mac concert in the football stadium.

Many valuable trees were transplanted to other parts of the campus to make room for new buildings or to protect them from the growing traffic.

“With the University’s rapid growth, grounds maintenance became a key issue.” — Eric Scharf.

2000s
The Krutch cactus garden is to be expanded and integrated into the new Alumni Plaza. A grant from the Getty Foundation will allow the Campus Arboretum to continue and expand its documentation of the history of campus landscape.

In the 1980s, the Mall’s small cactus island was dedicated to author and naturalist Joseph Wood Krutch.

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