

RESEARCH

The campus has been an ideal location to evaluate the suitability of plants as crops. The olive trees and date palms planted by Robert Forbes in the early 1900s were part of early experiments in desert farming and are still among the most striking features on the campus.

Warren Jones, Charlie Sacamano and Richard Felger, among others, introduced countless drought-tolerant and exotic plant species on campus to see how they would adapt to an urban environment.

Steve Fazio developed a sterile Bermuda grass hybrid as well as innovative techniques for propagating palo verde and eucalyptus.

EDUCATION

The campus is an outdoor classroom for botany, desert ecosystems and landscape architecture courses. The xeriscaping concepts of the mini-oasis, transition and natural zones were developed and taught at the UA.

“Graduates from the School of Landscape Architecture have exported these concepts to many arid regions of the world.” — Bill Havens.

OUTREACH

The campus has traditionally been ahead of its time in water conservation and environmental awareness and it has long been a public showcase for desert landscaping and gardening. The UA Cooperative Extension has been at the forefront of outreach programs for decades.

The wide palette of drought-tolerant and exotic plants introduced on campus in the 60s, 70s and 80s became popular in nurseries and gardens across the Southwest.

The Mission of the Campus Arboretum at the University of Arizona is to preserve, manage, enhance, and expand a vital collection plants in an active, urban Sonoran Desert setting. The UA Campus Arboretum will showcase the historic, scientific, aesthetic, environmental, economical, conservation, and educational value of these plants within the larger Tucson urban forest and the American Southwest.

This brochure was compiled by Philippe Waterinckx, 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:

- DIANNE BRET-HARTE, former UA staff member *Lo 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 SCHARF, Landscape Architect, former staff member Architect for Facilities Design and Construction
- JIM TURNER, Historian, Arizona Historical Society
- RAY TURNER, Botanist, Carnegie Desert Laboratory

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

- Photo credits*
- 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.

- Phyllis Ball (1985). *A Photographic History of the University of Arizona 1885-1985*. University of Arizona Press, Tucson.

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Once upon a time... on the campus of The University of Arizona



The Cactus Garden, 1930s

AN ORAL HISTORY OF THE CAMPUS LANDSCAPE



Herring Hall, 1903.

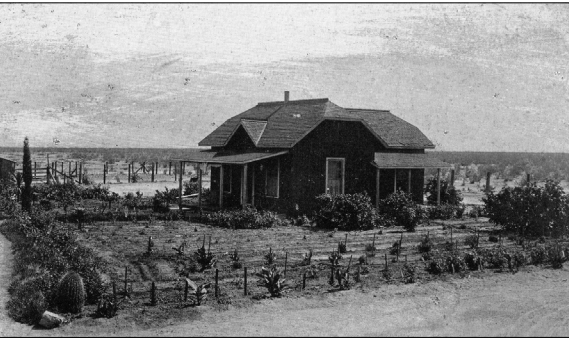


The stately palm-lined mall, the cactus gardens and the shady olive groves are among those campus features which are most vividly remembered by visitors and alumni.

“Visitors’ first impressions of the campus are often that of the grounds.” — Chuck Raetzman.

A LABORATORY THAT BECAME A PARK

What looks today like an elegant park is in fact the result of over a century of research and experimentation with desert plant material which began with the founding of the University of Arizona in 1885. Countless plants from arid regions around the world have been successfully introduced to the campus. Innovative methods of cultivation, propagation and selection have been developed over the years and have contributed to the fields of desert farming, horticulture and landscape architecture. And as perceptions, values and attitudes towards landscape and environment have evolved over the decades, so have the UA research, education and outreach practices.



Horticulturalist’s Cottage, 1891.
UA’s first experimental garden.

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.

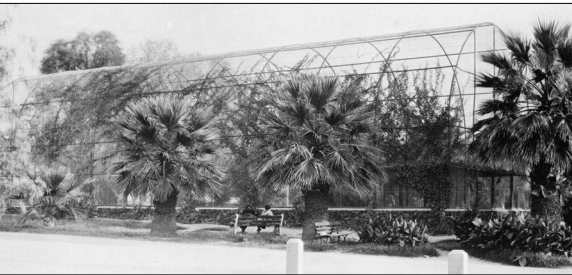


Old Main and Toumey’s original cactus garden, 1920s.

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.



The bird cage, west of Old Main, 1918.

1940s

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

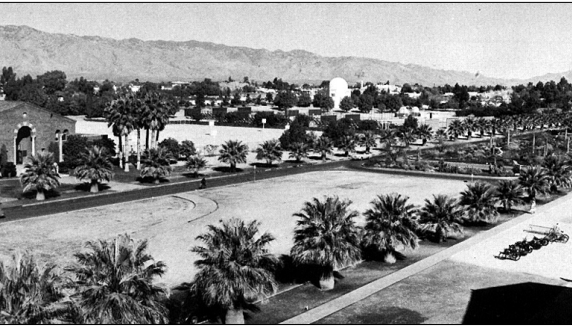


The fish pond in the garden of the President’s house, 1941. The house was removed to make room for Gila Hall, but the pond has remained.

“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 western half of the Mall’s cactus garden was grassed over in 1950.

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.

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.

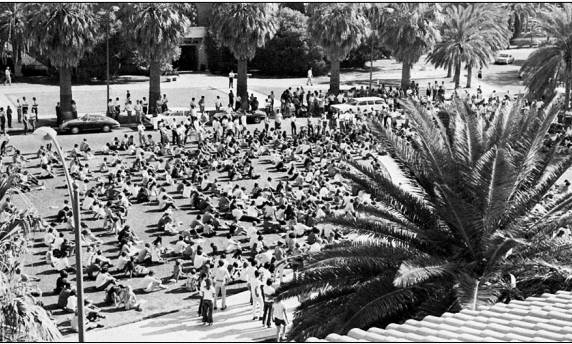
1970s

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

“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.



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.

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 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.



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

1990s

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

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

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.

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.