




NEWS

# San Diego Botanic Garden gets grants to restore canyon plant life





Tony Gurnoe, San Diego Botanic Garden's director of conservation horticulture, shows a local native plant, called Baccharis (*Baccharis vanessae*) that will likely be planted at Ocean Knoll Canyon. (Courtesy of San Diego Botanic Garden)

The Encinitas-based nonprofit San Diego Botanic Garden is getting roughly \$200,000 from the California State Coastal Conservancy and \$50,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to remove invasive plants and replenish native plants in Ocean Knoll Canyon

BY LINDA MCINTOSH | SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE

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The Encinitas-based nonprofit San Diego Botanic Garden is getting roughly \$200,000 from the California State Coastal Conservancy and \$50,000 from the Natural Resources Conservation Service to remove invasive plants and replenish native plants in more than half of Ocean Knoll Canyon.

The grants will also cover the first steps in setting up an outdoor education program at the canyon.

The project's 4.6 acres is part of the Cottonwood Creek Watershed in Encinitas and sits next to Ocean Knoll Elementary School. The canyon serves as a refuge for native plants and animals, some of which are endangered.

The project involves removing invasive fire-volatile and high water-intake plants that impede biodiversity along with trash and planting native flora, such as coastal sage scrub, that require less water, improve drainage and capture more carbon dioxide.

The grant will also fund the nonprofit's continued collection of seeds and support its seed bank for research on seed resiliency under a range of climate conditions. The project is among several land restoration efforts throughout the area that the nonprofit is spearheading outside its 37-acre botanic garden, including at Cottonwood Creek Park.

The garden has received a two-year \$99,000 contract from the city of Encinitas for habitat restoration in Cottonwood Creek Park, 95 N. Vulcan Ave., which is downstream from Ocean Knoll Canyon.

The San Diego Botanic Garden was recognized for its efforts with an award for Environmental Stewardship last year from the city of Encinitas's Environmental Commission.

The first phase will include setting up a framework for an outdoor education program, including educational signs in the canyon. In the second phase, which is not yet funded, an eco-environmental education program will be established with neighboring Encinitas Unified School District's Farm Lab, making the canyon an outdoor classroom, like a living laboratory, for students in the nine elementary schools in the school district.

"The only thing we get more excited about than preserving plant life in our region is educating kids about our amazing flora. This project allows us to do both," said Ari Novy, San Diego Botanic Garden's president and CEO.



Linda McIntosh

Linda McIntosh used to lead a double life as a technical writer for an engineering company and a feature writer for the Chicago Tribune. Since joining the U-T in 2002, she has focused on writing North County community features and calendars. She also covers community news at Camp Pendleton. Linda has a master's degree in English from the University of Chicago.