

Santa Barbara City College
Lifescape
A History And Overview

The Lifescape is a horticultural exhibit that displays an array of edible/ornamental plant materials capable of adapting to the Santa Barbara coastal mediterranean-climate zone. Special emphasis is placed on mild climate/low-chill plants, with new introductions and cultivars being tested and examined continually. The Lifescape features trees, shrubs, vines, herbaceous perennials and various other plant categories, many having multiple-purpose advantages. Plants in the Lifescape are selected for adaptation to residential and suburban-size landscapes. Plant size is an important factor: miniature, dwarf, semi-dwarf and controllable-sized plants are highlighted. Aesthetic beauty is a requisite for all plant materials exhibited, with culinary delight a second requisite.

Many hundreds of plants are displayed in the Lifescape.

The edible-ornamentals (🍏) are grouped into convenient categories:

- 🍏 Deciduous Pomefruits
- 🍏 Deciduous Stonefruits
- 🍏 Miscellaneous Deciduous Fruits
- 🍏 Dwarf Citrus and Avocado and Semi-tropical plants
- 🍏 Dessert Bananas and Tropical-Like Edibles
- 🍏 Assorted World-Wide Edible Exotics
- 🍏 Perennial and Seasonal Culinary Herbs
- 🍏 Edible Flowers and Fragrant Plants
- Medicinal Herbs and Healing Plants
- Turf Display
- Water-Conserving Xeriphytes *Denotes water conserving plants
- Decor Perennials **Extra Low Water Usages

The Lifescape is a key component used to teach the landscaping artforms and skills associated with horticulture. The garden is essentially an outdoor classroom and practical laboratory for the Environmental Horticulture Department. Students training in career specialties or for personal enrichment also have the advantage of working with various irrigation systems and automatic controlled clocks. They are also exposed to water management methods and techniques, which include micro irrigation and a selection of low water use plants, and are taught the art and science of soil preparation and management, plant culture, IPM (Integrated Pest Management) and hardscape development. Environmentally sound techniques for responsible landscape care are taught, including backyard composting and green resource recycling. Emphasis is placed on sustainable horticultural and biodynamic techniques and exhibited throughout the Lifescape and Chumash Preserve.

Classes are presented in Fall, Spring and Summer sessions and can be taken by any interested person. Options within the program are: a one-year (two-semester) **Certificate**, leading to a two-year **Associate Degree** with 6 options. Also offered are the single-semester Skills Competency **AWARD** and **outreach classes** and individually selected classes. Students can also train under the Cooperative Work Experience Program (EH 290 class), where the student, SBCC, and an employer agree to a supervised

work training program (for those individuals that are striving to earn the E.H. Certificate or Associate Degree). Some students do apprentice work for pay or as assigned volunteers in the Lifescape itself.

Location

The Lifescape is situated on the bluff above the Harbor at Santa Barbara City College's east campus. It is located oceanside of the main parking lot above La Playa Stadium adjacent to Shoreline Drive. The groves of trees and assorted plants run for some 500 feet. The public is invited to tour the garden on weekends when the college is not in "regular" session (when parking is allowed without permits). The garden is within the Coastal Access Zone. On week-days permit parking is required. Tours are also given if prior arrangements are agreed upon. Some tours also take advantage of eating at SBCC's Gourmet Dining Room, which overlooks the ocean (call the HRC extension for information). The most picturesque view of the South Coast occurs from the Lifescape's Chumash Point and the adjacent Castillo Overlook (photographing is best from these vantage sites). On the clearest of days the vista extends to Pt. Mugu in Ventura County, and three of the Channel Islands silhouette the ocean horizon. From the bluff the Santa Barbara/Goleta valleys are ringed by the famous hillside coastal communities. Coastside of the Lifescape is the Chumash Point–Ethnobotanical Preserve. Chumash Preserve is the site for pre-European era indigenous plant displays, unique to the Chumash Native American culture and specific to the local Barbareño and Cruzeño dialects.

History

Originally the garden was designated as the Margaret Ruth Taylor Memorial Fruit Grove in June, 1982. This collection of fruit trees was initiated in her honor by her sister, Dorothy K. Taylor, and her brother Robert Taylor and his family, acting as friends of Santa Barbara City College. They were the original donors of this project. This living memorial fruit tree grove came under the sponsorship and ongoing care of the Landscape Horticulture Program (since 1991 titled **Environmental Horticulture Department**).

In the 1960s the garden site was a loose collection of organic seasonal-crop gardens tended by college students and neighbors. Through time, these individual plots deteriorated into disarray and a new direction was sought. The College realized the location as exceptionally picturesque. The cliff and mesa are unbuildable due to their geological proximity to the edge. The College Board of Trustees agreed to the concept, that the Lifescape and Chumash Preserve would not only improve the area but would provide a needed site for the Program to implement practical training in the arts, skills and techniques of landscaping, ornamental horticulture, and habitat management and emphasize the growing awareness of sustainable, environmentally sound approaches to ecological balance. The "Green Gardener" Principles and Guidelines of the HCB are being infused into the appropriate credit class syllabi taught within the EH program.

The Environmental Horticulture Department maintains the Lifescape through practical lab classes, individual student projects, through College Work Study apprenticeship assignments, and with some local volunteer assistance and representatives from RSVP (Retired Seniors Volunteer Program) and occasionally "Master Gardener" volunteers from the Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Contributions of materials, money and worktime are donated to the E.H. Program by local businesses in the horticulture-related trades, horticultural associations and clubs, by people that tour the garden, and by individuals that find solitude and value in this most unique and useful botanical assemblage. Through the Horticulture Program the Lifescape has become a member of the Southern California Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (SCABGA) affiliated with the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta and a member of the California Rare Fruit Growers. The EH Department is locally a member of the Horticulture Consortium of Santa Barbara (HCSB). With the cooperation of the sophisticated horticulture community and the participation of the program's students and interested individuals, the Lifescape will continue to showcase useful and ever-changing horticulture achievement and hardscape artforms.

Into the Future

The Lifescape was specifically developed to assist the students of the Environmental Horticulture Department to gain the knowledge needed to understand plants and their environments, and thusly be able to launch successful careers in one of the most diverse and rewarding realms of job opportunity. The Garden will be used to the advantage of the whole school and the local community. The Hotel Restaurant Culinary (HRC) program at SBCC utilizes herbs, flowers and various edibles from the garden in their gourmet dining facility; visitors are requested **not to harvest** from the Garden. Science Departments also use the Lifescape, as do the Art Department, History Department, and the Outdoor Recreation program. Local primary and secondary schools utilize the Lifescape and the Chumash Preserve. The garden is truly a community resource; any volunteer participation, sponsorship, monetary or material donations would be genuinely appreciated and used. New plant materials or product lines are also tested at the Lifescape and at the Nursery Greenhouse unit. The EH Department is converting sections of the garden to showcase Universal Accessibility and barrier-free design and thusly be more A.D.A. compliant. Modularization of the program is being designed, and online classes are being projected.

Anyone wishing to tour the Lifescape or who needs additional information, please contact:

Jerry Sortomme – Dept. Chair
Environmental Horticulture Department
Santa Barbara City College
721 Cliff Drive
Santa Barbara, California 93109-2394

(805) **965-0581, ext. 2244**
FAX (805) 963-7222
E-Mail: sortomme@sbcc.net
Visit the Web Page

Anyone that would like to make a donation, an endowment or similar gift for the Lifescape specifically, or to the E.H. Program, please contact:

FOUNDATION FOR SANTA BARBARA CITY COLLEGE
721 Cliff Drive, Room A202, A204, 965-0581, ext. 2601
Executive Director (805) **965-0581, ext. 2601**
Pat Snyder **FAX (805) 965-3161**

or make a donation to: **Santa Barbara City College**
Campus Garden Fund

Account #79-01-9156
c/o Student Finance Office

JS/gjb/June 2000/FRC