



SWIRE SIEGEL LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS

MAYORS' DISCOVERY PARK

NATIVE PLANT GUIDE



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OVERVIEW

La Canada Flintridge purchased this previously inactive parking lot from Caltrans with the goal of creating a useful public space for the residents of the city. A committee composed of La Canada Flintridge Parks and Recreation Commissioners, City Council members, and involved residents explored many options and ultimately determined that the space should be transformed into a public park catering to residents of all ages. The site however presented an extreme design challenge being both of small ($\frac{1}{2}$ acre) usable space and surrounded on three sides by a busy street (Foothill Blvd.), a parking lot, and heavy freeway traffic (Glendale Fwy on-ramp and acceleration lanes). In order to transform the site into one having both aesthetic value and reasonable noise level, the views and the sounds of the surrounding roadways needed to be heavily screened. Considering both the site and the history of the park, formerly a Caltrans parking area, the city agreed to explore a transportation theme, with numerous design and practical site improving features that would turn this small noisy corner of La Canada Flintridge into a space that not only all could enjoy, but that stimulated thought and exploration related to the park's past, and southern California's historic focus on transportation. All of the design and structural elements on the site conform to these themes both in a practical sense by creating a space conducive for passive recreation and promoting creative play for children using elements of transportation in an abstract and a fully participatory vein. The layout and choice of recreational activities was critical in being able to attract people to this less-than-ideal location adjacent to the freeway and busy commercial street. Traditional picnic and children's play equipment was not considered a sufficient draw, as there are several larger parks in quieter locations that meet these city needs. Rather a more unconventional approach was taken to provide a more unique type of "discovery" play for children and an entertaining and educational aspect for adults as they watch and participate with their children in exploring the many hidden details of Mayor's Discovery Park.



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The overall structure of the park was modeled on an Italian piazza where narrow streets lead to a large vibrant open space filled with perimeter activities including a fountain all facing an open center. In this park, the narrow entrance path and looming arbor lead to a large open space at the terminus, a great central lawn which can be used for frisbee, croquet, lawn bowling, badminton or volleyball with provisions for storage of nets and equipment in the nearby community room. Plenty of places to sit, picnic, people watch and especially participate in discovery play are here for the enjoyment of all ages all around the central lawn.



As one enters the parking lot by car, bicycle or on foot, the main entry gates are always in view. The entry gates boldly reverberate the theme of transportation hosting a wide assortment of wheels collected from antique tricycles, modern bicycles, wagon wheels from antique tractors and carts, motorcycles, cars, roller coasters, and factory machinery, all frozen in motion as they roll down the top rail of the gate. Twisted fence pickets evoke suspension bridge cables and chrome car door handles on the gates complete the collage of imagery in support of the theme.



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Passing the gate, we begin our walk along a large concrete wall that both mitigates the sounds of the freeway as it curves its way along the west side of the park both obscuring views of the traffic and substituting snatched views of an off-site hillside and an adjacent ball field to add the illusion of greater space. Glancing down, one discovers tire tracks in the pavement that lead the stroller into the park, passing the restrooms and community room which line up behind the curving wall like train stations along a rail line. The lawn to the right ripples in giant waves suggestive of the wake of a boat, and the tire tracks take a leap over the sound wall to join the flowing traffic on the other side. The sound wall itself is used as part of the transportation theme, supporting an arbor that begins at the entry with a plumb post and supported beam at a thirteen degree angle above horizontal. Sequentially each arbor beam drops lower as the posts themselves swing out, reversing at the eighth position where the post is now at thirteen degrees off vertical and the beam is now level. A series of pulley wheels ornament the post and beams, add to the impression that the arbor itself is in motion as you progress down the arcade.



As you walk along the arbor and begin to enter the large open lawn area at the terminus, you will notice a large variety of activities located around the perimeter. These include a large sand play area with a whimsical feature waiting to be uncovered by adventurous children. Hidden under a thin cover of sand is a 16' by 22' matchbox car scale model of the freeway interchange around the site including underpasses and on ramps to the 2 and 210 freeway and Foothill Blvd. The lawn berms on the north side for seating and to create a crawl/roll space for toddlers. The arbor and grove of pine trees provide shade for picnic tables which double as surface space for board games and crafts available from the community room. A dominant feature and focal point for the terminus of the entry walk is a huge hand crafted water channel and fountain. It serves to both disguise the hum of traffic, and adds a hands-on transportation play theme in the form of a waterway for children to float boats and follow them on their journey through the park. This fountain uses gravity feed to send a cascade of water through a variety of forms, dancing its way from the source, some 75 linear feet to the catchment area at the base. The waterway is enhanced and enlivened by hundreds of hand crafted ceramic

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mosaics donated by Jean Taylor and over 20 artists at the La Canada Roger Barkley Community Center. The ceramic pieces are grouped so as to evoke the fauna of a bubbling mountain spring in its course via streams and eddies, marshlands, around islands and through tidal pools as it cascades down to the sea.



Everywhere in the park we are conscious of the contrast between transportation and the natural environment on which it is imposed. Just as the stark manmade concrete forms of the water channel are contrasted by the artistic and colorful ceramics invoking nature, so is the rest of the park's high tech machinery contrasted with natural elements such as trees, lawn and vines which will eventually blanket the stainless steel cabled arbor and bare concrete walls. The theme of the park itself is repeated and enhanced by structural and whimsical design elements. The color scheme mirrors those of traffic lights and signs – reds, yellows and greens are part of the structures and contained in the flowering plants. Native concrete and steel are the building blocks of roads and highways.

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Finally, the park strives to make the most use of all of its small area. Even the parking lot has a loop path for bikes and pedestrians. It is lined with native California plants which will be maintained and someday be labeled for educational use.

Funding for the park was provided by the City of La Canada Flintridge and by grants from Caltrans for development of a rest stop for cyclists and by the Land and Water Conservation grant to reclaim land for park use.



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Since 2008, California has been in a statewide drought and as we head into a new decade, water reserve levels continue to drop. According to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) up to 60% of water consumption during the summer months goes to watering lawns. Homeowners would be wise to reconsider their outdoor spaces and come up with ways to better adapt them for the future.

One of the best ways to reduce water use is to replace water thirsty landscapes with drought tolerant/low water plants. Reviewing existing irrigation systems for leaks, inefficient coverage and excessive runoff is also very important.

California has a unique and fascinating array of plant life, both attractive and adaptable, encouraging wildlife, conserving water and connecting us to our surroundings. A California native landscape reflects the true nature of our region.

This plant guide contains information on the California native plants at Mayors' Discovery Park and is meant as a self help booklet for local residents who are interested in learning more about the local plants. The text and photographs identify the plants, state their height and width, bloom period, sun exposure requirements and long term water needs. [1] Ideally it is best to group plants together that share the same water and sun exposure needs.

For further reading on the subject, *California Native Plants for the Garden* by Bornstein, Fross and O'Brien is an excellent resource.

[1]. The individual plants water requirements are taken from the WUCOLS publication, produced by UC Davis. This document is available as a free download and is solely intended to identify the water needs of landscape species. (See References section for details.)

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Botanical name: *Arctostaphylos edmundsii* 'Carmel Sur'
Common name: Carmel Sur Manzanita
Height by width: 1-2' H x 6'W
Sun exposure: Coast: full sun; Inland: part sun
Flower season: Winter/Spring
Flower color: Light pink
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Artemisia californica* 'Powis Castle'
Common name: California Wormwood
Height by width: 2-3' H x 4'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: Grey-Green
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Baccharis pilularis* 'Pigeon Point'
Common name: Pigeon Point Dwarf Coyote Bush
Height by width: 2' H x 6-8'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Fall
Flower color: Cream
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Ceanothus thyrs.* 'Yankee Point'
Common name: Yankee Point California Lilac
Height by width: 3-4' H x 6-10'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Light blue
Water requirements: Low



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Botanical name: *Cercis occidentalis*
Common name: Western Redbud
Height by width: 15' H x 10'W
Sun exposure: Full sun to part shade
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Hot pink
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Clematis lasiantha*
Common name: Pipestems
Height by width: 10-15' long
Sun exposure: Part sun to shade
Flower season: Jan- June
Flower color: Cream
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Eriogonum fasc. 'Dana Point'*
Common name: Dana Point Buckwheat
Height by width: 3' H x 3'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Eriogonum giganteum*
Common name: St. Catherine's Lace
Height by width: 6' H x 6'W
Sun exposure: Full to partial sun
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



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Botanical name: *Galvezia speciosa*
Common name: Island Snapdragon
Height by width: 3' H x 5'W
Sun exposure: Partial sun or shade
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Red
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Heteromeles arbutifolia*
Common name: Toyon
Height by width: 8-15' H x 10-15'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Iris douglasiana* 'Canyon Snow'
Common name: Canyon Snow Douglas Iris
Height by width: 1' H x 2'W
Sun exposure: Full sun to part shade
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Moderate



Botanical name: *Juncus patens*
Common name: California Grey Rush
Height by width: 2' H x spreading
Sun exposure: Full sun to shade
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: Brown
Water requirements: Low



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Botanical name: *Lyonothamnus floribundus* ssp. *asp.*
Common name: Santa Cruz Island Ironwood
Height by width: 15-35' H x 15'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Mahonia aquifolium* 'Golden Abundance'
Common name: Golden Abundance Oregon Grape
Height by width: 5-8' H x 6'W
Sun exposure: Part sun to shade
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Yellow
Water requirements: Moderate



Botanical name: *Muhlenbergia rigens*
Common name: Deergrass
Height by width: 2-4' H x 4'W
Sun exposure: Full sun to part shade
Flower season: Summer
Flower color: Seedhead
Water requirements: Moderate



Botanical name: *Quercus agrifolia*
Common name: Coast Live Oak
Height by width: 20-75' H x 30-60'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Acorns
Water requirements: Low



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Botanical name: *Quercus engelmannii*
Common name: Engelmann Oak
Height by width: 40' H x 10'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Acorn
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Rhamnus californica*
Common name: California Coffeeberry
Height by width: 8-12' H x 4-8'W
Sun exposure: Full sun to part shade
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Yellowish
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Rhus integrifolia*
Common name: Lemonadeberry
Height by width: 10' H x 10-30'W
Sun exposure: Sun to partial sun
Flower season: Spring
Flower color: Pink
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Romneya coulteri*
Common name: Matilija Poppy
Height by width: 8' H x spreading
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: May-July
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



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Botanical name: *Salvia clevelandii* 'Winnifred Gilman'
Common name: Winnifred Gilman Cleveland Sage
Height by width: 5' H x 5'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Spring/Summer
Flower color: Purple/Blue
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Salvia* 'Dara's Choice'
Common name: Dara's Choice Creeping Sage
Height by width: 1-2' H x 3'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Spring/Summer
Flower color: Lavender
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Salvia greggii*
Common name: Texas Sage
Height by width: 2-4' H x 2-3'W
Sun exposure: Full sun
Flower season: Spring/Fall
Flower color: Red
Water requirements: Low



Botanical name: *Salvia mellifera* 'Terra Seca'
Common name: Terra Seca Black Sage
Height by width: 1-2' H x 6'W
Sun exposure: Full to part sun
Flower season: Spring/Summer
Flower color: White
Water requirements: Low



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<http://ucce.ucdavis.edu/files/filelibrary/1726/15359.pdf>

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