

Opening May 30

Public Turns to Gardens for Serenity Good News for California's Newest Gardens

REDDING, Calif. – A public seeking serenity in their lives is increasingly visiting public gardens, according to the American Association of Botanical Gardens and Arboreta (AABGA). That's good news for California's newest public gardens which open May 30 at the Turtle Bay Exploration Park in Redding.

“World events have stimulated an appreciation of our natural world, resulting in increased attendance at public gardens” says AABGA Deputy Director Sharon Lee. “About 60 million Americans visit America's gardens, today, and cultural tours – including visits to public gardens – are increasingly popular,” says Ms. Lee.

California's newest public gardens, called the McConnell Arboretum and Gardens, will display about 65,000 plants, including over 700 species mostly from the mediterranean climates of Australia, Chile, South Africa, the Pacific Rim, the Mediterranean basin and California.

“Public fascination with places like Tuscany and Provence has never been higher,” says horticulturist and Turtle Bay President and Chief Executive Officer John Peterson, Ph.D. “We expect that interest to attract garden lovers from across the west and beyond to Turtle Bay, as ours will be the first major public garden in America dedicated to showcasing plants from the world's mediterranean climates, several of which are seen rarely in North America.”

Dr. Peterson says another draw will be a large All-America Selection (AAS) trial and display garden. AAS gardens demonstrate new garden seed varieties for home gardeners. Though AAS gardens have existed since 1933, the McConnell Arboretum and Gardens will introduce the first AAS garden in Northern California and one of only three in the Far West.

Recycling, refreshment and recreation are presented at the *Mosaic Oasis*, an art nouveau sculpture in the Children's Garden. Old tiles, broken mirrors, chipped coffee mugs and bowling balls are among recycled materials used by artist Colleen Barry to create whimsical benches and fountains that attract families.

In the Pacific Rim Garden, internationally recognized ecological artist Betsy Damon's *Sounds of Water* leads visitors along marble-stepped stones, hand-carved with images, to discover the sources of California's water, how water purity affects sound and where California's water flows.

The McConnell Arboretum and Gardens were developed at a cost of \$8.6 million and cover 220 acres within Turtle Bay Exploration Park, a 300-acre campus that straddles the Sacramento River. Connecting its two sides is Sundial Bridge, a 21-story tall cable-stay, cantilevered suspension bridge that forms the world's largest working sundial. Designed by renowned Spanish architect Santiago Calatrava, Sundial Bridge opened in 2004.

"Our mission at Turtle Bay is to interpret the relationship between humans and nature. Sundial Bridge exemplifies that," says Dr. Peterson, "We extend the message of human interaction with nature in our visitor center, museum, art gallery, children's environmental discovery center, amphitheater, summer butterfly house and throughout the gardens."

Admission to the McConnell Arboretum and Gardens is included in the price of visiting Turtle Bay Exploration Park (\$11 adults, \$9 seniors, \$6 children). The park is open daily from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. (closed Tuesdays, Dec. through February). A garden center that sells many of the plants displayed in the gardens will be open during planting season. For more information, visit www.turtlebay.org.

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