

DWL Tour 2018 Essay by Ken Brock

The 2018 Desert-Wise Landscape Tour had something for everyone.

For native plant proponents, low maintenance gardens were key. An interesting stop was the JTNP Native Plant Nursery where indigenous plants are nurtured and managed for conservation.

Water savers saw a plethora of xeriscape presentations. Xeriscape is landscape design requiring little or no irrigation through the use of drought-tolerant plants, mulch and efficient—usually drip—irrigation.

Would-be artisans were enthralled by original, resourceful, innovative and inspired creations. Hardscape. Outdoor living areas. And desert art that for some elicited a “what the...” and for others a zen-like experience of relaxation, meditation and contemplation. Who would have thought that used bowling balls could be an attractive landscape choice?

Off-the-grid advocates were delighted by some fine examples of properties not dependent on public utilities, i.e., electricity and what’s commonly called “city water.” A handy chart included in the tour packet tallied water usage, solar electricity generation, grey water/reuse as well as food cultivation.

Visitors learned that wallet size didn’t matter. Money was literally of no consequence as those with the bucks showed-off landscapes designed and installed by professionals, while those with restricted budgets did very well with their seat-of-the pants, pay-as-you-go strategies.

Talking to both visitors and homeowners proved to be an educational experience. We exchanged tips (what to do about voracious rabbits), offered insight and provided encouragement.

Large or small, each property had something to offer. Some residents had lived in their homes for years, while others were relatively new to the area; some were part-time weekenders or Airbnb landlords from LA.

As a bonus, several participants allowed guests to roam their homes, which usually complimented the healthy environment theme found outside.

For me, my “aha!” moment came when I decided that—sometime soon—I will submit my own landscape for consideration.