

DWL Tour 2018 Essay by Scot E. Mckone

Joshua Tree National Park Nursery

An Inspirational Journey

From the simplistic beauty of rock-strewn paths to elaborate spring gardens in blooms of color, the 2018 Desert-Wise Landscape Tour offered an abundance of creations for visitors to enjoy within a desert landscape.

To gain a full measure of appreciation of native flora that our desert has to offer, my wife and I visited the native plant nursery operated by Joshua Tree National Park in Twentynine Palms.

As a nearly 50-year resident in our hi-desert community, it's almost tragic to think I was never aware of the wonderous display of botanical treasures that lay protected under an impressive array of shade-cloth-covers and greenhouses.

Inside the small compound where row upon row of nearly every native plant within our desert ecosystem is cared for by Park personnel, it was an inspirational journey to see so many plants we take for granted propagated from seed to seedling to mature plant.

From creosote to mallow, and brittlebush to bladderpod, the personnel managing the nursery are more than ordinary gardeners tending to gardens.

Through processes unique to each species of plant, they are a dedicated group of scientists who devise ingenious methods to fool mother-nature and sprout native plant seeds that stubbornly do not want to sprout; it is not an easy cycle where even in their natural environment, extremes of heat and cold need to pair with a perfect mix of moisture for native seeds to sprout.

While some view the desert as an inhospitable wasteland devoid of any living thing, spare the occasional rattlesnake or coyote, a visit to the National Park's nursery cures that mirage of misconception; for those of us who have grown to know it and love it, we see the desert in its truest form, where in its natural splendor, it is indeed alive and vibrant.