

## **DWL Tour 2018 Essay by T.H.**

Heed the message—thoughts on the 2018 Desert-Wise Landscape Tour

The first desert landscape tour I went on was in the early 1960's when I was 11. It was an extensive and detailed exploration of the five naturalized acres, complete with rustic, not quite completed homestead cabin and outhouse my father had acquired in Morongo Valley. There were large climbable boulders, wonderful desert plants exemplified by the trio of mesquite, creosote and cacti, and a sandy wash that ran through over half of the property, filled with treasures like the old rusted metal teapot, that I excitedly showed off to my family. I loved it all!

Though the five acres were sold to a neighbor and I now live in Ventura County, the thrill of coming to the desert and experiencing the land, the plants, the homeowners and their stories continues, unabated. Having now come to several Desert-Wise Landscape Tours, I have seen and been inspired by the growing awareness, appreciation, and necessity to protect the desert environment and its resources that is exemplified by homeowners who graciously open up their properties. I especially enjoy the broad diversity of the sites—from multigenerational families who are completely in harmony with and protective of the natural elements on their piece of the desert, to new property owners, who may not yet know the details of what's what in their yard but have a deep respect for the place and the plantings, to the stewards of the native plant propagation nursery, where the next generation of desert plant life are nurtured and shepherded.

On reflection, the Tour successfully relays the increasingly urgent message to act in a mindful, responsible and sustainable way as we engage with the land—the natural resources in the desert are precious and in precarious balance. Let us all heed the message! Our desert depends on it.