

## Kannally Ranch House Gardens 2016-2020

My first visit to Oracle State Park was in March 2014. Later that year, in October, I started volunteering as a 'citizen scientist' with the National Phenology Network monitoring the Phenology Trail at the park. I had been impressed with the gardens at Oracle State Park from the first time I laid eyes on them, realizing that the gardener in charge here knew his plants!

In late November 2016 I was honoured by that same gardener asking if I would join him in maintaining these gardens; specifically the Old World and Lucy's gardens. I knew I had so much to learn about gardening in Arizona and immediately accepted. Chuck LeFevre became not just my teacher but my gardening mentor.

There is not a lot of photographic or written information about the history of the gardens so I turned to a friend of mine, Denise Wiles Adams, who wrote 'Restoring American Gardens: An Encyclopaedia of Heirloom Plants 1640 - 1940'. She sent me a book from that era, 'Gardening in the Southwest' edited by Mrs. Scruggs; and a catalogue from a Phoenix nursery from 1926. With these tools in hand I set to work.

Chuck and previous gardening volunteers had done major reorganization of plants over a several year period, so that different areas of the gardens represented various desert regions. Chuck and I started to do a last bit of re-shuffling, grouping the Old World Plants by country/region of origin in their respective beds - which left Chuck with one more bed to create another native desert plant area!

There have been many failures, some lost plants. Working against the high odds of decreasing precipitation, increasing heat, and soil nutrient issues (not to mention the wildlife!), I feel we have created a solid backbone for future gardeners to work with.

Some of the above-mentioned issues can be ameliorated in future, and my following recommendations could help towards that goal:

1. Amend the soil in all the Old World beds. They need truckloads of compost/manure.
2. Remove the Vinca major (Periwinkle) from the narrow terrace between the middle and lower terraces. Vinca is a non-native aggressive invasive plant which will run rampant in riparian areas at mid-elevation (about 3500'-6000'). [https://www.aznps.com/invasives/GrowNative/main\\_pages/vinca.htm](https://www.aznps.com/invasives/GrowNative/main_pages/vinca.htm)
3. Keep the English Ivy in Lucy's bed from climbing the Emory Oak. English Ivy can kill trees. <https://www.hortmag.com/headline/how-to-get-rid-of-english-ivy-in-the-landscape>
4. Address the irrigation issues. Chuck and I resorted to hand-watering throughout one of the hottest, driest summers on record, as the wildlife had chewed holes in all the irrigation piping.
5. Enjoy the gardens!

Hilary Cox, Garden Designer, Leescapes Garden Design

**Soil pH and Nutrient Test Results:**

**Cypress bed on lower terrace:**

pH	-	off the chart, over 7.5 (very alkaline, fairly typical for Arizona desert soil)
N	-	deficient
P	-	between deficient and adequate
K	-	Sufficient

**Chuck's High Desert (Bird Feeder on Dead Tree) Area on Upper Terrace:**

pH	-	7.0 (neutral)
N	-	depleted
P	-	deficient
K	-	deficient