



## College Campus Landscaping – Keeping It Natural!

In keeping with the desire to continually develop the Canyon Country campus, without disturbing the natural settings and scenic views that make the campus so unique, College of the Canyons officials have adopted a natural and environmentally sensitive landscape design throughout the 70-acre campus.

Whether it's the use of environmentally-friendly building practices and landscaping or the development of "green technology" academic programs that will eventually be housed in Canyon Country, the campus has embraced the concept of environmental responsibility and sustainability.

"Our community advisory committee always advocated for the use of native plantings and environmentally sensitive landscaping," said Dr. Dena Maloney, Founding Dean of the campus. "Their collective commitment to these concepts has tied in with our own vision of the campus and how it will be developed in the coming years."

In total, there are more than 40 types of trees, shrubs, ground covers and seeding incorporated throughout the campus' inner corridor and maintained hillsides.

A majority of that plant life is native to the local hills and canyons that make up Santa Clarita's hot and dry chaparral terrain. Virtually all of the plants are considered drought proof and fire resistant.

"Native plants and plants that grow well in the desert do very well here on campus," said Jenny Leadbetter, instructional lab assistant in the campus' biology department. "Many of these plants can survive for weeks at a time without water, or very minimal water."

The campus' walkways, quads and courtyards have all been landscaped with a varied mixture of bright and aesthetically pleasing plant life which, when in bloom, provide an enchanting array of natural colors.

The interior slopes and walkways have been covered primarily with yellow Lady Bank's rose while the classroom courtyards have been filled with a mixture of yarrow, century plant, coral aloe, dwarf pomegranate and the appropriately named Red-Hot Poker or Torch Lily.

Spread across the campus' five main quad areas are chitalpa and Chinese pistache trees and a collection of ground covering shrubs including California lilac, matillija poppy, Mexican sage, tyon and Pacific coast iris. Also found throughout the campus are California sycamore, silk trees, white alder, strawberry trees, coast live oak and valley oak trees.

"The architect wanted this campus to look like it was dropped into a natural setting," said Sid Gent, custodian and groundskeeper at the campus. "So we've tried to make everything blend with the native plant life that's out here and keep a drought tolerant landscape theme."

Even the campus' more than three acres of surrounding slopes and hillsides, which were originally hydro-



seeded in August 2007, have been landscaped with drought tolerance in mind.

The 12-seed wildflower mixture used on those hillsides — which includes California poppy, lyme grass, tidy tips, monkey flower, purple needle grass and winged pea— is now thriving with only seasonal rainfall and minimal irrigation.

"For the most part, those slopes don't require much water," explained Gent. "We're about 80 percent germinated and that growth is primarily the result of the last two winter storms. It's a prime example of just how eco-friendly landscaping can be."

In fact, even the interior campus' courtyard areas, walkways and slopes that are watered only require light to moderate irrigation cycles. The campus' computerized sprinkler system is also routinely tweaked, adjusted and monitored in order to adjust watering times, periods and duration in making an effort to conserve.

"One of the first things people notice about the campus is that we have nice plants, but it's not just green grass — and anybody who has a lawn knows how much water that takes," said biology department faculty member Greg Nishiyama, who has also used the campus' natural plant life in lab and classroom lessons. "This type of landscaping design is valuable on a lot of levels and is an important first step toward building a 'green' campus."

Photos Courtesy COC Canyon Country Campus

