

Native Plant Demonstration Garden Helping Educate the Next Generation of Conservationists

Conservancy's Nursery Provides Native Species to Schools, Businesses and More on Catalina

By Peter Dixon

Every school day, the preschool students arriving at Catalina Kid Ventures pass directly by a beautiful new garden filled with native Catalina plants from the Conservancy's nursery.

Most of the children are too young to understand what "native plant" means, let alone "endemic," a species found in a particular area and nowhere else. However, they can learn a few things about biology, plants and the interdependent nature of our world from their garden.

"The children learn from this garden that plants need water and rain, and that they require sunlight to grow," said Elizabeth Madden, Catalina Kid Ventures director. "They understand that the birds eat the berries of some of the plants as well."

This is but one of many educational opportunities the Conservancy provides for Catalina's youth. From its Kids in Nature after-school programs for younger students to its Rose Ellen Gardner Internship for high school students, the Conservancy provides a wide variety of education and outdoor programs for young people at no charge.

The Conservancy's Ackerman Native Plant Nursery also provides Catalina native plants free of charge to replace any highly invasive species at schools, like Catalina Kid Ventures, businesses, civic groups and other community organizations throughout Avalon and Two Harbors. Highly invasive plants are those that the Conservancy seeks to eliminate in the Island's wildlands: flax-leaf broom, French broom, pampas grass, fennel and others.

These donations are an important part of the plant nursery's and the Conservancy's Catalina Habitat Improvement and Restoration Program (CHIRP) efforts to encourage sustainable landscaping practices. While CHIRP is primarily focused on eliminating invasive plants in the Conservancy's wildlands, this effort helps make people more aware of the threat as well as the solution. Together they encourage the removal of invasive species from Avalon by offering native trees and shrubs as replacements.

The plant nursery's offer to provide native plants also recently found willing partners with the Los Angeles County Baywatch staff and the City of Avalon. Highly invasive pampas grass was removed from City Hall and the Baywatch facility on Avalon Canyon Road and replaced with native shrubs. The nursery provided plants to Joe Machado Field along Avalon Canyon Road, and it's been asked to provide street trees to the City of Avalon.

At the preschool, deer had browsed most of the plants in its garden. The remaining plants had been neglected. With the support of the City of Avalon and Catalina Kid Ventures, the Conservancy helped create a beautiful new garden that features a native Catalina toyon tree, also known as Christmas-berry, as well as Catalina silver lace, Catalina currant and Catalina liveforever -- a species only found on the Island. The new native plant demonstration garden is protected by a fence to keep the deer out.

"We're proud of what we have here, and this garden is just another reason for that," Madden said. "We're glad that the Conservancy brought the plants here. The children like them."

CAPTIONS:

[Pullout box: To learn more about the Ackerman Native Plant Nursery, Catalina's native plants and how to take advantage of the nursery's offer to replace highly invasive non-native plants with Catalina natives – free of charge – contact the nursery at (310) 510-1299.]

[**Cutout images:** , images: toyon tree, Catalina silver lace, Catalina currant, Catalina liveforever]



image: CKV_Garden_1.15.13.1

Elizabeth Madden, left, director of Catalina Kid Ventures, poses with the preschool's students along with Ackerman Native Plant Nursery Supervisor Peter Dixon, center right, and Conservancy horticulture technician Rebecca Cano.



image: ISV_CKV_1.10.13

Diveer Shah, a volunteer with International Student Volunteers, plants a sticky monkey-flower in the preschool's garden.



Toyon tree berry



Toyon tree



Catalina liveforever



Catalina silver leaf