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Theodore Payne Foundation to launch new, expanded education center

The LaFetra Nature Education Center to Help Transform Los Angeles Into a More Drought-Tolerant City

LOS ANGELES—The [Theodore Payne Foundation](#) opened the LaFetra Nature Education Center, a new hub for native plants in Los Angeles, today. The Center complements the Foundation's nursery, and will serve as a headquarters for educators and horticulturists who will teach throughout Los Angeles County, giving residents access to the tools and resources they need to contribute to a more drought-tolerant and El Niño-ready city.

The ongoing drought and the potential for harsh storms this winter has spurred a healthy – and necessary – conversation about our environment and the important role native plants play in a sustainable Los Angeles. At just the right time, the Theodore Payne Foundation will open its new Center funded by a grant from the Nature Education Facilities Program, part of Proposition 84 passed in 2006, and private donations.

Surrounded by two acres of demonstration gardens, the Center will serve as both an inspiration and a resource for Angelenos looking for ways to create beautiful gardens that attract natural pollinators, save water, and thrive in Southern California's climate. The Theodore Payne Foundation will increase its class offerings, including more professional development opportunities and new materials to guide novice and experienced gardeners.

The Theodore Payne Foundation has long advocated for native plants in Southern California with the goal of promoting the understanding and use of native plants in urban horticulture. The Foundation's vision is for native plants to make up 50 percent of the planted landscape of Los Angeles. The LaFetra Nature Education Center will play an important role in creating that transformation.

Kitty Connolly, executive director of the Theodore Payne Foundation, issued the following statement:

“Californians are becoming increasingly aware of how the drought is affecting their day-to-day lives and are seeking ways to be a part of building a more sustainable Los Angeles. At this new center, residents can gain the skills they need to make their yards more water conscious and uniquely Californian.”

Felipe Fuentes, Councilmember District 7:

“We hear all over the news how the drought is hurting our city – dulling our vibrant neighborhoods as lawns turn to brown. The drought has been hard and painful, but it is also an opportunity for us to be creative and smart about how we develop the Los Angeles of the future. The Theodore Payne Foundation is offering an alternative that will maintain the beauty of our city while making it more sustainable in the long run. Right here in Council District 7, this new Center is a great starting point for

residents who want to learn how to tear out their lawn and replace it with plants that are meant to flourish in Southern California.”

Frances Spivy-Weber, vice chair, State Water Resources Control Board:

“Wasting any water during a drought like this one is irresponsible and adding to a problem that is only getting worse. The forthcoming El Niño will not save us from our water woes, so we need to act now if we want the California dream to continue for generations. The Theodore Payne Foundation envisions half of LA’s plants as native, which will lead to incredible water savings now and in the future. This new Center will help get us there faster, and be a place where the community can learn how their yards can be a drought-fighting force.”

Vickere Murphy, Green21 program manager, office of Senator Carol Lui:

“We often focus on alternative energy, greenhouse gas emissions reductions, and energy efficiency as key solutions to climate change. These strategies are critical, but they are not our only options. There are many ways individuals can join the battle. Native plants save water, reduce erosion, and support vulnerable wildlife. With this new Center, residents can learn how their lawns, gardens, or community parks can also contribute to the fight against climate change.”

Dr. Alex Hall, professor, UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability:

"What we have learned from this drought is that California is not as prepared as it should be for a changing climate. In the future, we expect rising temperatures to reduce the mountain snowpack that's currently such an important water resource, and to lead to drier conditions overall. We can be much more resilient by facing these changes with smarter landscaping. Theodore Payne Foundation's new Center is ready to help residents restore the state’s native plants and wildlife, which can support our environment in current and future extreme climate events."

Cassy Aoyagi, LEED AP, president of the board, Theodore Payne Foundation, and president, FormLA® Landscaping:

“The LaFetra Native Education Center will inspire even greater appreciation for the outdoor beauty authentic to Los Angeles. Angelenos now have a place to learn how create water-wise, storm-tolerant, and absolutely beautiful spaces.”

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About The Foundation

The Theodore Payne Foundation for Wild Flowers & Native Plants, Inc., established 1960, is a non-profit 501(c)(3) organization that operates an education center, California native plant nursery, seed source, and bookstore that are open to the public year round. Its annual garden tour promotes the distinctive beauty of native landscapes. More information about the Foundation and gardening with native plants can be found at theodorepayne.org