

2nd place Desert-Wise Landscape Tour Essay 2022 – Elizabeth Leonard

My day spent on the Desert-Wise Landscape Tour left me inspired and hopeful about the future prosperity of my community. Knowing that there are others who value and honor our water resources the same way that I do gives me hope there is a chance for me to inspire folks in the same way.

On the tour, I learned there are new and long-time residents who are very committed to building their homes and developing their land in a way that sustains the landscape. There were so many kind people who freely shared their knowledge about the history, plants and animals of the region.

Each of the home-owners, and the MDLT and JBWD staff, had a unique understanding of what we can do to preserve and enjoy the beauty of the desert scenery. It was amazing to see the swales, berms, and rainwater catchment system at the Sonora house. I am very interested in integrating these concepts at my own home. Seeing the way the Ocotillo House integrates natural building techniques and placement of structures into the topography, without disturbing the plants, gave me hope that my home could exist in greater harmony with the land. Viewing all of the various plantings at the Double JJ Ranch made me think more broadly about where my plantings could go and how to increase the lushness around my home. And the amazing resources at the MDLT and JBWD demonstration gardens are ever evolving wonderlands of plants that bring me joy each time I visit them.

As a local resident, gardener and desert-enthusiast, I found myself encouraged and optimistic at the end of the day. The tour reinforced and furthered my understanding that being water-wise is the key to the prosperity of our community.