Desert-Wise Landscape Tour Essay Contest 2022 Entry by Helen Jeong

Until February of 2021 I had never heard of Joshua Tree National Park since I’m not much of a traveler.

In October of 2021 I was advised by the county planner to read the Joshua Tree Community Action Guide and get to know the locals.

(what)?

I feel that I am blessed to be joining the Morongo Basin Conservation Association. In attending the Old School House Museum lecture series I learned about Ocotillos and Hummingbirds. I really enjoyed the Wold’s home because of the colorful plants. I got to see ocotillos for the first time.

Kathleen at the Joshua Basin Water District patiently gave us the tour through all the demonstration gardens. There was something to like about each of the five gardens. I learned that if you don’t want to see a bunch of bees you don’t want a pollinator plant around like the rosemary to attract them. Rain water can be collected in attractive barrels or rocks utilized in a sloping yard as part of the irrigation by directing water ways to other plants.

The mesquite tree is my husband’s new favorite with its beautiful green leaves. We learned to appreciate the importance of conserving water and were blessed by the many colorful options to have a garden in the desert.

I’m not a green thumb at all, even the succulents die at my house. I’m hoping because these desert wise plants are not used to getting watered that I will find the perfect plants for my garden that are extremely low maintenance and live. Before the tour I thought deserts consisted only of green prickly cactus.

I look forward to next year to learn and appreciate more what it means to be desert wise.