
Self-Guided Nature Trail

by: Gretchen Mills, August 2006

DAC HELPS PRIVATE COMMUNITY CREATE NATURE TRAIL

The Terravita Desert Appreciation Group is working over the summer¹ to prepare a self-guided nature trail in Terravita to introduce residents and their guests to the Sonoran desert and the wide variety of plants and animals it sustains. It has been a long-term goal for members of this group, working in cooperation with the Desert Awareness Committee of the Desert Foothills Land Trust, to increase awareness and appreciation of the Sonoran Desert by creating such a trail.



View of Black Mountain from Terravita Nature Trail
[all photos by Dave Mills]

Desert Discovery Day, presented by the Terravita Desert Appreciation Group in April, featured a trail walk which was led by a professional naturalist, Steve Jones, and trained docents. A self-guided trail will enable residents to learn about the desert and appreciate its beauty and diversity any day of the year. This two mile walk, which utilizes a portion of the existing fourteen mile Terravita Trail System, is designed to increase residents' appreciation of



plants indigenous to the Sonoran desert: bursage, saguaro and other cacti, paloverde, ironwood, mesquite and other plants commonly found in the Sonoran Desert. It includes washes, and by implication at least, birds, small mammals, rodents and other desert dwellers.



A sign at the start of the trail will direct interested residents to pick up a trail guide at the Concierge Desk or download it from the Terravita web site. The trail guide will include a map with numbers and a corresponding plant list. Plant names will be on permanent markers along the trail. Descriptions of plants and animals and their adaptations to the desert environment are also planned to be included in the trail guide.

Before her death, Janet Law, a Terravita resident since 1994 and an active member of the Terravita Desert Appreciation Group and the Desert Awareness Committee, had been planning Desert Discovery Day at Terravita. One of the features was the docent-guided Trail Walk. Janet was eager for others to learn about the desert and all of the wonders it holds. She had also worked effectively on the 2005 revision and reprinting of *The Fragile Desert* which was recently published by the Desert Awareness Committee. It would undoubtedly please Janet to know that the interpretive trail she had dreamed of will soon become available to all Terravita residents and their guests any time that is compatible with their personal schedules. The Terravita Desert Appreciation Group is grateful for Janet's inspiration that propelled the implementation of this self-guided nature trail.

Upon learning of this proposal one Terravita resident has generously committed \$500 to launch this project. Contributions to help fund the signs and trail guide



may be made to the Desert Awareness Committee, PO Box 4861, Cave Creek AZ 85327-4861.

¹ Editor's Note: Installation of the Terravita Nature Trail was completed and has been operational since 2006. Terravita is a private community; access to the trail is limited to residents and their guests. DAC continues to be supported by members from Terravita, and occasionally offers walks along this trail for members.

DAC has also completed similar projects in other venues, most notably Cave Creek Museum and Gateway Desert Awareness Park in Cave Creek (see article on Gateway Desert Awareness Park).

Desert Awareness Committee is a Partner program of Foothills Community Foundation (June 2010).

