

Wildflower Center of Silicon Valley

by Shira Gruhl

Many people comment on the beautiful flowers and plants around WCSV, but few realize it is the work of just one person, Cory Barfield. Cory started out in 2001 feeding baby birds like any new volunteer, but soon he noticed other work that wasn't getting done. He remembers thinking, "Really, someone needs to take care of these grounds and the plants that have been donated." And so Cory decided to put his considerable skill as a longtime hobbyist gardener to use.

Over the past four years, Cory has worked on the grounds a minimum of three days a week, even when it was so hot that other volunteers wouldn't brave the heat for more than a few minutes. During this time, he has installed a drip system around the entire perimeter and planted dozens of vines, trees and flowers, many of which he purchased and donated. His wife, Laverne, has helped

him, growing both Rose of Sharon (actually a hibiscus) and Chinese lanterns from slips. Cory says the hardest part of the job has been digging through the rocks in order to plant trees—a task that sometimes requires a crowbar to complete!

Another challenge has been finding plants the ground squirrels won't devour. Cory reports that mature plants with heavy bark have the best chance of withstanding the onslaught of these hungry residents

The plantings are a mix of native and non-native species, including donations of daffodils from San Jose Beautiful and 17 trees from Our City Forest. The scarlet trumpet vines gracing the fence receive lots of compliments, as do the bright purple flowers of the Happy Wanderer. Cory's personal favorite is the red and white climbing rose known as a Fancy Dancer. While these non-natives provide welcome splashes



Carmel de Beiraut

of bright color, the natives have the added benefit of being perfectly adapted to offer food and shelter to the local animals. The native plants include Western sycamore trees, big leaf maple, California buckeye, California wild lilac and many species of sage.

So next time you are passing by, make sure you take time to smell the roses and thank Cory for all his hard work.

Editor's note: When WCSV moved to Penitencia Creek Park four years ago, we noticed there were no hummingbirds in the immediate area. Now that flowering vines and plants cover the landscape, we have droves of them coming to visit and getting their fill of nectar daily!