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Wak the paths and take in the view at the Discovery Garden.

BONNIE COURTER

Tucked away in a tree-lined, one-acre plot next to the entrance to River Forks Park is a Douglas County treasure, just waiting to be explored. It's called the Discovery Garden and it's managed entirely by volunteers of the Douglas County chapter of the OSU Extension Master Gardeners.

Started in 1999, this demonstration garden invites exploration and learning, with educational signage and numerous landscape examples of sustainable gardening practices. The Garden is open and free to the public every day of the year, but the parking area now comes under the new Douglas County Parks Pass system.

The Discovery Garden is designed to show the benefits of a variety of ecologically sound management practices including:

- Proper irrigation, including a rainwater collection system
- Use of mulch to suppress weeds and control evaporation
- •water-wise (xeric) plant selection
- Natural-form pruning
- Composting

Scattered throughout the Discovery Garden are numerous mini-gardens, including a Japanese Garden, Butterfly Garden, compost, bio-char, and worm bin exhibits, Easy Access, Xeriscape,; Herb Garden, dahlia and lily beds, a whimsical Children's Garden, Rock Garden, as well as an orchard of dwarf fruit trees.

In the center of the Discovery Garden sits a lovely pavilion built by the Wolf Creek Job Corps, along with various community groups. The Pavilion is excellent for events and classes.

Across the parking area



Take the little ones to the Children's Garden.

lies the Victory Garden, where Master Gardeners grow vegetables. These are harvested weekly for donation to Umpqua Community Action Network's local food pantry.

The Discovery Garden welcomes visitors to stroll its paths and inhale the fragrances wafting from the Herb Garden. Enjoy the serenity of the Japanese Garden with its moon gate, pagoda, and tea house.

Statues of the Tortoise and the Hare invite children to explore the Children's Garden, to dig in the sandbox, play hide and seek under the weeping mulberry tree, hopscotch over to the living sundial to tell the time, and run through the tunnel of vines.

The Butterfly Garden is generously filled with botanicals whose colors and fragrances attract pollinators.

Visitors who want to see examples of plants that require very little water and can thrive even in drought conditions should visit the Xeriscape Garden.

The Easy Access Garden exhibits many ideas which enable gardeners with disabilities or who have



Color blooms in the Discovery Garden.

limited space to enjoy gardening, as well.

For those with a landscape that is rocky or has less than ideal soil, the alpine Rock Garden is populated by plants that can thrive in such conditions.

Several picnic tables and benches throughout the Discovery Garden provide a place to rest and relax in the quiet setting.

The public is invited to participate in various pruning workshops conducted by Steve Renquist, OSU Extension Horticultural Agent, and Master Gardeners in the Discovery Garden from January to March. These hands-on workshops cover the art of pruning fruit trees, roses, shrubs and ornamental trees.

Free tours for school children, garden clubs and other interested groups are also available. Call the OSU Extension at 541-672-4461 to arrange for a tour or for

upcoming workshops.

Funding to build and maintain the garden and structures has been supplied by grants and contributions from businesses and individuals, whose names grace the tree-shaped Donor Board. Proceeds gathered from various Master Gardener fund-raising activities, such as the annual Plant & Garden Expo in May, the spring Trash to Treasure rummage sale, and the Bake Sale in November also help finance the costs involved in maintaining the Garden.

So come "discover" your Discovery Garden, and bring the whole family. See you in the Garden!

Bonnie Courter is a Master Gardener. For further information about the Discovery Garden or how to become a Master Gardener, email douglasmg@oregonstate.edu or call 541-672-4461