

# Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness

Garden Update: Volume 5  
July 2013



## *Garden Club Recap (2012 - 2013 School Year)*

Simonton's first Garden Club was formed in January. The club consisted of twenty-four 4th - 6th graders and one 3rd grade student. Two Simonton teachers, Mrs. Driscoll and Mrs. Spooner, were the Garden Club Sponsors. The Garden Coordinators, Mr. Justin Licon and I worked with the club sponsors and club members. Ms. Becca Colvin, with the Pinal County AmeriCorps Vista program, led two of the club meetings. I led three of the after school club meetings. Mr. Licon provided gardening related instruction during each club meeting.

**January 2013** - "I Love Bugs!" This was a meeting that I led about pesky bugs and the beneficial bugs that like them. It was also an informational meeting about the club. The first part of the meeting was held in a Simonton classroom then we took a walk to the garden. Mr. Licon led the children in a discussion about irrigation and the plants growing in the garden.

**February 2013** - "Cool Season & Warm Season Plants" During this indoor meeting, cool and warm season plants were defined and examples of each type of plant were listed. To wrap up the meeting, Ms. Colvin led the children in a seed planting project where they made newspaper pots. The children took home their seed pots so they could watch their plants and seeds grow. Unfortunately, many of the seedlings did not make it back to the garden. We determined some of the newspaper seed pots received a little too much water.

**March 2013** - "What's All The Fuss About Soil?" This meeting was held in the garden. I led a discussion about the importance of healthy soil, the benefits of it, and ways to recognize it. Additionally, I gave a presentation about composting then we started a discussion about ways to amend unhealthy soil. Naturally, this led to talk about worms and the benefits of them in the garden.

**April 2013** - "Good Bug, Bad Bug" This meeting was held outside in a grassy area. The Garden Club kids looked at pictures of bugs. There was a discussion about beneficial and detrimental garden insects. Lastly, Ms. Colvin led the children in a few games of bug bingo. This program was developed by the Pinal County 4-H Cooperative Extension Office.

The Simonton Garden Club participants attended a special tree planting event Friday, April 26th. During the event, seven fruit trees and three shade trees were added to Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness. The Garden Club kids played a significant role during the historic event at Simonton. The children worked alongside the San Tan Landscape Management team as they planted trees.

Each Garden Club member received a tab bracelet and a personalized thank you certificate. They also received a plant to transplant into a larger pot. San Tan

Landscape provided the plants so the children could have something special to take home with them.

**May 2013** - "The Buzz About Bees" This meeting was held in the garden. The Garden Club members weeded and watered plants. A few of the children planted vegetable seeds. Then I led a discussion about bees and pollination. Since there was so little shade in the garden, we moved the meeting to the playground for some shade cover. Just before our meeting was adjourned, program related literature was given to each club participant.

There were a few club meetings which occurred during various school days. During the meetings, the children participated in discussions about plants, and created gardening related posters. We talked about the nutritional benefits of the plants in the school garden. Additionally, the Garden Club members created garden journals to take home for recording their thoughts/ideas/quotes about gardening.

I believe the first year of Simonton's Garden Club was a success. The club members provided positive feedback about the programs. They participated in discussions about plants, garden bugs, soil, and pollination. Weeding and watering the garden were some of the responsibilities of the garden club members. Seed starting, transplanting seedlings, and harvesting produce were some of the additional garden club related activities. Several students offered noteworthy ideas for future garden club projects. At the end of the school year, the majority of the club participants verbalized their hope to attend Simonton's Garden Club next year.

The gardening related activities were made possible through donations of materials, the money to purchase materials, and donations of time. Additionally, several people offered gardening advice which was beneficial to the garden program(s). The school garden and club go beyond the school property. Through the support of Simonton personnel, student body, and our community, we are able to connect Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness to a much wider audience. By reaching beyond school grounds, we gain enthusiasm, advice, and assistance from a much wider audience.

The 2013 - 2014 school garden club should be an even greater success! I believe the club motto sums up the essence and purpose of Simonton's Garden Club. "Educating future gardeners while growing a community." *Sherri Crosslin*

Kind Regards,

Sherri Crosslin  
Kathryn Sue Simonton

Garden Coordinator



# Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness

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## *Donations Received Recap (2012 - 2013 School Year)*

There were many donations, on behalf of Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness, received from November 2012 to May 2013. I am thankful for each and every donation made to further the development of the school garden and gardening related programs.

Below is a list of donations received and donors who provided each item(s):

Sun  
\$1,000 & Up

San Tan Landscape Management, Inc. - Gilbert, AZ

San Tan Landscape is our largest donor. Mr. Bill Faires, company President and owner, provided advice regarding the layout and placement of trees in the school garden. He donated two 24" Red Push Pistache trees, one 15 gallon Golden Dorsett Apple tree, a flat of jumbo pak starter plants (Celosia) Cox Comb Feathers, soil and mulch for ten trees and tire planters, and nine tires to serve as planters. San Tan donated pavers for the garden pathway. Mr. Faires gave Simonton a generous labor discount for the installation of pavers. Bill Faires and San Tan Management's Sales Manager, Mr. Dwight Faires, worked with additional San Tan personnel to stage a special tree planting event at Simonton. They brought tables, shade cover, kid sized shovels, plants for the garden club children, a cooler of water, a large planter full of beautiful plants, a personalized event sign, and American flags which they placed throughout the garden. The San Tan team worked with the children to plant the trees and repot small annuals into 4" pots for the children to take home. Everyone with San Tan Landscape Management made the 2013 Arbor Day tree planting event a special day in the history of the school garden.

Flower  
\$500 - \$999

Who will be the first person or company to become a flower in our garden?

Leaves  
\$250 - \$499

Zvida Growers (wholesale nursery) - Queen Creek, AZ

Mr. Nick Zvida & Boaz Zvida provided greenhouse space so the garden seeds could receive warmth and water during the cold weather. Additionally, the Zvida staff thinned the seedlings as needed. I am grateful for the time everyone at Zvida spent to give Simonton's plants a great start.

Zvida Growers donated approximately twelve large bags of soil and eight bags of mulch to the school garden. Arturo, with Zvida Growers, usually loaded and delivered the soil and mulch

directly to the school garden. I am grateful to everyone at Zvida for providing key items during the 2012 - 2013 growing season at Simonton.

Seeds of Change, Rancho Dominguez, CA

Seeds of Change donated a little over one hundred 100% organic seed packets to Simonton's school garden. The seed donation is part of the 2012 Seeds of Change "Sowing Millions, Growing Minds" school garden seed program. It was thoughtful of the company to send us such a large donation of excellent quality seed stock.

Stem

\$100 - \$249

The Hargis Family - AZ

Thank you for the donation of horse manure and leaves. We appreciate the donation and the help loading it into a truck. Thank you for the supply of leaves which supplied some brown material for the school compost pile.

Simonton PTO, San Tan Valley, AZ

Thank you for supplying the school garden with two 15 gallon Minniola Tangelo trees. It is so thoughtful of you to provide two fruit trees to the garden. Furthermore, you donated the delivery fee to transport several trees from the nursery to the school. Thank you to Mrs. Crowder, Simonton's PTO President, and to every PTO member who made this donation possible.

Anonymous Donor, San Tan Valley, AZ

You responded to a last minute request for a donation of another apple tree. It was so thoughtful of you to provide the school with the special donation. In addition to one 15 gallon Golden Dorsett Apple tree, you provided the delivery fee so several trees would be delivered from the nursery to Simonton. Thank you for donating a special tree to the school garden.

Design Ur Stone, Mesa, AZ

ONEil Arce, owner of Design Ur Stone, created three engraved pieces made from three different material. He donated each of the personalized pieces to Simonton Elementary. Additionally, Mr. Arce has provided a lot of advice and answered numerous questions about the set-up of an engraved pathway at Simonton.

Roots

\$1 - \$99

The Pork Shop, Queen Creek, AZ

Jason Corman donated two straw bales to be used to create paths and provide mulch in the garden beds. Mr. Corman, thank you for supplying materials to help control weeds in the garden.

Castlegate Community Association - Phoenix, AZ

At the November 2012 Castlegate HOA meeting, community members' agreed to make a donation of \$100.00 for the school garden. During the meeting, I requested a donation of \$100 for irrigation parts. Mr. Hansen spoke on behalf of the garden and asked for an additional \$50.00 for

the purchase of garden plants. Thankfully, the community members' supported both requests, so Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness received much needed financial support. Thank you to everyone who made this donation possible.

Dr. & Mrs. Michael Thomas, San Tan Valley, AZ

Thank you for providing the school with one 15 gallon Chinese Elm tree. It was so kind of you to donate a tree from your yard to Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness.

Treeland Nursery, Gilbert, AZ

Susan provided the school with a donation of an Elm tree. She generously provided one 15 gallon Chinese Elm tree to the school garden. Thank you for the donation for the tree planting event at Simonton.

Distinctive Earthscapes @ the Avacado Nursery, Casa Grande, AZ

Mr. Bill Bond, owner of the Avacado Nursery, provided a thoughtful donation to our Arbor Day event. He donated two 15 gallon Flordaprince Peach trees and his staff provided a lot of telephone gardening support.

The Hansen Family, San Tan Valley, AZ

You provided various ways of support to the school garden. You provided two books, paint, small planters, herb seeds, and the use of tools. Thank you for the generous donations to the garden.

Carri Yenkala, Simonton Kitchen Manager, San Tan Valley, AZ

Thank you for meeting with me to discuss information about the history of Simonton's school garden. I appreciate your time and your support of the school garden.

Michelle Swendseid, Food & Nutrition Department Supervisor, San Tan Valley, AZ

I appreciate your insight regarding the history of the school garden. Thank you for meeting with me to discuss various aspects of the garden.

Ms. Rose Flaherty, San Tan Valley, AZ

You provided support to the school garden on numerous occasions. You raked garden beds and offered gardening advice. Additionally, you let us have access to your pick-up truck for the delivery of compost materials. During our garden work days, you let us have access to your Rototiller. Thank you for the in-kind donations. I enjoyed working with you during our weekend garden prep days.

The Crosslin Family, San Tan Valley, AZ

My family & I donated two 5 gallon grape vines and one 15 gallon Navel dwarf orange tree was donated to the school in April.

The UPS Store, Queen Creek, AZ

Store owner, Joyce Robinson, has provided quick turn arounds garden related printing materials. She is great to work with and has been generous with her time.

Sweetie Peaz Frozen Yogurt, Queen Creek, AZ

Stacey Tardiff, owner of Sweetie Peaz, allowed us to host a Simonton Spirit Day fundraiser at Sweetie Peaz. It was the first Simonton garden fundraiser and we were happy to receive the community support. Thank you, Stacey, for your positive contributions with the school garden fundraiser. You are an inspiration to me because you are such a generous contributor of numerous community related events.

Walmart, Queen Creek, AZ

Randi, a Walmart employee, approved a \$25.00 Walmart gift card for the purchase of kid sized garden gloves and hand trowels. It was thoughtful of Randi to provide the school with the donation. Thank you for the support and for reserving the gift card until I was able to go to Walmart to obtain it.

The National Honey Board, Firestone, CO

Andrea sent honey and bee related literature to Simonton for the after school Garden Club program. She also sent honey inspired recipe brochures for each club participant. Thank you for the donation of curriculum information.

Arizona Cooperative Extension for Pinal County, Casa Grande, AZ

Lori sent me gardening related literature. The information she provided is specific to gardening in Pinal and Maricopa counties. I am so thankful for the literature and I have accessed the information quite often.

Mrs. Hamm, 6th grade teacher, Simonton Elementary, San Tan Valley, AZ

Mrs. Hamm loaned me the book, *Success with School Gardens: How to Create a Learning Oasis in the Desert*. I referred to *Success with School Gardens* for ideas regarding leadership, seed planting timelines, and tips for amending soil. I am most grateful for the use of Mrs. Hamm's book.

Mrs. Hamm provided me with card stock to use for various school gardening projects and correspondence. The card stock came in handy when the Garden Club children created journals. Thank you for the beneficial donation of colorful paper.

Becca Colvin, 4-H Youth Development AmeriCorps VISTA, Pinal County, Casa Grande, AZ

Thank you for providing program literature for a couple of Simonton's Garden Club meetings. You were a big help to me with the club and I am thankful you were able to travel all the way from Casa Grande to San Tan for two club meetings. Thanks for your help with the club program.

Mrs. Spooner, Kathryn Sue Simonton Garden Sponsor, San Tan Valley, AZ

I appreciate your positive influence with the Garden Club meetings. You offered encouragement and assistance as needed. Additionally, I am so happy you brought part of a beehive to the school. I was able to show the beehive to a class of 4th graders. They seemed to enjoy seeing the bees, honey, honey comb, and talking about bees. Mrs. Driscoll's 4th grade class watched the Magic School Bus show, *Into the Hive*, earlier in the day. The bee hive visual tied in nicely with the program. Thanks for everything!

It has been my privilege to get to know and/or work with each and every person/company mentioned in the above referenced listing of donors. Your advice, assistance, and support have been helpful to me and to the school gardening related activities. Thank you for sharing gardening tips, program ideas, and for your time. Many of you demonstrated support for Simonton's Garden of Awesomeness in ways which go beyond your donations of time, in-kind support as well as monetary contributions. I am thankful for the opportunity to share what is going on in the school garden. Thanks again for making the school garden a special place.

Simonton's principal, Mrs. Whitlark, led the way with her request for help with the school garden. Her support, for the garden and club activities, has been unwavering. It is a privilege knowing Mrs. Whitlark and working with her to accomplish great things with the garden club and the school garden is an honor. The success of many projects and activities starts with a great leader. As a Garden Coordinator at Simonton, Mrs. Whitlark is my team captain.

It has been my pleasure meeting with Simonton Elementary personnel and volunteers, various personnel within the J. O. Combs Unified School District #44, and employees at the district office. I am grateful for the advise and support I received within the local school community. Thank you for your welcoming attitudes and willingness to share your time with me.

Mrs. Jacqueline Rowley, Kathryn Sue Simonton's Attendance Clerk  
Jacque Rowley provided a lot of assistance to me. She reviewed, typed, and printed correspondence for me. Jacque enthusiastically supported the garden from the first day I began volunteering as a Garden Coordinator at Simonton. Her wisdom and insight offered help to me on multiple occasions. Thanks for every bit of encouragement you offered throughout the school year.

A note of thanks is reserved Simonton's other Garden Coordinator, Justin Licon. I am grateful for your continued support of all things gardening related. Thank you for your willingness to till the garden beds and install irrigation on the weekends throughout the school year. You provided many hours of research and gardening related experience as a school Garden Coordinator. You offered support of the garden projects, program assistance with the Garden Club, and presented feedback for various program ideas. Thanks for everything!

Thank you for helping us grow Simonton's school garden. Your support has enabled us to expand the garden and the school garden programs.

Attached is a visual poster a garden club member drew of the donor chart categories.

Kind Regards,

Sherri Crosslin  
Kathryn Sue Simonton Garden Coordinator