

# MCC grad receives Garden Club of America Scholarship for Desert Studies

By *mynews* - September 19, 2016



*Tom Bulinski (far right), a recent Mesa Community College graduate, was awarded a Garden Club of America Scholarship for his proposal to rejuvenate the Xeriscape Demonstration Garden on MCC's Southern and Dobson campus. (Courtesy of MCC)*

Tom Bulinski, a recent Mesa Community College graduate, was awarded a Garden Club of America Scholarship for his proposal to rejuvenate the Xeriscape Demonstration Garden on MCC's Southern and Dobson campus. Used by Life Sciences as a learning lab, the garden is a section of campus displaying native and other desert-adapted plant selections that promote the wise use of water. Originally created in 1989, the garden was in need of major maintenance and reinvigoration.

Bulinski, who majored in urban horticulture with a focus on nursery management and landscape design, saw the project as an opportunity to apply the knowledge he learned at MCC. His first step was to meet with the Life Science and Urban Horticulture departments to find out how the improvements would best aid instructors in the educational process.



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"My goal was to refresh the garden, while keeping in mind all the needs of the various users," Bulinski said. "Integrating these needs into a design that will be both functional and cohesive with the surrounding landscape was of great importance."

With the assistance of MCC adjunct faculty member and retired city of Phoenix lead horticulturist Steve Priebe, the project was broken into three major stages. The first step was to assess, prune and remove some of the plants in the area. The next was to upgrade the irrigation system, turning it into a more dependable, durable system with the addition of 1,000 feet of pipe and 80 multi-outlet emitter ports and isolation valves for each garden bed. With this system in place, the final stage of the project is planting new materials in the redesigned beds. Identification tags are being considered to enhance the student learning experience.

The first two stages of the project have been completed and the final stage is underway with an anticipated completion in late September. The planting step was made possible through the generous donations of **Mountain States Nursery**, plus Bulinski's personal plant propagations.

As the project on campus wraps up, Bulinski is preparing for the contractor's exam and applying for contractor licenses. He plans to start his own landscape design and build company. Future goals include a boutique landscape nursery and a wedding facility.

Bulinski said he is grateful for the scholarship he received from the Garden Club of America and was thrilled he was able to give back to his alma mater.

"I do feel like this will be a great portfolio piece and a critical stepping stone in launching a successful career..." he said. "I certainly cannot take complete credit for this project...Steve (Priebe) has been there every step of the way, working side-by-side to complete this makeover. Steve teaches the plant biology class on campus and brings with him years of horticultural experience."

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