

# INNOVATION

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## MESA COMMUNITY COLLEGE: CAMPUS ARBORETUM EARNS LEVEL II FROM ARBNET ACCREDITATION PROGRAM

**By: Dawn Zimmer**

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Member Spotlight

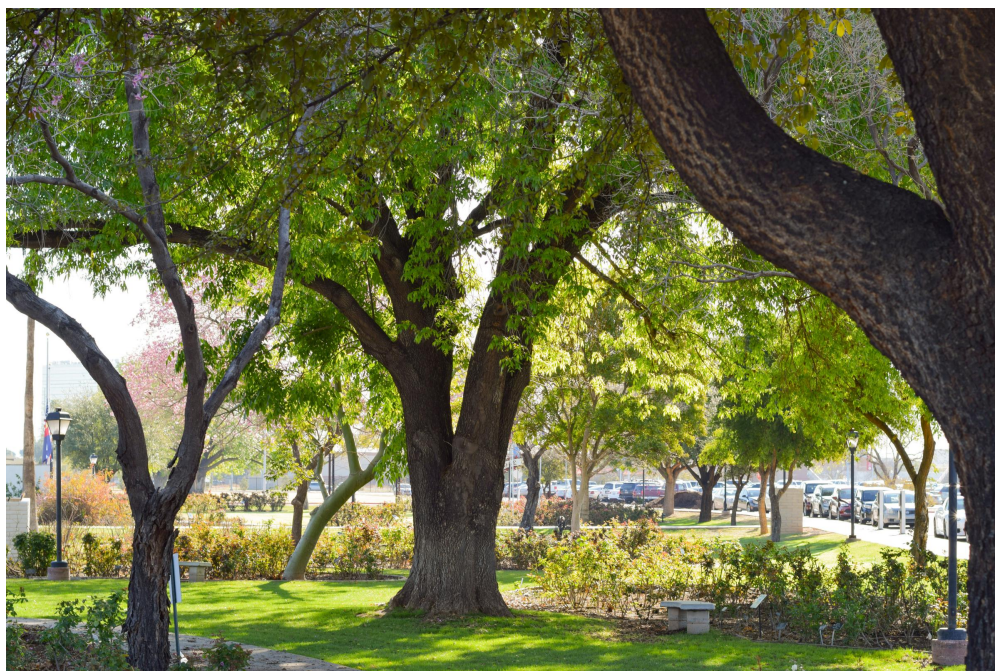
**Tags:** [Community Relations \(/specialty-area/community-relations\)](#), [Sustainability \(/specialty-area/sustainability\)](#)



The 140-acre Mesa Community College (MCC) Arboretum has been upgraded to Level II Accreditation by the ArbNet Arboretum Accreditation Program and The Morton Arboretum, for achieving standards of professional practices deemed important for arboreta and botanic gardens. “We’ve had a remarkable year of achievements,” said MCC Life Science faculty Sean Whitcomb. “The Level II Accreditation is a testament to the arboretum's dedication to maintaining a diverse and sustainable community of trees.”



There are four levels of accreditation, with Level IV being the highest level. Thirty-nine countries have accredited arboreta and there are 611 accredited arboreta worldwide. Initially accredited in 2018 (<https://www.mesacc.edu/news/press-release/mcc-first-level-i-arbnet-accredited-arboretum-arizona>), the MCC Arboretum, located at the Southern and Dobson Campus, was the first in Arizona to be awarded the designation. The arboretum is home to the Southwest Desert Plant and Sonoran Desert Plant sections, Xeriscape Garden, Outback Arbor, and Arizona Riparian Tree area as well as the world-renowned Rose Garden, the largest in the desert Southwest. Maintenance in the arboretum is performed by college grounds staff, volunteers, and subcontractors.



The Rose Garden at MCC provides a shade respite from the summer heat.

In addition to more than 100 species of trees, such as willow, citrus, ash, cottonwood, mulberry, palo verde, jacaranda, and many others, the arboretum has more than 80 species of cacti and succulents. Some of the arboretum's other achievements over the past year include:

- Recognition from the Arbor Day Foundation for the second consecutive year as a Tree Campus, awarded at the Arizona Arbor Day celebration at the State Capitol
- A \$40,000 irrigation improvement grant from the Arizona Department of Forestry and Fire Management to install new irrigation systems and upgrade existing ones
- Recruitment of more than 100 volunteers during six arboretum-sponsored events, essential for achieving the arboretum's goals like planting trees, maintaining the grounds, and improving the irrigation system
- Twenty-seven new trees planted by volunteers
- Creation of a second monarch butterfly waystation providing habitat and food for this endangered species in partnership with the Arboretum Committee and the Center for Civic and Community Engagement
- The dedication of two new waystation signs designed and built entirely by students

“Our arboretum committee continues to support the college in maintaining and improving the beauty of our amazing campus and has been receiving generous donations of trees from local nurseries,” said Peter Conden, MCC Landscape Horticulture and Sustainable Agriculture Programs faculty and co-director of the MCC Arboretum. “This is all due to the hard work of Sean Whitcomb, Steve Priebe, Carrie Lipka, the entire arboretum committee, and student and employee volunteers.”

The arboretum remains free and open to the public during regular school hours (6 a.m. - 10 p.m.). An [interactive online map \(http://mesacc.edu/arboretum\)](http://mesacc.edu/arboretum) may be viewed on any computer or mobile device. [Click here \(http://mesacc.edu/arboretum\)](http://mesacc.edu/arboretum) to learn more about MCC Arboretum plants and events.

*Lead image: Cacti, agaves, and other desert species thrive in the MCC Xeriscape Demonstration Garden.*

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*Opinions expressed in Member Spotlight are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect those of the League for Innovation in the Community College.*

## Upcoming Events



<https://www.league.org/eli2023>

December 10-13, 2023 (in person)  
and January 23-25, 2024 (virtual)