

# A Time To Dig

By Kiera Hay / Journal North Reporter on Sat, Nov 5, 2011

It's been a long time coming.

In front of a small crowd of dignitaries and supporters, representatives of the Santa Fe Botanical Garden finally broke ground on their Museum Hill site Friday morning, after about eight years of planning.

The golden shovels came out and people clustered for pictures by the Arroyo de los Pinos, where the garden's first phase of construction will begin later this year.

"Today is the first time we've actually had shovels in the ground, and it is very thrilling," Santa Fe Botanical Garden executive director Linda Milbourn said.

"We're very excited about joining the other museums on Museum Hill," she said. "We feel that with the addition of the botanical garden, all the museums will benefit. We'll have one more great attraction."

The first task of builders is to move the nearly 100-year old Kearny's Gap Bridge from San Miguel County. The bridge, built in 1913 along N.M. 283, will be placed over the arroyo and serve as a connector between the site's Courtyard Gardens – with gathering places – and the Naturalistic Gardens, which will feature a xeric lawn and spaces for classes for children.

The bridge, which is 62 feet long and 16 feet wide, was abandoned by the state when the highway around Las Vegas was widened.

Once the bridge is in, work will start on the nearby fruit-laden Orchard Gardens, the future entrance to the botanical garden.

An important part of the garden's mission is to tell the history of Santa Fe and its surrounding areas through native plants. The garden can be viewed as another one of Museum Hill's collections, said Cathy Kalenian, Santa Fe Botanical Garden board president.

"It's going to be a great educational tool," she noted.

Planning for the garden has been in the works since 2003. The Santa Fe Botanical Garden is leasing the 13-acre property from the city and state.

Construction will take place in several phases over about five years.

The total cost of building the garden is expected to be around \$7.5 million. An ongoing fundraising campaign has taken in \$1.7 million, which includes state government capital outlay money.

"All the major cities throughout the world have a botanical garden. For a city that's 400 years old, we should have a botanical garden. I think it's time we have one," Kalenian said.