

# Our View: A garden blooms on Museum Hill

The New Mexican | Posted: Thursday, July 18, 2013 11:30 pm

After years of planning, the Santa Fe Botanical Garden at Museum Hill opens this weekend. From tonight's sold-out gala, the membership preview on Saturday and the public opening Sunday, there is plenty to celebrate this weekend. The newest addition brings together the botanical heritage of our region as well as selected non-native plants. It promises to be a place to soak in beauty and learn about the plants that thrive in our dry climate.

It's more than just beauty, though. A botanical garden is a museum, featuring plants as living exhibits. Some 6,000 plants have been gathered in the garden's first phase, tended since March 1 to be ready for this weekend's big opening. Landscape architect, W. Gary Smith, with more than 25 years in master planning and the design of public gardens, brought his singular vision to the project. Smith has worked on gardens in Texas, New York City and Florida. He has said that in Santa Fe, he hopes to draw from both the austerity of the desert and the lushness of springs and tended gardens: "I'm hoping the new botanical garden will have something from both extremes — the simplicity and drama from the desert, and the diversity and exuberance from more garden-like places."

The idea is to show how plants, the earth and water can come together; education will be a big mission for garden operators, including teaching about erosion control and arroyo restoration. There's more than a bit of history, too, with the bright red highway bridge from Kearny's Gap near Las Vegas, N.M., a standout. The orchards, displaying the fruit trees that came with the Europeans, are more history on display. Located along the Arroyo de los Pinos, the garden also is near walking and biking trails, close to the Museum of International Folk Art and other Museum Hill attractions. Visitors will be able to stop by the gardens around 9 a.m., enjoy nature and then walk over to the museums, making an already rich experience even more enjoyable.

The opening phase is just the beginning for the Santa Fe Botanical Garden. Still to come are naturalistic and courtyard gardens, with work beginning on them in 2014. Private donations, city and state money all have helped bring the dream to fruition (to learn more, visit [www.santafebotanicalgarden.org](http://www.santafebotanicalgarden.org)). The Santa Fe Botanical Garden at Museum Hill joins the Leonora Curtin Wetland Preserve and the Ortiz Mountains Educational Preserve as the third jewel in the Botanical Garden crown — all places where busy humans can slow down, breathe more deeply and revel in the beauty of nature.