

Conservation committee responds to native plant ordinance pleas

Editor's note: This is the first in a series of columns outlining recommendations for a plant ordinance for the Town of Cave Creek.

The Cave Creek Conservation Committee has responded to the pleas of the large majority of residents who wish to protect and preserve as much as possible of the Cave Creek we love by writing a native plant ordinance for use by the Cave Creek Planning and Zoning Commission.

We knew we were taking on an awesome task. A 10-member subcommittee did much research, contacted other towns who are successfully using a native plant ordinance, wrote, re-wrote, added and deleted until we had something we felt would work.

The ordinance was drawn up in response to an overwhelming majority of answers to a recent survey mailed to all residents of

Cave Creek in favor of preserving our vegetation and wildlife habitat as closely as possible to its original natural state, while still allowing for individual freedom of choice within reasonable bounds.

The following are excerpts from the survey conducted by the CCIA in 1986. People rated questions as to whether they strongly agreed (SA), agreed (A), were neutral (N), disagreed (D) or strongly disagreed (SA).

In response to the statement, "the Town of Cave Creek should require arid landscaping and native plant preservation," the responses were: 366 SA; 92 A; 26 N; 11 D; and 8 SD.

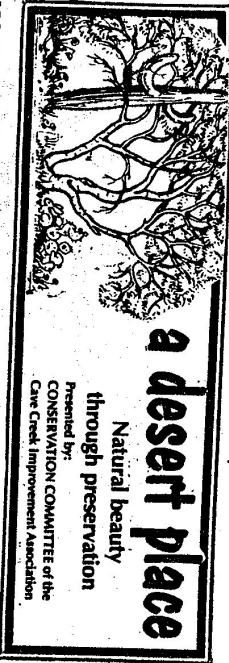
In response to the statement, "the Town of Cave Creek should encourage native plant preservation with long-range planning and financial support or with guidelines, cooperation and support of civic groups," the responses were:

379 SA; 91 A; 21N; 8 D; and 4 SD.

As to whether the town should encourage arid landscaping, the responses were: 310 SA; 122 A; 44 N; 9 D; and 10 SD.

The will of the people as demonstrated in the survey supports the ordinance.

The ordinance also was drawn up in response to numerous outcries against careless and wanton scraping and destruction of land. This area once was the beautiful habitat and environment for all to enjoy.



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and the very cause for residential and commercial interest in the first place.

The destruction was just to superimpose an artificial atmosphere upon the land without benefit of permit or public mandate. Too often, mankind destroys the irreplaceable.

Our over-all purpose reads as follows:

These regulations are intended to promote the reasonable use of land for development, while insuring the preservation of indigenous vegetation.

Indigenous plant materials enhance the town's physical and aesthetic character, increase the value of real property, provide scenic opportunities unique to this region, reduce the excessive use of groundwater, preserve wildlife habitat and are in furtherance of the public health, safety and welfare.

The first criterion of the ordinance states that any live native vegetation is not to be removed without first obtaining a clearing, grading, removal or building permit.

We feel this is extremely important because our area has some of the most beautiful and unique vegetation which a desert can offer. It supports an abundant wildlife community, which has evolved over centuries and is extremely fragile.

The ecosystem of a cleared lot is destroyed. It will not recover and

grow back in a few years, as is the case of other vegetation types in other parts of the county.

However, this criterion is not intended to restrict or prevent individual property owners from making minor changes in the vegetation on their own property or caring for or pruning existing vegetation in a reasonable manner. It is only intended to restrict the wholesale, needless clearing of native plants.

The second criterion states that riparian habitats (areas of plant and animal life adjacent to and dependent upon a creek, river or pond) have to be preserved in their natural state. These areas are extremely rare in a desert environment, and much wildlife depends on these areas for survival.

Washes and dry waterways are areas that can become torrents of water and churning boulders in desert storms. Because they support wildlife and, if destroyed can cause flooding problems, these areas also should remain in their natural state.