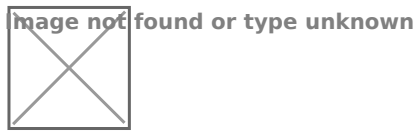


New Gardens of St. Barbara Dedicated



The lovely new Gardens of St. Barbara were dedicated in a ceremony held Earth Day weekend at St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church. After parish priest Father Haralambos Fox spoke to the congregation about the spiritual call to be good stewards of the natural world, church members and guests strolled through the Gardens, now in glorious spring bloom.

The Gardens feature dozens of delightful and drought-tolerant California native plants as well as plants endemic to other Mediterranean ecosystems from around the world. More than a church beautification project, the Gardens were designed to inspire better care and protection for nature, and to raise awareness of climate change.

According to Garden Director John McKinney, it all started with His All Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, spiritual leader of the world's 300 million Orthodox Christians. In 1997 he came to St. Barbara Greek Orthodox Church in Santa Barbara, California to lead an Environmental Symposium and to share his vision of how people of faith should care for the natural world.

"In response to the Patriarch's environmental messages then and now, we decided to plant a garden," explains McKinney. "One that would be sustainable, environmentally friendly, and significantly reduce water consumption."

Native plants now thriving in the garden include lemonade berry, manzanita, toyon, golden yarrow, wooly blue curls, Bees Bliss purple sage, and several varieties of ceanothus. Joining the Southern California flora are plants from Mediterranean climes: Tuscan blue rosemary, Pride of Madeira and Jerusalem sage.

The three-year effort from vision to planning to planting was spearheaded by the parish's Friends of the Garden who visited native plant displays throughout Southern California, including the renowned Santa Barbara Botanic Garden. Santa Barbara landscape architect Billy Goodnick designed the project, made possible by the generosity of the Fotine Drulias O'Connor Trust.

Phase II of the Gardens of St. Barbara project calls for the planting of many more

native plants and construction of a nature trail that will loop around the 4.5-acre campus. Visit saintbarbara.net for further info. View a video with details and commentary here: [Gardens of St. Barbara Video](#)

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Photo: John McKinney

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