

EDUCATIONAL: CABOT YERXA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



BUILDING OWNER: Palm Springs Unified School District
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BUILDING TYPE: Educational
SIZE: 13 acres
DATE COMPLETED: 2009
COST OF CONSTRUCTION: \$50M

This large, multi-level campus in Desert Hot Springs, completed in 2009, is highlighted by water-conserving plantings used throughout the site to offset the required large turf athletic fields. Nearly half of the 250,000 square feet of plantable area is devoted to "desert" landscape with drifts of openly spaced shrubs and trees within decomposed granite fields and utilizing drip or bubbler irrigation for efficient application of water. Plants were selected for tolerance to local climate challenges of high summer temperatures, low winter temperatures, and nearly constant winds.

The site was an earth-shaping challenge carved out of a sloping site. Large flat pads are separated by 50 foot grade changes using two stacked retaining walls or large 2:1 slopes that are traversed by ramps and stairs. This created huge potentially expensive planting areas with heavy erosion problems. To keep the project affordable, we limited the plantings to bubbler-fed desert Mesquite trees and spreading Bougainvilleas and Banks' roses.

One of the highlights of the campus however are the dry creek swales between classroom buildings featuring boulders, Palo Verde trees, and other desert plantings. Olives, Mexican Fan palms and Mediterranean Fan palms combine with Cassia, Indigo Bush, Lantana, Texas Ranger, Red Yucca, and Jojoba to colorful effect.