Welcome to the Leaning Pine Arboretum. Located at the Environmental Horticultural Science facility on the Cal Poly campus, the arboretum is an outdoor living laboratory displaying a vast array of beautiful and interesting landscape plants. The five acre arboretum is in a quiet setting with stunning vistas overlooking the campus and the nearby Santa Lucia mountains.

Collections are arranged primarily by geographic nativity and feature a diverse array of trees, shrubs, and other landscape plants appropriate for use throughout most of California’s vast Mediterranean climate area. The gardens feature hundreds of unique and intriguing plants from the world’s five Mediterranean climate regions: California, Chile, southern and southwestern Australia, South Africa, and the Mediterranean basin.

Adding to the arboretum’s diversity are many other specialty collections within a boxwood parterre, a Dwarf and Unusual Garden displaying uniquely shaped topiary plants, a Mediterranean Garden, a New Zealand Garden, and a garden of primitive plants featuring numerous cycads. Specialty collections within the gardens include Banksia, Ceanothus, Phlomis, Quercus, Rhus, and several others. The arboretum provides an attractive habitat for numerous types of birds such as hummingbirds, quail, kiiuider, and other wildlife including butterflies.

Education is our primary mission. The arboretum, part of the Horticulture and Crop Science Department, exists mainly as a laboratory for students and is used extensively by several classes for independent research and project studies. Plants are labeled with permanent identification signs and are attractively arranged by geographic origins, often by natural plant communities — all designed to facilitate effective study of individual plants and the relationships between plants from similar plant communities. Colorful interpretive signs at key locations and a self-guided tour brochure add to the learning environment. While the arboretum is focused primarily on students and their education, it also serves as a site for special classes, workshops, cultural events, and is a visitor destination for garden design inspiration, or simply enjoying a stroll through the beautiful gardens.

Maintenance and care of the arboretum is provided by students — as volunteers, as paid employees, and in classes under faculty direction. The gardens are maintained using sound and sustainable horticultural practices that are in harmony with nature, with the goal of having a positive impact on the environment, rather than a negative, damaging impact.

Visitors are always welcome. Because plants change with the seasons we encourage you to return often to enjoy the many and various highlights and vistas.

Hours: The arboretum is open year around. Hours are from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Saturday, closed on Sundays and academic holidays. There is no admission fee. Guided group tours may be available by prior arrangement.

Location: Leaning Pine Arboretum is located at the Environmental Horticultural Science facility (Building 48) on Via Carta at the north end of campus. Visitors may obtain a parking permit (required Monday through Friday) at the information building near the Grand Avenue entrance to campus or at parking permit dispensers located in many of the parking lots.

For driving directions, a map, parking information, and additional information please visit the arboretum’s web site at www.leaningpinearboretum.calpoly.edu

Garden Etiquette: The arboretum is a living laboratory of plants for all to enjoy, so we ask that you do not pick flowers or fruits or take plant samples or seeds. Please stay on the paths or the lawn areas and avoid walking in the garden beds where tender plants and young sprouts are easily damaged. Dogs are not permitted in the arboretum, except for service dogs. Please refrain from climbing on trees, shrubs, rocks, or garden structures. Bicycles are not permitted in the arboretum. Please park bicycles in the rack near the conifer garden, but do not lock bicycles to trees, benches, railings, or other structures. Out of respect for other visitors and because of fire danger, smoking is not allowed. Please keep children under adult supervision.

Thank you
Note: None of the water used in the arboretum is safe for human consumption. Children and service dogs should not be allowed to play in, or drink, water from any hose, hose tap, irrigation system, or body of water.

Photography: Feel free to take lots of photographs. We request that professional photographers credit the location as “Leaning Pine Arboretum.”
Leaning Pine Arboretum
The Central Coast’s Premier Horticultural Display Garden

Just above the lawn, the mesembryanthemum bank in the South African Garden puts on a stunning display of vibrant color in the spring. Other major components of this garden include plants in the restio family, colorful seasonal geophytes, unusual succulents displayed in large containers, along with proteas and their relatives with exotic looking flowers and year round foliage color.

The Chilean Garden displays plants primarily from central Chile, an area with a climate very similar to that of California. Plants include several trees, flowering shrubs, geophytes, and pineapple relatives in the bromeliad family.

The Mediterranean Garden features many old favorites including several cultivars of rosemary and lavender, an olive grove, as well as many lesser-known mediterranean plants. Enjoy sweeping vistas of the Morros and the Cal Poly campus from a seating area above the main path.

The Palm and Aloe Garden hosts a collection of palms from around the world, along with more than 60 species of aloe and other succulents. The aloes, with their amazing variety of foliage colors and patterns, range in height from just a few inches tall to tree types reaching thirty feet or more with massive trunks at maturity. Aloe ciliaris, climbing aloe, grows as a vine supporting itself on the trunks and stems of other plants.

The Primitive Garden features a growing collection of cycads and other ancient plants such as ginkgo, horsetail, and dawn redwood.

Red flowered plants, such as the various types of bottlebrush, make the Australian Garden a haven for hummingbirds. Other features include numerous species of exotic banksias, emu bushes, and a grove of one of Australia’s more unusual trees, Brachychiton rupestris.

The New Zealand Garden displays a variety of foliage textures and colors beneath the broad canopy of a stunning New Zealand Christmas tree.

The Entry Garden is an aesthetic patchwork representing some of the best plants from each of the arboretum’s many gardens.

The picturesque pattern of the boxwood parterre interplanted with various clipped topiaries in the Formal Garden is best viewed from the overlook deck.

Along two sides of the parterre is the Dwarf and Unusual Conifer Garden, displaying several uncommon conifers including some with a weeping habit and others with golden or bluish foliage.