

1 **SUNNYLANDS CENTER AND GARDENS**

RANCHO MIRAGE, CA

A MODERN DESERT GARDEN IN SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA EXPRESSES A NEW ECOLOGICAL AESTHETIC FOR ARID LANDSCAPES.

Pioneering a new ecological aesthetic for arid landscapes in the southwest, Sunnylands Center & Gardens is a nine-acre desert jewel amid Rancho Mirage's conventional, thirsty sprawl. The new Interpretive Center and Botanical Gardens celebrate the cultural legacy of publisher, diplomat, and philanthropist Walter Annenberg and his wife Lenore, whose adjacent 200-acre estate has long been a retreat for U.S. Presidents, foreign dignitaries, and celebrities. Working closely with Mrs. Annenberg, OJB created a collection of museum quality garden spaces that invite discovery and reflection.

Organic and free-flowing at the edges of the site, the lines of hardscape surfaces and planting beds take on a geometric precision adjacent to the Center. Located past a gracious entry drive and formal autocourt, Frederick Fisher and Partners' 15,000 SF LEED Gold rated building houses exhibition space, a café, a theater, and a gift shop. The Center's western windows frame views to the 10,000 foot-high San Jacinto Mountains beyond. To the right and left of the terrace, twin reflecting basins mirror the expansive desert sky, lower the ambient temperature, and fill the area with the relaxing sound of water. More than 1.25 miles of walking trails lead visitors past the circular event lawn, beneath flowering palo verde desert trees, to a labyrinth garden, a performance circle, and interpretive displays of native plants.

The planting design features 53,000 hand-picked specimens from over 50 arid landscape plant species chosen for their sculptural character, seasonal interest, and wildlife habitat value. Innovative water efficiency measures throughout the site allow the garden to thrive using only 20% of its water allocation from the Coachella Valley Water District.



Client: Annenberg Foundation Trust

Team: Frederick Fisher and Partners,
CMS Collaborative, HLB Lighting Design,
Hillmann & Carr,
MSA Consulting, Litwak Group

Awards: ASLA National Design Award
ASLA San Diego Design Award
Architectural Foundation of Los Angeles
(AFLA) Design Award

















