

## Happy Trails

With all the attention to alternate transportation and the health of our society, it is no wonder that trails are becoming a popular design alternative. Trails fit very well into otherwise useless left over space along utility easements and drainage channels. Trail systems fill many functions providing safe routes to school, recreational opportunities, walking the dog, walking the kids or time to just get outside and enjoy nature. Trails appeal to many people and can be used by the young, the old, walkers, joggers, bicyclers, skaters, dogs and horses.



SLA recently completed a three mile trail along the Las Vegas Wash in North Las Vegas. The trail runs along the wash from Craig to Deer Springs passing through several neighborhoods, nearby schools, parks, shopping and offices. The trail is paved and can be used for all types of pedestrian traffic. Desert landscape provides shade and visual interest for the pedestrians. There are various nodes or rest areas along the way. Some are simply benches while others have shade shelters and picnic tables. The largest contains an exercise course.

Since this trail runs along a major drainage channel, we wanted to have a water theme without using water. In order to accomplish this, we designed resting rails, benches and markers out of pipe materials, connections and valves painted with bright colors. The distance along the trail is marked by one of these pipe features. Orange colored pipe markers are at the ¼ mile distances and green markers note ½ mile points. The pipe features give this section of the trail a unique appearance and identity helping users know where they are on the entire trail system.

Our valley is full of wonderful trail systems. City and County websites have maps of each of their trail systems. Become familiar with the trails near your home or work and use these wonderful amenities to enrich your life.

“My definition of an expert in any field is a person who knows enough about what's really going on to be scared” - P. J. Plauger

## FAVORITE FLORA: ARBUTUS UNEDO- STRAWBERRY TREE

Focal points are as important in the landscape as they are in any other form of design. One example of a focal point in the landscape could be a specimen tree. The Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*) has the form and size that lends itself to this use. This native tree to the western Mediterranean and Ireland is slow growing to 8-15 ft. in our climate. The Strawberry Tree is evergreen with 2-3 inch long dark green leaves. It has a low branching form with reddish-brown trunks and branches. As the tree gets older the branching pattern often becomes twisted and gnarled adding interest to the tree. Contrasting the dark leaves are clusters of small white flowers and red fruits which appear in fall and winter. The plants botanical name *unedo* is derived from *unum edo* meaning "I eat one." This is



thought to come from the fruits which are edible but usually very bland tasting.

In Las Vegas the Strawberry tree is best suited in a shaded or partially shaded area as its dark green leaves may burn in our direct sunlight. It is a very hardy tree that can withstand cold and hot temperatures as well as poor soils. The fruits can attract birds and other wildlife to the landscape but its most attractive quality is its form. Be careful not to plant too many shrubs in front of this tree so as not to block the trunk structure. Lighting this tree so that it casts its branching pattern on to a wall is a striking addition to a landscape at night.

## Photo of the Month



Sign... Mailbox...  
Iron Mountain, California  
Stan Southwick