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## Friendship Park and the Bi-national Friendship Garden of Native Plants



### Friendship Park

Friendship Park has been a gathering space for generations on the US/Mexico border. Up until about 10 years ago when a new border wall was put in, families separated by immigration status and people in general from both sides of the border could meet easily through the border fence. Now, there is an additional border wall and very restricted access on the US side. Border Encuentro used to do common interests events for people to make friends through the fence (yoga classes, salsa dancing lessons, poetry readings, and language exchanges) and in March of 2007 planted a bi-national Garden of Native Plants.

The dual purpose of the garden is to create a space where people can make friends across the border and promote native flora of the region. The design is four bi-national circles that connect through the primary border wall. The garden has become part of the park and part of the struggle in general for more public access to Friendship Park.

A coalition of environmental and human rights groups and individuals called the Friends of Friendship Park continues to resist the ever increasing militarization as we push for more access on the US side in order to allow cross-border friendship.

### Realimenta Comunidad Community "Feed" back

While the relationship with the Department of Homeland Security and Friends of Friendship Park has been difficult, the local municipality on the Mexican side is very supportive of the bi-national garden and the area is open to the public at all hours. Through this openness, interest, and activity, the bi-national garden has grown with native plant workshops, community planting, and art projects.

At the end of 2015, a grassroots food justice organization called "Cultiva Ya" in Tijuana joined with the bi-national garden to give workshops to the community on the Mexican side on how to grow their own food and at every workshop the participants installed two 3 meter-long raised food beds with a variety of seasonal vegetables.

By the end of 2016, there were ten food beds installed meant for nearby migrants and homeless/hungry to take advantage of. They are harvested every Sunday and yield around 50 salads for the public. The goal in 2017 is to build a compost bin to create employment for locals collecting organic waste from local restaurants.



Friendship Park is a park along the United States-Mexico border in San Diego-Tijuana. It is within Border Field State Park, a California state park, and includes the border fence dividing the two countries. It was dedicated in 1971 by Pat Nixon. Friends of Friendship Park is an organization of community members working for unrestricted access to this historic border site. The organization works on behalf of many families who depend on the park to see their families and friends.