

He Keeps the Village Green

Greg Dauss believes that if you improve people's surroundings, you improve their quality of life. As the horticulturist in charge of Carlsbad Village's lush landscaping, he's enhanced the quality of life here by preserving what he calls the city's "small-town quaintness" and "soul."

"After all these years I've become attached to these plants. It's personal," says Dauss, a maintenance worker for the Carlsbad Parks and Recreation Department.

Since starting a pilot landscaping program for the City of Carlsbad nine years ago, Dauss has transformed the Village landscape into a seaside oasis, introducing a wide variety of tropical species and hybrids. Some of the planted areas are unlike any other coastal city.

Bromeliads, ferns, purple crown shaft king palms, ornamental

ing days as weekend bar-hoppers usually leave their trash behind. He tries to get the streets cleaned up before the merchants open at 10 a.m.

Of course most of his job is tending and watering the plants. Dauss maintains the 61 concrete planters around the Village and all the landscapes that include boulders, most of which he designed. His goal for Carlsbad Village has always been visual impact. Dauss tries to put as much greenery as he can on each block.

Dauss encourages home gardeners to experiment. "So much of gardening knowledge is gained through failure. You learn by screwing up." He also advises that it's not how often you water, but how you do it: A cycle-and-soak method entails watering plants for three to five minutes at a time, waiting an hour and repeating two to three times. Do this three times a week and use a



As the city employee responsible for maintaining Carlsbad Village, Greg Dauss (center) has given the area a lush, tropical feel with his landscaping (left and right).

grasses and flowering perennials fill his favorite section of the Village, which he refers to as "his baby": the area by the "Welcome to Carlsbad" sign at the north entrance of town. This corner was a chance for Dauss to be creative and use his artistic eye.

"They [the City] let me use my imagination and really run with it," he says. "I like to put in plants that people normally wouldn't think of, like palms with succulents."

Dauss studied nursery management and landscaping at Saddleback College, and has been in the horticulture industry for 38 years. He has an extensive personal collection of tillandsias, commonly called air plants, with more than 550 different species and hybrids. Dauss—who lives with his wife of 13 years, Rana, and their dog, Rufie—especially likes to raise and collect tropical and exotic species, which he trades in Europe and South America. The bromeliads flourishing in the Village are from his collection.

A typical day for Dauss and his three-person crew—the other two work at the beach—also includes maintaining the sidewalks, beaches, bathrooms and paint on railings and other surfaces, and cleaning up trash and graffiti. Mondays are especially busy clean-

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lot of mulch. A more offbeat tip: play music. "I would never play something like Black Sabbath or rap to the plants," he says. "My friend used to play John Denver to his plants and he had the best-looking plants around." •

A LOOK AT DAUSS'S JOB BY THE NUMBERS

- 6: The morning hour when his work day starts
- 1: Hours spent weeding each week
- 1,000: Flowers planted each year
- 200: Pounds of organic fertilizer used each year
- 2-3: Times the Village landscape is watered each week
- 12: New species introduced since 2003