A GROWING GARDEN

Naples Botanical Garden reopens after 17 months of renovations, making its 70 developed acres the second-largest in Florida

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The Naples Botanical Garden reopens this Saturday in a huge way. It will come out of its 17-month hiatus as the second-largest developed botanical garden in the state, with 70 developed acres. After its final three-phase gardens are developed, possibly next year, it will likely be the largest.

Yet its beginnings were flower-pot size. A number of people on its first board remember packing up their backyard plants to raise when they needed to pay a lecture room rental fee.

"We had this free lecture series," recalled Susan Gallagher, one of the members of the original board. "They were just people interested. And we'd have a plant sale from things we brought in. There were enough plants so if you bought any tickets at all, you'd go home with a plant."

Win. Former, a landscaper, garden neighbor.
Big, bigger, bigger
Naples Botanical Garden will open as the second largest developed botanic garden in the world—and it will be a place to be seen, a place that will be a destination for tourists, for families, for people who want to experience nature in a new way.

and volunteer since 1993, remembers organizing lunch-chair troops to promote the concept, serving food from his own backyard.

"The thing about it — it wasn't that long ago that they were doing all this," marvelled Brian Holley, executive director of the Naples Botanical Garden. He wasn't around for those first few years in 1995, but acknowledged that small things will always underlie the marvels. Late Friday garden staff and volunteers were digging holes for 4,000 little filler plants.

Tourist has been one of those digging up to 200 a day to plant the gardens. A new group of 200 will be added to the gardens in 2013, and the Naples Botanical Garden will open in 2016, with a full schedule of events planned for the year.

"There's no cure in Turner's voice when he talks about their original idea. It is a rock pit, before they sold their land for its next potential fate: a low-density housing development. The first botanical garden board, thanks to a $10 million gift from the late Harvey K. Capron, bought it instead, turning it into a half-acre sapling area for a state park.

"I believe that Turner's view of the garden is one of the most important things we've done in our lives. It is one of those things that goes beyond the normal and becomes an important, and permanent, part of the future of Naples."