FEW EXCHANGES are perfect, but the one between the California Conservation Corps and the Los Angeles Department of Arboretum and Botanic Gardens seems to come close. Since it was first established in 1976, the CCC has sought projects that will help its 18 to 20-year-old members mature and learn as they work to preserve and protect California's natural heritage. These projects concentrate on meaningful, necessary public works such as trail building, park development, wildlife habitat restoration, and erosion control for government and community agencies.

The Department, on the other hand, always has improvements that need to be done but which must be put off indefinitely because employees are already busy with regular work.

Crews of 12 to 14 young men and women live and work out of the 18 CCC base centers throughout California and usually spend one week at each project before being rotated to a different project. Corps members from the Ft. McArthur center were assigned to an orchard planting project at South Coast Botanic Gardens. In early winter, they cleared the ground and planted apple trees to expand the deciduous fruit orchard. They also planted ground covers and trees in the entrance way frontage along Crenshaw Blvd.

The projects at the Arboretum gave the corps from the San Gabriel Canyon center experience in marketable skills while promoting good work habits and self-discipline. Carpentry skills were emphasized while crews were rebuilding the bridge at the top of the waterfall and constructing the cedar split rail fences by the Queen Anne Cottage and the Herb Garden.

Building an extension at the western end of the flagstone walk by the Herb Garden interpretive center and recessing a new stone bench into the bank under the birches at the opposite end of the walk gave corps members practice at masonry construction.

One of the basic requirements in conservation is soil stabilization, work that needed to be done in several areas of the Arboretum. The decomposed granite paths in the Meadowbrook area were eroding into the stream, so corps members corrected the grading and resurfaced the paths. The base of Tallac Knoll was the site of two other CCC erosion control projects. Railroad ties were installed on the north slope beside the Herb Garden to hold the...
soil and make the path safer for visitors. On the south slope they built a new path that loops around the native oaks and the expanded display of native plants. The area now contains about 75 new plants including several varieties each of native agaves, yuccas, ceanothus, fremontias, and manzanitas.

Planting the slope was a challenge because crews had to learn the proper way to plant and water young shrubs in hillside basins. As the display matures, it will show gardeners a selection of California native plants that are especially well suited for use in home gardens.

Crews from the Simi Valley center are scheduled to make several improvements at Descanso Gardens. The first major project will be the removal of poison oak from an area near the native plant garden to accommodate the plants already waiting in the growing area for transplantation. Corpsmembers will also plant redwoods in a different part of the gardens. Frequent washouts in a canyon area prompted plans for a stone wall that crews will build to stabilize the soil there.

By the time the exchange between the Department and the CCC has been completed, many improvements at all the gardens will be apparent to visitors. Less obvious but just as important are the intangible benefits the young corpsmembers will have gained from their demanding and essential work for the Department.

Photos by William Aplin

After the mortar in the flagstone path by the Herb Garden hardened, CCC members began removing the temporary header boards.

Baldwin Bonanza Ten Sunday May 4, 1980

Preview Party for California Arboretum Foundation Members and their Guests

Reserve the date:
Saturday May 3, 1980
5:30 - 8:00 p.m.

Enjoy the best selection of plants, entertainment and refreshments.

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