

Garden paradise grows in Sierra City

By Debbie Arrington, Sacramento Bee

Painters and photographers are making the long trek up Highway 49 again this summer to capture one perfect moment, maybe more.

They set up their easels or tripods near the bridge that arches gracefully over the spring-fed pond. They surround themselves with blooming rhododendrons and native azaleas in the forest shade. Or they focus on the majestic buttes that tower over this little valley and gleam in the late-afternoon sun.

All this makes Don Phillips smile. He loves sharing his Big Springs Gardens with others. He's happy to see so many people enjoying it, too.

"People come up to me with almost tears in their eyes," he said. "They tell me how beautiful it is and how wonderful that's it's open. That's what keeps me going. I want to make it work."

Big Springs Gardens is Phillips' passion. On 113 acres surrounding his Sierra City home, he devoted 30 acres to a serene vision and a flower-filled forest with miles of trails and unforgettable views.

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