

Valley students join global project

Seven schools will help in test of new planter designed for arid climates

BY MICHELLE MITCHELL

The Desert Sun

Palm Springs students left the classroom on Thursday to participate in a global experiment designed to prevent climate change, deforestation, hunger and poverty.

"I think it's good because we're going to be a part of this," Raymond Cree Middle School seventh-grader Mirna Mosqueda, 12, said.

About 50 Raymond Cree students planted native trees in the Whitewater Preserve using the "Groasis Waterboxx" — an innovative planter designed to allow trees to thrive even in harsh or damaged land.

With the help of local students, inventor Pieter Hoff is perfecting the waterboxx by testing it in harsh conditions on every continent.

The American test plants are planned for areas surrounding the Coachella Valley and the area damaged by the 2006 Sawtooth wildfire.

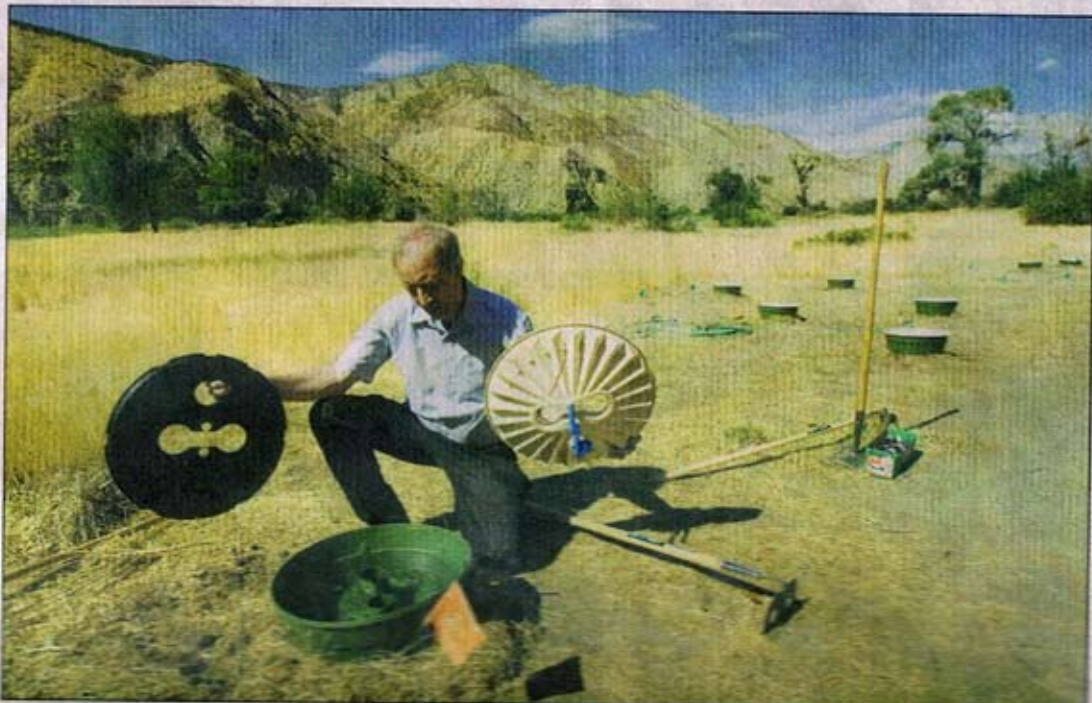
"If I can prove that it works here, then nobody will doubt that it can work in their own garden," said Hoff, a native of Holland.

The waterboxx is designed to provide inexpensive and sustainable irrigation using condensation — and no energy.

Initial experiments show that the waterboxx is about 90 percent successful in allowing plants to grow in desert, rock and land damaged by drought, flood, fire or strip mining.

Thursday was the first day in a three-week planting period to restore the natural vegetation that will include

Please see **WATERBOXX, A4**



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Pieter Hoff, CEO of AquaPro, demonstrates the simple design of the Groasis Waterboxx, which is a planter that is self-sustainable with an initial source of 16 liters of water. Some 160 of the planters will be used in an experiment at the Whitewater Preserve. The planters were put together by Raymond Cree Middle School students.

Plant your own — waterboxx family day

The Whitewater Preserve is hosting a Family Waterboxx Planting Day on Saturday.

Plantings will happen from 9 to 10:30 a.m. Activities for all ages, such as guided nature walks and restoration projects, will be held from 10:30 a.m. to noon.

The Whitewater Preserve is at 9160 Whitewater Canyon Road.

Information: (760) 325-7222

A closer look

Find out how the Groasis Waterboxx works. **A4**



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Raymond Cree Middle School students (from left) Maria Nuño, Dajanae Alexander and Maia Alvarado assemble a Groasis Waterboxx at the Whitewater Preserve.