



Owner, Samantha Owens



Barrels & Branches Garden & Gift

Nestled ever so quaintly on Santa Fe Drive near El Camino Real, Barrels & Branches is easy to miss as you drive by. This pristine and lush oasis is situated on roughly two-acres of one of the last parcels of underdeveloped land in Encinitas, and it's quite a sanctuary. Owner and lifelong Encinitas resident Samantha Owens opened Barrels & Branches in August of 2005.

"I was actually born and raised in Encinitas—I grew up on this property. I'm a third generation Encinitan," said Samantha. "My grandma was one of the first people to live here. My dad purchased this land in 1968 and it was nothing but a cow barn. There was no Santa Fe Drive or El Camino Real—it was just a dirt road with a duck pond."

With seven employees, Barrels & Branches is a full service nursery that provides a wide array of services that includes a complete range of landscaping, maintenance (specialized pruning and clean up), consultations, landscape design, and installation. They also have a delivery service. Every square inch of the property is utilized, and their specialty is more of a Mediterranean drought-tolerant plant palette with succulents and houseplants being their main sellers.

The property is massive with rock-lined pathways winding through bamboo thickets, two ponds stocked with frogs, and an incredible

display of succulent gardens—a sea of green at every turn. It's a very relaxing and tranquil environment, to say the least. "We're more like a botanical garden than a nursery. We sell plants here, but we're more of a destination and an experience," smiled Samantha.

Basically, there are four different levels at Barrels & Branches. The property is almost two acres, so each section is like it's own little zone. On the lower section, you'll find the gift shop where they sell a lot of consignment items from local artists like handmade pottery, and they also feature a variety of herbs, edible veggies, houseplants, air plants, crystals, and organic dry goods for pest management and fertilizing. Barrels & Branches also specializes in locally grown perennials and unusual shrubs.

Level two features an extensive succulent selection, a four-inch perennial table, and it's also the space where they have wedding ceremonies. The third level features an event space and a shade house. It's concreted in and provides tables and chairs, lighting, and much needed summertime shade. It's really gorgeous at night when it's all lit up. People can rent out the entire nursery for events, and they have workshops, classes, and bridal showers in this space as well.

Barrels & Branches also hosts driftwood workshops on the weekends—where you take a piece of driftwood that's hollowed out and they teach you how take the cuttings and plant it. They offer ceramic pot and macramé classes as well. "Our events have been a really creative way to bring in parts of our community that might not be seeking out a nursery," explained Samantha.

The fourth (top) level features a gazebo where you can get a bird's eye view of the eastern mountains in solitude. Smaller more intimate events and classes are usually held on the top deck. There's also a belly bar located there as well. Overall, every level is amazing and the vibe at Barrels & Branches is mellow and inviting—you'll get that "at home" feeling right away as you walk in.

The nursery is open seven days a week (8am-5pm), so take some time out of your busy day and check it out this hidden gem of Encinitas—you really need to see the property in person to capture the true essence of it.

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