



FRED GLADDIS/ENTERPRISE PHOTOS

Diane Ullman, co-founder of the UC Davis Art-Science Fusion Program, admires the *Opuntia humifusa* tile as she sits on a bench in the Ruth Risdon Storer Garden at the UCD Arboretum. Behind her is the Iris Pacific Coast hybrid tile. Below is the *Eristalis tenax* (bee) tile. A fundraising campaign is under way to permanently install the tiles on a 26-foot-long curved wall.

Mosaic mural needs a home

'Nature's Garden' would be the focal point of a UCD Arboretum courtyard

By Cory Golden
ENTERPRISE STAFF WRITER

Once they graced the U.S. Botanical Garden on the National Mall and later the California State Fair. But for now, the 140 colorful tiles of a mosaic mural called "Nature's Garden" remain in wooden crates, locked away in a storage locker.

"It's so phenomenally sad," said Diane Ullman, co-founder of the UC Davis Art-Science Fusion Program. "I go there periodically just to gaze lovingly at them."

Now, though, fundraising

is under way to pay for permanently installing the ceramic tiles on a curved wall measuring 26 feet long and more than 11 feet high at the UC Davis Arboretum.

It will be between the Ruth Risdon Storer Garden, which showcases the drought-tolerant plants and



attracts the insects that inspired the tiles, and the

Arboretum Teaching Nursery just off Garrod Drive.

Plans by Davis landscape architect Ron Lutsko call for a tree-lined courtyard with the "Nature's Garden" as its focal point.

Ullman said those who've seen the wall of tiles — a sort of "ceramic flower garden" — seem drawn to it.

"It is really almost a visceral response that people have to it, in a good way," she said. "It's almost sensual. There's texture and the colors. Everybody loves flowers."

"A lot of people just walk up and start touching it, running their hands over the flowers and insects."

Forty students from Entomology I and 40 community members created the tiles over just eight weeks in the spring of 2007.

Friends of the Arboretum, university staff, faculty and assorted children worked with the students under the guidance of Ullman, a professor and associate dean in the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences,

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The "Nature's Garden" ceramic flower and insect tiles were displayed as they were intended to be — on a curved wall measuring more than 26 feet long and 11 feet high — on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., as part of an installation sponsored by the American Public Gardens Association to celebrate public gardens.

COURTESY PHOTO

MURAL: Court would be part of GATEways Project

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and the program's co-founder, artist Donna Billick.

When Ullman looks at the tiles, she sees the people who made them.

There was Liseth Dominguez, a student who created a yellow iris. She was a freshman at the time, but is one of several students who have remained in close touch with Ullman.

"She wrote me a beautiful letter about how much working on it meant to her," Ullman said. "She keeps a picture of it on her bulletin board to inspire her."

There was a small group of seniors who wanted to take part but who had never tried making ceramics. Ullman encouraged them to work together on a tile.

There were community members Judy Gilchrist and Katherine West, who, after finishing their own tiles, put in 40 hours or more of grouting.

And there was Bob Segar, assistant vice chancellor for campus planning, working alongside 10-year-old Toni Rizzo, the daughter of plant pathology Professor David Rizzo, and so many others, carrying the tiles, one by one, from the studio to packing crates waiting on a truck.

Though hundreds of thousands of other visitors to the National Mall did, only a handful of the artists were able to see the Washington, D.C., installation sponsored by the American Public Gardens Association to celebrate public gardens.

And all those fairgoers in 2008 saw the tiles displayed on a flat wall, not a curved one as it was intended.

The campaign for the permanent installation is off to a promising start, said Suzanne Ullensvang, the Arboretum's resource development manager. Since late November, donations have been made to dedicate 16 plant and 12 insect tiles

out of 152 total tiles.

The cost to dedicate a 16-by-21-inch plant tile is \$1,500; for a 6-by-8-inch insect tile, it's \$500.

Money raised will pay for the installation and go to support both the Arboretum's education programming and the Art-Science Fusion Program.

The finished "Nature's Gallery" court, at the Arboretum's west entrance, is part of the GATEways Project, an effort to turn the Arboretum into a physical and programmatic gateway to the campus. (GATEways stands for Gardens, Arts and The Environment.)

Ullensvang and Ullman imagine

a place where people will meet, sit and read, take the engraved name of a plant from a tile and find it in the neighboring garden, or even hold a small wedding ceremony.

First, though, Ullman can't wait for the day when all who took part can see their tiles out in the sun.

"It's going to be an absolutely glorious moment."

To view the tiles or to learn more about the project, see <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu>.

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