

Final Report to
Slosson Research Endowment for Ornamental Horticulture
for work completed in 2005-06

**Central Valley Gardening:
Interpretive Signs for the Demonstration Gardens
at the UC Davis Arboretum**

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Introduction

The UC Davis Arboretum is a living museum and an outdoor classroom, used for horticultural education by students and teachers at all levels, research scientists, horticultural professionals, home gardeners, and general visitors. The Arboretum is uniquely positioned to educate Central Valley gardeners. The UC Davis Arboretum has a strong commitment to practicing and teaching environmentally-responsible horticulture with the goal of moving toward a sustainable future. This project was designed to make the Arboretum demonstration gardens more useful as a source of information and inspiration for home gardeners. We developed interpretive signs to provide insight into the ideas behind the gardens, provide specific information about plants and gardening, help change visitors' attitudes about what constitutes a beautiful garden, and inspire them to make the transition to low-input, low-maintenance gardening using heat-tolerant and low-water-use landscape plants.

Goals/Objectives

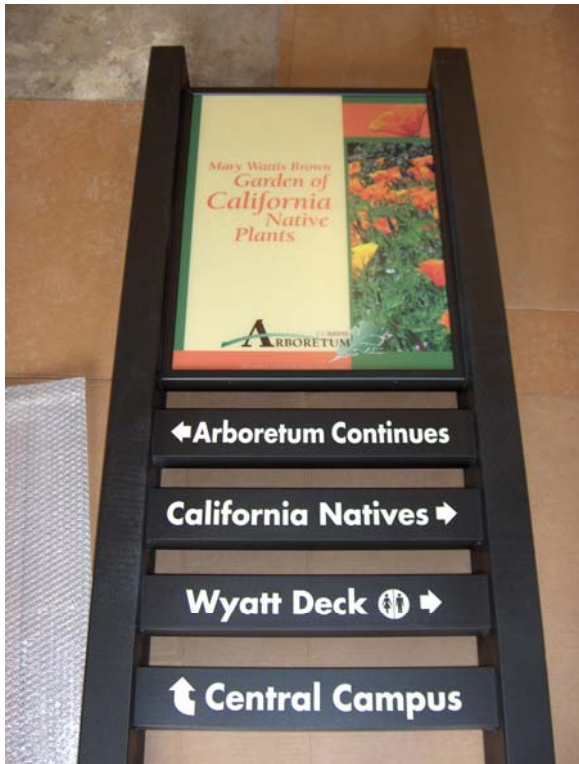
The goals of the project were:

- 1) To develop conceptual organizer and orientation/wayfinding signs for the Arboretum's demonstration gardens.
- 2) To develop changing signs in the Arboretum Terrace Garden.

Discussion

Orientation/Wayfinding signs

Wayfinding signs are important for visitor comfort and helping visitors navigate the Arboretum. We created four wayfinding signs for three of our demonstration gardens.



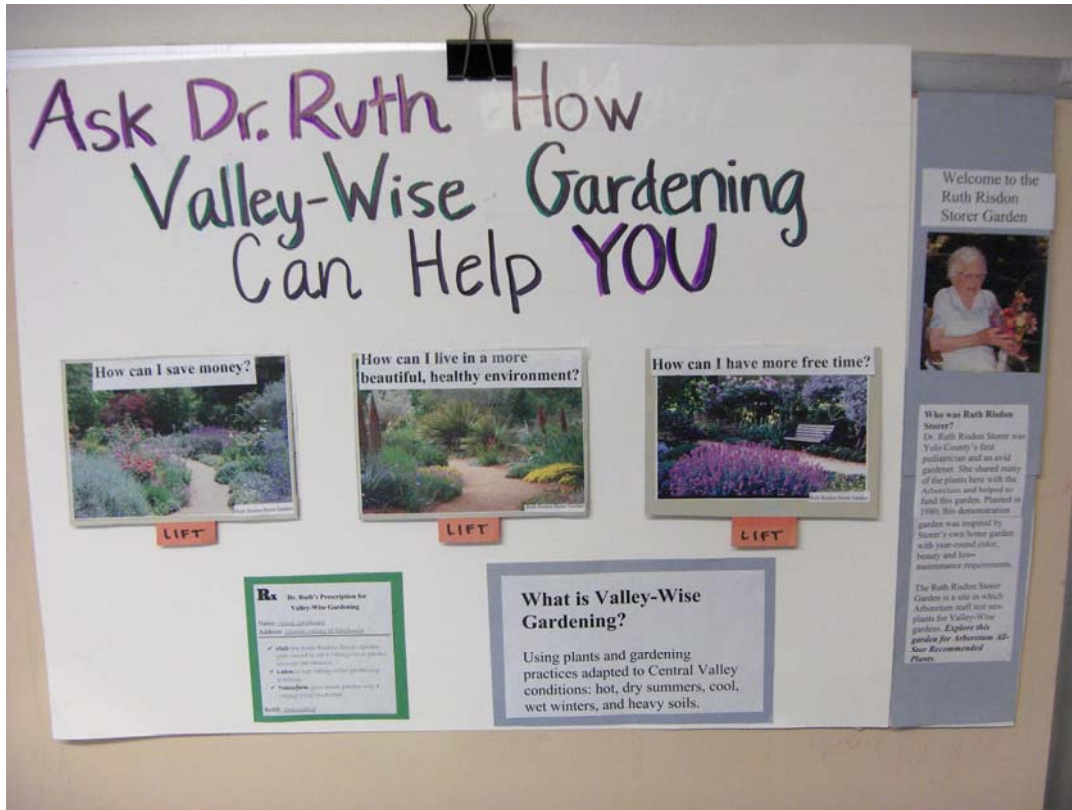
Mary Watis Brown Garden wayfinding sign



Wayfinding sign installed

Conceptual Organizer signs

We developed two conceptual organizer signs to provide visitors with a conceptual framework for learning about our demonstration gardens. The signs were created through the Arboretum's innovative team-based exhibit development process. This process involves testing mock-ups of signs with visitors to be sure each sign 1) attracts attention, 2) holds attention, and 3) communicates effectively. [Since this report will go on their website and into their annual publication, I would not mention that the project is unfinished.



Mock-up of Ruth Risdon Storer Garden conceptual organizer sign

Changing Signs for the Terrace Demonstration Garden

We have developed a seasonal series of changing signs to highlight great plants for Central Valley gardens. In each season, signs identify the plants that have striking features that make them a good choice for our region.

Project Successes

This funding from the Elvenia J. Slosson Foundation has allowed us to create a better experience for our visitors. Improved orientation, wayfinding, and organizing signs make it easier for visitors to learn about appropriate horticulture in the Central Valley. We are committed to continuing to interpret our plant collections in this way.