

Garden Highlights

New Design for Mary Wattis Brown Garden

The Arboretum recently retained landscape architect Cheryl Mihalko to give us some suggestions for improving the visual continuity of the Mary Wattis Brown Garden of California native plants and the western part of the Mrak Hall area. With her help we will be renovating some of the oldest plantings and adding several new areas. Some of the highlights of Ms. Mihalko's design are shown in the plan below.

The design brings symmetry to the Arboretum's two entrances at the intersection of Old Davis Road and Mrak Hall Drive. This will be the main point of connection with the brand new Visitor's Center now being built on the opposite corner. Her plans call for the realignment of the western corner's pathway to match the eastern corner, thus providing a new triangular planting space to match the existing mix of *Ceanothus* 'Concha' and dwarf coyote bush found across the street. The number of posts and utility boxes will be reduced to a minimum by combining functions in one location.

As visitors enter the Mary Wattis Brown Garden from the west, they will still stroll down the naturalistic pathway, but bicycles will be encouraged to use the new roadway level sidewalk connecting the corner with the asphalt pathway. Walkers will have the best experience of the new mid-elevation garden. The existing Jeffrey pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*) structure will be strengthened by the addition of several *Pinus ponderosa* along the top of the embankment. An understory emphasizing light wispy forms will be drawn from a plant palette selected for blade

structure, fine texture and fragrance. Long horizontal bands of yellow, white, and orange wild flowers will stretch through the grasses and groundcovers complemented with a small accent of fragrant purple flowers. Unplanted areas will be left covered with bleached white wood mulch.

Silver Blue and Gray Garden

Walkers will then enter the silver blue & gray garden. The garden's name refers to foliage color; flower color will be limited to reds and red-oranges. A pathway is now under construction in this area to bring travellers off the main thoroughfare and into the more hidden areas. A widened alcove opposite the footbridge will have two benches and will serve as the trailhead and meeting place. This garden will be the most intensely planted early on. Many of the existing plants have been removed to make way for a long list of new gray, blue, and silver foliaged California natives. Existing blue oaks (*Quercus douglasii*) and the white-barked buckeye (*Aesculus californica*) will anchor additions such as: *Artemisia tridentata* (big sagebrush), *Artemisia californica* 'Montara', *A. californica* 'Canyon Grey' (prostrate California sagebrush), *A. pycnocephala* 'David's Choice', *Eriogonum grande* var. *rubescens*, *E. giganteum*, *Yucca whipplei*, *Festuca californica* "Berkeley Blue", *Rhamnus californica* var. *crassifolia* (a very gray Tehama County form), *Dudleya cymosa*, *Salvia*



MARY WATTIS BROWN GARDEN
University of California, Davis Arboretum
Plan by Cheryl Mihalko, October 1990