

# Clay creations by Mariposa Elementary students will soon inhabit school gardens

*By Penny E. Schwartz, Correspondent – Redlands Daily Facts*

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(REDLANDS, CA) When students return to Mariposa Elementary School in August, the gardens will be decorated with sculptures they spent the spring semester creating.

“Each student is making a component piece that will be stacked on top of others to create a totem (pole),” said [Lisa Tucker](#), a Redlands ceramacist who has been overseeing the project.

After Tucker directed a tile project at Crafton Elementary School, one of the Mariposa mothers contacted her about doing an art project there.

“The P.T.A. wanted to bring art to the school since there are no regular art classes,” Tucker said. They decided on garden sculptures as a colorful enhancement to the school environment.

“The kids are really excited about it and love the project,” she said.

Before they began early in the spring semester, Tucker asked the children to think about the things they love in nature. They came up with ideas for animals, plants and even a depiction of the solar system, she said.

About 600 students, from every grade level, have participated in the project.

“It’s a challenge working with all grades but the teachers have been really great,” said Tucker, who has spent every Tuesday since January working at Mariposa.

Younger children worked with flat shapes while older participants began by making pinch pots that they honed into their final creations.

“I made two holes in my pot and made a pig, which I painted pink,” said Jahaan Patel, 10. “I’m enjoying the project because you get to make whatever you want and it gets me out of class,” he said with a laugh.

Amber Phillips, 10, has been hard at work painting her clay cat orange and brown to resemble a tabby. She wanted to make a cat because she enjoys drawing them, she said. “I haven’t done sculpting before and this gave me a chance to make a 3-D cat.”

A “Donald Trump blob fish” was the creation of Corinne Garber, 10, who settled on the idea after her attempted rendition of a dragon didn’t pan out. She chose brown, green, yellow and blue for the fishy colors. “I like doing art at school,” she said of the sculpture and other crafts projects her teacher sometimes does in class.

After fashioning their clay into its final form and letting it dry, students painted their creations with an under glaze of clay and color before the first bisque firing in the school's own kiln. Afterwards, Tucker will dip the pieces into a clear glaze to create a shiny finish, then fire them again to obtain the final results.

Tucker said she finds children naturally creative, with great imaginations.

“There is little filter between their imaginations and real life and they are not afraid to express themselves,” she said.

“It is fun to see kids’ art because it is so imaginative and really shows their personalities.”

The totems will be installed sometime over the summer so that they will greet returning students for the fall semester. Tucker was not yet sure where on the campus they will be placed.

“The students have been really fun to work with,” she said. “They are so funny and clever and I didn’t have to try to get their attention.”