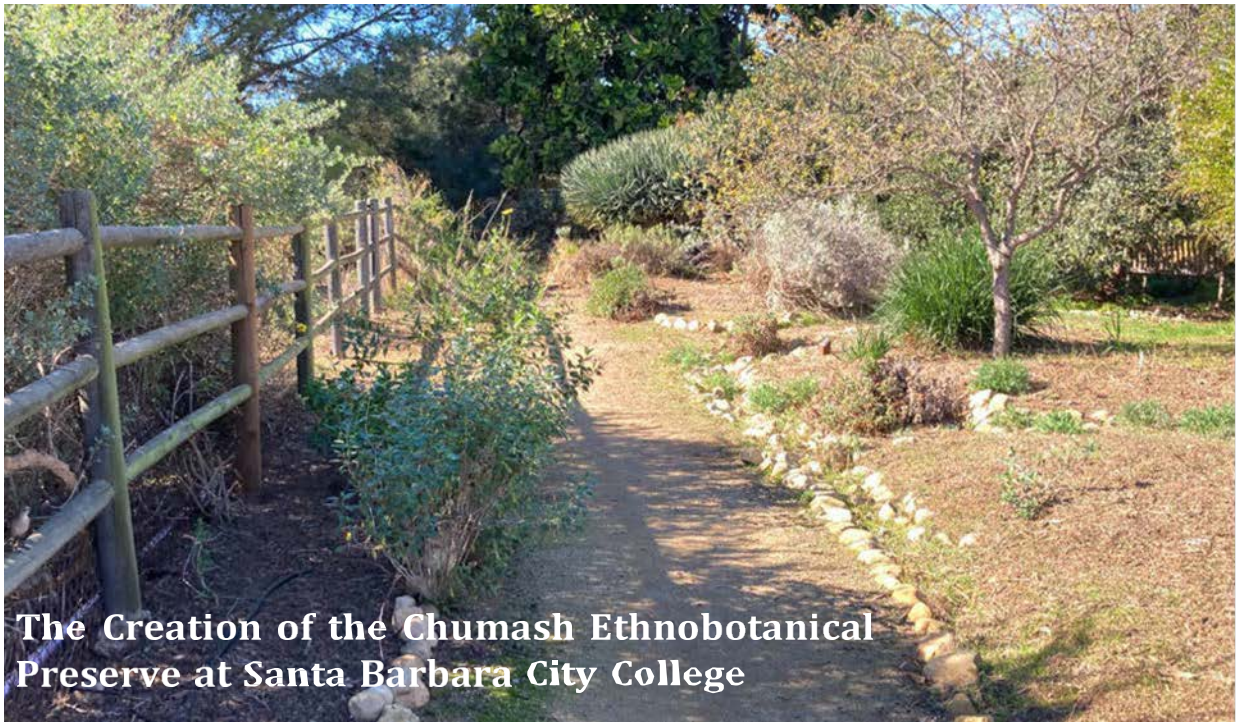


A view of the strolling pathway through the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

by Jerry Sortomme, Professor Emeritus, SBCC Environmental Horticulture, and Ruth Hamilton, SBCC Environmental Horticulture student

Introduction

The Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve (CEP) is an area of land that is historically the site of a Chumash village and is now part of SBCC's East Campus. It is currently a portion of SBCC's Environmental Horticulture Department's Lifescape Garden in which horticulture students practice many of their landscaping skills while in class. The CEP is the most south facing portion of this garden and houses a collection of many native plants, all important to the Chumash people. It is open to the public to visit during the day for free. Mike Gonella, Prof. and Chair of the Environmental Horticulture Dept., is the current manager of the Preserve.

The following are reflections of Jerry Sortomme:

The origin of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve and Chumash community involvement in its creation

When I hired on at SBCC as the temporary full-time Chair/Director in the Fall of 1980 the name of the program was titled Landscape Horticulture. My contract was a one-year trial experiment to determine if SBCC might want to upgrade and include the existing part-time SBCC Horticulture Program, to become a full-time status program that was clumped into the Applied Technologies Division [the Division included: Drafting, Electronics, Auto Technology, Hotel Restaurant & Culinary, Welding, Horticulture, etc.] Pre 1980 the LH Program was only a part-time Landscape Horticulture Program and had no full-time Instructor/Chair position.

As I gathered together LH Department part-time staff to teach lecture & lab classes, I was confronted with the situation that there were no *reserved or permanent* SBCC outdoor campus sites to teach on-campus practical labs for LH apprentice students earning a career Horticulture Certificate. Dean Mel Elkins of the Applied Technologies Division urged and was successful at having SBCC set aside assigned Campus undeveloped land on the West Campus in 1980, where only the Garvin Theater existed, to be used for practical lab space. Quite soon afterwards, SBCC began to build and develop the West Campus. That construction activity would intrude upon activities needed to teach the LH Department's practical lab classes.

My trial academic year as Chair/Instructor became a tentative full-time designation status in 1981. In 1982-83, the SBCC Administration designated a portion of the unbuildable apron- strip of cliff edge and land adjacent to the parking lot on East Campus to become the Landscape Horticulture (LH) Program's on-campus practical outdoor laboratory teaching site. This included a long strip of land that had been used in prior years as a community garden. Situated on the main campus, the oceanside, cliff-face zone, it paralleled the campus parking lot across from the SBCC cafeteria. This land was substituted for the land that LH lost to West Campus construction. This indeed became the site of the LH Department's student Lifescape Garden, practical lab site.

Sacred Datura, called momoy by the Chumash, is an important plant in Chumash culture and grows naturally in the Preserve. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

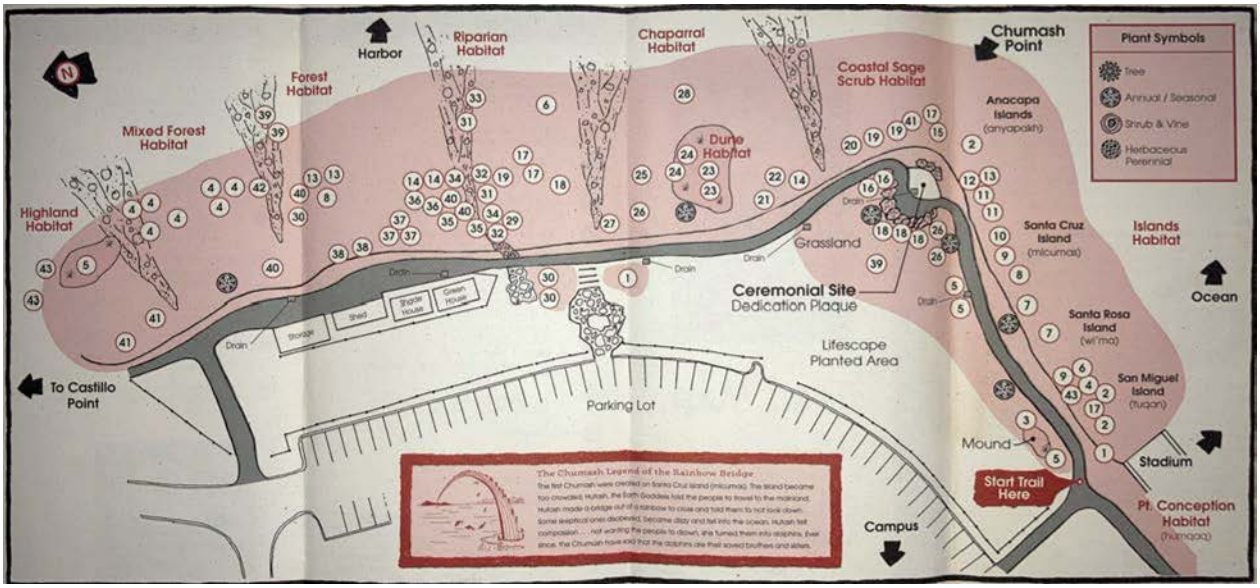
The narrow strip of land, cliffside of the parking lot, was zoned as *unbuildable* due to the site's proximity to the unstable nature of the cliff's geology, prone to cliff slippage, and it suffered from ongoing erosion and gravity shearing. It was off limits to LH because it was the site of proven embedded Chumash skeletal remains...some of which tumbled onto Shoreline Drive as El Niño rains washed away the cliff wall. This land was deemed as Chumash-sensitive because it contained indigenous grave sites. These sites were harvested for artifacts and bones by UCSB (which moved from this Mesa campus site to Isla Vista in 1959) and by SBCC. SBCC no longer has collections of artifacts and, as Tina Foss remembers, collecting was only done if the college was about to obliterate an area for new construction—lots of that was happening on the SBCC campus in the 1970s and 80s—and was done to save culturally significant materials that were at that time legal to destroy. The indigenous native population was offended by this past history of harvesting and fought hard for protections for the treatment of artifacts and bones at the City, County and State levels. (The federal law providing for the repatriation and disposition of human remains and sacred objects, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act, only became law in 1990.)

Later SBCC wanted to expand development of the West Campus again and to do so the Coastal Commission demanded that SBCC provide a public access zone to balance future campus development/improvements on the West Campus. SBCC agreed to dedicate the full stretch of cliff edge as public access, thus opening the untouchable cliff edge land to a public access project.

SBCC suggested to the *now retitled* Environmental Horticulture Department to work with the Chumash community to find, hoped-for cooperation to create a master design plan opposite the existing Lifescape Garden. SBCC hired a local architect who submitted a concept cliff side

strolling pathway design...similar to a Balboa Park (San Diego) landscaped concept. Proactive Chumash were incensed at the glitzy landscaping concept blueprint plan. This pathway landscape plan to savvy Chumash, smacked of being insensitive to the ancient indigenous people, its graves, etc. At one point Chumash and Chumash supporters were even planning to chain themselves within the Lifescape Garden walkway project area, to protest any inappropriate development of this remaining sliver of sacred land, that in time, revealed a Chumash vortex spot, situated at Chumash Point where the assemblage creation of the Dolphin Pod Rocks announces the mysterious vortex.

As the SBCC EH Chairperson, I worked with Tina Foss, Professor of Native American Studies, to create an alternative landscape pathway plan situated adjacent to the Lifescape Garden. Chumash representatives, Tina Foss and myself met. The Chumash did NOT want any non-reverent project scheme to be approved. Through many trials and tribulations the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve plan by the Landscape Architect George W. Girvin Associates, Inc. finally was approved and was sponsored by SBCC. This impossible, unlikely plan, the indigenous strolling landscape, came into existence and created a "public dedicated" walkway zone to satisfy this trade-off of land usage. The cliff edge strip of land (looking down upon the marina-harbor), coast side of SBCC's Lifescape Garden (the horticulture practical outdoor lab zone), then was designated as a local indigenous plant community, botanical plant repository site across from the decomposed gravel (DG) path with the Lifescape Garden. Eventually the entire



Original Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve trail map. *(Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)*

edge of cliff-lands along the Main Campus above Pershing Park and extending above Shoreline Drive all the way along to the West Campus, became the public access zone, complete with peeled-pole safety fencing. An added benefit was the Chumash Preserve plants actually helped stabilize the erosion problem. The Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve also allows Chumash to harvest ceremonial plants, healing plants and plants used for cultural materials such as elderberry for clapsticks (*wansak*).

Many legally recognized and unofficial Chumash entities were involved in the final authorized scheme of this Preserve including the Quabajai Chumash Indian Association, United Chumash Council, the Candelaria American Indian Council, the Owl Clan, and others as well as key individuals that helped the allied SBCC folks and the Chumash folks, win the day.

Tina Foss, a 7th generation Californian with a tribal background from Alabama- Muskogee, adds some additional details about Chumash involvement in the planning of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve. She was on the Board of the Quabajai Chumash Indian Association when the development of the Chumash Point Project (to be named the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve) was in its early stages. She adds that the Quabajai Chumash Association was the only Chumash organization in Santa Barbara when the Chumash Point project was envisioned. She arranged the first meetings between the Quabajai Chumash Association and Jerry Sortomme, of SBCC, to get participation by Quabajai members, project help and design approvals. Kote Lotah, who became the leader of the Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation, was present at the Quabajai tribal meetings to okay the project. Chumash from Ventura, Santa Barbara, Santa Ynez and San Luis Obispo were involved in the planning and dedication of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve. There were many months of early planning and several years of work to bring the project to fruition.

"In itself, the idea of the preserve has great merit and would certainly be a source of pride for both SBCC and the local Chumash community. To have the opportunity to develop the Preserve at this site simply enhances its value manyfold."

Bruce Stenslie, Deputy Director of the Candelaria American Indian Council

Soil cap

Along the length of much of the Preserve's DG pathway, the surface soil/land is composed of cap-soil relocated from SBCC West Campus, with excavated surplus soil obtained from active sites of SBCC building construction. The added blanket of cap-soil buffers the sea bluff land, and contains the last vestiges of ancient Chumash burial grounds, almost forgotten to history. The soil cap varies in depth depending upon the topography and the grade of the walking pathway surface…from inches in depth up to 17 feet in depth in some places. Tina Foss has more information regarding SBCC burial grounds and disturbed Chumash midden sites located across the SBCC-Lifescape parking lot.

A-lul'Koy Lotah giving a blessing at the Dedication ceremony. (Photo credit: Don Calamar)

Dedication ceremony on Earth Day, April 22, 1993

The bronze plaque at Chumash Point commemorates the official day that SBCC, the LH Program, regional Chumash indigenous groups and the local community dedicated the native plantings portion of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve. This special ceremony was hosted by SBCC President Peter MacDougall. A-lul'Koy Lotah, a Ventureno Chumash married to Kote Lotah, a founder of the non-profit Coastal Band of the Chumash Nation headquartered in Santa Barbara, gave a blessing at the Dedication ceremony and the site was saged with the sacred *Apiana* white sage. Tina Foss knows the local Santa Barbara Chumash personalities that participated in this unique project. An impressive contingency of Chumash adults and

children were part of the Day of Dedication. The plaque was also dedicated.

Prof. Jerry Sortomme helping a young child water the newly planted "tree" at the Dedication ceremony. *(Photo credit: Don Calamar)*

The "tree" mentioned on the plaque in the Dedication blessing is actually an Environmental Horticulture (EH) Department cloned rooted cutting of a *Salvia apiana* forma *seacliff*, a wild cultivar, atypical one-of-a-kind, coastal population strain of native white sage. The forma *seacliff* is strikingly unique in several aspects, size (robust) and intense fragrance in particular. It was secured from a unique plant population at Douglas Preserve. EH propagated it and gave it its forma *seacliff* name. Jepson Manual representatives researched this white sage colony variant at Douglas Preserve and verified this unique coastal population forma discovery. They believe that f. *seacliff* originally leap-frogged from a natural stand of the typical, higher elevation foothill population of the common local species of *Salvia apiana.* Through time a variant-form evolved, adapted and thrived as its nativity marched along a ravine toward the coastline, dead-ending up at an eco-niche at Hendry's Beach. At SBCC, we encountered it and propagated this special forma and added it to the SBCC Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve.

This naturally occurring Salvia apiana *forma* seacliff *grows on a cliff near Leadbetter beach. The photo was taken March 8, 2024.* *(Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)*

[Additional information of *seacliff* white sage growing at SBCC is provided by Mark Broomfield (personal communication), currently the facility operations manager at SBCC. As an SBCC horticulture student, he learned of the *seacliff* horticulture story. After becoming grounds maintenance supervisor, he found some *seacliff* white sages growing naturally on the SBCC campus. Compared to the common white sage, he described *seacliff* as having branches that grow longer horizontally before turning upward. One of these *seacliff* white sages can be seen in the above photo on the right. Jerry Sortomme has also planted *seacliff* white sages at La Huerta Garden on the grounds of Mission Santa Barbara where they are still growing.]

Dolphin pod rocks

The crescent collection of symbolic dolphin pod rocks (POD-Rocks) were positioned at Chumash Point to depict a pod of sacred porpoises/dolphins. Dolphins and porpoises are sacred in Chumash lore. Dolphins are an integral part of the Rainbow Bridge, a Chumash Story. In

lore...when the creator realized that *Limuw*, (the genesis of the Chumash people) was becoming too crowded by the original people, the creator commanded Chumash men, women and youngsters to trek upon a magical *Limuw* rainbow bridge, that spanned the Channel, and ended on a mainland mountain peak (variously claimed by both Ojai & Carpinteria lore-ists).

This special Rainbow Bridge pronouncement of faith, had a stern caveat...do NOT look down during the commanded-crossing. Anyone that did look down, would fall through the spiritual light beam, *and drown*...a fate to be avoided at all costs. Some who crossed who did not heed the warning would fall into the channel seawater, to die by drowning. The creator, being compassionate, saved those drowning souls...salvaging their lives by transforming those Chumash into lucky dolphin-beings. The dark colored assemblage of symbolic dolphin pod rocks is situated on the raised land, at the backside of the *Sitting Rocks,* and arranged to resemble dolphins (the dolphins being the *saved souls*) cruising by.

"Cousin" rock to the dolphin pod rocks, this monolith is found in the adjacent Lifescape Garden to the Preserve. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

This narrative-story is held in highest regards by the Chumash...hence the POD-Rocks were installed prior to the dedication of the SBCC-Chumash Preserve. The rock-grouping was situated at the Spiritual Vortex, a Chumash Point spot, that Chumash elders determined. During the ceremony, a seafaring Tomol, newly crafted by Chumash volunteers, was placed on the precise vortex spot. This Tomol now resides at the Washington D.C., Smithsonian Native-Indigenous Museum, and is part of the Chumash People's presentation.

Also, one of the harvested POD-Rocks is a separate, upright, dual-sided monolith placed within the Lifescape Garden itself and has a polished face on both sides...a "cousin" rock of the POD-Rocks. These rocks were purchased with a special allotment of money. These rocks were made available (at cost) from Professor Paul Lindhardt, a stone artist who then taught art/sculpture at SBCC and a fan of the Chumash Preserve Project. I came up with the idea of representing the Rainbow Bridge story using rocks to represent the dolphins when I was talking with Paul Lindhardt. Paul had these rocks displayed at his ArtCity work site in Ventura. The dolphin pod rock group was excavated from an ancient moraine-deposit in San Diego County. Paul Lindhardt directed the delivery of the rocks on a large flat-bed truck during Spring Break when the adjacent parking lot was empty.

An earlier photo of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve showing some of the sitting rocks (to the right) and some of the large dolphin pod rocks behind them. The group of rocks in the flagstone pathway is the rock-station, a podium site for speakers. The rock-station is almost on top of the Vortex, a spot of indigenous vortex-energy. (Photo credit: https://maps.roadtrippers.com/places/63158/photos/37483872)

Semi-circle of sitting-rocks

The Chumash Point semi-circle of ocean vantage sitting-rocks is centered and located midway in the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve pathway. It was designed as an indigenous people and community meeting site and gathering place, a line-of-rocks framing the Dedication Plaque containing a Chumash Prayer -- words spoken on the Dedication Day by Chumash Medicine woman A-lul'Koy Lotah. The plaque was sponsored by my family. The light-colored, flat surfaced sitting rocks were donated as an anonymous gift. They are situated Lifescape-side of the spot of indigenous Vortex-Energy, and the view extends toward

The semi-circle of sitting rocks designed for a meeting site and gathering place. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

the cliff-edge, and beyond to the Channel waters where people can scan the island horizon across the Channel. Native grasses, subshrubs and *Dudleya*s outlined the apron-land behind the sitting rocks to frame the meditative Chumash Point rocks and the Chumash Prayer Plaque-Rock. The line of Sitting Rocks is intrinsically coupled to the dolphin pod rocks in the Rainbow Bridge story, the essence intrinsic to the present day Chumash community. The curving line of sitting-rocks connects to the slightly elevated stepping stone path that elementary school kids would traverse, mimicking the trek of Chumash people along the magical Rainbow Bridge from Santa Cruz Island, to a new, additional homeland on the mainland. Kids loved this bit of theater.

A view of Santa Cruz Island (micumas) across the Channel from the Preserve. *(Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)*

There is also a small rock-station (a podium site) situated harbor side of the sitting rocks. The rock-station is made of the same rocks donated as part of the Sitting Rock project. These rocks were placed there to designate a spot for speakers or instructors to address classes, groups and visitors. The rock-station is almost on top of the Vortex. This spot of indigenous vortex-energy was pinpointed by Chumash elders while they were positioning the newly constructed Tomol before the dedication ceremony.

Wooden posts depicting the four Islands in the Santa Barbara Channel

Originally there were four etched posts placed in the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve, each one denoting the four Islands in the Santa Barbara Channel opposite the coastline of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. From the south, northward these are: 1) Anacapa Island (the three islets), 2) Santa Cruz Island, 3) Santa Rosa Island, and 4) San Miguel Island. These are the islands of Chumash lore.

Before the four islands were given their current names, historians have attempted to denote these islands with their indigenous names, from various sources. I used the Santa Barbara Museum of Natural History's *Docent Chumash Handbook* as my source. It is a very good source for a variety of Chumash educational information. It is available at the Museum's bookshop. There are other sources that put-forth additional, possible names for the four Islands. The islands and the names used in the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve are:

1) Anacapa Island (grouping): *Anacapa* is the only island that does not have a Spanish-name origin. Anacapa is a bastardization of the Chumash word *anyapak* or *anyyapax* referring to the word mirage or illusion.

The reason for this reference—on many days of the year this low elevation island complex seems to rise higher than expected in a puzzling manner on the horizon. The island complex may look like an aircraft carrier or ocean freighter, fading in and out of view. This is the natural

result of "light refraction" that can happen when dust or smoke triggers this visual process. Usually the topography of the three other islands is too tall or out of location to create this mirage-effect. One afternoon when I was driving back to my Ventura home I actually viewed (only once) a double-stacked Anacapa Island refraction-effect. The *stacked* island atop itself image lasted for only a brief moment, as the illusion/mirage quirk dissolved away.

2) Santa Cruz Island: The largest island of the archipelago has several indigenous root names: *limu* or *limuw*. The meaning of this word is "in the sea." *Limu* is the storied genesis of the Chumash people by their creator. Also, this island's indigenous name is referred to as *micumas, michumash*. This name means people of the island, or makers of seashell bead money. The name of the entire Chumash indigenous, language-group title has its roots here. The Rainbow Bridge story's origin is on Santa Cruz Island.

A wooden post with the indigenous name of wi'ma for Santa Rosa Island. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

3) Santa Rosa Island: The indigenous name is *wima, wi'ma***.** Meanings vary: "driftwood," "redwood," "red pine," etc. The Chumash gathered redwood driftwood from the beaches of both Santa Rosa Island & San Miguel Island by way of the northern ocean current. Redwood forests did not grow south of Big Sur but its wood drifted south. However, the southern Mexican Current kept this driftwood from drifting farther south than Santa Rosa Island.

4) San Miguel Island: Its indigenous name is *tuqan***.** This word's meaning is unknown.

Wooden posts of plant eco-habitats

We labelled the various plant eco-habitat communities along the trail with their names etched in wooden posts and tried to coordinate installation of plant communities with precise native plants. The cliffside Dunes habitat was created by delivering a sandy soil-blend to create a favorable soil base for dune habitat species. One of our EH students was a commercial fisherman and he landed on San Miguel Island and retrieved a Mason jar sample of that Island's sand dune soil, where the Caliche Ghost (fossil) Forest is. This island's sandy soil was given a soil sedimentation jar test and I took this recipe to Santa Barbara Sand & Topsoil. I blended together the closest conjured soil match…then subjected it to a soil sedimentation test. Once both the original island soil sample & the created soil blended mix seemed nearly identical, S.B. Sand & Topsoil made up this soil mix and

Wooden post for the area containing coastal sage scrub flora. (Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)

delivered it to the Preserve to be used in the Dunes habitat. This sand dune habitat needed to be nurtured and tended too continually, as it easily disappeared as other plants intruded.

The Riparian habitat was developed in a small ravine opposite the controlled plant environment structures. It included the coastal forma of *Platanus racemosa,* a cutting made from the last sycamore growing at Butterfly Beach, Montecito. Also a cottonwood tree, willow species etc. were added to the habitat. The other habitats included Chaparral, Coastal Sage Scrub, Oak Woodland, Grassland, and Pine Forest.

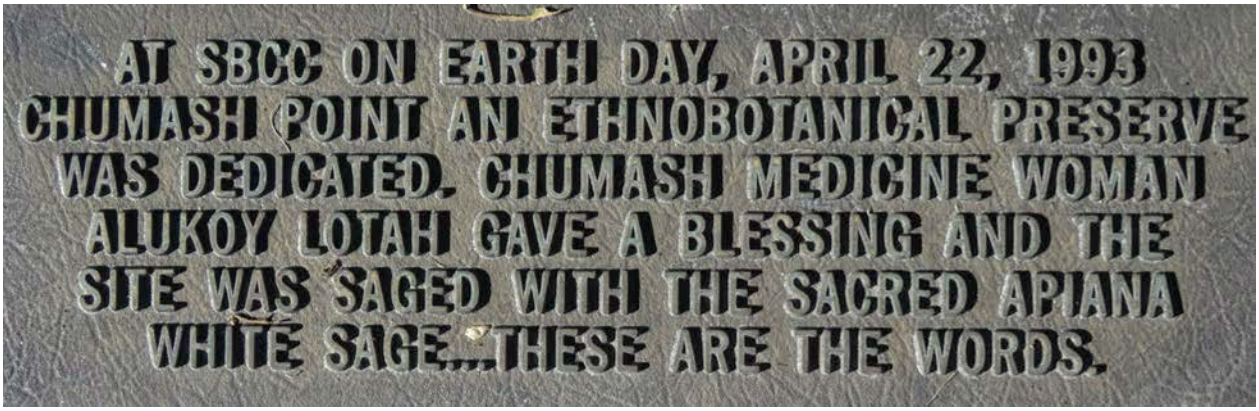
This sign marks the entrance to the Preserve. *(Photo credit: Ruth Hamilton)*

Naming of the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve

Collectively the proactive Chumash community, along with the EH Department, SBCC enthusiasts, and Friends-of-the-Lifescape chose the name. Eventually the selected/preferred three-names, garden-title for this special designated indigenous, public access strolling garden, was distilled-down to a most aptly descriptive title...the Chumash Ethnobotanical Preserve.

The Preserve portion of the title was voted on and selected from a list of various possible garden-titles. The designation of Preserve is appropriate because this is a one-of-a-kind "Native Garden" setting and uniquely incorporates and includes: 1) the line of sitting rocks, 2) the collection of the mystical Dolphin Pod Rocks (that is suggestive of the Rainbow Bridge Story), and 3) the so very unique element where Chumash elders confirmed the *spot of indigenous Vortex-Energy* located between the sitting rocks framing the decomposed granite pathway and bordered by the peeled-pole fence at Chumash Point.

The Preserve is much more than a native garden. The spirit of the Chumash resides at Chumash Point. It is a true Chumash treasured location, and a glory.



This is the introduction on the bronze plaque containing the Dedication blessing. This plaque is placed on one of the sitting rocks in the Preserve. *(Photo credit: RuthHamilton)*

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