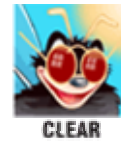


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Monday, Jul. 13, 2009

# Stanislaus County fair brings rain forest to the valley

## Exhibit will have the look and the animals of tropics

By Patty Guerra  
pguerra@modbee.com

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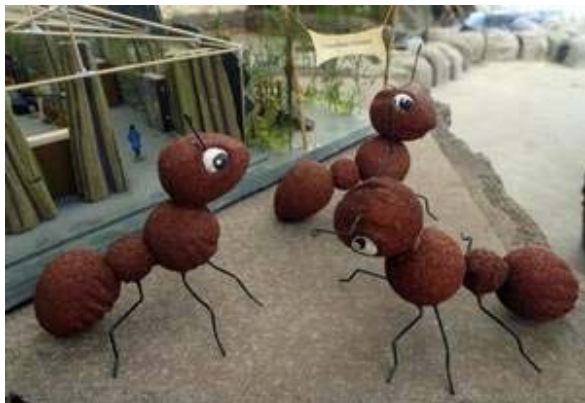
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TURLOCK -- As of last week, it rains in the rain forest.

That doesn't seem all that exciting, but standing on what used to be a concrete slab at the Stanislaus County Fairground, the thunder and the rain are pretty impressive.

Workers are erecting trees, creating rivers and building giant mushrooms for Rainforest Adventure, an interactive display set for this year's fair.



It's the second year designers Clay and Elaine Everett are working with the fair. The Turlock couple created a dinosaur exhibit last year that scored with its young audience.

During the run, fair spokeswoman Pennie Rorex said, some staffers were sitting around trying to figure out, "How do we top this?"

Eventually, they came up with the idea of a rain forest, which goes with the 2009 fair's recycling theme of "Renewable Fun."

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Modesto Bee - Ants like these will be on display throughout the Rain Forest Adventure display. July 10, 2009. (DEBBIE NODA / dnoda@modbee.com)

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Earlier this year, the Everetts went to work. And that started with sitting down.

"We did a lot of research on the Internet, and we watched a lot of movies on the rain forest," Elaine Everett said.

Then they created a scale model of what they had in mind and shared it with fair officials, who gave them an enthusiastic go-ahead.

Clay Everett, a theater lighting instructor at California State University, Stanislaus, said his goal is to surround attendees with an experience that's as authentic as possible. Hence the rain that will fall every few minutes, rather than a sound effect replicating a storm.

Story continues below video



"We wanted it to be very theatrical," Clay Everett said.

He brought in colleague Eric Broadwater, a set designer at CSU Stanislaus, to paint panels for the exterior of the 8,000-square-foot exhibit. The colorful, texturized waterfalls and tree cutouts will greet fairgoers as they approach.

Visitors will walk over a swinging bridge and through an alligator swamp. (This critter is fabricated, as is the recycled-tire "water" where he rests). Children and nery adults can swoop into the exhibit via a slide that will go over a waterfall and a river. The water here is real, and the Everetts expect a number of children won't be able to resist stepping in. That is, if they're not put off by the lifelike giant ants.

The Everetts' 6-year-old son, Noble, is their test audience. "He tells people his job is to make sure everything is fun," Elaine Everett said.

As of now, there is more exposed pipe and canvas than rainforest. But as the days go by, each piece is coming together and the attraction is looking more exotic. Even the tables that will hold terrariums for the animals are designed to fit in with the landscape.

"We always come back to the kids," Clay Everett said. "We want to do everything we can to heighten their experience."

The exhibit, which will be included with the price of admission when the fair opens in a few weeks -- "20 days," Elaine Everett said Friday -- will contain animals ranging from anacondas and alligator to parrots. They are provided by professional wranglers who will offer regular shows in the rainforest. (The seats will be mushroom stools and rocks, because you don't have auditorium seating in a forest).

"We really wanted to give people something they've never seen before," Elaine Everett said.

**Bee city editor Patty Guerra can be reached at [pguerra@modbee.com](mailto:pguerra@modbee.com) or 578-2343.**

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