



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

Jayne LaGrande, President

Nancy Compton, Editor

Rooting for You.....by Jayne La Grande, President

When I joined the River Valley Garden Club in January 2023, I never expected to become co-president within a six-month period —and then, president a year later. Little did I know club President Deb Rooney had already served two years. As we do each year, we have launched a Nominating Committee, chaired by Laura McAllister, with Linda von Merveldt and Cathleen Riebe as members, to prepare for the 2025-26 election. Several committee chairs have indicated their desire to step down after serving various roles for many years. And I want to assure continuity of the club by finding the next person to take over my role either as co-president or president.

The committee chair positions needing new leaders:

- ♦ **Field Trips and Tours**, currently led by Sharon Barton and Laura McAllister
- ♦ **Welcoming committee**, currently led by Donna Hansen and Cathleen Riebe
- ♦ **Refreshments**, currently led by Rosann Stevenson
- ♦ **Workshops**, currently led by Rosann Stevenson



Raise your hand and volunteer. Your club needs you!!

These leaders named above are those who are stepping down and who are a source of information.

In addition, the Sacramento River Valley District is seeking nominations for its Board of Directors to serve as Associate Director, District Secretary, and At-Large board members. If you are interested in being nominated for one of these positions, please contact me and I will submit your name.

I realize members may be hesitant to volunteer for many reasons. However, clubs that operate successfully do so because of the members who volunteer to plan and implement the club's services and activities, from membership meetings to annual plant sales, community projects, social gatherings, and educational tours. To continue to offer our current programs, we need your help, otherwise we'll have to rethink what we're able to offer. A club takes a whole membership of volunteers to thrive and grow.

I'll end on the note that volunteerism is one of the best ways to participate in a club and form friendships with other members. If you are interested in volunteering for the club or district, please contact Laura, Linda, Cathleen, or me by March 1. We would be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Sincerely,

Jayne La Grande, President



Plant of the Month — *The Mighty Valley Oak*

Quercus lobata, more commonly known as Valley Oak, is a large and mighty oak that grows into one of the largest oaks in North America. They are also very long-living trees, sometimes attaining the age of 600 years. Those of us who live in California's Central Valley are accustomed to seeing these sturdy trees that grow from the interior valleys all the way to San Diego.

The branches of this large and lovely oak have an irregular spreading and arching appearance that provides a distinctive silhouette against our clear winter skies. Often their profile resembles an animal stalking its prey, or people in a variety of dance positions.

In fact, if you take Scott Road to Folsom, you are treated to a fascinating array of silhouettes so life-like that I've been tempted to pull off the road and take pictures; however, the lack of safe places (or any place) to pull over makes just thinking about this a daunting task. In advanced age, Valley Oaks seem to mimic humans, as they appear to take on a droopy characteristic.

Valley Oaks not only offer abundant shade and sculptural interest, but they do their best to provide a copious number of acorns to add to the food supply of various mammals and birds, including the acorn woodpecker, western scrub jay, yellow-billed magpie, and our ever-ubiquitous ground squirrels.



Valley Oaks are opportunists, in that they have the means that allow them to live in challenging environments. They can live without excessive water, but must have access to a water source. Young Valley Oaks can have a tap root 60 feet deep, as it searches for ground water in a landscape characterized by seasonal droughts. As the tree matures, the tap root sloughs off and the tree develops a tiered root system 2-4 feet below the soil surface that allows the tree to avoid, rather than endure, drought conditions.

It is well-known that native peoples included acorns from the Valley Oak in their diet, both by grinding them into a flour or meal-like substance, or eating them raw. Apparently these oaks bear acorns so low in bitter tannins that they may be eaten raw, although I prefer to leave this taste-testing experiment to others. How fortunate we are to live alongside such magnificent trees that add so much to our native landscape, our summer shade, and our entire ecosystem.



Garden Stroll and Plant Sale — Saturday, May 10

It's happening!

On **May 10th, 2025**, the day before Mothers Day, our club will be hosting our **Garden Stroll and Plant Sale** — the plant sale being a long-standing tradition in our community, with the Garden Stroll being added in 2023 as a biennial event. The event is scheduled from 9 a.m.—3 p.m.

New this year will be a bake sale (can we call it our Gourmet Shoppe?), and a focus on Art in the Garden. So in addition to showcasing some of our residents' fabulous gardens, we are inviting artists and crafters of all kinds to join us for this special event. And back by popular demand will be a children's area where kids can create their Mothers' Day gifts which means they will be busy while moms, grandmas, neighbors, and friends can peruse the stunning array of plants, flowers, garden art, and other garden-related items. Attendees can even purchase our stylish garden-green aprons so they can look classy while gardening.

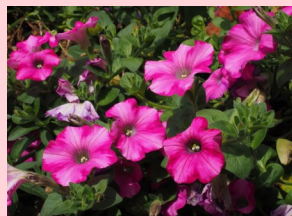
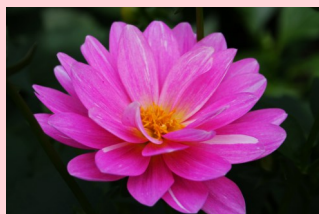
Here's how you can help:

1. Can you plant seeds which will sprout and be ready by May 10?
2. Do you have unused and unloved pots lurking in the corners of your garage?
3. Do you have garden art, even if it needs a new coat of paint?
4. We need a person (or persons) to organize the raffle. Some items have already been identified, but we need to organize items and create a system for selling tickets and encouraging attendees to purchase raffle tickets. Two of our former raffle chairs are available to explain the raffle and offer assistance with the process.
5. Would you like to serve as a hostess at one of the gardens?
6. Would you like to participate as an artist/crafter? (This could include painting, pottery, sculpture, jewelry, or any other form of art or craft.) Our aim is to celebrate the creativity of our local artisans.
7. Can you contribute to the bake sale? Better yet— would you be happy to be the Bake Sale Executive and organize this event?



Items for sale at the 2023 Garden Stroll

The River Valley Garden Club's **Garden Stroll and Plant Sale** is not just a fun and festive event — it also serves a greater purpose. Proceeds from the event support the club's Scholarship and Grants program. For further information and to volunteer, please email Peggy DeMello at pdemello22@g.mail.com or Nancy Compton at ncompton43@att.net.



Grants Program Open for Nominations.....

For many years, the River Valley Garden Club has maintained a Grants Program which allows the club to award charitable organizations and local nonprofits to help fund their programs and projects. For several years, our grants were awarded primarily to school gardens to help them purchase such things as mulch, garden tools, and plant material. While this was certainly commendable, our members rarely got to see where the funding went.

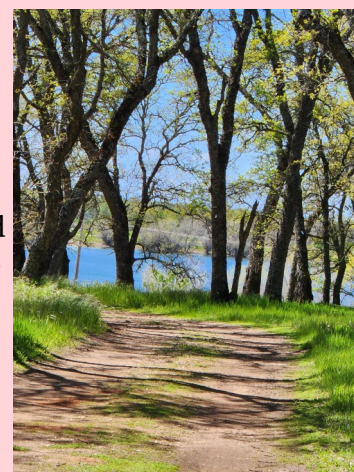
Then about eight years ago a decision was made to focus on donating to groups in or around the River Valley area so members could see, experience, and possibly benefit from the donation.

Since that time, the club has donated to the Murieta Trails Association, which maintains the trails and created signage as a result of our donation; SOS (Save our Lakes and Open Spaces) for the work they are doing to ensure the quality of life in the River Valley (specifically their focus on ensuring the quality and quantity of water); Tri-County Wildlife Rescue, a rescue operation for lost and injured wildlife, including several raptors; Pioneer Elementary School to help fund a compost bin and other garden-related tools; and the Fishing Club, which provides fish for the children's Fishing Derby. Our club recently awarded a grant to Scout Troop #633 for all the community volunteer projects and community support they provide for other community groups.

Please send your suggestions for a group worthy of our donation to a board member, or to Nancy Compton, chair of the Grants program, at ncomp-ton43@att.net



A rescued bird



Along the Murieta Trails..



Chlorophytum comosum

Life as a Spider Plant.....

Did you know that if you Google Spider Plants you will see 45 different species of spiders? (plants, that is — not arachnids). This is why horticulturists prefer using the Latin terminology for plants, and why it would be more efficient to look up *Chlorophytum comosum* after which you will be able to see a spider plant, but hardly anyone will know what you're talking about.

And did you know that spider plants are so much more than attractive greenery for your home? They are powerful air purifiers that can significantly enhance the indoor environment. Known to effectively remove pollutants like formaldehyde and xylene, these plants contribute to improved air quality.

Additionally, spider plants are incredibly easy to propagate through their unique reproductive process involving the creation of pups, which can either be removed and planted separately, or may be planted while they are still attached to the mother plant.

Spider plants thrive in a variety of home lighting conditions and require minimal maintenance, making them ideal for any home or office space. They also make lovely and much-appreciated gifts.



Bonsai Speaker a Big Hit!



Roger Steel, speaker on the art of Bonsai

Members and guests who attended the January 28 meeting of the River Valley Garden Club were treated to an outstanding presentation on the art of bonsai given by Roger Steel of the American Bonsai Association of Sacramento.

Attendees learned that bonsai is the art of growing miniature trees in containers. This art form originated in China, is rooted in Asian culture, and has been perfected by Japanese devotees to this form of living art.

These small, yet intriguing miniature trees are actually regular trees that have been pruned and shaped in a container, the goal of which is to create a realistic representation of nature.

The art form of bonsai cultivation reflects the balance and interconnectedness found in nature. Giving a bonsai as a gift can convey a sense of serenity to the recipient, making it an ideal present for those seeking balance in their lives.



Even a camellia can become a bonsai with proper pruning and care



Margaret Watson-Hopkins introducing the speaker



Roger Steel brought several bonsai to show



An example of a show-ready bonsai



Alexander Hoberg explaining his Eagle Scout project

Also at the meeting, the garden club awarded Alexander Hoberg a \$200 grant which he will use to improve the current Cosumnes River Elementary School garden.

His project, the culmination of requirements to earn his Eagle Scout designation, will involve improving the garden so that students can use it during the winter months to sow cool-weather crops.

Alexander's project will include creating greenhouses and lining the fences with chicken wire to keep out neighborhood rodents. His work will build upon the updated garden created by RVGC members assisted by Scout members from Troop #633.



RVGC members and Scouts from Troop #633 laying the groundwork for a refurbished school garden



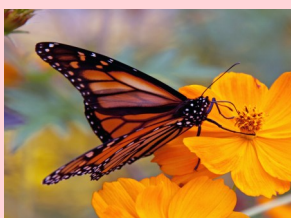
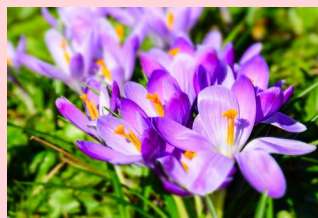
Spring Wreath Workshop Announced

How cute is this?!! Wouldn't you love to have this lovely spring wreath that is charming and colorful to hang on your front door to signal that spring is not far behind? Or maybe you need a gift for a friend or family member that is designed to bring a smile.

All members and guests are invited to attend a **Spring Wreath Workshop** specifically designed to make you happy, as you create a delightful work of art that says spring. Here are the details:

Day/Date:	Saturday, March 22, 2025
Location:	RMA Building
Time:	10 a.m.
Cost:	\$25—includes all materials

To reserve your spot in this fun and creative workshop, contact Rosann Stevenson at the following email address: **rosann72.rs@gmail.com**. — or Nancy Compton at **ncompton43@att.net**.



Spring Sale at the Shepard Garden & Art Center.....

This sale is a bonanza for gardeners and artists — and everyone who loves gardens and art! Many, many groups meet at the center, and this sale has become an opportunity for these groups to show and sell their plants, jewelry, crafts, flowers, art — and you can even purchase food for lunch, for a snack, or just because.

A sampling of groups that will show their wares during the Spring Sale are the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club, the African Violet Society, the local Iris Society, the Sacramento Floral Design Guild, and many vendors, including those selling carnivorous plants, native plants, gourd art, and many more vendors and clubs. The Sacramento River Valley District, of which our club is one of fifteen member clubs in our region, will also have a booth. Here are the details:

Saturday, March 15 from 10 a.m.—4 p.m.

Sunday, March 16 from 10 a.m.—3 p.m.

This is a wonderful opportunity to purchase plants, vegetable and herb starts, pots and garden-related items, or just browse and enjoy the show.