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Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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Dear Members.....Jayne LaGrande, President

Reflecting on the past several months, I've been interacting with and listening to new and long-term members through planning sessions, projects, and social activities. I often want to know why a member decides to join and what makes one volunteer.



What's the value? Is it education, giving back, community focus, problem solving, or a host of other reasons? At a recent social event, I was reminded of another reason that I'd nearly forgotten about, but was extremely important to each person who mentioned it: camaraderie.



It reminded me of when I joined a fitness program years ago. Initially, it was about becoming more fit. Over time, the true value for me became the camaraderie with new friends who joined the program and the existing friends who kept coming back night after night. Eventually, the program ended, but we had an opportunity to gather for goodbyes. I still miss that camaraderie we built over those years.



So, if it's been awhile since you've been to a garden club event, please join us for some camaraderie with the membership meeting on September 23 when the guest speakers will be Susan Hart Snyder and Patti Sewall who wrote, "Along the Banks of the Cosumnes," a history of Michigan Bar, Sloughhouse, and Rancho Murieta.

Lorraine Loken and Karen Reichenbach will be there to greet you at the door. Diane Goebel and Debbie Orlando will be serving up refreshments. Peggy DeMello will run the raffle table, and Nancy Compton will chair the meeting on my behalf, as I'll be in France. Bring a friend — the first meeting is free. Reconnect with old friends and make new ones! See you soon.

Cheers,

Jayne LaGrande, President

River Valley Garden Club

Note: All photos above show the camaraderie and fun within RVGC and activities

Monarchs are making a Comeback.....



According to the World Wildlife Fund and Mexico's National Commission of Protected Areas, the eastern monarchs that overwinter in Mexico's Sierra Madre mountains occupied 4.4 acres of forest during the 2024-05 winter season — nearly double that of the year before.

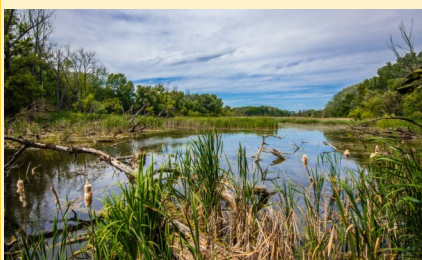
Though monarch populations remain far below the long-term average, this increase offers a bright spot for a species in long-term decline. Monarch butterflies play a crucial role as pollinators and are a key link in the food web.

Their 3,000-mile migration from North America to central Mexico is among the most remarkable journeys in the animal kingdom. Researchers attribute the population boost to favorable weather during migration, as well as conservation efforts.

All across the U.S. and Mexico, communities have planted native milkweed and nectar-rich flowers, reduced pesticide use, and restored habitat. In Mexico's Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve, local community involvement with sustainable forest management is offering a safer shelter at the butterflies' overwintering sites.

Along with this good news, however, scientists urge caution, as one strong year doesn't mean the species is out of danger. The population remains below the threshold for long-term survival. The good news for now is that the coordinated efforts behind their return offers a powerful example of protecting other migratory species. Their comeback shows what's possible when conservation is unified and sustained over time.

Green Thumb Trekkers Announce a Hike out in Nature



Cosumnes River Preserve

The first organized hike of the 2025-2026 garden club year will be the **Cosumnes River Walk—a 3.3-mile loop trail that begins at the Visitor Center of the Cosumnes River Preserve.**

Our hike is scheduled for **Friday, September 19**, and we will meet at the **RMA building at 9:00 a.m. for carpooling.**

This is the area where the Sandhill Cranes overwinter and is close to the location we will be visiting during our trip to view the Sandhill Cranes with a local tour guide. The date is yet to be announced, though it will be in November when the skies are nearly darkened with thousands of these beautiful long-legged birds coming in to roost.

The Cosumnes River Preserve is a nature preserve of over 51,000 acres located 20 miles south of Sacramento. This preserve protects the Central Valley remnant in an area that once contained one of the largest expanses of riparian oak forests and wetland habitats in North America. Each hiker will receive a 4-page handout that we will use during our self-guided tour. The handout points out the various things we will see along the way, like giant oaks, little bridges, and willow trees that the Miwok used in building their dwellings.

Contact Deb Rooney at debjrooney0120@yahoo.com or Nancy Compton at ncompton43@att.net to confirm your participation. Yes — of course you can bring a friend! And yes — of course we will have lunch after the hike! Looking forward to a great hike in a beautiful area.

Pruning 101: First Field Trip this fall...



Do you know everything about pruning? Like most of us, the answer is likely NO.

But help is on the way via the U.C. Master Gardeners of El Dorado County that will be hosting a session entitled, **“Pruning 101” at the Sherwood Demonstration Gardens in Placerville on Saturday, September 27 from 9 a.m. to 12 noon.**

According to the class announcement information, “Pruning plants is like getting a haircut. First you

need to visualize what you’d like the plant to look like long term. Just like a barber, you need the right tools. Then there are some do’s and don’ts, like the proper time of year, and some basic principles that will turn any gardener into a pro — even better than professional trimmers.”



Come to Sherwood Demonstration Gardens and learn to prune just about any plant, and then be prepared to walk through the gardens to get more of a hands-on experience.

Though the announcement does not mention this, it appears that we should bring our pruners because it mentions the phrase “hands-on experience.” And of course we will have lunch together at a local restaurant.

Meet at the RMA parking lot at 7:45 a.m. on Saturday, September 27, for the 45-minute ride to the Sherwood Gardens. Please contact Nancy Compton at ncompton43@att.net or 916-600-1992.



Turning Dirt into Gold.....

My initial impression upon seeing the title of this workshop made me kind of excited...an opportunity to learn the art of gold-panning?

Well, maybe not. This is another workshop offered by the U.C. Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, the focus of which is improving the structural and biological content of soil to support healthy plants.

This workshop is offered on Saturday, October 18, 2025 from 9 a.m.—noon at the Veterans Memorial Hall in Placerville. Participants will learn how to nurture their soil to improve soil health, reduce the incidence of pests, and make their gardens thrive. The workshop focuses on the importance of soil

teeming with life and how to modify soil for better plant growth.

This workshop will emphasize...

- Why healthy soil is vital for plant life
- How to modify your soil to improve its health
- How to reduce plant diseases and pests



This is the first trip/tour of our 2025-2026 garden club season. If you would like to attend please contact me at ncompton43@att.net or via cell phone at **916-600-1992**. You may also add your name to the sign-up sheet our meeting on September 23.

Program Speakers for 2025-2026

September 2023, 2025: “Along the Banks of the Cosumnes” Patti Sewall and Susan Hart Snyder.

Patti Sewall and Susan Hart Snyder have teamed up to create a beautifully written and well-researched tale of the picturesque Cosumnes River Valley in which we are fortunate to live.



October 28, 2025: Lorina’s Edible Garden.



Lorina Cajias owns and operates Lorina’s Edible Garden in Escalon. Her innovative approach to gardening involves growing vegetables, herbs, and spices, and then turning them into delicious foods, teas, and seasonings for families to enjoy, while her colorful garden supports birds and pollinators.

January 27, 2026: TBA: *This date is currently open. If you would like to recommend a speaker, please contact Nancy Compton (ncompton43@att.net) or Margaret Watson-Hopkins (m.watson911@sbcglobal.net)*

February 24, 2026: Vermiculture: Turning Soil into Black Gold; Susan Muckey.

Susan Muckey is a long-time Sacramento County Master Gardener who teaches classes on vermiculture, a natural way to enrich soil to produce a bounty harvest. Vermiculture contributes to sustainability by transforming organic waste into valuable soil amendments that improves

March 24, 2026: The Importance of Vernal Pools and their Flora. Vernal pools are temporary wetlands and are some of the most ecologically important areas in California. Vernal pools typically occur in areas with a Mediterranean climate around the world, but the diversity of native flora and fauna found in California’s vernal pools make them especially unique. Our presenter, Dr. Jamie Kneitel, is chair of the Environmental Studies Department at CSUS.

April 28, 2026: Birds, Blooms, and Butterflies. Master Gardener Mary Jane Sutliff will share her passion for pollinators. She has turned her typical suburban back yard into a native plant paradise that attracts pollinators, from bees, to butterflies and birds.

May 26, 2026: TBA

June 23, 2026: End-of-Year Party



Workshop: From Seeds to Propagation

Looking ahead to 2026, we are happy to announce a workshop on ways to broaden our knowledge of how to grow our plants from seeds and cuttings.

Master Gardeners Jan Fetler and Vivian Sellers will share their expertise on this topic through lecture, a slide show, and a down-and-dirty hands-on experience. Bring your garden gloves and go home with a plant!

When? **Saturday, March 7, 2026 at the RMA building community room.**

