



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Clu

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Rooting for You.....Jayne LaGrande, President

Dear Members:

'Tis the season...the conditions are perfect for starting plants from seed.

I recently attended a class on "Growing Plants from Seed," presented by the U.C. Master gardeners of El Dorado County as part of RVGC's field trip series with two other members. The class was presented by two Master Gardeners offering contrasting views on how to start plants from seed.

After the holidays conclude, both Master Gardeners convert their dining room tables to grow stations replete with warming pads and elaborate lighting configurations, and hundreds of six packs (not beer, mind you) to start their seeds. They even study different fluorescent lighting options, as measured by kelvins, to assess and optimize their results.

While their approach bordered on the extreme for my interest and energy in growing plants from seed, it did make me think about how I could apply their principles to set up grow stations with modification using a simple is better approach given my own resources, patience, and challenges.

At the conclusion of the class, they provided sturdy plastic clear packs, soil medium for seed starting, plant stakes, and seeds. I departed with four packs of red cherry and green zebra tomatoes, calendula, cosmos, and basil all neatly labeled. To supply the plants with light, heat, humidity, and moisture, I nestled the packs on transparent plastic take-out lids and placed the plants in the southeast facing kitchen window. I also placed a plastic cover over them to generate humidity. Tip: they recommended using plastic wrap or clear plastic shower caps as alternatives.

Each morning and evening I mist them with a fine mist sprayer to keep the soil cover it needs. Once they germinate, I'll cease misting and water from the bottom of the tray and remove the covers.

With daytime temperatures warming to 65-70 degrees and the nighttime temperatures hovering in the 55-60 degree range, this is the perfect condition for germination, according to experts. For seed starting soil they recommend a potting medium of peat moss, perlite, dolomite lime, and gypsum. Black Gold was a recommended brand. I'm using the soil mix sold at ACE Hardware to further my seed starting endeavors outdoors where I've now planted poppy and marigold seeds which are starting to germinate. I just need to protect them from the squirrels and deer,

The moral of the story is to take the principles and don't be afraid to experiment. It's a challenge, but fun, and you'll learn as your experience grows. 'Tis the season...for growing plants from seed. Cheers and Happy Gardening!

Jayne La Grande, President, RVGC

Greg Gayton.....first speaker of 2026



Photo by Gail Bullen

Nursery professional Greg Gayton starts the garden club's 2026 speaker series

Although growing and raising camellias was Greg Gayton's stated topic, he is so knowledgeable on so many garden-related topics that before long, he was responding to myriad issues that attendees asked on multiple topics related to gardening,

First — focusing on camellias — initially they were imported from Japan, and although they are not native to California, they have adapted so well to our growing region, that in 1941, the camellia was officially adopted as the city flower of Sacramento. In past years Sacramento hosted multi-day springtime festivities, including a parade, crowning of a camellia queen, and a 24 hour 100 mile foot race. Today Sacramento is host to a lovely Camellia show, this year held on March 7, and is on our club's list of tours.

Asked about pruning camellias, Greg responded that the only time to prune a camellia is after they bloom. If pruned earlier than this, the entire following year's bloom will not produce, as the buds would have all been cut off.

One factor that may affect this year's bloom is the fog we had earlier in December and January. Fog helps spores spread throughout roses and camellias, which means we may experience more diseases this spring.

Greg fully understands our clay soil and the problems associated with it, and recommends regularly amending our soil with organic matter — actually saying that we cannot give our soil too much organic matter. Water is another issue in which Greg stated that overwatering can be a



Photo by Gail Bullen

With a look of pure joy, Ellison accepts the beautiful white camellia she won simply by asking a question

problem. Once a camellia becomes established, it actually doesn't need to be heavily watered.

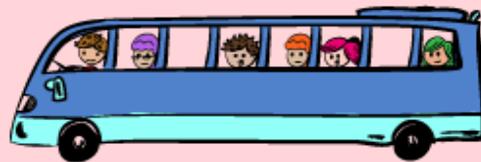
Several lucky members received gifts from Greg, mainly because they asked questions. Just look at Ellison's reaction to receiving a stunning white camellia.

Before leaving, Greg invited members to call him with any questions they may have. He answers questions through Green Acres' plant advice hot line at **916-597-4751**.

Springtime Tours you won't want to miss!

Our tour captain, Sharon Barton, has been busy organizing interesting and beautiful tours for us to experience this spring.

Check out the opportunities listed below and take a look at your calendar to ensure that you can participate in these tours.



- ◆ **March 7 - 102nd annual Camellia Show — Scottish Rite Center, 6151 H Street, Sacramento.** Lunch prior to visit. Show opens at 2:30 p.m.
- ◆ **March 21 or 28** — Time and date to be announced. **U.C. Davis Arboretum.** (Free parking on weekends.)
- ◆ **March or April - Sacramento Splash vernal pool walk — formerly a part of the Mather Field property.** (This is a very weather– dependent tour).
- ◆ **April 19 or 20. - Crystal Hermitage Botanical Garden Tour — Nevada City.** Specific information forthcoming.
- ◆ **April 25— Starting at 9 a.m. Folsom Garden Tour** — This has always been one of our more heavily -attended tours. We will visit 4-5 gardens in the morning, then break for lunch, and then visit the remaining gardens, after which we can visit the plant sale at the Murer home in Folsom.
- ◆ **TBA: Park Winter.** This is a farm tour with an opportunity to learn the history of farming in Yolo County, pick fresh flowers for your home, and have a guided tour of this lovely rural area.
- ◆ **TBA: Amador Flower Farm and Deaver Vinyards in Plymouth.** Details to follow.



Seed starting workshop—Friday, March 13

Our club is so fortunate to have booked two local experts for a workshop in seed starting this spring!

Both Jan Fetler and Vivian Sellers will present this workshop that will be held on Friday, March 13 from 10 a.m.—noon at the home of Deb Rooney, located at 15257 Murieta Parkway South. The cost of the workshop will be \$10 to cover the cost of materials. Everyone will walk out of this workshop with planted seeds.



Imagine how many plants you can grow from seed—an entire package of seeds will cost much less than one starter plant or pack. And don't worry if you don't use all the seeds this season; most of the seeds will remain viable for many years.

As we go to press, this workshop has three openings, Email Nancy Compton to save your spot! Email: ncompton43@att.net

Community Projects Update.....



Refurbishing CRES school garden—2024

The River Valley Garden Club continues to deepen its roots in the community through hands-on service projects that bring beauty, connection, and generosity to the region. Recently, members completed several meaningful efforts:

- * Assembling a bountiful raffle basket for the Kiwanis Crab Feed;
- * Refreshing the planters at The Local Bean;
- * Giving the flower and plant containers at the Rancho Murieta courts a vibrant new look.

Building on this momentum, the club is now planning a collaborative project with Kiwanis to enhance the memorial bench at Lake Calero, creating a more welcoming and reflective space for visitors.



Plant Sale 2025



Getting ready for the Plant Sale 2025 -Donna Hansen, Deb Rooney, Cathy Critz



Beautiful flowers at the Plant Sale 2025

Looking ahead, the club is excited to host the annual Plant Sale on Saturday, May 9, — a vibrant celebration of gardening and community spirit. This year’s event will feature a diverse selection of plants, a special raffle, a Master Gardener to offer expert advice, hands-on flower arranging workshops, and a children’s table to inspire young gardeners. In addition, the club will be launching a new community tradition: A Front Yard Golden Shovel contest, inviting residents to showcase their creativity, curb appeal, and love of gardening. The winner will receive the coveted Golden Shovel Award—an honor meant to celebrate both beauty and community pride.

As the club continues to grow its community presence, members are actively seeking additional project ideas that align with our mission of beautification, education, and service. Whether it’s partnering with local organizations, enhancing public spaces, or offering new educational programs, all suggestions are warmly welcomed.



For sale at the Plant Sale 2025