

# RIVER VALLEY GARDEN CLUB A PLACE TO GROW

HERE'S THE DIRT - APRIL 2019

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 7

## ROOTING FOR YOU Nancy Clark, President

Each spring, I delight in looking through my seed collection and selecting what to plant. I feel like a painter must feel when approaching a blank canvas - energized and ready to create something magical.

My seed collection has really grown over the years, partly because I inherited my Dad's seeds. This year I've decided to plant one of my Dad's favorites - Vitex, which he successfully grew in San Diego, and, Georgetown. Known as the "Chaste Tree" (*Vitex agnus-castus*) because it may suppress the sex drive, Vitex is a lovely deciduous shrub that bears clusters of flowers in the summer.

With our hot summers, this Mediterranean native should do well. Heat is necessary for profuse blooming, which happens in July/August. The blooms open slowly from base to tip, eventually reaching up to 12 inches long and lasting 4 to 5 weeks. Deadheading spent flowers encourages continued production. Deer and drought resistant, Vitex attracts bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds.

The leaves are very reminiscent of the marijuana plant (*Cannabis sativa*) and feature five leaflets. I would venture that when my Dad grew this in our backyard in San Diego in the 70's, my Mom probably suspected that my Dad was growing Pot again. Okay.... He only grew Pot ONCE, for his buddies. It was the 70's after all.

There are many varieties of Vitex available nowadays – from *Little Madame* (delicate purple flowers, tight compact habit, 3-4 feet high) to *Cooke's* (white, pink, or purple flowers, 15 – 25 feet high and wide). Once established, they are cold hardy. And leafing out late, Vitex avoids damage from late spring frosts.

One of the fun things about Vitex is that you can grow it into whatever form you like - multi-trunk or single trunk tree or a large, broad shrub. While they can grow quite large, they can be maintained at 6' tall and wide or trained up as a small shade tree. They take very well to a severe pruning, even all the way back to the ground if needed, and can also be used in large containers against hot walls and parking lots. Vitex are one of the few choices for a small tree or large shrub that thrives in the heat and have lovely blooms late in the season.



*Vitex Agnus-Castus*  
The Chaste Tree

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## Rooting for You, Cont.

In addition to planting my Dad's seven foot variety, I may also plant a couple of dwarfs like *Little Madame*, for contrast. And being a bit of a rabble-rouser, I may plant them in the front yard where passersby might just wonder if the garden club president is growing Cannabis, right out in the open. Who knows, it could draw new club members.



## April Speaker - Marlene Simon, the Plant Lady, Garden Myths Nancy Compton, Programs Chair

Our April 23rd speaker, Marlene Simon, will take us on an adventure through a variety of myths and legends relating to gardening. Better known to her fans as *The Plant Lady*, Marlene is a popular contributor to Good Day Sacramento, appearing bi-weekly on the highly rated weekend edition.

Marlene draws inspiration from her personal passions, ranging from both inside and outside planting, to pruning, to repurposing old tools. Her home away from home is the U.C. Davis Botanical Conservatory in Davis, where she is the Staff Horticulturalist. Here she grows and cares for over 3,000 species of the world's most exotic and rare plants and flowers.

In her spare time between appearing on Good Day Sacramento and work at the Conservatory, she guest lectures on all topics related to gardening. As a fervent animal lover, she donated her expertise to help establish a wildlife garden at a regional nonprofit wildlife center.

Marlene lives in a 1930s farmhouse which sits on 40 acres of walnut orchards in the heart of Northern California's agricultural heartland. Several acres of her massive backyard are devoted to growing succulents, unusual edibles, vegetables, and flowers.

Join us on April 23rd for a fun and lively presentation by the Plant Lady!



Debbie Kolmodin, Marlene Simon, Nancy Clark, Nancy Compton, and Ruth Moore enjoy the San Francisco Flower and Garden Show at the Sacramento Expo Center



## Photo Adventure, 2019

### Fran Hawkins, Chair

As we start to see some long awaited sunny days, it's time to venture out, enjoy nature, and capture that award-winning photo.

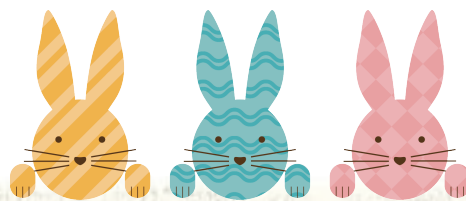
I hope you all have learned some great tips from our February speaker Master Gardener Jan Fetler. I wasn't able to attend but I hear she gave a wonderful presentation on garden and nature photography. So what better way to put those tips into practice than by entering this year's contest. This year our photo adventure takes us on safari to find critters in a garden setting.

The Category: "Critters in the Garden"

You can photograph any kind of critter, from a lady bug to a deer, or even a fake turtle if you want to play it safe. The setting can be anywhere in the world, but the "critter," live or inanimate, must be in a garden setting.

It's easy and fun to participate. Simply:

- Take a Photo.
- Submit your entry. Deposit it in the box which will be with our lovely greeters at our garden club meetings. Or, hand it to any committee member. Alternatively, send your digital image directly to Irene at: [slavens.irene@gmail.com](mailto:slavens.irene@gmail.com).
- Entries must be submitted by June 30th.
- Need Technical Help? We will be available to answer any of your questions at the garden club meetings between 6.30 – 7 pm, or we can assist anonymously and no questions asked! Contact



### PEARLS BEFORE SWINE



## Local Events and Reminders

### Berniece Jones, Publicity Chair

- The “First Friday” at the Rancho Cordova Library is April 5th, at 1:00 pm. The topic is *Grafting Fruit Trees* and there is no entry charge.
- The Clarksburg Garden Club is having a flower show, April 10th, at the Clarksburg Community Church. Open to public, 1:00 pm - 4:00 pm. No charge.
- The Folsom Garden Club is having their annual garden tour - *Gardens of Folsom*, April 27th & 28th, 11:00 am - 4:00 pm. Tickets are \$20.00 and can be purchased online or in Folsom at Green Acres, or Raley’s on Blue Ravine.
- Gardens of the Hills (El Dorado Hills Assistance League) has a Garden Tour on May 4th and 5th. Purchase tickets on line. \$25.00
- Bloomtastic at Maple Rock is Sat. May 11th, 9:00 am - 3:00 pm \$10.00

Questions? Contact Berniece at [bjones@ranchomurieta.org](mailto:bjones@ranchomurieta.org) or [916-354-2873](tel:916-354-2873).

## Trash & Treasure - Raffle Update

### Vivian Baier

Many thanks to the kind and generous members who donate raffle items for the general meetings. We are currently working on the raffle “baskets” for Trash & Treasure, which are nearly completed except for the BBQ raffle item. It needs some augmenting.

We don’t need grilling utensils, but could use a pair of silicon BBQ gloves, grill baskets for vegetables and burgers, sauces, rubs, smoking chips, and a nice set of paper plates and napkins. Believe it or not, a bag of charcoal would also be useful.

But what is a BBQ without the grill? We would be thrilled to receive a donation of a new barbecue or smoker.

We would like to complete the BBQ raffle item by the end April. Please call me to arrange a time to deliver your item, or I can also pick it up. Thank you for your faithful support of our club. Vivian Baier, (586) 930-2105.

## Membership

### Irene Slavens, Chair

We are delighted to extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Loretta Lutz, Maryanne and Peter Reagan, and Elaine Stout





**The ~~San Francisco~~ Sacramento Flower and Garden Show - In Case You Missed It...**  
**Jamie Fox, Newsletterer**



It was a lucky day for Sacramento when the San Francisco Flower & Garden show came to town. Stunning garden displays and engaging speakers augmented the show. Nancy Compton mentioned that she wished the show could stay in Sacramento and I agree. It was such a pleasant change from the sprawling "home and garden" shows normally held at the Expo Center. The best part? It was all in one building!



Nancy Compton had the good fortune to win an avocado tree at the SF Flower Show during a presentation by Ahmed Hassan of DIY "Yard Crashers". She correctly answered Ahmed's question about how long it takes for an avocado tree to bear its first fruit.



Border garden created by The Butchart Gardens of British Columbia.



A closeup of part of the award-winning landscape design by Clearwater Designs.



## San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, Cont.

### Best in Show Trophy



This stunning display by [Clearwater Landscape Designs](#) won **Best in Show** and took six men five days to assemble according to owner, Nathan Beeck. If you are interested in having Nathan upgrade your yard, you don't have to travel far to speak with him. This award-winning design guru is located in ORANGEVALE.



The [North American Satsuki Bonsai Center](#), located in Castro Valley, CA, had a stunning display of many specimens of Satsuki bonsai. Known as the pampered princesses of the bonsai world, Satsuki are indigenous to Japan and are unique in that they are famous for their spectacular *flowering* displays each spring. Currently, there are over *2000 documented varieties* of Satsuki azaleas, in varied flower shapes, sizes, colors and patterns, and with unique leaf shapes and sizes. The thought of creating a bonsai plant is daunting enough, but to create one that blooms...that's fairly spectacular.



## San Francisco Flower and Garden Show, Cont.



Raised bed hydroponics.

Although not necessarily a bad thing, the show seemed a tad small to me. I overheard that due to being in Sacramento the show lost quite a few of its Bay Area exhibitors. However, the exhibitors who attended did a stellar job and in the case of The Butchart Gardens from Vancouver Canada, it made me want to hop a plane for Canada. [The Butchart Gardens](#) is a hundred year old oasis located on Brentwood Bay in British Colombia . [Click here](#) to read the marvelous story of how Jennie Butchart transformed a former limestone quarry into a sunken garden, and then added [rose](#), [Japanese](#), [Italian](#), and [Mediterranean](#) gardens which now famously make up *The Butchart Gardens*. If this virtual tour doesn't make you want to jump on a plane with me, I'm going alone!

Another impressive display was created by the [Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society](#). This is not your average indoor model railway society. The club was formed in 1989 to help garden railroaders build, operate, and maintain miniature and large scale trains indoors and out. Imagine your backyard with the sound of a train chugging through it. [Click here for an incredible example](#) of a garden railway courtesy of the Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society. Notice how the train winds its way through a vegetable garden, and then heads into totally different terrain built by the owner. It's never too late for a new hobby, Gardenistas.



Flower Power - Visitors were treated to a Garden Railway engineered by the Sacramento Valley Garden Railway Society.



There were many familiar faces at the show.

Recognize these lovely ladies?

(Helen Mary Scheinert, Sharon Barton,  
Rosann Stevenson, and Berniece Jones)



## 2019 Remaining Programs and Workshops

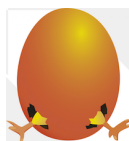
Learn to make the most of life, lose no happy day,  
Time will never bring thee back, chances swept away!

~ Sarah Doudney, English writer (1841-1926)

Only a few more months remain in our gardening year.

You may not want to miss out on these final opportunities to enhance your gardening skills.

Activity	Date	Time	Speaker/Provider	Topic
General meeting Program	April 23, 2019	7:00 PM	Marlene Simon, The Plant Lady	Garden Myths
Workshop	April 27, 2019	10:00 AM	Rosann Stevenson	Floral Arranging - RMA Bldg. \$20.00
General meeting Program	May 28, 2019	7:00 PM	Greg Gayton, Green Acres Nursery	Japanese Maples



This is a friendly reminder that the garden club ship still needs steering.

Be the fresh air and the change on the wind.  
Choose a yellow line and jump right in.

	Incumbent	Volunteers
<b>Board:</b>		
Co-President	Nancy Clark	Nancy Clark
Co-President		Pam McCabe
Treasurer	Carrie	Kathy Nuttall
Vice President (Membership)*	Irene	Judith Embree
Vice President (Programs)	Nancy Compton	Berniece & Patty
<b>Chair:</b>		
Awards	Nancy Compton	Nancy Compton
Communication	Nancy Clark	Nancy Clark
Community Projects	Debbie	Debbie
Discounts	Debbie	
District Liaison	Berniece	Nancy Compton
Field Trips	Sharon	Sharon
Grants	Pam	Catherine Blaisdell?
Greeters	Marianna, Joyce	Marianna, Joyce
Newsletter	Jamie	Jamie
Nominations		
Parties	Carol	Carol & Candy
Penny Pines	Kathy Nuttall	Donna Hanson
Photo Contest	Fran	
Publicity	Berniece	Irene
Raffle (Vivian)	Vivian	Vivian
Refreshments	Debbie	Nancy Miller & Debra DeVerter
Scholarships	Nancy Clark, Berniece, Jamie, Marianna	<i>We may not provide scholarships moving forward</i>
Webmaster	Nancy Clark	Nancy Clark
Workshops	Nancy Clark, Debbie, Rosann, Nancy Compton	

We still need



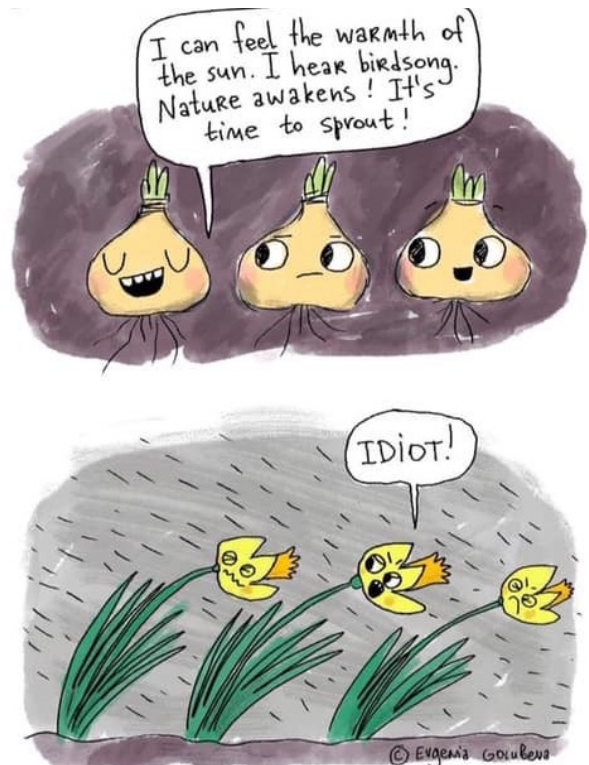
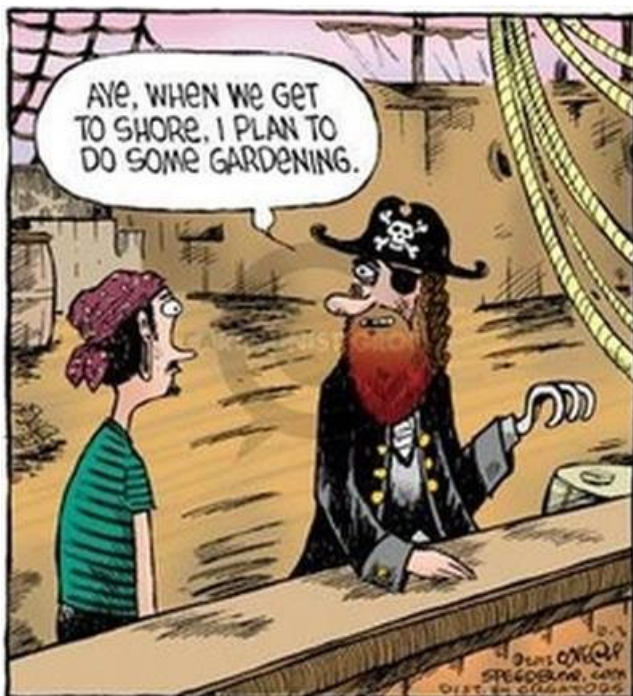
Dear Easter Bunny,  
this year could  
you please fill  
my eggs with  
health and  
happiness and  
deliver them to  
everyone that I love.  
Thank you ♥



*April cold with dripping rain  
Willows and lilacs brings again,  
The whistle of returning birds,  
And trumpet-lowing of the herds.  
~ Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803 – 1882)*

### June Potluck and Social Carol Prinzo, Chair

Here it comes! Our year end June Potluck and Social is Tuesday, June 25th. This is a great event and being on the planning committee is lively and creative. I'll bring a signup sheet to the April general meeting so that you too can be part of the planning for this great end of garden club year celebration.



*Oh, how fresh the wind is blowing!  
See! The sky is bright and clear,  
Oh, how green the grass is growing!  
April! April! Are you here?  
~ Dora R. Goodale (1866 – 1953)*

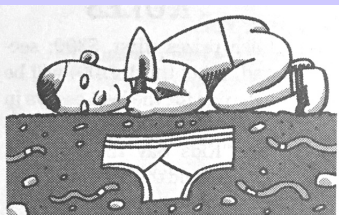
## DID YOU KNOW?

After growing a world-record 35-foot-tall cornstalk in 2011, Jason Karl of upstate New York, moved to the milder winters of Costa Rica, where his tassels now reach 45 feet above ground.  
(Must make harvesting a tad challenging.)

In Berlin, Germany, a 16-inch, 11-pound zucchini was mistaken for an unexploded World War 2 bomb.

In 2017, a woman near Armena, Alberta, pulled up a carrot which was growing through an engagement ring. That same ring had been lost by her mother-in-law in 2004.

In the Roman calendar, April, the fourth month, is spelled Aprilis, meaning "to open." Hence, the name April is fitting because across the northern hemisphere, flowers and trees begin to open and bloom.



## How good is YOUR soil?

Jamie Fox, Newsletterer

Here I stand with my feet in a muddy April 1st contemplating a small strip of land that constitutes most of my garden area. It's a constant work in progress, that garden.

What am I going to plant, where am I going to plant it, and what amending does the soil need *this* year? I eye my small strip envisioning the *dreaded clay* pushing itself up from the bowels of the earth replacing that which I dug out last spring. It's baffling how clay returns.

It is said that diamonds are forever. Well, so is clay. No matter how deep I dig - mind you I'm removing enough clay to build an adobe hut - it returns by the next year. So I dig again, shoveling out great bricks of red which I chuck into the garbage can. Yes, garbage can. Let the landfill deal with the dang stuff.

But while I dig, I note large night crawlers which I lovingly and gratefully return to the garden bed. So maybe the soil isn't *all* bad. Over the years, when I've excavated the dreaded clay, I have replaced it with bagged amendments of all types and kitchen greens that I have stored up in the 'fridge. I own a little mantis tiller that I consider using, but I'm mindful of the beautiful night crawlers, and remember the attributes of "lasagna" gardening (no dig, no tilling, and layers). Hahahaha. Clay doesn't layer, my friends. But I think... *I have night crawlers. Despite the magically reappearing dreaded clay, how bad IS my soil?* I could spend a lot of money on soil testing, or I could bury a pair of cotton underwear. You heard me. BURY UNDERWEAR. This is how it rolls:

**Step 1:** Dig a hole 6 to 8 inches deep in your garden or field bed. Bury a pair of clean, 100% cotton, white or undyed, men's underwear. (Naturally the waistband can't be 100% cotton.) Repeat in another area of your garden if you're really curious, or scientifically minded. Best if you mark the spot(s) for easy retrieval. Use one of those herb garden stakes and instead of inscribing chives or oregano on the name plate, write *Underwear*.

**Step 2:** Walk away for two months while the undies hang out eight inches down.

**Step 3:** Here's the fun part. In two months, dig up the underwear (or what's left of it) from the soil. Hopefully, you'll only find the waistband because the amount of remaining cotton fabric clinging to the waistband roughly indicates the amount of earthworms, fungi, bacteria, and other microscopic organisms keeping house in your soil. If only the waistband remains, the organic quality of the soil is very high. Essentially, the bugs have eaten your underwear. (Lucky you.) If most of the drawers remain, it means the soil is lacking in biological life and it's time to start amending.

Again.

In case you're interested in conducting this extremely scientific test, Kohl's has men's undies on sale. See you there.