



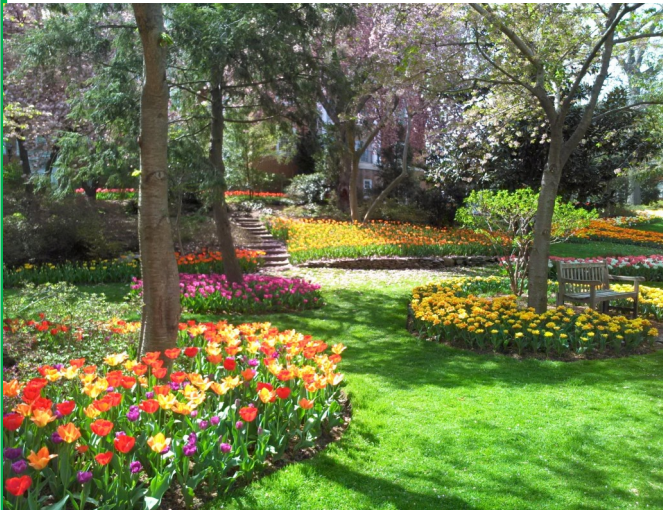
Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

Deb Rooney, President

Nancy Compton, Editor

Rooting for You.....by Deb Rooney, President



Looking out the window as I write this, I'm amazed at how invigorating a little bit of sunshine can be. Partly cloudy is okay with me, but since I'm a "glass-half-full" girl, let's call it partly sunny!

This garden club is in full-on planning mode for the Garden Stroll and all the events that will occur on Saturday, May 13th. Make sure and mark your calendars!

The fun begins at 9 a.m. with the Garden Stroll through seven gardens, our Mothers Day Plant Sale, and **THE RAFFLE**(wait until you see what's in **THE RAFFLE!**).

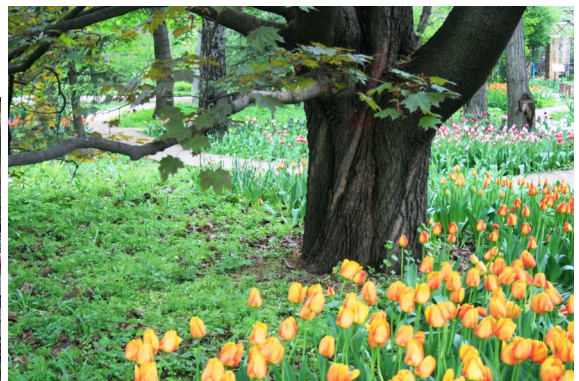
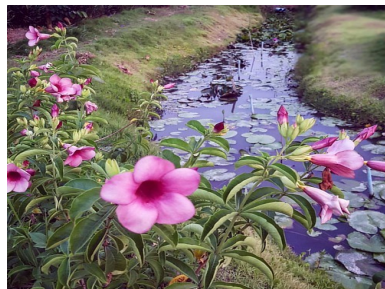
We have so many unique gardening situations here in Rancho Murieta — open meadows, rock formations, oak trees, deer and other wildlife, open fencing — and add in climate change (tons of rain, freezing cold temps, lots of heat and sun) that we often feel overwhelmed. The gardens on the tour are all different, are all impacted by Rancho Murieta's uniqueness, as well as the crazy weather. Hopefully these gardens will be able to provide you with lots of creative ideas on how to move forward after this wild winter. I can't wait — I love seeing what other people have done, and quite frankly, after this winter, I need some new ideas and inspiration.'

THE RAFFLE (yes, capital letters and all **BOLD**) is gearing up to be fantastic! Peggy and her team are working hard and have some fabulous raffle prizes. I can't wait for you all to come out and see what they've pulled together.

The Mothers Day Plant Sale is gearing up to be full of unique garden items, pots, and plants. Need a gift for Mom? We've got that. Need a little something for yourself? We've got that too. We live in a generous community, and the donations that are coming in prove that.

Your generosity makes a difference — whether it's donating to the Plant Sale, joining us on the Garden Stroll, buying raffle tickets for **THE RAFFLE**, or shopping for fun items at the Mothers Day Plant Sale. These events support the River Valley Garden Club's ability to give back to the community through community projects, like the Blue Star Memorial, grants to local groups like the Murieta Trails Stewardship, and scholarships to deserving horticulture college students.

Spring is in the air, and it's going to be fun!



A Visit to the 99th Annual Camellia Show



One of the stunning camellias featured at the 99th annual camellia show

On a brisk, but lovely afternoon in early March, thirteen club members attended the 99th Annual Camellia Show at the Elks Lodge on Riverside Boulevard in south Sacramento.

This show, hosted annually by the Camellia Society of Sacramento is a free event, and is the country's largest and oldest flower show featuring camellias. The show furthers the goal of the Society to develop a community interest in camellias. It appears that it has been very successful in this endeavor, as Sacramento is informally referred to as the Camellia City. Actually, according to some literature available through the Camellia Society, Sacramento is considered to be the Camellia Capital of the World.

As historical background, the first camellia show was held in April 1924 at David Lubin School. After three years of increasing interest, the Sacramento Garden Club was formed, and they established the Annual Camellia Show. From 1931 through 1944, the chair, a Mrs. H. Pisani, developed many of the programs that included a census of camellia plants in Sacramento. She also created the first annual Children's Parade (*now discontinued*).

On November 17, 1943, at a meeting of the Camellia Planting Committee, Jerry Olrich, State Gardener, made an impulsive motion: "Mr. President—I move that we form a Camellia Society in Sacramento right here and right now!" The motion was seconded and carried by unanimous vote, and in 1943, the Sacramento Camellia Society was born. The dues were a whopping \$2.00 per year.

During Camellia Week of February 20th, 1950, the Camellia Society urged residents to plant up to 50,000 new camellias. Cooperation of ten local nurseries, twenty local stores, and three newspapers came to the aid of the society in order to accomplish this goal. The plants were sold for \$1.50 each. And this is what made Sacramento the Camellia Capital of the World. In 1941, the camellia was adopted as the city's official flower.



Berniece Jones took 2nd place with this unique and creative design

This year's show was especially fun for RVGC members to attend, as Berniece Jones took second place with her unique design, pictured far left.



The colors and variety of camellias seems endless



Another stunning camellia

As I drive downtown and observe the multitude of well-preserved Victorian homes, I wonder how many of those giant camellia bushes (and even small trees) were purchased in 1950 at \$1.50 each.



RVGC Garden Stroll & Plant Sale

Garden Stroll

**Celebrate the 20th Anniversary
of the River Valley Garden Club**

**Saturday, May 13th
9:00 - 3:00**

**Stroll through 7 Rancho Murieta Gardens
with artists in residence**

Raffle Items and Plant Sales

Admission \$25

Tickets available at... ACE Hardware..

E-mail: rmrvgcpresident@gmail.com

(916) 730-7403

**Day of Event: RM Association Bldg.
7191 Murieta Parkway
Rancho Murieta, CA**

Our garden club is getting ready for our biggest event of 2023 — a Garden Stroll and Plant Sale to celebrate our 20th Anniversary of the club's existence. Seven lovely gardens of Rancho Murieta will be featured, along with a plant sale outside the RMA building. Also look for a raffle of wonderful items that any gardener would love! Below is a list of items needed — whatever you can help with will be truly appreciated!

- ◆ Vegetable plants, annuals, perennials, native plants, herbs, succulents, cut flowers...
- ◆ Garden art — something you have collected but perhaps never used;
- ◆ Pots — all kinds of pots with holes in the bottom. Please be sure they are clean.
- ◆ Items for the raffle: a large plant, a weekend at Lake Tahoe, wind chimes, bird baths, etc.

Tickets will be available at Rancho Murieta ACE Hardware as of April 15. Tickets will also be sold the day of at the plant sale. All tickets are \$25.

May 13 is the day before Mothers Day, so be sure to invite your mothers, children, grandchildren, aunts, shirt-tail relatives, and friends. Pick up a beautiful plant for a Mothers Day gift!

For further information, please contact Deb Rooney at rmrvgcpresident@gmail.com

Raffle Items Needed to Fill Cart



Sturdy Garden Cart donated by Rancho Murieta ACE Hardware for the Raffle at the Garden Stroll

Julie Davis, owner of Rancho Murieta ACE Hardware has donated a sturdy garden cart for our Garden Stroll raffle.

Now we're looking for garden items to fill the cart. What can you contribute? A bag of garden soil? Leather gloves? A new pair of pruning shears? How about a sunhat to keep off the hot summer sun? Herbs? A ceramic pot? There is no end to the number of garden-related items that we can fill this garden cart with.

Please contact Peggy DeMello at pdemello@ranchomurieta.com with your donations!



Plant of the Month: The Enchanting and Colorful Daylily



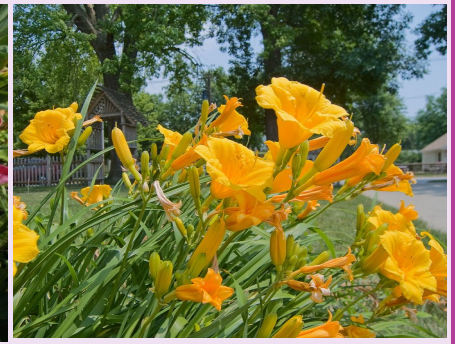
Day Lilies: often considered the perfect perennial

Day lilies always remind me of my grandmother — a sweet, gentle woman who excelled in the garden, sang “*Tura-lura-lura*” while vacuuming, and made the best friend chicken in southern Wisconsin. Despite the long winters, when spring arrived, she always planted a garden — all from seed — and always resulting in delicious vegetables that ended up on the dinner table.

In addition to vegetables and strawberries, she could grow beautiful sweet-smelling flowers, many of which were placed in Mason jars inside the house. Outside my bedroom window, she grew two lovely lilac bushes, and her garden always included lots and lots of day lilies. As a child, I wondered what I could do to make the day lilies live more than one day.

As popular as day lilies have been for hundreds of years it was not until the 19th century that botanists and gardeners began to experiment with hybridizing the plant. Over the next hundred years thousands of different hybrids were developed from only a few wild varieties. Interestingly, most modern hybrids are descended from only two types of day lilies.

Many gardeners consider the day lily to be the perfect perennial, due to its brilliant colors, ability to tolerate drought and frost, and the fact that it thrives in many different climate zones. It is also generally a low-maintenance plant.



Amazingly, day lilies grow in USDA plant hardiness zones 1-11, making them some of the most adaptable landscape plants available. Though formerly daylilies only came in yellow, pink, fulvous (bronze) and rosy colors, they can now be found in nearly every color, with the exception of pure blue and pure white.

Day lilies should be planted in full sun or partial shade, as long as they get 4-6 hours of sun daily. They produce large, colorful flowers that will return year after year with minimal care — even in drought conditions. Here are some additional fun facts about day lilies:

- ◆ Day lilies provide excellent erosion control
- ◆ Day lilies look amazing in containers
- ◆ Day lilies come in over 80,000 varieties
- ◆ Day lilies are not actually lilies. There is a lot of confusion about just where day lilies belong in the world of horticulture, but the fact is that they are in the genus *Hemerocallis*. But we really don't need to know this unless we are studying for a degree in Botany.
- ◆ Day lilies are drought tolerant, but they don't mind getting their feet wet.
- ◆ There are many reblooming and everblooming varieties.

I think I need to stop writing this newsletter and take a quick trip to the Amador Flower Farm!



Trip to Hollandale Nursery Includes Mud and Determination



Entering this greenhouse involved balancing on a 2" x 4"

Anyone who doubts the grit and determination of River Valley gardeners should have accompanied this indomitable group on their trip to Hollandale Nursery to check out the spring flowers.

Hollandale, as you will recall, is where we go before the Christmas holidays to pick out our holiday poinsettias which are always gorgeous, healthy, and reasonably priced. Visiting this nursery in the spring is a different experience, especially during wet years.

The first challenge was actually getting into the greenhouses, all of which had no walkways other than the naked ground which, due to the relentless storms this season, had turned into piles of mud. Getting into one of the greenhouses involved walking a tightrope upon a 2" x 4" board, and imagine doing so with two ranunculus under one arm and a flat of pansies in the other. The good news is that no one fell in the mud, and all attendees found pretty spring flowers that will be planted in various Rancho Murieta gardens.



Helen Mary Scheinert found some beautiful posies

Hollandale has been a family-run business for over 50 years and their business is still in the same location. This is a multigenerational family headed up by Al Warmerdam and involves his children, grandchildren, some cousins, and a group of friendly dogs.

Al's parents immigrated to Lodi from Holland in the late 1950s where they were sponsored by a local dairy farm. Al's father milked cows for several years while saving up his money to buy some land and start a nursery.

While most of their customers are commercial accounts, including Save Mart and the San Francisco Airport (look for their colorful poinsettias), they love garden clubs, and are always very friendly and accommodating.



Colorful ranunculus stole the show



Jan Mathews and Donna Hansen found some pretties



Debbie Kolmodin and Sharon Barton found several flowers for their gardens

Soil Amendments...which are best?



Everyone talks about soil amendments...but just what do they do? And more importantly — what is best for your soil? Some guidelines that were sent out recently by the Amador Flower Farm may be helpful...

Compost: This adds nutrients to the soil, helps improve soil structure over time, is particularly useful for breaking up clay soil, and may be used as a top dressing to help reduce water loss and insulate soil and roots. Compost is an organic material so it breaks down over time, meaning you will have to add more to the garden each year.

Compost? Soil conditioner?
Manure? What???

Manure: Whether steer, chicken, bat, sheep, or horse is the source, manure will add lots of good stuff — mainly nitrogen, or “greening” nutrient — to your soil, creating a more hospitable environment for plant roots. Fresh manure is highly concentrated and will burn your plants, so make certain that the manure is fully composted and not “hot.” According to *Fine Gardening* magazine, mature, stable, composted manure will have a relatively uniform granular appearance and will not feel warm to the touch.

Soil Conditioners: Soil conditioners are different than fertilizers because they break down over time and not only feed the soil, but improve its structure and water-holding capacity.

Gypsum, limestone, and greensand are inorganic amendments, meaning they are derived from non-living organisms, while amendments like alfalfa meal, bone meal, and kelp meal are organic, which means they are derived from once-living organisms. Each of these amendments has its own special quality. For example, gypsum breaks up clay and adds calcium to the soil, while alfalfa meal is a source of nitrogen, trace minerals, and triacontanol, a plant growth promoter.



NOTE: It is best to have your soil tested before adding any amendments so you know what you're working with. Once you know deficiencies, you will understand just what you need to add to get the most out of your garden.

Speaking of soil amendments, have you thought of coffee grounds??

A quick phone call to the Master Gardeners hot line reveals that coffee grounds improve soil structure. By adding them to the soil, you will increase the soil's water-holding capacity and provide a buffet of plant nutrients, as well as beneficial microbes to your garden. The organic matter stimulates the plants' root development and helps de-compact heavy clay.

AND.....Seema, the new owner of the Local Bean, has invited River Valley Garden Club members to come in and take home her used coffee grounds. Bring your own container, and she will happily fill it with coffee grounds that will improve your soil and provide nutrients to your plants!



Floral Arranging Workshop a Huge Success!



Marlene Heier uses a Ti leaf splitting method demonstrated by Berniece Jones

It may have been April Fool's Day, but the fifteen members of the River Valley Garden Club who attended the floral arranging workshop presented by Rosann Stevenson were no fools.

Rosann, a career floral designer, taught the basics of floral arranging, and provided each participant with the container and materials with which to create a spring-inspired design.

Berniece Jones, a budding floral designer who has already won 2nd place in a city-wide camellia show, demonstrated how to split a Ti leaf using nothing more than a fingernail. This split-leaf look allows a floral design to have movement and an airy feel.

Rosann advised attendees to start at the back of the container using tall greenery, then working outside to inside, to work in material groups of 3, 5, or 7, as odd numbers are thought of as being more pleasing to the eye. This is merely a guideline to help organize colors and shapes. Each designer, however, should develop their own sense of shape and style.



Participants busily working on their arrangements

Each participant received a bundle of plant materials that included three bright yellow tulips, three long stalks with miniature white orchids, one stalk of yellow flowers listed as solidago (looked like a scotch broom or forsythia), three Ti leaves, and three delicately-colored roses. Participants also were able to select two or three curly willow twigs that provided visual interest to the finished design.



It was quite a challenge getting everyone in a group picture, and it also appears that someone is hiding behind their arrangement, but everyone had a wonderful time, and we are certainly looking forward to our next lesson in floral design.

Many thanks to Rosann Stevenson for sharing her expertise for the benefit of our club members.



A lighter moment with Maria Lopez



Feed me! Fertilize Your Roses for More Blooms

The following information is reprinted from the blog “Sacramento Digs Gardening” and contains great and timely information on raising healthy roses.

“With rapid spring growth, rose gardens seem to be screaming, “Feed me!” With moist soil and relatively mild weather conditions in the forecast, now is a good time to fertilize roses as they sprout new canes, lush foliage, and their first wave of flowers.

But what to feed them? How do you fertilize roses in spring to support growth as well as prompt flowers? **Combine nourishment with weed control.** For starters, use a combination of compost or other organic amendments and mulch. Apply organic soil amendments, such as aged horse manure, alfalfa meal etc. around the drip line of each of the roses, per Master Rosarian Baldo Villegas, who grows more than 2,000 rose bushes in his Orangevale garden. Some rosarians apply two inches of mushroom compost and another two inches of mulch for a total of four inches throughout whole garden beds to feed the soil, prevent weeds, and preserve moisture in the soil.

What mulch do roses prefer? Ground bark or dried leaves work best. Avoid rocks or gravel, as they add nothing to the soil in the way of nutrients and, because they absorb heat, they can cook roots in summer. Rocks also tend to reflect heat onto the bush, further stressing the plant.

After that initial mulch-blanket, put your roses on a regular diet. Once a month, apply a slow-release rose food. Look for products with more phosphorus (the middle number) than nitrogen (the first number); phosphorus supports flowers, while nitrogen prompts more leaves. Scatter fertilizer around bushes and water it in. Or use a liquid fertilizer and apply while watering. Never fertilize roses in dry soil; it can burn the foliage.

Roses can benefit from bone meal (an excellent source of phosphorus). After deadheading, scatter a few tablespoons of bone meal around the bush and work into the soil. You may need to pull the mulch away from the bush to do this. Other “snacks” to feed your roses: Fish emulsion and worm casting. Master Rosarian Charlotte Owendyk of Roseville uses both. Applied while watering, nutrient-packed fish emulsion can give a weak or sluggish grower a little extra boost. Worm castings — and even better, active earthworms — help overall soil health.

Time extra fertilization to when you want the most blooms. After their first big bloom in April, roses tend to take six to eight weeks to produce another flush of flowers. If you want roses on July Fourth, deadhead and feed the first week of May. Keep up your rose feeding schedule until fall. In October, start cutting back fertilizer, or skip it altogether so your bushes will begin to ease into winter dormancy.”

