



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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



That little white pail under my sink drives me a little nuts. It smells, it's messy, and in my humble opinion, it's overall yucky. I'm diligent about putting food items in the white bucket, but I don't like to dump it. But it did get me to thinking about composting — there are quite a few of our garden club members who create and use their own compost in their gardens.



I know the basics; it's a natural process of decomposition of organic materials, and once the process is complete, it can become a wonderful amendment to your garden fertilizing strategy. That's what I know, but I'm sure it's a little more complicated, so I thought I'd look into it and share what I found. Hope you are at least a little bit interested!

While the basics above are correct, backyard composting is a more deliberate effort to manage the process. The basic ingredients in a compost pile include "browns," such as dried leaves, straw, and wood chips, which provide carbon. "Greens," like grass clippings and kitchen scraps provide nitrogen. The right balance of these materials, along with moisture and air, supports the work of breaking down the matter into compost. Well, there you go — who knew there needed to be a balance between "browns" and "greens."

As you start off, there are a lot of things to remember. Here are a few:

- ◆ Select a dry and shady spot close to a water source for the compost pile.
- ◆ Layer in the brown and green materials.
- ◆ Turn the compost pile frequently.
- ◆ Keep the pile moist, not wet, realizing that as the material decomposes, the compost pile could heat up to 140-160 degrees.

Once your compost no longer gives off heat and becomes dry, brown, and crumbly, it's ready to use. This usually takes anywhere from two months to two years depending on the size of your compost pile. It's now ready to use! You did it!

You can use compost to enrich flower beds, top-dress lawns, and provide a nutrient-rich medium for potted plants. Remember, compost is not a complete fertilizer, but it is an excellent soil amendment. For best results, mix compost with soil before planting.

The benefits of composting are far-reaching — from reducing greenhouse gases produced in landfills to the benefits in your garden's soil. I'm not sure I'm ready to go through this process but I certainly have a different attitude about my stinky, little white bucket under my sink!



(Pretend this pail is white...)

Happy Composting...and Happy Spring!

Deb

Marlene Simon, The Plant Lady, to Speak at our April meeting



Marlene Simon, The Plant Lady

Who could forget Marlene Simon, The Plant Lady, who has not only presented a lively “Garden Myths” program for our club in the past, but spoke at the joint meeting we hosted for the clubs in the Valley Lode District a couple of years ago.

We are fortunate to have a return engagement when Marlene will speak about indoor gardening — house plants — at our meeting on April 23. With her quick wit and engaging personality, this program is not to be missed!

Marlene has a B.S. in Horticulture and a lifetime of hands-on experience, and she seems to pack more into a 24-hour day than most of us have the time and energy for. She not only works at the U.C. Davis Botanical Conservatory, she is an on-air personality and sought-after speaker. Her current focus of interest is rare and unusual plants, as well as native plants, drought-tolerant plants, orchids, unique flower gardens, living walls, integrated pest management, organic methodology, and fruit & veggie gardens. Whew!

If you’re thinking of bringing a friend to one of the River Valley Garden Club meetings, this would be a good one. You will learn, enjoy, and be entertained by one of the most lively and knowledgeable horticulturists in our area.

Thank you – Paul Anderson!



Candy Hearn, Paul Anderson, Cathy Long

What an amazing program we had in March when professional nature photographer and local resident Paul Anderson presented his award-winning photographs of local nature.

The photos of the eagles and swans, in particular, were captivating, and his energetic narration made the meeting both exciting and relevant.

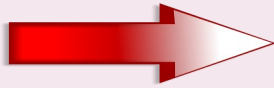
The photo at the right is one of my personal favorites — three little baby swans. I’m told that the correct name for baby swans is signets.

So here we have three baby signets right here in Rancho Murieta. Nature at its finest!



Happy children plant a spring garden at CRES

From this



To this.....



To this!



The concept of “It Takes a Village” is a pertinent description of the club’s community service project at Cosumnes River Elementary School, as the Community Service Team under the capable direction of Berniece Jones, joined forces with Scout Troop #633 and interested community members to bring the school garden to life.

After several years of neglect and vandalism, the concrete blocks needed to be realigned and repositioned into garden beds. Then came the weed-pulling, resulting in bags and bags and more bags of weeds for the compost pile. Then came the mulch for the pathways between the beds, followed by the soil, donated by Mason Woodbury of Wilton, and the fertilizer, donated by Bio Roc of Ione. The final touch was upgrading and completing the drip system. And with that final touch, the school garden was ready for the students to plant! The excitement of the children was palpable as they planned their spring garden. Many thanks to our club and the community for pitching in to complete this project!

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 generously donated a sturdy garden cart again this year for our Plant Sale 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.

Peggy DeMello, Raffle Chair has a big "THANK YOU" for those of you who have already signed up to donate. Please bring your donations to our upcoming meeting on April 23rd.

If you cannot decide what to donate, we will happily accept a \$10 donation so we can purchase whatever garden tools or items are still needed. With your future donations and those we already have, this filled garden cart is sure to be a big hit at the Plant Sale raffle!



Plant Sale Extravaganza! ***Saturday, May 11***



On Saturday, May 11, our club will hold its annual **Plant Sale Extravaganza** at the RMA parking lot from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m.

This is our major fundraiser of the year, the proceeds from which will go toward our Scholarship and Grants program.

The date has been strategically selected so that shoppers may purchase beautiful Mother's Day gifts, as well as healthy plants for their own homes and gardens. Here is what the plant sale will have to offer.....



- ◆ *Indoor and Outdoor Plants*
 - ◆ *Veggies and Herbs*
 - ◆ *Succulents*
 - ◆ *Cool Garden Art*
 - ◆ *Floral Arrangements*
 - ◆ *A Raffle (and you should see the prizes!)*
 - ◆ *Silent Auction*
 - ◆ *A Kids Activity Table*
 - ◆ *A Master Gardener to Answer your Questions*
 - ◆ *Staffed by friendly garden club members!*

The Plant Sale Planning Team is still accepting donations for the sale. The team is happy to accept pots (clean, please), plant material, garden art, even if it needs a bit of spiffing up, garden benches, — anything and everything garden-related. Contact Deb Rooney at debjrooney0120@yahoo.com, or Nancy Compton at ncompton43@att.net if you have donations. We will pick them up!

Photos from 2023 Plant Sale

You may be wondering what makes the River Valley Garden Club's Plant Sale different from other club plant sales. Here's the scoop: the plants are all healthy and beautifully displayed, our floral designers offer floral arrangements (but attend early — those arrangements jump off the tables and into the arms of delighted shoppers), terra cotta pots are sealed, painted, and many are decorated, a children's activity table is available so moms can actually focus on their shopping, the garden art is amazing....and the list goes on.

So come and bring friends! Lots of them! Donate! Come on out early to grab a beautiful gift or two for your Mother's Day celebration! And all the while, know that you are making a true contribution to our Scholarship/Grants program to help up-and-coming horticulture students and to benefit our community.



Huge Bonsai Show Devoted to “Little Trees”



Hundreds of these “little trees” will be on display and for sale at the 64th annual Bonsai Show at the Shepard Garden and Art Center

The American Bonsai Association, Sacramento, announces its 64th annual Bonsai Show and Sale at the Shepard Center in McKinley Park. The dates are April 13-14. Show hours are 10 am. to 4 p.m. Admission and parking are free.

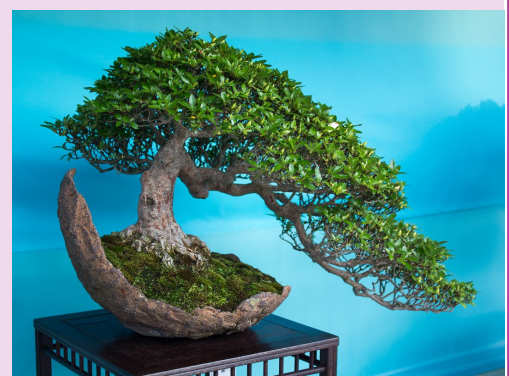
One of the country’s oldest bonsai clubs, the American Bonsai Association, Sacramento, dates back to 1958 — the same year the Shepard Garden and Arts Center was opened to the public. That’s seven years before *Sunset Magazine* even published its first book on bonsai!

Since World War II, Sacramento has been at the center of bonsai interest in the United States. The nation’s oldest bonsai club is the Sacramento Bonsai Club, formed in 1946 by previously interned Japanese Americans. Its meetings were originally held in Japanese.

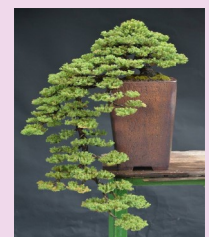
The American Bonsai Association, Sacramento, was created to accommodate English-speaking garden enthusiasts who were interested in learning how to grow “little trees in pots.”

Special guest artist Tyler Sherrod of Dogwood Bonsai Studios in North Carolina will fashion a bonsai at 1:30 p.m. both Saturday and Sunday. His completed demonstration trees will be raffle prizes. Trained in Japan, Sherrod is an internationally recognized bonsai artist and renowned teacher.

The show will feature scores of bonsai, some of them representing decades of growth and artistry. In addition, visitors will see a display of suiseki stones. Shaped by natural forces, suiseki stones inspire through their shapes, color and longevity; they often resemble mountains, islands, bridges, animals, and other recognizable forms.



Also, find pots and trees for sale at the club’s vendor and consignment tables. In addition to all of this, visitors can learn to bonsai as well. A beginner workshop (\$15) will be held at 10 a.m. on Sunday and includes tree, pot, soil, and instruction. Register via email to abasbonsaiclub@gmail.com



If You Give a Gardener a Rake...

*From time to time, I read something garden-related that is so much fun—even joyful, that I just need to share it with my garden friends. The piece below from a column called, “In the Weeds,” from the magazine **Garden Gate** is one such article. Enjoy!*

“If you give a gardener a rake on a spring day, she will probably want to clean up the pile of wet winter leaves from the edges of her garden. While cleaning up the leaves, she will be excited to see the first green tips of irises coming up through the earth, reminding her that she needs to order flower seeds for the season,



But before she can order seeds, she should probably check to see which seeds she has left over from last year. On the way to check her seed stash, she’ll think about how she hasn’t turned her compost bin recently. When turning the compost bin, she sees it’s ready to be added to her garden. She’ll have to go to the shed to get a pair of gloves, but then she’ll spy the patio furniture stored in the shed for the winter.

Since it’s such a beautiful spring day, she’ll decide to get out the patio furniture and hose it down to make it easier to access the tools in the back of the shed.



With the shed empty she can’t help but notice all her pretty flowerpots stacked in the shed. Even though it’s too early in the season to plant flowers, she hops in the car and drives to the local nursery. As she strolls the garden center, she’ll think about how it’s always been her dream to grow dahlias. So, she’ll stop in the middle of the garden center and Google how to grow dahlias.

She’ll find a great deal online and end up ordering dahlia tubers.



As she continues to wander the garden center’s aisles, she will see the bags of mulch and remember that her flower beds need some TLC. Before she knows it, her car is weighed down by 15 bags of mulch, as well as potting mix, because she can’t quite remember if she has some at home.

When she gets home, she’ll drag the bags of mulch to the flower beds. Then she’ll see more wet leaves that need to be raked up, reminding her that the rake is still propped up next to the compost bin. Since she didn’t get around to adding compost earlier, she’ll do that after cleaning up the leaves and before she mulches. And when the leaves are picked up, the flower beds are mulched, the garden is tilled, and the dahlia tubers are en route, she might as well go ahead and sow a few rows of lettuce in the garden, because even though it’s early in the season, it should be just fine.....”

Does this sound vaguely familiar to any of you????

(Note: My deepest apologies to our male gardeners....the above is a direct quote ...but this may happen to you as well!)