



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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Rooting for You.....by Pam McCabe, President

December brings to mind Meyer lemons. We had a Meyer lemon tree for several years that we bought from Chris Strutz. We planted it in a whiskey barrel and started harvesting lemons the second year.

Our harvest was in late December. I harvested all the lemons at the same time, juiced them, froze the juice in large silicone ice cube trays, then stored my frozen lemon juice cubes in zip lock bags. This gave me approximately two tablespoons of lemon juice per cube, and I found it perfect for many recipes. We covered our lemon tree with frost cloth when we left for our winter getaway. In 2020, we left it covered for three months — not a good idea. It did not fare well and we had to toss it.



Meyer lemon trees are suspected to be a cross between a traditional lemon and a mandarin orange. They were originally imported from China, but contained a threatening citrus virus.

In 1975, the University of California produced the kind we grow today. They are often called “improved” or “perfect” lemons because they are resistant to the citrus virus. Meyer lemons are sweeter than regular lemons and are difficult to find in stores. When they are blooming, they smell so good and attract lots of bees.

Today's Improved Meyer Lemon dwarf reaches 6-10 feet in height, but pruning keeps it more manageable with a fuller appearance. It is self-pollinating, which means you only need one tree in order to get fruit.

In planning for our move, I am anticipating where to plant a Meyer lemon tree. Whether grown in a container or planted in the ground, Meyer lemon trees require at least six hours of sunlight. In our area, morning sun and afternoon shade are best for Meyer lemons. It is important to fertilize monthly between April and September. New trees should be planted in late winter or early spring.



Generally Meyer lemon trees need water every one or two weeks. If the leaves droop, the tree is getting too much water. If the leaves are crispy and dry and curl upwards, this is a sign of under-watering.

If you already have a Meyer lemon tree (or a neighbor with one) enjoy the fruit and plan on how to save the juice and rind for the upcoming months. If you don't have ready access to a Meyer lemon tree, start looking for a spot in your garden or on your patio to put one, then go shopping in late winter.

You won't be sorry.

Blue Star Marker Dedication — A Huge Success



President Pam McCabe reading a resolution from National Garden Clubs, Inc.



Community Services Chair Debbie Kolmodin unveiling the Blue Star Memorial Marker with veteran Jack Seigal



Honored guests California Garden Clubs, Inc. President Shane Looper (left) and Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc. Director Robin Pokorski (right)

After nearly a year of planning, the Blue Star Memorial Marker honoring our community's veterans was dedicated on November 11, 2020.

Opening the ceremonies, Boy Scout Troop #633 posted the colors and led the assemblage in the Pledge of Allegiance.

In attendance were Shane Looper, president, California Garden Clubs, Inc., (CGCI) and Robin Pokorski, Director, Pacific Garden Clubs, Inc. Sue Bennett, Past President of CGCI also attended.

Jack Seigal, one of our community's veterans, provided an overview of our country's Armed Forces, as well as a history lesson as to how Veterans Day grew out of Armistice Day, a day designated to celebrate the end of World War I.

Following Jack's presentation, he and Debbie Kolmodin unveiled the rock on which the Blue Star Marker is mounted, resulting in much cheering and applause.

Approximately 75-80 people attended the ceremony.

The River Valley Garden Club is so proud to have dedicated this Blue Star Marker to honor all the men and women who have served our country with pride and distinction.



Blue Star Memorial Marker at the head of Laguna Joaquin honoring our veterans and thanking them for their service



Local Boy Scout Troop #633 posted the colors and led the Pledge of Allegiance



Angie Freidrich played the Star Spangled Banner for the opening ceremonies



Bouquet of hydrangeas and roses designed by Debbie Kolmodin placed on top of the Blue Star Memorial Marker

Road Trip to Hollandale Nursery in Lodi.....



Carol Prinzo and Sharon Barton select some lovely plants for gift-giving and home decor

Part of the charm of Hollandale Nursery in Lodi is the weathered, tumble-down appearance of the greenhouses, the 95-year-old patriarch of this family-owned business wandering around, and the big friendly dogs that approach visitors hoping for a tummy rub or a pat behind the ear.

Hollandale is a wholesale nursery that has been in business for over 50 years, specializing in bedding plants, annuals, perennials, vegetable/pepper plants, and most spectacularly, an endless array of poinsettias for the holidays. The color and variety of poinsettias includes a wide range of colors — mainly in red and pink shades, some variegated plants, and some with unusual-shaped petals.

Al, a second generation nursery owner advised club members that poinsettias like temperatures between 60 and 70 degrees, which begs the question as to whether these lovely holiday plants should be kept outside or inside. They may be kept outside, but it is suggested that they be brought inside at night, especially if the overnight temperatures hover around freezing. If you keep them inside, they should be placed in a sunny window, kept moist, but be sure to dump any water that runs through the plant onto the saucer. Poinsettias do not like wet feet.

If they become dry to the touch, Al recommended throwing 3-4 ice cubes on top of the pot and letting them melt into the soil. When the leaves drop in late winter or early spring, cut the stems back to two buds and reduce watering to a minimum. It is possible to keep poinsettias throughout the year, but consult a reliable source, like the *Sunset Western Garden Book* for instructions. Happy Holidays!



Sam, a second-generation sibling, helps package poinsettias for transport



An incredible selection of three-foot poinsettias — healthy and colorful, perfect for gift giving — and for the incredible price of only \$7!

Holiday Gifts from a Gardener



This holiday season will certainly be different from any in recent memory. We will be keeping closer to home, avoiding crowds at the mall, and perhaps scaling back from massive gift-giving in favor of more personal, more homey, and possibly more memorable gifts than previous years — that is, unless you have lots of grandchildren who still like to play with colorful toys that are shown on Sesame Street.

Here are some suggestions for making personal gifts that recipients will enjoy.

1 Aquatic Plant: This project is listed on our web site as one of the virtual workshops shared by Debbie Kolmodin. Find the demonstration by Googling “How to Make an Aquatic Garden.” You will find a YouTube presentation by a

very pleasant young woman who is easy to follow in terms of instructions.

Supplies you will need:

- **Glass cylinder:** If you don’t have one, a mason jar or clear glass vase will work. I bought mine at Michael’s for \$5.00, and the very next day I saw the same thing at Dollar Tree for one dollar.
- **Aquatic plant :** Available at Pet Smart or other stores with aquarium supplies. This is probably the most expensive item used in the project — mine cost \$10 at Pet Smart in Rancho Cordova.
- **Aquatic gravel:** The smallest bag I could find was 25 lbs., so do not purchase any gravel. I only used a very small amount, so there are probably 24.97 lbs. left in the bag. Email me and I will be more than happy to give you some — lots, actually.
- **Aquatic plant food:** Available at Pet Smart.

Before you begin the project, fill a pitcher with tap water and let it sit overnight.

Now — to begin.

1. Carefully take the aquatic plant out of the container. It may have some jelly-like stuff on the roots which is designed to keep the roots moist. Rinse off the roots with tap water and set aside.
2. Take a small amount of gravel out of the bag and rinse until the water runs clear. Then, make a little well in the center of the rocks. This is where you will place your plant.
3. Place your plant in the center of the well. If you need to move some gravel around, or need to move the plant, you can do so with a table knife.
4. Carefully add water. The best way to avoid splashing is to bank the water off the opposite side of the container from where you are working. Fill it nearly to the top. If you have a leaf that sticks out from the water, you can either take that leaf off or find a taller container.

That’s it! Simple and quite lovely You might advise the recipient that he or she may wish to take everything out and clean it, adding new water once a month, although I made mine in October and have yet to do anything but enjoy it. Add a perky red ribbon for color. You’re done!

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2. Birdseed Wreath

Here is another quick and easy way to make a gift for a bird lover, or maybe your own backyard birds would love it. Mix 2 packets of unflavored gelatin with one cup of warm water.

1. Add 6 Tablespoons of light corn syrup and one and a half cups of flour.
2. Slowly add 8 cups of birdseed, stirring as you go.
3. Lightly coat the inside of a bundt pan with cooking spray.
4. Add a few fresh or frozen cranberries to the pan.
5. Spoon the birdseed mixture into the bundt pan, pressing down firmly.
6. Let wreath dry for 24 hours.
7. Carefully remove the wreath from the bundt pan and loop a pretty ribbon around it to hang it up.

(By the way, if you plan to wrap this as a gift, please do so loosely in a gift bag. If it's wrapped in plastic or sealed in a box, it may become moist and sticky).

3. Paperwhites

This suggestion comes from the blog, "Sacramento Digs Gardening," written by Debbie Arrington.

Debbie writes that these bulbs make a fun gift for gardening friends — or for yourself. It involves forcing bulbs now for blooms by Christmas. Here's how:

1. Fill a shallow bowl or dish with 2 inches of rocks, pebbles, or glass beads.
2. Place bulbs in the dish with the root end nestled in the rocks.
3. Add water until it just touches the bottom of the bulbs.
4. Place the dish in a sunny window. Add water as needed.
5. After the paperwhites finish blooming, plant the bulbs outdoors in the garden. They'll return year after year — sometimes blooming into the fall, and sometimes early spring — and sometimes both.

4. Garden Gloves

If these projects seem time and energy consuming, and you would rather watch a 24-hour marathon of "The Godfather," remember our club still has quality gloves for sale which would make great gifts. Contact Donna Hansen at hansendk@sbcglobal.net to find out what colors and sizes are available.

Happy Holidays!





RVGC Zoom Holiday Party!

Date: Sunday, December 13

Time: 4—5 p.m



Items required to connect with this party:

1. Technology: iphone, Android, IPad, or computer laptop. Zoom instructions to follow.
2. Pad of paper and marking pen.
3. Holiday Cheer — We will be making a cocktail with a surprise mixologist
OR...if you prefer, you may make your own cocktail.
(Golden Cadillac ingredient list to follow). *Note: You can purchase a small amount of ingredients at Total Wine in Folsom.*
4. Ugly Sweater Contest
5. We will play two games — rules to follow.

R.S.V.P. by December 1 to participate.

Contact Loretta Lutz via email at

loretta_lutz@sbcglobal.net

Members/spouses/significant others only.

