



Volume 18

Issue 6 February 2021

Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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

The River Valley Garden Club (RVGC) board voted at its November meeting to initiate the process of changing districts. The RVGC has been a member of the Sacramento River Valley District (SRVD) since our club was founded in 2003. SRVD meetings are held three times a year at the Shepard Garden and Art Center in McKinley Park in downtown Sacramento.

A few of our members also belong to the Foothills Garden Club, which meets in Amador County. Their club is part of the Valley Lode District (VLD). The Amador County line is only three miles from Rancho Murieta.

Deborah Rooney, our Treasurer, Vivian Baier, our Raffle Chair, and I attended the October VLD board meeting via Zoom and we were very impressed with the level of support and helpful information shared at the meeting. As your president, I began researching how garden clubs are assigned to districts and whether it is possible to change districts. The California Garden Clubs, Inc. (CGCI) has definitive guidelines in its bylaws outlining the process.

In November 2020, I presented the possibility of changing districts to our club's board. There was considerable enthusiasm for doing so, and the board voted unanimously to start the process. Per CGCI bylaws, I first provided written notification to our current district co-directors of RVGC's intention to change districts. Then I contacted the director of the VLD and told her that RVGC was interested in joining her district. I provided an overview of our club and its recent activities during the pandemic to the VLD board in November. They voted unanimously to recommend to their membership to accept the RVGC into their district. On February 9, the VLD general membership will vote whether to accept us into their district. Their director anticipates that they will agree. If we are accepted, we will send a request to CGCI for final approval, which will probably be addressed at the state convention held at the end of May. Our official entry to the VLD would be July 2021.

The Valley Lode District has 19 clubs from the following counties: Amador, Calaveras, San Joaquin, Tuolumne, Stanislaus, and Alpine. We would make 20 clubs in their district and we would add Sacramento County to their membership. Your board believes that the gardening interests of our club would be better aligned with the VLD than to the SRVD. We think we will gain more support for our membership and will have more opportunities to expand our gardening interests.

What will change? Typically districts meet three times a year. The Valley Lode District rotates the host for the district meeting with each club hosting about once every three years. The host club is required to secure a meeting place, contract with a caterer for lunch, arrange a speaker, and hold a raffle. (This is how it is done when we are not in the midst of a pandemic). The host club determines a per person cost to reimburse their expenses and participants are charged an appropriate fee. The VLD meetings sound like mini-conventions with great opportunities for learning and socializing with other gardeners. In addition, our district dues will go down from \$2 per member to \$.75 per member. I am so thrilled with the possibility of RVGC joining VLD that I plan to continue as a member next year, even though I live in Yolo County! This is not that unusual, since we currently have a member who lives in El Dorado County, and one who lives in Idaho!



Keeping a Garden Journal.....



When Pam McCabe mentioned her garden journal a couple of months ago I wondered if that would be something to think about, especially now that I'm taking care of two gardens.

Most of us believe we'll certainly remember the last time we fertilized our roses, or what product was most effective in getting rid of mealy bugs — but do we?

I decided to dig deeper into the concept of a garden journal by talking with Pam to determine just what method she uses. Here is what I learned: Pam uses a three-ring binder with tab dividers. In the front, she has a *Sacramento Bee* article from years ago with monthly lists of what to do in the garden. Then her tabs read: Soil, Pests, Bulbs, Irrigation, Flowers, Fruit, Pollinators, and Veggies.

Within each category she has collected information sheets and keeps ample binder paper. When something is planted, she makes notes. If she spies pests or pollinators, she makes notes. When she observes something not doing well, she makes notes. Her journal is where she keeps the pictures and descriptions that often come with plants. She finds the journal helpful because all of her garden notations are kept in one place.

If you Google "garden journaling," you will find all manner of suggestions as to how you can accomplish garden journaling. The owner of a web site on gardening in Australia said that "keeping records of one's horticultural endeavors over a period of years is surely the best way to develop knowledge and experience as a gardener." She recommends using things like Excel spreadsheets and check-off lists.

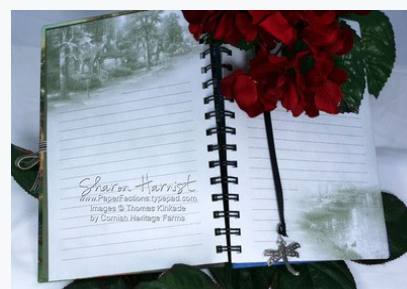
A Master Gardener from Mono County has been quoted as saying that one of her most treasured possessions is a book that belonged to her grandfather and was published in 1911. This book apparently served as his garden journal, as he had added copious notes in every margin and kept long-faded newspaper clippings within the pages.

One web site called Garden Know-How suggests that you'll want to record a sketch of your garden layout, pictures of your garden, a list of successful plants and those to avoid in the future, expenses and receipts (this could be scary!), plant sources, and dates when you divide your perennials.

And then there are those wildly creative garden journalists who just go out into their garden and write poems, draw sketches of blossoming flowers, watch little birds flit about, and just meditate.

So there you have it. A garden journal can be many things — a planner, a documentation of activities, a means of assessing what works and what doesn't, a tool for learning, a work of art (especially a messy, perhaps even smudgy work of art), collections of tidbits and thoughts, fancy or plain.

I think I'll give it a try. And I can guarantee that my journal will not include any Excel spreadsheets, but may include a few smudgy sketches or some pretty pressed flowers.



Plant of the Month: The Lovely Cyclamen



Native to Mediterranean climates, cyclamen are typically available in cooler weather, and are often received as gifts during the holiday season. This would lead a person to conclude that it's a house plant, which it can be, depending upon the species.

Known primarily for their pretty flowers that stand up tall from a clump of attractive leaves, they come in white, as well as varying shades of pink, rose, and red.

Large-flowered florists' cyclamen (*C. persicum*) is most often raised as a container plant suitable for indoors. Cyclamen with smaller flowers are called hardy cyclamen and are better adapted to outdoor planting where they thrive in shady rock gardens, under trees, or as carpets under camellias, rhododendrons, and large non-invasive ferns. They may also be grown in containers on balconies or patios.

Cyclamen sold as houseplants are tropical and cannot tolerate temperatures below 40 F. Hardy cyclamen, on the other hand, which are sold in nurseries and garden centers are typically hardy to USDA Zone 5, but it's best to check the plant's label.

It turns out that cyclamen are quite forgiving of incorrect culture (soil, temperature, light) provided that you don't drown the poor thing. A sickly cyclamen in a container may simply need new potting soil. Try removing the plant from the soil, rinse off the tuber, and check for any damage. If the tuber is healthy, repot using fresh, sterile soil. After a cyclamen blooms, it will go into a dormant state, with the leaves turning yellow and falling off. It is in this state that most people



decide that the plant is dead and toss it in their yard waste bin. At this point in a cyclamen's life, I typically remove any remaining leaves and spent flowers and then plant it outdoors in a flower bed that I maintain for miscellaneous plants I'm trying to nurture through the winter. This flower bed is dominated by *Lamium*, but the *Lamium* is very friendly and allows co-habitation with several other species that I am trying to support through the cooler months. Following this regimen, some cyclamen just don't make it through the winter, but a surprising number of them do survive to greet the spring.

If you receive a cyclamen for a birthday gift, it will no doubt come with the container wrapped in a lovely gift foil with a bow. The best course of action here is to immediately remove the foil to allow the soil to breathe and prevent root rot, which will occur if the water pools at the bottom of the foil and has no way out.

Cyclamen are surprisingly grown easily from seed; however, the small, hardy species may take several years to achieve full bloom, so unless you're a hard-core propagator, you may wish to go to a nursery and plop down \$6.95 for a specimen that's already blooming. Whatever color or type you choose, enjoy the dazzling color this Mediterranean species can bring to your home or garden.

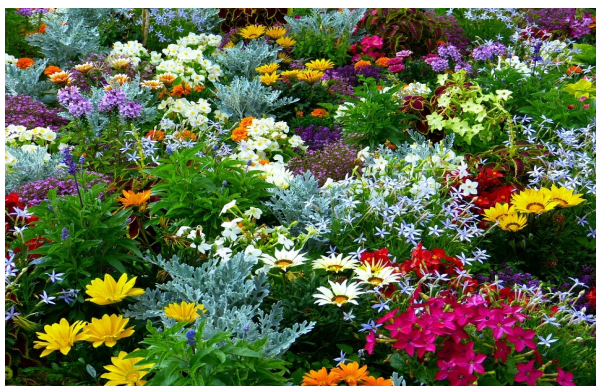


Great online programs from the UC Master Gardeners of Placer County

The volume of garden-related information and programs offered on the Internet is astounding — and is particularly welcome at a time when our activities are curtailed and we're staying close to home. This past week I found an entire schedule of online classes offered through the University of California Master Gardeners of Placer County and plan to enroll in many of them. Below is the schedule:

Event Date	Event Name	Event Sponsor
February 13, 2021	<u>Totally Tomatoes Zoom Workshop</u>	UC Master Gardeners of Placer County
February 27, 2021	<u>Planning Your Summer Vegetable Garden Zoom Workshop</u>	“ “
March 13, 2021	<u>From Bambi to Thumper Zoom Workshop: An Integrated Strategy for the Management of Vertebrate Pests</u>	“ “
March 27, 2021	<u>Growing Citrus in the Foothills Zoom Workshop</u>	“ “
April 10, 2021	<u>Gardening in a Changing Climate</u>	“ “
April 17, 2021	<u>Composting and Mulch Zoom Workshop</u>	“ “
May 8, 2021	<u>Principles of Propagation Zoom Workshop</u>	“ “
May 22, 2021	<u>Plant It and They Will Come: Planning for Pollinators Zoom Workshop</u>	“ “
June 12, 2021	<u>Succulents Zoom Workshop: Part 1: Welcome to Succulents: Part 2: How to Propagate Succulents</u>	“ “
June 26, 2021	<u>California Native Plants for Habitat Gardening</u>	“ “

To enroll in these workshops, you can Google “UC Master Gardeners of Placer County,” or email mgplacer@ucanr.edu.



Back to School with the National Garden Club



As members of the River Valley Garden Club, we are also members of the National Garden Club (NGC), which means we have many wonderful opportunities, including participating in the educational offerings through the NGC schools. These include:

- ♦ **Gardening School:** This program consists of a series of four courses, each scheduled over two days of instruction, followed by an exam for those interested in becoming an NGC Gardening Consultant. Courses cover all aspects of horticulture, gardening, soil structure, pruning, plant identification, basic botany, annuals, perennials, trees, shrubs, fruits, vegetables, lawns, pests and plant classification.



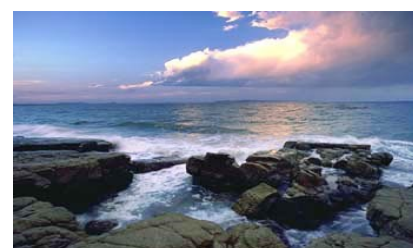
Pam McCabe and I enrolled in Gardening School, the first course of which was offered in Turlock at the Stanislaus County Fairgrounds where the presentation focused on basic botany, and a tree was planted, a donation from the Valley Lode District. Course #2 was offered at Modesto Jr. College where a professor of horticulture went into more depth on pruning, soil structure, site preparation, and plant propagation. The best part of this course was propagating plants in the greenhouse, which felt more like playing to an avid gardener.

Then COVID hit and the possibility of attending any more live sessions was put on hold while the NGC figured out how to offer the same quality courses via Zoom. I attended the last courses sitting in front of my computer in my bunny slippers.

- ♦ **Environmental School:** The mission of the Environmental School is to teach environmental literacy to spread the message that cherishing and protecting the living earth is crucial to ensuring a healthy planet for the next generation. This course encourages action for sustainable development and appreciation for the interrelationship of nature's world. Land and water conservation, as well as air quality, are specifically emphasized.

Attending the first two courses of the Environmental School in Chula Vista at the Living Coast was my introduction to NGC Schools. The Living Coast is an environmental education center built to inspire the community and the general public to connect with and appreciate the natural environment. Open to the general public, it is also a destination for thousands of school children through field trips, scout programs, and other community education programs. It also houses marine animals and a bird exhibit.

- ♦ **Landscaping School:** The mission of this school is on helping gardeners learn the basics of building and maintaining more beautiful gardens. Many students have been motivated to serve in political decision-making arenas where awareness of the impact of a well-designed landscape can enhance the beauty and enjoyment of public spaces.



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Back to School With the NGC.....(continued).....

- ♦ **Flower Show School:** The Flower Show School is a comprehensive program that teaches all you need to know about judging, entering, competing, and chairing a National Garden Club Show.



This is a really good time to become involved in the NGC programs, as there is no need to travel. The last course I took was offered through a district in Ft. Lauderdale, Florida, and included a virtual trip through the Everglades, which was truly fascinating.

For more information about how to enroll in a NGC school, Google National Garden Clubs. When the home page comes up choose "Our Schools." This page shows all four schools.

Press the "learn more" button. You will come to a page that provides more in-depth information. To the right of the course description, you will see a green square and an opportunity to find a course. Click on that, and you will see that the next Gardening School course begins on March 31 in Kalamazoo, Michigan.



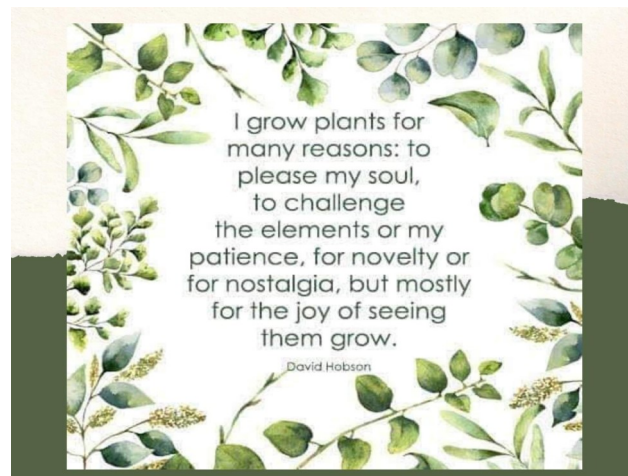
But you don't want to go to Kalamazoo, Michigan. It's entirely too cold! Brrrrr.... So remember...these are now Zoom classes, and you won't have to go anywhere except the room where you keep your computer.

Just sign up with the registrar, and you'll be on your way to becoming a Gardening Consultant, or just obtaining the information for your own purposes.

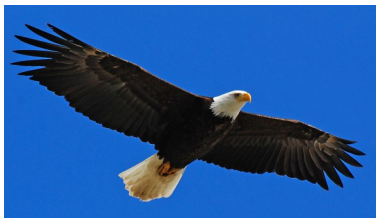


One more tip: It's not necessary to attend the courses in numerical order. If you find a class, for example, in Landscape Design, and it happens to be Course #3, well that's quite all right, as long as you take all of the required courses and complete the entire program.

And while you're cruising around the National Garden Club web site, take a look at the other resources available to you, as a member. The publication, "The National Gardener," is always interesting and well-written.



Stalking the Bald Eagle by *Candy Hearn*



Over the dam, through the woods, and around Lake Clementia, Ellen Covairt led a group of ten garden club members on a delightful walk out to see the Bald Eagle.

Ellen gave many interesting nature highlights, as did Chris Wasserman. Who knew that during the toilet paper shortage, all we had to do was go out and gather some of nature's natural toilet paper?* Also, we found miners lettuce to be quite good.**

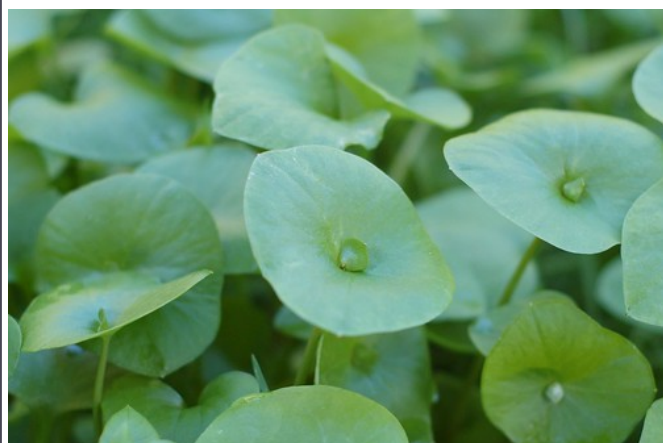
The Bald Eagle was just flying back to the nest when we arrived, so we got some good views. Some of the group continued on to walk the rest of the way around Lake Clementia, and the rest of the group doubled back to where we started. The weather and the walk were beautiful. Thank you, Ellen, for taking us on the walk!



***Nature's Toilet Paper = Wooley Mullin:** This plant has large, fuzzy, sage-green leaves and is described as a hairy biennial plant that can grow two feet or taller by the second year of growth.

The bottom leaves are large, and apparently comfortable enough to be used as toilet paper by hikers, campers, and people who can't wait until the next comfort station.

That's probably something worth remembering!



**** Miners Lettuce:** You guessed it — this plant is so named because miners used to eat it as salad. It reportedly tastes similar to watercress, but with a more mellow flavor— more like spinach with a nice refreshing crunch.

Miner's Lettuce grows naturally from the West Coast to the Central Plains, but is most abundant in coastal and central California. It is said to not only have a pleasing taste, but is heavy with nutrients — containing a third of our daily requirement of Vitamin C, 22% of the daily requirement of Vitamin A, and 10% of the requirement of iron.



Farmers Market 2021



After an enormously successful run in 2020, the River Valley Garden Club is once again planning to participate in the Farmers Market held on Cantova Drive across from the church on the second Saturday of each month beginning with May 8, 2021, and continuing through October.

So as you're contemplating what seeds to plant, think about what you can have ready for our sales. Or what plants you can propagate or divide. It may be a bit early to take stock of containers you no longer use or want, but when the weather becomes a bit balmy, perhaps you can peruse your garden shed and think about what to contribute to the cause. A neighbor moving away may have the perfect stash of containers to donate. Also, garden art can be refurbished, as can bird houses, watering cans, and other items related to gardening. Debbie Kolmodin, Community Services Chair, is lead on this event. Debbie may be reached via email at cagodmother60@gmail.com.

Below is a list of Farmers Market Dates:

May 8 June 12 July 10 August 14 September 11 October 9



14th Annual Galt Winter Bird Festival.....

Here's a fun event you can attend this year from the comfort of your own home....the **14th Annual Galt Winter Bird Festival**. The purpose of this event is to advance public awareness of conservation of the region's wildlife.

The area around Galt is a critical stop for many species of birds commuting on a diverse chain of habitats called the Pacific Flyway. In addition to these magnificent migrating birds, hundreds of bird species call Galt and its surrounding areas as home.

The festival typically includes tours, vendors, programs, and presentations for guests to enjoy — and now — just think — you won't even have to drive to Galt and look for a place to park! This year's festival is billed as a *Unique Online Experience* providing an opportunity to continue Galt's tradition of connecting the community to nature.

The 2021 festival includes a youth art contest, bird drawing classes, three Cosumnes River Preserve Tours, including those entitled, "Out of Step Birds," "Cosumnes River Preserve Self-guided Tour," and "Behind Closed Gates."

The keynote speaker, John Muir Laws, will address the topic, "How to Build a Better Bird Brain," and it appears that the bird brain he refers to is the human brain that can be expanded to include more information about birds. Googling "John Muir Laws" reveals that he is a naturalist whose web site is a treasure trove of information related to nature stewardship, science, education, and art.

The date is Saturday, February 6. For further information call (209) 366-7115 or go online at www.ci.galt.ca.us/WBF.





The Fascinating Life of a Honey Bee

Who knew that honey bees lead such structured lives, and even have job descriptions? Or that without bees, humans would survive only about four years? Jan Fetler, Sacramento County Master Gardener, presented a fascinating program on honey bees via Zoom that was enjoyed immensely by members and guests who attended our first program of 2021.

We learned that the Workers, who represent 99% of the hive, do all of the work in the hive with the exception of laying eggs. Their first duty after emerging from the hive is to clean out the cell from which they emerged. They then need to feed and nurture the developing babies, which means checking a single larva 1300 times each day. Are you kidding? That sounds exhausting! They also are required to tend to the Queen, which means feeding, grooming, and removing her personal waste. So the next time you say you want to be a Worker Bee rather than take the lead on a project, please remember these rather unpleasant tasks, including removal of personal waste.

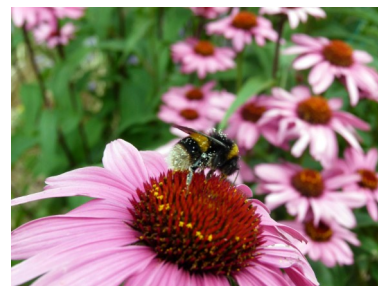
Drones, on the other hand, have only one task — and that is mating. That's it. How's that for a job description? And of course the Queen (and there is only one per hive) lays all the eggs — up to 1500 per day. Whew! That's quite a job! I think one baby at a time is quite enough, thank you.

We have heard much about Colony Collapse Disorder which is blamed mainly on a specific pesticide, as bees are very sensitive to pesticides. This is a growing concern due to their importance in pollinating agricultural products, which means the food that we eat every day. In fact, 43% of our hives were lost in 2019, and the loss of bees has been on a steady decline every year.

How can we help maintain the bee population and ensure they continue their role in pollination? We should plant flowers with big, open centers — flowers like coneflowers, sunflowers, and daisies. That's the good news, as these flowers are always a beautiful addition to any garden.

Coneflowers: Also known as Echinacea, coneflowers are considered hardy flowers that draw butterflies, bees, and birds to the garden. They can be tolerant of drought, but do better in average, dry-to-medium moisture.

These colorful gems are prolific bloomers, and deadheading will keep them blooming all summer. Each flower remains in bloom for several weeks. You can ensure a spread of cone flowers by letting the seed heads ripen and dry on the plants. In the fall, break the seed heads apart and sprinkle them where you want more flowers to grow.



Sunflowers: A flower that needs no introduction, sunflowers originated in the Americas, and were first domesticated in what is now Mexico. During growth, sunflowers tilt during the day to face the sun, but stop once they are blooming. By the time they are mature, sunflowers generally face east. Bees love them so much that if purchasing sunflowers from a nursery, you may be followed home by a wandering bee or two. Just be sure they're in the bed of your pickup, and not inside your car.



Daisies: Bright, cheerful, and easy to grow, daisies are readily identifiable and are often the mainstays of cottage gardens and perennial borders. An old Celtic legend states that the daisy symbolizes childbirth, motherhood, and new beginnings. Just as their cheerful appearance would suggest, daisies enjoy full sun, although they will tolerate partial shade. Recommended companion plants include coneflowers, bee balm, and a wide variety of salvias.

February Meeting to Focus on Building Resilient Gardens

Our next general membership meeting will be held on Tuesday, February 23, at 7 p.m. and it will be provided in a different format than we have used before.

Karrie Reid, Environmental Horticulture Advisor, has produced a beautiful YouTube presentation entitled, "Building Resilient Gardens," which is packed with information of interest to every gardener.

Karrie talks about the importance to healthy soil, water-conserving plants (which, interestingly, is often related to the type of leaf on the plant), selecting the right plant for the right location, and her presentation style is pleasant and easy for gardeners to follow. There are also many helpful tips on plant selection.



A few days prior to February 23, you will receive an email with information about how to access the YouTube presentation. Then you can view the presentation at your convenience, and when we get together for our Zoom meeting on **February 23**, we will have an open discussion about the video and the concept of a resilient garden. The email will also include a brief outline of the presentation, so you can use it to take notes on during Karrie's talk.



To Plant a Garden is to Believe in Tomorrow

We are so fortunate to be gardeners, because it makes us believers. In a world where the future often seems cloudy and division marks our society, we gardeners sow affection for those who will come after us. They may sit under a tree we plant, or enjoy a daffodil from a bulb we set years before. Our endeavors reflect the need for clean water, healthful air, an enriching earth, and a nourishing environment.

We plant today for tomorrow, because we believe in the future. Gardeners help create a better, more beautiful tomorrow.

We inspire each other by coming together to learn, share, and create. Nature inspires us. We are concerned about bees that help grow food and flowers, and the birds and butterflies that lighten our hearts. We're gardeners, you and I, and we're making tomorrow a better place, one blossom at a time.

From an inspiration by Harry Matte given at the Sacramento River Valley District meeting on 2/17/2020.