



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

Pam McCabe, President

Nancy Compton, Editor

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

As I ponder my move, the reality is that I have a very small planting area at my new home. So I have been thinking about how to maximize the color and have something blooming year-round. What about winter blooming plants? Hellebores came to mind — they bloom for up to six weeks in late winter and are also known as Lenten Rose, since they are often flowering during the Christian season of Lent.

Older varieties of Hellebores have blooms that face downward. Breeding has been focused on the development of larger blooms that face upward. I am particularly fascinated by new varieties developed by Hans Hansen. He developed the Wedding Party series in 2015 and the Honeymoon series in 2020. His selections are known for their vigor and producing an abundance of blooms in rich, sophisticated color patterns.

The names of Wedding Party varieties include Wedding Bells, Maid of Honor, Confetti Cake, Dark and Handsome, True Love, First Dance, Flower Girl, Mother of the Bride, Blushing Bridesmaid, Wedding Crasher, and Shotgun Wedding. The Honeymoon series includes Paris in Pink, Rio Carnival, Romantic Getaway, Rome in Red, Sandy Shores, Tropical Sunset, Vegas Nights, and California Dreaming.

Hellebores should be planted in partial or full shade. They are evergreen in warmer climates like ours. Pruning is not necessary except to remove old, damaged, and brown foliage. They should be spaced 18-24 inches apart. They are reportedly deer and rabbit resistant.

As I have shared previously, I am moving to El Macero, which is near Davis. I have already joined the U.C. Davis Arboretum and purchased three Maid of Honor Hellebores plants at their recent drive-up sale.

In my Rancho Murieta garden, I planted a Wedding Bells Hellebore in my white garden last spring after garden club member, Ellison Cowles, shared photos of her Hellebores blooms. I haven't had any blooms yet; I trust that the new owner of my home will enjoy its blooms this winter.

“The gardener is the quintessential optimist: not only does he/she believe that the future will bear out the fruits of his/her efforts, he/she believes in the future.” (Joyce Carol Oates)

Being a gardener and an optimist, I have great expectations for 2021. Stay safe and healthy — and keep gardening. ☐

(Three species of the lovely Hellebores flower are pictured on the right.)



What's New for 2021?



As we ring in the New Year, let us hope that we are all well and happy, our families are unharmed, and that COVID is on its way out the door. In the meantime, we will continue with our programs and activities following the guidelines provided by the Sacramento County Health Department and the RMA.

What this means is that for the colder months of 2021, our meetings will be held in a Distance Learning mode using Zoom. If you haven't downloaded Zoom yet, this is a good time to do so. It's a free download and is fairly easy to use. Just ask your grandkids!

Our first meeting of 2021 is scheduled for Tuesday, January 26 when our speaker will be Jan Fetler, former RVGC member and Master Gardener. Here is a description of Jan's program:

The Honey Bee ***by Jan Fetler***



How much do you really know about honey bees? Yes, they will sting, but only to defend their home, or in response to a poorly aimed swat. You might know they reproduce by complete metamorphosis, just like butterflies. Did you know they live only six weeks? Or that the first half of their lives is spent inside the hive? What do they do in there?

Join me for a peek inside a honey bee hive to find out what these amazing little creatures do, how important they are to us, and what we can do to help them.

I have been a Master Gardener since 2011, and started keeping bees in 2018.

Jan has created an interesting and lively PowerPoint that she will narrate, and because she will be on the program in real time, she can hold a Q & A session.

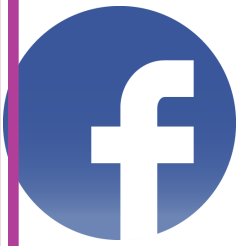
Our February meeting is scheduled for **Tuesday, February 23rd** when our topic will be, "**Building Resilient Gardens,**" by another Master Gardener, Karrie Reid. The video is lovely and contains information I wish I had known years ago when I first started to garden in this clay-and-rock soil.

As the year progresses, we will keep our eye on the weather and on possible changes in health protocols, and plan programs for about two months at a time. Program planning this year has been a bit of a challenge, but your participation and ideas have been so welcome and helpful, and most sincerely appreciated.

Also new for 2021 — **RVGC now has a Facebook page!** See the information on the following pages and become an active user of this new experience for our members. It's really fun!

In addition, our club has two new members whose names and contact information appear later in this newsletter.

And finally, I thought it might be fun to have a feature called, "**Plant of the Month.**" So often I've wondered about a specific specimen observed in a local garden or detected in a nursery — something I don't see often and don't know much about. If you are interested in an exploration of a specific plant and think it might be a good topic for a feature, be sure to email me at ncompton43@att.net.



Welcome to our new Facebook Page!

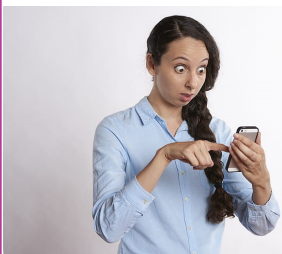
by Margaret Watson Hopkins

New Years Greetings! Fingers are crossed that 2021 will bring us all health, love and joy, retail outlets, indoor dining, theaters, and beauty salons that are open, and a bumper crop of gorgeous things in our gardens to enjoy into the fall.

Some of you might wonder why we “need” a Facebook presence, since we already have a website and a terrific newsletter that comes out once a month. That’s an excellent question — and let me answer it.

Our website serves as a static source of information for anyone who wishes to know more about the RVGC organization and its activities. The absolutely beautiful newsletter brings us monthly articles and photos of interest concerning current garden club events, in addition to articles with suggestions for a healthier and more attractive garden.

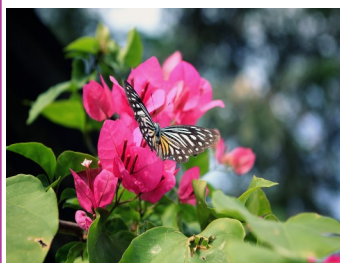
The Facebook page, however, will be a more interactive way to communicate with our garden club members. As a member, you will be able to post articles of interest that you want to share with others. You will also be able to ask — and answer — questions, such as, “What is this weed?” or, “Does anyone else have a problem with fuzzy white bugs on their White Sage?” (mealy bugs!) or “What’s the best cherry tomato to grow?” (Black cherry!). Another question: “Does anyone out there know if we can grow avocados in Zone 9?” (And — yes, we can!)



Oh, wow. I didn't know that!

The Facebook page has an administrator, herein known as The Admin. The buck stops with me, although the Facebook page also has two moderators (Deb Rooney and Debbie Kolmodin) who will be posting articles and keeping an eye on content to make sure it’s appropriate — I’ll explain that in a moment.

The RVGC—Rancho Murieta is a “private” group. That means that only those members who have joined may view the pages, although anyone searching may view the Cover Photo at the top of the page. An invitation to join is posted at the top of the Facebook page.



Does anyone know the name of this butterfly?

In order to become an RVGC—Rancho Murieta page member, all one has to do is click on the invitation, answer three simple questions, read the page rules, agree to follow, and then submit the request which will be reviewed by The Admin and/or The Moderators, and— in all probability — be approved.

Of interest, anyone can join the Facebook page. They don’t have to even live in California. Many of our own RVGC members are also Facebook members of other garden clubs located around the United States. Why?

Because it’s a good way to know what other folks are doing in their gardens. I’m a member of a garden club Facebook page located in the United Kingdom. I absolutely love looking at the pictures of rambling English backyard gardens! They get rain there, too!

About those pesky rules that people must read and to which they must agree and adhere. Well, as we know from this previous election cycle, things can get “tentious,” as my mother used to say, on the Internet. We don’t want that on our pages. So rules are simple. Please do read the rules carefully. The are written on the following page.

(This story continued on the next page.....)

Welcome to our new Facebook Page... *(continued from previous page)*

The Rules

1. Be nice.
2. No name calling.
3. No insults.
4. No gross pictures.
5. If you take umbrage with what someone has said or posted (and seriously think you need to deal with it), you have two options: You may (1) Contact The Admin and report the issue...or (2) Deal privately with the individual who posted the comment or article. No angry back and forth on the Facebook group site is allowed.

And finally.....

6. No selling or self-promotion on the site (unless, of course, you are the author of novels whose protagonist is a shy Master Gardener who solves mysteries in her garden club by using the Latin names of plants as a shibboleth).

Now.....who is The Admin and what is her experience? I'm a newish RVGC member, a container gardener of fruits and vegetables, specializing in lemons, limes, figs, tomatoes, spicy peppers, cooking herbs (including Epazote), and pollinators. I'd love to try my hand at yellow potatoes. I'm also the Admin for my Chico High School Class of 1962. Go Panthers!

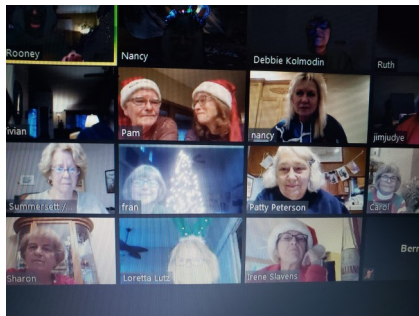
Lastly, if you do not have a personal Facebook presence, think about getting on the platform, if only for our group page. If you're not sure how to do so, ask Deb Rooney, Debbie Kolmodin, or me for assistance, and we'll be glad to help you set up your page — at a safe distance, wearing masks, protective clothing, surgery hats, gloves, and shoe covers, if necessary..

Thank you! Have a great New Year!

Margaret Watson Hopkins
m.watson911@sbcglobal.net



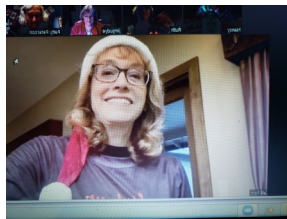
Holiday Party Fun



The RMA Building is closed? Can't meet in groups of ten or more? And that means not even outside at a park?

These minor distractions didn't matter to the River Valley Garden Club members! We know how to party!

On Sunday, December 13, Zoom was lit up like a Christmas tree as RVGC members clicked their way into our distanced Christmas Party. The party animals who arranged for this hoopla spared no expense in finding the best Mixologist west of the Rocky Mountains to teach us how to make a Golden Cadillac. That Mixologist, who was and still is a long-time member of the club is none other than Nancy Clark, who now hails from Idaho where her home features a heated floor in the bathroom and her dog loves to roll in the snow.



Pam McCabe



Nancy Clark



Irene Slavens



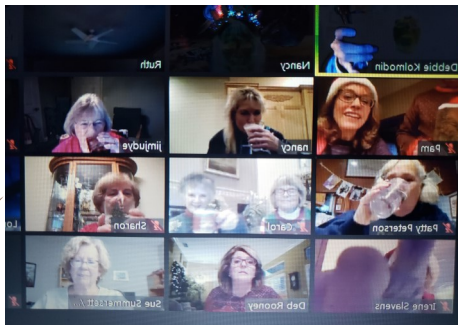
Vivian Baier (or a snowman)

While revelers enjoyed their Golden Cadillacs, Ruth Lecheler-Moore announced an ugly sweater contest which was accomplished by party-goers standing up to show others their sweaters, and in some cases, their hats. The contest resulted in a tie between Pat McCabe and Nancy Compton, but it was a squeaker, because so many people really got into the spirit, including whatever Vivian was wearing.

Not to be outdone by the sweater contest, Berniece Jones hosted a trivia contest by reading ten questions, and party-goers writing down responses. The answers were tallied via the honor system. Just so you can get a sample of the questions — what brought Frosty the Snowman to life? (*answer: magic hat*).

Next up was a game hosted by Candy Hearn called, "Majority, minority." The object of this game was to make a choice between two words that Candy presented, write your favorite on a piece of paper, then show it to the zoom audience. For example if the words "beach" and "mountain" were read, you would choose your favorite, then show it to Candy via the screen. If more people chose "beach," then those who chose a mountain would be in the minority and have to take a gulp of their drink. It seems that if this game were played long enough, several players would be asleep.

The party animals who planned this gig were Ruth Lecheler-Moore, Deb Rooney, Berniece Jones, Hearn, Irene Slavens, Sharon Barton, and Nancy Clark, and it was so successful that we might consider making them the permanent party crew!



The Earth is in her Hands



One of the gifts Santa brought me this year is a gorgeous book entitled, “The Earth is in her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working in the World of Plants.”

It is well-written, includes striking photos, and describes each woman by her title, her degrees, and her specific interests. This is a book full of enormously accomplished women and the impact they have on the plant world.

Imagine my surprise when I turned to page 108, and there with her brilliant smile, was Annie Hayes, of Annie’s Annuals in Richmond, where we have been on at least two tours that I know of, and maybe more. I specifically remember the time when Berniece Jones won first prize in a drawing, which allowed her to dress like a court jester and run around the nursery with a red wagon for five or ten minutes, plopping as many plants as she could fit in the wagon within the allotted time.

Annie is quoted in the chapter as saying that she loves romantic cottage garden flowers of nursery rhymes and fairytales—hollyhocks, Shirley poppies, Silver Bells, and Cockleshells. As a girl, she would lose herself in them, and they have inspired the flowers she first grew from seed.

Annie’s, operating on close to 3.25 acres, is known for its almost completely seed-grown, 4-inch pots of unusual annual and perennial plants. The nursery is also known for the over-the-top colorful, contagiously enthusiastic, descriptive information on each plant tag, which captures why Annie’s loves this particular plant.

It was the background information on Annie Hayes that was so surprising. She was born and raised in the Washington, D.C. area where her first grade teacher recognized her as a child who needed nature. So the teacher created a terrarium in the classroom just for Annie, and put it on her desk. Annie recalls it as being an amazing gift for which she still feels grateful. At the age of twelve, Annie ran away from home, and by fourteen, she was living in a hippie commune known as the Yurt Community in Franklin, New Hampshire, and she credits the commune with saving her life. She vividly recalls walking through woods filled with lady slipper orchids in spring, very cold winters without electricity or hot water, and a two-acre-garden where the food was grown.

Inspired by an ad in *Mother Earth News*, Annie moved to a Yurt Community near Ukiah, and eventually moved to Berkeley where she got a job at Berkeley Horticultural Nursery. One of her colleagues had a studio apartment that was completely filled with fluorescent lights over seed trays. Annie thought, “I could do this,” and before the day was over, she had collected and sowed *linaria purpurea* seeds. They didn’t come up, and they didn’t come up. Then her cat Jupiter walked across the seed tray and left little cat footprints. When the seedlings all came up where the cat had walked, she realized he had tamped the seeds down in a way that she hadn’t. We have much to learn from the animal world.

Annie believes that education needs to be at the heart of what her nursery is all about. “We try to teach people how to grow the plants — that’s what’s up in the catalog, the demo gardens, regular free talks, simple basic helpful videos, and colorful, explanatory tags.”



Annie’s business plan is to always be happy, to have a nice place to work and nice people to work with, as well as having happy plants and happy customers.

Perhaps when our COVID quarantine is over, we can plan another tour to Annie’s Annuals so we can once again enjoy one of life’s happiest nurseries.



We've Got Connections!

Did you know that as a member of the River Valley Garden Club you are connected to an entire network of gardeners and resources at the district, state, region, and national levels? Here is how it works:



National Garden Clubs, Inc.

Promotes the love of gardening, floral design, civic and environmental responsibility, and helps coordinate the interests and activities of state and local garden clubs in the U.S. and abroad.

Offices located in the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis, Missouri.

Offers schools to gardeners wishing to expand their education and knowledge. Schools include Landscape Design, Gardening, Environmental, and Flower Show Judging.

Sponsors the Penny Pines and Blue Star Memorial programs.

President: Gay Austin



Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc.

The mission is to operate on a nonprofit basis for benevolent, charitable, scientific, and educational purposes conducive to the well-being of the community and the public.

(Partial statement)

Director: Robin Pokorski

Focus: Reconnect with YOUR Pacific Region



California Garden Clubs, Inc.

Mission Statement: California Garden Clubs, Inc. promotes gardening, floral design, civic beautification, environmental responsibility, and the exchange of information and ideas.

President: Shane Looper

CGCI members spend thousands of hours learning about all aspects of gardening, as well as serving our communities, working together to make our world a better place. Offers college scholarships, an annual convention with programs and speakers, holds flower shows, garden tours, sponsors youth gardening activities, and supports numerous projects, including restoration and reforestation.



Sacramento River Valley District Garden Clubs, Inc.

Let's pull together and organize our varied skills to create a positive outgoing district.

Includes fifteen clubs in Sacramento, Yolo, and Solano counties

Three general membership meetings per year with interesting speakers and activities.

Co-Directors: Frankie Raymond and Debbie Doherty



River Valley Garden Club

To create, promote, and develop further interest in horticulture, gardening floral, landscape design, plant and bird life, and the natural beauty of our area.

Offers interesting programs, workshops, tours, and camaraderie among gardeners.

President: Pam McCabe



Plant of the Month:
The Colorful Kalanchoe

A brightly colored, easy-care Kalanchoe is always a lovely addition to a garden, a patio, or even as an indoor plant. Pronounced Kal-an-**KO**-ee, or Kal-an-**CHO**-ee or Ka-**LAN**-cho (and apparently all are correct, or at least acceptable), this hardy succulent hails from Madagascar, but has adapted well in a variety of growing zones, although interestingly, the *Sunset Western Garden Book* does not list our zone, which is Zone 9, as one of them. But we know better, and so do all the nurseries in the surrounding area. They thrive in Zone 9.

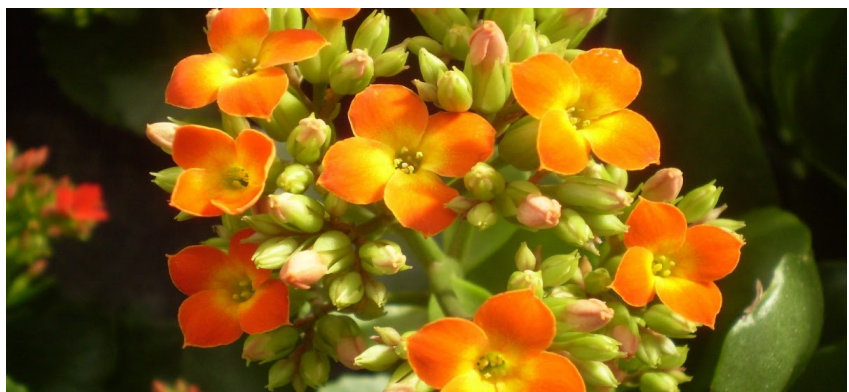
According to *Sunset* and several Internet garden sites, the Kalanchoe is tolerant of bright light, but may do better in filtered light, or partial shade. However, the Kalanchoes that live in pots in my back yard never read the light requirements, because they get full sun and have been thriving for years.

The Kalanchoe is a happy plant and offers a wide splash of colors, mainly in the red family — pink, fuchsia, magenta, salmon, and orange, but it also comes in white and yellow as well. The sturdy, waxy leaves are always a bright, cheerful green, so that even after the flowers have bloomed and been dead-headed, the Kalanchoe remains a handsome plant.

Kalanchoes require well-drained soil, so planting directly in our rocky clay soil, even if you've been amending for fifteen years, may not be a great choice. Instead, find an attractive pot and fill it with either cactus & succulent soil, or, as the web site *Gardening Know-How* recommends, 60% peat moss and 40% perlite.

Kalanchoe plants are fun to grow from cuttings. Take a 2-3 inch section and strip off the bottom couple of leaves. Let the cutting sit out in a warm, dry location to form a callus at the end. Then plant the cutting in pre-moistened peat & perlite up to the first leaf. Enclose the entire pot in plastic to form a little terrarium and conserve the moisture. Place the little pot in a bright window with indirect light. The cutting will root in 14-21 days after which it will be ready to transplant. Think about how easy that is! You can give little Kalanchoe plants to all your friends for their birthdays.

But please, if you do give them to your non-gardening friends, let them know that when the flowers are spent, that doesn't mean the plant is dead. Many Kalanchoes end up in the dust bin because non-gardeners are unaware that they can just pinch off the stalk where the bloom was, and the beautiful foliage will continue to thrive. Eventually it will bloom again! It's a gift that keeps on giving.



It's January...so Here Come the Seed Catalogs!

Winter can be somewhat frustrating to gardeners whose natural passion is to be outside planting.

However, to compensate for this inconvenience, seed and garden catalog companies are at the ready to fill this void. As a result, our mailboxes will soon be crammed full of seed and garden catalogs — filled with dazzling displays of colorful peonies, dahlias, day lilies, tea roses — and amazingly large and juicy-looking watermelon, luscious tomatoes, enormous peppers, and bean stalks taller than your head.

Now let's be serious. Of course the pictures grab your attention — who wouldn't want to have the most amazing garden in Rancho Murieta? Or for that matter — in Sacramento County? Whoever photographed all these stunning flowers and vegetables probably took 165 photos before finding the perfect picture to submit for final publication. And then there's Photoshop.

We even need to be careful of falling into the trap of descriptive words that would lead us to believe that the described plant is infallible. Here are some sneaky word clues to watch for in plant descriptions:

Deer resistant: It might not be a deer's first choice, but if a deer is really hungry, it could be lunch — or a hearty mid-afternoon snack.

Vigorous: It will not only take over your garden, but will house a large family of rodents by the end of the summer.

High yields: Your neighbors will hide when they see you walking up their driveway dragging a bushel basket.

Spreading vines: Kiss your driveway and your chihuahuas goodbye.

Best for storage: It will be around forever and can only be sliced with a chain saw.

Unique heirloom: It is old and ugly.

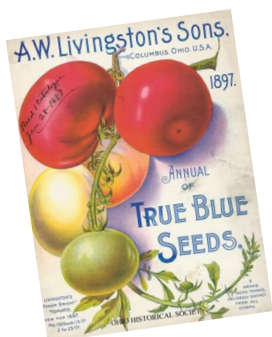
Old time favorite: It's been around forever. Your grandparents hated it, but they didn't have a choice.

Do not allow to dry out: Best planted in damp, boggy areas. Don't even miss one day watering this plant.

Good for shipping: The skin is as hard as a rock and you can use it to play ball with your grandchildren.

All kidding aside, it can be fun to grab a glass of wine, sit curled up on a comfy chair, and leaf through the pages, dreaming of how stunning your garden will be if you just order everything on page 63 and 129.

(Note: Part of the above list was pulled from "Gardening Catalogs — Read Before you Seed," by Pat Neasbitt, Master Gardener, published on the National Garden Clubs, Inc. web site)



Tune in to Workshop Wednesdays



As members of the Pacific Region Garden Clubs, Inc., we can tune in to a free series of workshops called “Workshop Wednesdays.” The topics cover a wide range of garden interests, followed by a 5-10 minute Hot Shot Topic focused on the administrative side of club membership.

The Hot Shot slot will be presented by Robin Pokorski, and if you haven’t crossed paths with Robin, then you need to. She is high-energy, hilarious, and has a depth of information to share. The schedule of dates and topics is shown below.

<u>January 6</u>	Floral Design Mechanics (basic) Hot Shot Topic: How to set a Budget	Shirley Tetrault Robin Pokorski
<u>January 13</u>	Geraniums Hot Shot Topic: How to Schedule a Convention	Judy Newman Robin Pokorski
<u>January 20</u>	Basic Botany Hot Shot Topic: How to Deal with Difficult People	Tina Tuttle Robin Pokorski
<u>January 27</u>	Winter Floral Design (Advanced) Hot Shot Topic: When Discussing Turns to Arguing	Lynn Frank Robin Pokorski
<u>February 3</u>	Seven Plants that Changed the World Hot Shot Topic: How to set an Agenda	Tina Tuttle Robin Pokorski
<u>February 10</u>	Combination Plantings Hot Shot Topic: Treasurer’s Reports	Darlene Newell Robin Pokorski
<u>February 17</u>	Increasing Membership Hot Shot Topic: Email Etiquette	Becky Hasselbroek Robin Pokorski
<u>February 24</u>	TBA Hot Shot Topic: Motivating participation	Robin Pokorski

These workshops are presented on Zoom, so you can attend in your sweats and bunny slippers. All workshops begin promptly at 9:30 a.m. To get on the list of attendees, contact Robin Pokorski at PRGCDirector@gmail.com.

Welcome New Members!

We welcome the following new members to our RVGC family! Please add their names and contact information to your directory.

- * Janet Mathews 6970 Carreta, Rancho Murieta (916) 354-1237 (916) 850-9492
janandtommathews@aol.com
- * Karen Hoberg 6521 Chesbro Circle, Rancho Murieta (916) 947-6910 (916) 354-0200
karen@rmhl.net