



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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

It's that time of year — time for a few New Year resolutions! What ??? Oops — I mean resolutions for the new year of the River Valley Garden Club. The Garden Club year starts July 1 and goes through June 30 (yep, don't ask me why) and every time I think of a new year, I think of resolutions. So this year — let's make a few!

Resolution #1: I resolve (picture my best Girl Scout pinky swear) to meet and greet every new face I see. We are fortunate to have many new members join in the past few months. I have not been able to meet each one so now that will change. I know how hard it is to walk into a new group — my hat is off to each and every one of you that has joined in the past 2-3 months. I hope that I will see you at our June picnic. I'd love to meet you if I haven't already.

Resolution #2: I resolve to not buy plants if I have no clue how to take care of them. This is going to be a hard one. I love outdoor plants and I love houseplants, but let me be honest here — not all of my plants make it through the first month or two. Lots of reasons — none of them good, so what good is it to adopt a new plant if I have a strong sense it doesn't have a chance in...well, a chance. I have a feeling this will be the hardest one to keep!

Resolution #3: I resolve to be FOREVER grateful to each and every board member, each and every member of our club — every day, every way. While I am extremely grateful today and every day, I want to make sure that I continue to make it a priority — a priority to say thank you, I appreciate you. And in these busy days, I'm appreciative of everyone who has agreed to do one more thing — I am always in awe of our board — how hard they work to make our club great. I love that our board and our members support all of our great ideas! No matter how crazy or harebrained they are, it is a pleasure to work with each one of you and I don't ever want to take that for granted.

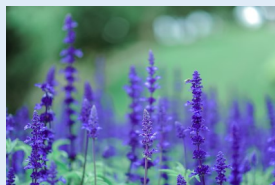


And finally, **Resolution #4:** I resolve (and this is a biggie) to write this article on time! Nine times out of ten — I'm the one who is late. Thank you, Nancy, for being so patient! I have all kinds of excuses, but I resolve to do better.

So as we end this year and start a new one, thank you for being a part of our club. Thank you for being active — for being a part of the board, for joining committees, coming to meetings, volunteering to help at events — and thank you for just being you!

We are so thankful! Happy New Year!

Deb



First-ever Garden Stroll a Huge Success!



Maizy and Ashley McKenna creating pots and plants for their Mother's Day gifts

Whoever you talk with about the Garden Stroll — whether a homeowner, a garden stroller, a volunteer, or a plant shopper — all the stories about the event have been highly positive. What a great event! And the weather, which had been cool and even rainy, blossomed into a beautiful day for all of us.

The children's activity, handled by Mo Young and Jan Mathews, was a particular favorite of busy moms, as they could shop the plant sale without the typical kid question of, "Can we go now?"

The homeowners, who had over a hundred visitors to their gardens, reported enjoying the interaction with visitors, answering questions — even giving out clippings of some of their plantings.

Plant shoppers commented on the beauty, the variety, and the health of the plants that were offered for sale, and it was evident that our shoppers were happy, because at the end of the sale, there was very little left to take care of. Shoppers even commented on the quality of the pots, many of which were recovered, refurbished and restored from the donations the club received from the community.

Plants for sale were raised from seed or propagated by members, donated by community members, and a big reason we had so many

wonderful flowering plants is that we received a generous gift certificate from Green Acres.

Many thanks to our many sponsors who provided financial or in-kind donations that helped us cover overhead costs, such as printing and advertising. Below is a list of our sponsors:

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And many thanks as well to our homeowners who allowed so many interested garden strollers to tromp through their gardens. Many thanks to:

Nancy and Marty Pohll

Jon and Margot Rice

Phil and Mary Helen Fitch

Maria Lopez and Edin Goolan

Stacy Garza

Margaret Watson-Hopkins

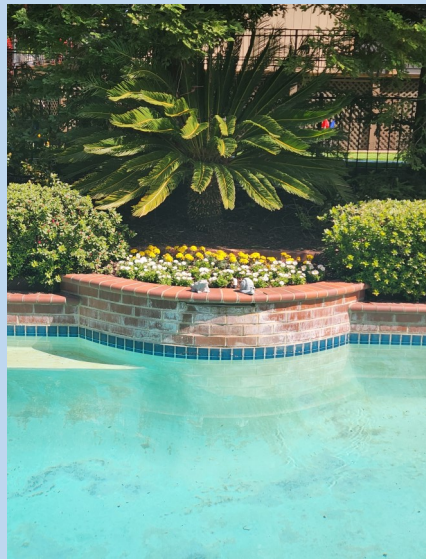


Enjoy the Photos!

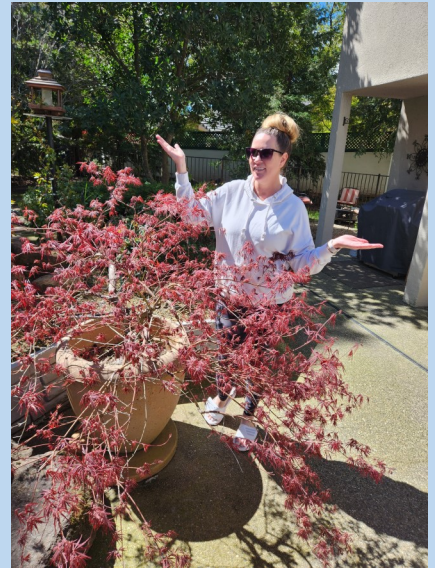
In the event that any of you missed the Garden Stroll, here are some photos for you to enjoy.



The lovely and welcoming entrance to the garden of Nancy and Marty Pohll



Serenity pool at the home of Phil and Mary Helen Fitch



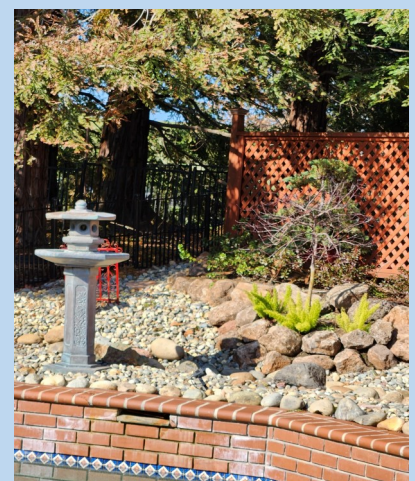
Busy mom that she is, Stacy Garza has found time to create an interesting and relaxing oasis for her family



Margaret Watson-Hopkins' garden features raised beds and gorgeous containers



The amazing vertical garden of Maria Lopez and Edin Goolan could be mistaken for a National Park



An Asian theme with a touch of whimsy describes the gardens of Jon and Margot Rice



With a beautiful selection of annuals, perennials, shrubs, small trees, and cut flowers, our plant sale was overflowing with gifts for Mother's Day and gifts for any garden.



Mo Young and Jan Mathews staffed the children's activity booth — which the moms in our community loved!

Did you know that birds and their songs are good for our Mental Health??

The Washington Post is not typically a resource in which to read about nature, but a recent article entitled “Why Birds and their songs are good for our Mental Health,” piqued my interest. This article summarized a body of research that consistently shows that the more contact and interaction we have with nature, the stronger our bodily and brain health become. Birds appear to be a specific source of these healing benefits. They are almost everywhere and provide a way to connect us to nature. And even if they are hidden in trees or in the underbrush, we can still revel in their melodies



Emil Stobe, an environmental neuroscience graduate student involved in Human Development studies commented that... “the special thing about bird songs is that even if people live in very urban environments and do not have a lot of contact with nature, they link the songs of birds to vital natural environments.”

At this point in the article, I became distracted wondering what in the world an environmental neuroscientist is. Well... it is the study of aspects of the physical environment that includes, but is not limited to noise, greenspace, degree or intensity of urban development, crime, low-level perceptual features like pollutants, lighting, temperature, etc. and how people work and react to the environment around them. There is an entire rabbit hole of information on this topic which led me to wonder if I had heard of this line of study 45 years ago, I may have become an environmental neuroscientist instead of an English teacher. But never mind....back to the topic of this article.....)

It appears that even listening to recordings of birds and their songs, even through headphones, can alleviate negative emotions. Apparently birds and their songs benefit both healthy people and those who have been diagnosed with depression, which is one of the most common diagnoses worldwide, and does not always respond to conventional pharmaceutical treatments (i.e. meds)

Going out to see birds also tends to encourage more physical activity, which has its own benefits to both our physical and mental health. And, exercising outdoors may magnify the health benefits of exercise.

So — how lucky are we that we live back-to-back with the natural environment? Hang out more birdhouses and bird-feeders! Invite nature’s songbirds into your garden!

