



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 a beautiful Sunday afternoon — temperature in the 70's and sunny skies. I spent a bit of time this afternoon surveying my yard — removing all the “freeze blankets” I'd set out, seeing what damage was done with those freezing night temperatures we had last week. While surveying my yard, immediately imagining the plants I love so much blooming brightly through the summer, I realize how much water those all need, and I'm thrown for a loop. I'm feeling happy, hopeful, and excited for spring, but confused for what the summer heat will hold and what I need to do now for those hot, hot days to come.

It's clear I need to rethink my gardening plan (a.k.a. my watering plan) for the coming seasons. I have no doubt we're in for more hot summer days and even more tightened water restrictions. Thoughts of drought-tolerant plants, revamping the yard, changing watering schemes fly through my head, and I realize I haven't got a clue on where to start.

So here goes — Google is my go-to. I Google “rethinking a drought-tolerant gardening plan” and VOILA! As I read through the various articles that pop up, I see that I first need to re-think the bones of my garden area, and then incorporate more drought-tolerant plants. Here are a few suggestions:

1. Reducing lawn size, enlarging flower beds, leaving natural areas around trees, increasing mulch, and adding drought-tolerant ground covers.
2. Replacing high water-use areas — shifting sloped garden areas with rock gardens or drought-tolerant shrubs or ground covers.
3. Amending soil with organic compost to reduce use of fertilizers.
4. Replacing water-dependent perennials and annuals with drought-tolerant plants and shrubs.
5. Watering early and wisely. Irrigating so water falls only on turf or beds — no need to water hard-scape!
6. Adding drought-tolerant ground cover around the base of a tree—establishing ground cover to help keep soil around trees watered.
7. Mulch, mulch, and more mulch.

Okay — this looks like a good start, something I can wrap my head around. But really, now I'm exhausted just thinking about all of my garden to-do's. I think I'll grab a lemonade, a book, and sit in the yard enjoying the sunshine.

I'll keep you posted as I make changes in my yard. Happy Gardening!

Deb



Paint & Sip Turns Gardeners into Artists



Painting instructor Caitlin Konrad

On a sunny Saturday morning, eleven gardeners gathered to take part in a “Paint & Sip” party, which is essentially a group painting class during which painters may nibble on cheese, crackers, and grapes, AND sip on tasty mimosas.

The instructor, Caitlin Konrad, a mom and freelance art instructor, has taught painting classes at the country club and came highly recommended. Her cheerful, easy-going teaching style brought out the creativity even for those who insisted that they are not creative.

And speaking of creativity, a recent study showed that the only difference between a creative and non-creative person is self perception. Creative people see themselves as creative and thus give themselves the freedom to embark on projects that may be intimidating to others.

Creativity may be defined as the ability to come up with new and useful ideas. We all think creatively in our daily lives, whether it’s figuring out how to make dinner appealing using leftovers, or fashioning a Halloween costume out of clothes already in your closet.

But back to painting. Using only three colors (blue, white, and black) Caitlin took the group through the process of painting flowers — some thought they were anemones, though others thought they were Icelandic poppies — and in under two hours, a room full of masterpieces was created.

And while all painters had the same basic instruction and saw the same reference painting, it was quite amazing how each painting had its own touch. One featured flowers that more resembled day lilies. Another painted daisies. Chris Wasserman, a real artist, enlivened her painting by adding green grass and yellow in the flowers’ center.



Jan Mathews painting the background for her masterpiece



Jane Miller focusing on her sky

Everyone seemed to enjoy themselves and asked when the next “Paint & Sip” class will be held. No date

has been scheduled as yet.

And a word to the wise: We don’t want to see any of these lovely paintings showing up as a raffle item at our next meeting!



Rear: Deb Rooney, Debbie Kolmodin, Lynne Erpelding, Jan Mathews, Sharon Barton, Margaret Watson-Hopkins, Jane Miller, Chris Wasserman. Front: Pam Williams, Donna Hansen, Nancy Compton

Plant of the Month: Carpet or Landscape Roses



Those of us who are somewhat intimidated by the rigors of growing roses have another option: low-growing Carpet or Landscape Roses. These roses are perfect for those gardeners who are looking for ground cover roses that are easy to maintain, colorful, and striking in a landscape.

These beauties produce a massive flower display from spring bloom to the end of fall. They are also low-maintenance and exceptionally disease-resistant. And, they are drought-tolerant, making them perfect for growing in our region. The reason they are so tolerant of drought lies in their two-tiered root system that allows their surface roots to use any available water near the surface, and once established, a tap root that will seek deeper water during drought conditions.

To help gardeners ensure that their Carpet Roses become well-established, it is recommended to mix a handful of fertilizer into the soil and keep the area moist for the first six months — certainly a dedicated effort in our dry area.

Drift Roses, another hybridized low-growing rose, are becoming one of the most desirable rose bushes on the market. A cross between a groundcover rose and a miniature rose bush, they are very compact and will grow to only two feet tall and approximately three feet wide. The Drift Rose was created to fill the gap in a landscape where small areas need a pop of color.



When it comes to pruning, these low-growing roses can be very forgiving. They may be pruned with a hedge trimmer because the nodes are so close together. However, with more careful pruning you may get more vigorous flowering. Debbie Arrington, local garden columnist and well-known rosarian recommends taking out any dead wood, as well as any canes that cross in the center of the plant to improve air circulation, which cuts down on fungal growth. Strip off any remaining leaves, as they can contain fungal spores that will infect the new growth. After pruning, give these roses new mulch and hold off with fertilizer until late February.

Carpet Roses get their nickname from the brand name Flower Carpet. Several groundcover roses are marketed under that label, all by color: Scarlet, Coral, Pink, Red, White, Yellow, Amber, plus some creatively named colors to include Apple Blossom, Pink Splash, and Pink Supreme.

Originally hybridized in Germany, Flower Carpet Roses are best sellers worldwide, with an estimated 50 million sold annually.

Although I consider myself a rose novice, I have grown Carpet Roses for years. They are consistently beautiful, nearly maintenance-free, and are a welcome harbinger of springtime.

Note: References for this article include an online resource called "Dave's Garden," and "Sacramento Digs Gardening," 1-17-22

Explore Deer Creek Hills Preserve



Spring season at Deer Creek Hills Preserve is now underway. The marked trails are open for self-guided hiking every Saturday (weather permitting) from 9 a.m.—1 p. m. Hikers are required to pre-register by 6 p.m. on Friday, and a signed liability waiver is mandatory to visit the property.

Groups may sign up for a group guided tour with knowledgeable docents. Topics change weekly and vary from history, birding, plants, wildlife, equestrian rides, and woodland therapy. (*Note:*

Curious about woodland therapy, I googled it and was referred to a variety of psychiatrists and therapists in Woodland, CA. Space is limited and pre-registration is required.

Deer Creek Hills is part of the Sacramento Valley Conservancy and is one of the largest nature preserves in the Sacramento region. The preserve includes a working cattle ranch and offers over 4,500 acres of Blue Oak woodlands, seasonal creeks, and grasslands.

Single track trails and ranch roads allow visitors to explore the beauty of expansive views of the Sacramento Valley and the High Sierra on foot, mountain bike, or horseback.

Those who are interested in exploring this beautiful, undeveloped local asset are referred to the website at outreach@sacramentovalleyconservancy.org, or call or text SVC's Program Coordinator Carly Amatiso at 916-612-3719.



Coming up.....grab your calendar....

- ◆ **Sunday, March 6** **Trip to Ironstone Vineyards to see the Daffodil Show — meet and carpool from RMA at 10 a.m.**
- ◆ **Sunday, March 13** **Arbor Week Festival at the Urban Wood Rescue — meet and carpool from RMA at 12:30 p.m.**
- ◆ **Wednesday, March 30** **Trip to Hollandale Nursery in Lodi — meet and carpool from RMA at 10 a.m. Lunch at Pietro's Italian Restaurant.**
- ◆ **April 7-10** **Northern California Flower & Garden Show — back at Cal Expo this year! No formalized club plans at the moment.**
- ◆ **April 8-10** **National Garden Clubs, Inc.-sponsored Flower Show School — Turlock, CA. Contact Nancy Compton for details.**
- ◆ **Tuesday, May 10** **RVGC hosting Valley Lode District Meeting — Location - Country Club. Speaker: Marlene Simon (the Plant Lady!) More info to come, but save the date!**

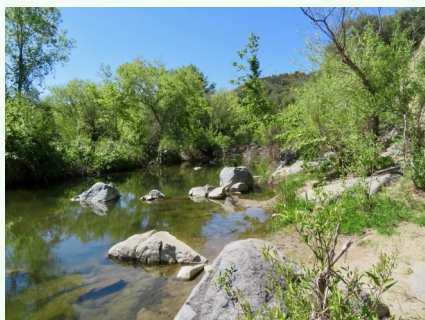
California Garden Clubs., Inc. President's Project: The San Diego River Center at Grant Park

Each president of the California Garden Clubs, Inc., (CGCI), our state organization, has a unique opportunity to establish a fund to help finance a garden or nature-related project of his or her choice during their term of office (two years). Lynne Batchelor, current state president, has identified her project to establish a garden and signage at the San Diego River Center at Grant Park in Mission Valley.

Many people are surprised to learn that the San Diego River is actually 52 miles long, flowing from the mountains in the eastern part of San Diego County to the Pacific Ocean. This is an area of cultural and environmental significance and the current focus is to develop this natural resource as a place for recreation, nature discovery, flora & fauna habitat, and outdoor education.

Toward this end, the San Diego River Foundation was established to protect and enhance the natural resources of the river valley, to foster appreciation of stewardship, and to encourage the community to embrace and celebrate the river legacy, create a system of parks, and to develop open spaces and community areas for public art and educational facilities.

Lynne's goal is to raise \$20,000 to establish this garden during her term of office (2021-2023). Donations to this fund are obtained from individuals, garden clubs, special fund-raising activities, and community donations. A wealth of research supports the premise that the more exposure families and individuals have to nature, the healthier the community will be. This year's state convention will be held in San Diego, and attendees will have an opportunity to tour this lovely natural resource.



Our Club Needs a Tech Guru!



Are you relatively tech-savvy? Do you know how to connect things like projectors and laptops? Can you trouble-shoot when technology seems unwilling to cooperate? Do you know what all those cables are for? Then we need you!!

This does not need to be a board position, so don't worry about lots of meetings. The club just needs a "go-to person" when we are baffled by equipment and short on expertise. Please contact President Deb Rooney at

debjrooney0120@yahoo.com or **(916) 730 - 7403. Thank you!!**

February Meeting Back at RMA Building

For the first time in nearly three years, the River Valley Garden Club met at our old stomping grounds – the Community Room at the RMA Building. Following some initial announcements, President Deb Rooney presented a framed certificate to Debbie and Don Kolmodin announcing that an acre of pines in the El Dorado National Forest has been purchased in their honor through the Penny Pines program. The board voted to honor the Kolmodins for their dedicated and continuous service to the club through our plant sales and other community projects.



Debbie and Don Kolmodin with their Penny Pines certificate

Our speaker for the evening was Carolyn McMaster, a local Master Gardener who lives here in Rancho Murieta. Her presentation focused on attracting hummingbirds to our pollinator gardens, and what to plant to accomplish this objective.

Her presentation included several lovely slides of brightly colored flowers, particularly those that are tubular, like foxgloves and hollyhocks, as well as those with an open center, such as cone flowers.

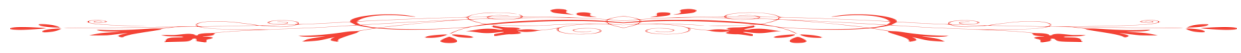
It is helpful for us to plant our gardens on a continuous blooming schedule, so that hummingbirds will have access to nectar throughout the year. Including perennials like bee balm, columbines, daylilies, fuchsia, catmint, and lupines, as well as biennials such as hollyhocks and foxgloves, provides a tasty menu for our little hummingbird friends.



A hummingbird discovers a fuchsia full of nectar

If your garden includes a hummingbird feeder, as well as flowers, be sure to wash it thoroughly each time it is filled to ensure that it is clean and free of disease.

And –kudos to our raffle crew – Vivian Baier and Rosann Stevenson – the raffle items were absolutely gorgeous and we took in \$150!!



Announcement.....

Please check out the lasagna pan modeled by President Deb Rooney at the left. Who forgot to pick up this wonderful pan after the Christmas Party?

Maybe it was brought to the party with a deep dish apple crumble in it. Or perhaps it was full of deviled eggs. Or maybe a treasured family recipe?

Whatever tasty dish was in it is now long gone, thoroughly enjoyed by party-goers. But the owner may want the pan back. If this item looks familiar to any of you, please contact Deb Rooney at debjrooney0120@yahoo.com, or 916-730-7403.

3rd Annual Plant/Gardening Fundraiser Sale!

Spring will be here before we know it, and with that comes our **3rd Annual Plant/Garden Fundraiser Sales Event!** The past two years were quite successful! Not only was it lots of fun, but also very profitable, allowing us to fully fund our horticulture scholarship, grants, and community outreach projects. Thanks to members and community residents, we had the best donations to help make us successful.



Debbie Kolmodin, Nancy Compton, Donna Hansen staffing the booth

As chair for this event, I need to ask a couple of favors of all members:

1. We are looking for members to donate plants and gardening items to include things like yard art, and all items themed or related to gardening. This could include indoor décor items, as well as outdoor gardening items. If you have friends or neighbors who are moving and want to get rid of gardening items, please consider those items to donate. I will gladly pick up any donations within RM.
2. We need six able-bodied men (one man for each month) to step up and volunteer their time to help Don Kolmodin set up the large canopy and seven tables in the early morning hour of 6:30 a.m. on event day — and then return at 12 noon to take it all down. It takes about 25 minutes to set up, and then again about 25 minutes to take down. If one man would like to volunteer for more than one month your help is always welcomed. If you can help by volunteering your husband, or if there is a male member who would kindly lend a hand, it would be greatly appreciated. My contact information is listed at the bottom of this article.
3. Here are the dates, time and location for our Plant/Gardening Sales Fundraiser Event:

Dates: May 7, June 11, July 9, August 13, September 10, October 8.
All are Saturdays.

Location: Murieta Plaza parking lot across from the vacant bank and market buildings.

Time: 8 a.m. to noon.

What can you donate? Plants you've grown or divided, seedlings, bird houses, garden art, succulents, and/or succulent arrangements, cute and quirky items for the garden (like metal garden stakes with birds, butterflies, or flowers), rocks painted with flowers, produce/herbs from your garden. ... the possibilities are endless!

I know there's a lot of creative gardening crafters in our group! Please show us and share your creativity by donating. All questions regarding donations or other information pertaining to this event may be directed to me, **Debbie**

Kolmodin at cagodmother60@gmail.com or text at (916) 458-2129.



Hand painted pot with house plant for sale



Child's bench hand painted by Don Kolmodin