

RIVER VALLEY GARDEN CLUB

A PLACE TO GROW

MAY 2019

VOLUME 16, ISSUE 8

HERE'S THE DIRT

Rooting for You

Nancy Clark, President

For the last few years, I've delighted in the spring explosion of color in my front yard. And this year it has been spectacular. Especially striking are my azaleas, completely covered in blooms. With conventional azaleas, the current explosion of color would be a one-time show, and the plants would be just a back drop the rest of the year. But the azaleas in my front yard are "rebloomers," blooming again in summer and fall. (A big thanks to Debbie Kolmodin for recommending them!)

Rebloomers thrive in the sun, needing four to six hours of sun for optimal blooms. They will also do well in part-shade. Because of this versatility, I've been able to position them throughout my yard rather than just pinning them against my house as is typical with traditional azaleas.

There are several brands of rebloomers – [Bloom-A-Thon](#), and [Encore](#) are most predominant. Mine are of the Encore brand, which were developed in the 80's in Louisiana. They're a hybrid of Kurume and Southern Indica parents, and there are now about 25 varieties, each name beginning with "Autumn." I have four of the "Autumn Fire" variety in a dwarf size, and right now they're a vibrant red. I also have some larger "Autumn Carnation" plants that are a lovely pink.

Encore Azaleas come in three sizes – dwarf, which at maturity are only two to three feet tall, "Starlite," which top out at four feet, and an "intermediate" variety, which grows to an average size of four to five feet tall. Imagine a back row of intermediate, a row of Starlite, and then a row of the dwarf variety in front. Now that would be stunning!

Azaleas have shallow roots and need good drainage, so you don't need to dig a big hole in which to plant them. I planted mine slightly above ground level, mounding plenty of planting mix over the crown of each plant.

So easy care, azaleas require very little attention, and rarely require pruning. I just add some specialized fertilizer in early spring, and that's it! (I wish I could say that about the rest of my garden!)



*Bloom-a-thon
Azalea*

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Club News and Events

2019 Programs and Events

Seize the moment. Man was never intended to become an oyster.

~ Theodore Roosevelt

Activity	Date	Time	Speaker/Provider	Topic
General Meeting	May 28, 2019	7:00 PM	Greg Gayton, Green Acres	Japanese Maples
Trash N Treasure	Jun 1, 2019	8 AM - Noon	RVGC	Fundraiser
End of Year Picnic	Jun 25, 2019	5:30 PM	RVGC	Fun and Frivolity

Sign Up Now For Another Great Garden Year

Irene Slavins, Vice-president, Membership Chair

It's that time again. For only \$25 you'll be able to enjoy another full year of membership that includes special speakers, fun workshops, and fabulous programs.

If you pay in May your dues are good all the way through to July 1, 2020. And, if you encourage friends to join now, they will receive a bonus two months because they will get to enjoy the remaining events of this year - two general meetings with topnotch speakers, Trash & Treasure, and our world famous end of year pot luck social.

Bring your dues to the May meeting or mail them in to: Membership. RVGC P.O. Box 711, Rancho Murieta, CA 95683. Membership forms can be found at <https://rivalleygardenclub.net/about-us-1>

California State Convention in Van Nuys, June 3 - 7, 2018

Berniece Jones, District Liaison

Several local members are going this year and if you're interested in joining us, go to CGCI.com to see costs for registration and Hotel. Contact either Berniece Jones or Nancy Compton for more details. We would love to see more of you at this fun convention. There are quite a few workshops planned.

Berniece (916-354-2873) Nancy (916-354-0354)

District Meeting

Berniece Jones, District Liaison

The May District Meeting will be held at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center in Sacramento on Tuesday, May 14. Carpooling at RMA at 8 a.m., with center opening at 9 a.m. Meeting is at 9:30 and program and lunch to follow. The program is on *Carnivorous and Bromeliad Plants*. Lunch and registration is \$10.00.

Call Berniece Jones by Deadline, May 9th, to reserve a spot. 916-354-2873



June Potluck and Social - Tuesday, June 25, 5:30 p.m., RMA Building

Carol Prinzo, Chair

Here it comes! Our year end June Potluck and Social is Tuesday, June 25, 2019. This is a great event and being on the planning committee is fun and creative. If you're interested in joining our party planners, please contact me. (354-9688) I will have a sign up sheet for potluck dishes at the May general meeting.



Photo Adventure, 2019

Fran Hawkins, Chair

Time is running out for you to submit that winning photo.

As a reminder, this year our photo adventure takes us on safari to find critters in a garden setting. You can photograph any kind of critter, from a lady bug to a deer, or even a fake turtle if you want to play it safe. The setting can be anywhere in the world, but the "critter," live or inanimate, must be in a garden setting.

It's easy and fun to participate. Simply:

- Take a Photo.
- Submit your entry. Deposit it in the box which will be with our lovely greeters at our garden club meetings. Or, hand it to any committee member. Alternatively, send your digital image directly to Irene at: slavens.irene@gmail.com.
- Entries must be submitted by June 30, 2019. ←
- Need Technical Help? We will be available to answer any questions at the May & June general meetings between 6:30 – 7 p.m., or we can assist anonymously and no questions asked! Contact Irene at: slavens.irene@gmail.com or Fran at: fdhawkins@gmail.com.



Trash N Treasure - Saturday, June 1, 2019

Pam McCabe and Nancy Compton, Co-Chairs

This is our major fundraiser and we need all hands on deck! We will use the funds generated from this event to fund our grants and scholarships, plus enhance our club activities. Whatever your interests or talents, we need your help.

Trash N Treasure was an annual event in Rancho Murieta, started because garage or yard sales within the gated community are not allowed. It was originally held in the parking lot behind the Sloughhouse Post Office. For a few years, the Consumnes Elementary PTA sponsored the event and it was held at the school. Since the school stopped hosting the event it has languished for the past couple years. This year the RVGC will be hosting the community yard sale, known locally as the Trash N Treasure, at the Rancho Murieta Community Church parking lot (14670 Cantova Way). The same day the Murieta Village will also be hosting their community yard sale and the Farmer's Market will share space with us at the church parking lot.

To generate funds, the River Valley Garden Club is sponsoring the event – renting vendor spaces and providing the infrastructure to make the event successful. Our club is also having our own plant and garden art boutique sale at the event. We have three sources of revenue from the event – the vendor space rentals, sales from our booth, and a raffle.

Key Dates (everyone welcome):

May 8th – Boutique Work Party, 9 am, Nancy Compton's house, 15256 Neuva Dr., Rancho Murieta

June 1st – TNT Set-up at 6:30 am. Sale runs from 8 am to noon.

Contact committee and subcommittee chairs to volunteer or donate.

Event Co-Chairs:

Nancy Compton ncompton43@att.net

Pam McCabe pamsaloha@gmail.com – Needs vendors (applications available at the RMA building or can be downloaded from www.rivervalleygardenclub.net or www.ranchomurieta.com

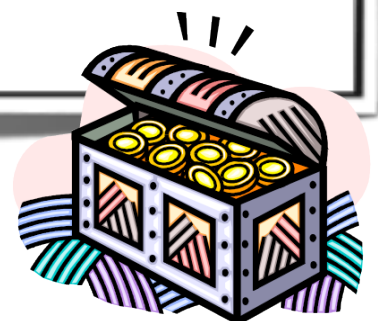
Garden Club Booth: Nancy Clark nancyclark475@sbcglobal.net - Needs plants.

Boutique: Carol Prinzo rcprinzo1062@gmail.com – Needs interesting planters, garden art that can be refurbished.

Raffle: Vivian Baier vivianbaier@yahoo.com – Needs BBQ related items, volunteers to sell raffle tickets

Volunteers day of event: Sharon Barton golfbum4@sbcglobal.net – Needs volunteers to work at the booth and membership table, help with setup and cleanup, traffic control.

Publicity: Berniece Jones bjones@ranchomurieta.org – Needs help making signs and posting them. Contact Berniece for downloadable posters to post at businesses or share with friends.



Flower Arranging with Rosann Stevenson, Sat. April 27, 2019

Debbie Kolmodin

Having owned a florist and decorating shop in the Bay Area, Rosann brought forty years of expertise to this colorful workshop. Not only did she bring all the flowers to create our exquisite arrangements, but we were presented with a beautiful food and drink table. Everyone learned a great deal through Rosann's talent and creativity. Needless to say, we're looking forward to another flower arranging workshop.



Picture yourself here... Next year!



Scholarship Winners Announced at March Meeting

Berniece Jones & Nancy Clark, Co-Chairs, Scholarships

Two Horticulture Students from American River College were chosen to receive scholarships out of the seventeen applications received. After reviewing those applications, only twelve applicants met all the requirements stated on the application. It was a very hard decision to pick only two winners from the list of deserving students.

Co-Chairs, Nancy Clark and Berniece had a great committee who helped by going to the colleges or reviewing applications. They were Debra DeVerter, Jamie Fox, Joyce Adams, Nancy Compton & Marianna Hashorva.

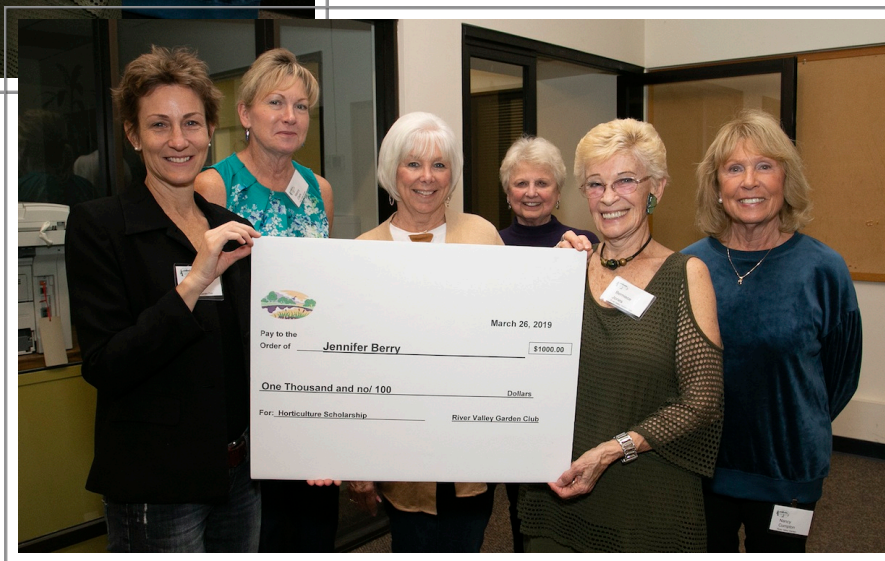
Our winners were: Jennifer Berry and Rosie Hernandez.

Jennifer is a returning student with a career path change. A former critical writer, she realized her love of nature and gardening was what would make her happier in the future. She plans to pursue urban farming, ecological restoration and design, and integrated pest management. Jennifer plans to enroll at UC Davis to complete her degree. She previously had worked at the Village Nursery and loved it.

Rosie, a beginning student, has big dreams of having her own cut flower farm. She is obtaining a degree in landscape design and has been accepted to several four year colleges which she will be attending in the fall. Rosie is currently a student assistant to the horticultural program and grows and sells flowers at the college. On her own farm she plans to raise cows and alpacas in order to have her own dairy products.



Rosie Hernandez receiving her check.



Jennifer Berry receiving her check.

Marlene Simon, the Plant Lady, Debunks Common Myths

Nancy Compton, Vice President/Programs

If you were unable to attend our April 23 meeting, then you missed a truly fun and delightful presentation by Marlene Simon, known locally as The Plant Lady – a frequent guest on Good Day Sacramento, regular contributor to the Sacramento Bee Garden Section, and horticulturist at the Botanical Conservancy at U.C. Davis.

Marlene admitted that her frequent annoyance at reading garden myths on Facebook and other online sites led to her developing a very entertaining program entitled, “Garden Myths.” If you missed the meeting or just couldn’t take notes fast enough, here is an overview of her lively presentation.

* Place banana peels on Staghorn Ferns. Many people have apparently been led to believe that the potassium in the banana is good for the fern. Myth! You don’t need to feed your Staghorn Fern. Put your banana peels in your compost bin. (I was personally delighted to learn that this is a myth, as my struggling Staghorn Fern always looked so silly sporting a banana).

*Use milk to sterilize garden tools, especially when pruning roses. True! The enzymes in milk do, indeed, sterilize your pruning shears. BUT – please do not pour milk on your roses, as they will not like it. Thank you.

*Put egg shells in the soil to add calcium. Well, okay, egg shells do have calcium, but it takes a long time to break down, and soil typically has enough calcium anyway. Put your egg shells in your compost bin.

* Add human hair to your soil to deter gophers. Thank goodness this is a myth because it sounds sort of disgusting. To deter gophers, Marlene advises that you get cats. Yes, cats! Apparently cats dislike gophers so intensely that they will actually eat them – all but the head and intestines, so you will be left with a gooey mess in your garden. I don’t think I ever had a cat that would even look at a gopher, but if you do have gophers, my suggestion is to sell your property and move someplace where there are no gophers. My sister has gophers and she catches them in a cage, then drives to a location far from her house and lets them out. However, don’t worry, she lives in Michigan, so her gophers won’t likely find their way to California.

*Use Vitamin B1 products for transplanting. Myth! Plants produce what they need. They are just fine without this additional product, so save your money and buy another plant instead.



Marlene Simon



Myths, Cont'

*Use calcium sprays for blossom end rot on tomatoes and peppers. Myth! Calcium cannot be absorbed through tomato skin. And don't think you should spray calcium on the leaves and then it will move to the fruit, because this just won't happen. Blossom end rot is usually a watering issue. Use mulch – lots and lots of mulch – to retain water.

* Use coffee grounds in the soil to increase acidity. Oh yes, I saw you at Starbucks taking out bags of used grounds, as Starbucks' grounds must certainly contribute high-quality acidity to soil. Well, folks, this is a myth! Used coffee grounds are neutral, as the acidity went into the cup of coffee you drank. However, used coffee grounds do contain nitrogen, so add it to your compost bin.

*Epsom salts are good on tomatoes. Noooo! Another myth. Take a bath in your Epsom salts.

*Always put rocks in the bottom of pots to ensure that soil does not leak out. NO! Don't do this! All you're doing is creating a smaller area for the roots to grow. Use a coffee filter or paper towel instead – all you need is just something to cover the hole.

*Bell peppers with four bumps are female and sweeter. Okay, this is not only a myth, but a rather hilarious one at that. Who thinks of this stuff?

So there you have it – myths debunked, more stuff for your compost bin, and a list of garden facts or fiction for your reference.

Next month's meeting will be held on Tuesday, May 28, at which time our speaker will be Greg Gayton of Green Acres Nursery who will speak on Japanese Maples. See you then.

Our 2017 Arbor Tree is Alive and Well

Berniece Jones

Our 2017 Arbor Tree is Alive and Well

After a really wet winter, I feared our little tree we planted for Arbor Day would drown in the clay soil by Lake Calero. After visiting the tree I am happy to report that it has bloomed out its green leaves and appears to have survived our two years of careful summer watering. This small Blue Oak was donated by the Tree Foundation, who advised us to water it for the first two years.

My thanks to all who participated in planting and watering the tree to ensure it survived.

The tree thanks you too.



DID YOU KNOW?

A queen bee can live up to 5 years and is the only bee that lays eggs. She is the busiest in the summer months, when the hive needs to be at its maximum strength. She lays up to 2500 eggs per day.

Larger than the worker bees, the male honey bees (also called drones), have no stinger and do no work. All they do is mate.

Honey has always been highly regarded as a medicine. It is thought to help with everything from sore throats and digestive disorders to skin problems and hay fever.

Honey is the only food that doesn't spoil. An explorer who found a 2000 year old jar of honey in an Egyptian tomb said it tasted delicious.

Honey is incredibly healthy and includes enzymes, vitamins, minerals. It's the only food that contains "pinocembrin", an antioxidant associated with improved brain functioning. Unless you are partaking of "mad honey" which will then turn your brain to mush.



Beeware of Hallucinogenic Honey

Jamie Fox, Newsletterer



Honey bees are amazing little creatures. They can fly up to six miles, and as fast as 15 miles per hour. The bee's brain is oval in shape and about the size of a sesame seed, yet it has a remarkable capacity to learn and remember things. For example, a bee is able to make complex calculations on distance traveled and foraging efficiency. And best of all, honey bees communicate with one another by dancing. When a bee finds a good source of nectar it flies back to the hive and shows its friends the nectar location by doing a dance which positions the flower in relation to the sun and hive. This is known as the 'waggle dance.' Wouldn't it be wonderful if humans could boast of such traits?

Those little bees work hard for our pleasure. Honey bees must gather nectar from two million flowers and have to fly about 90,000 miles – three times around the globe – to make just *one pound* of honey.

Amazing, right? Well. Let me introduce you to the honey bee's foreign cousins. *Apis dorsata laboriosa*, the giant Himalayan honey bee, has a very special talent. These giant bees make hallucinogenic honey. Yes, *hallucinogenic*.

Depending on the season, the inch-long bees make different types of honey. In the spring, toxins in the rhododendron flower pollen create a psychotropic "mad" or red honey. Mad honey is a special type of honey that contains grayanotoxins. It has been used for thousands of years as a biological weapon, a medicine, and as a recreational drug. With hives at the top of towering cliffs in eastern Nepal, the bees don't face many natural predators. But for centuries, honey hunters of the Kulung people have braved these cliffs and the giant bees that guard them, armed only with hanging rope ladders, 25-foot bamboo poles, and their faith in Rangkemi, the guardian spirit of bees and monkeys.

One of these hunters — perhaps the last among the Kulung — is Mauli Dhan. For the July 2017 National Geographic article and the documentary that followed, photographers Renan Ozturk and Mark Synnott accompanied Mauli on an expedition and discovered why the honey hunting tradition was in jeopardy. According to Mauli, decades ago, the spirit of Rangkemi visited him in a dream, calling him to the work that would define his life. Honey hunting isn't just a spiritual calling for Mauli. It's backbreaking, dangerous work and at nearly 60 years old, he is worn out and doesn't want to do it any more. But Mauli is poor and needs the money the honey brings. At this point, there is no one to succeed Mauli either. It's not just a matter of finding a willing successor. The Gods have to speak. Asdhan Kulung, Mauli's assistant, is more than qualified for the job. Problem is, he hasn't received the go-ahead from the magic dream. And without the blessing of the dream, bad things can happen.

Should you be considering a second career, and perhaps want to give Mauli a helping hand, take a look at this [extraordinary behind the scenes short film](#) before you head for Nepal. You may want to reconsider the career move.