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Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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Rooting for You.....Deb Rooney President

It's a busy world we live in — family, work, travel, friends, fun — all shoved into a finite period of time called a week, or a month, or a year. Especially so today, with COVID taking a bit more of a backseat in our lives, making time to do all those things we couldn't do the last two years.

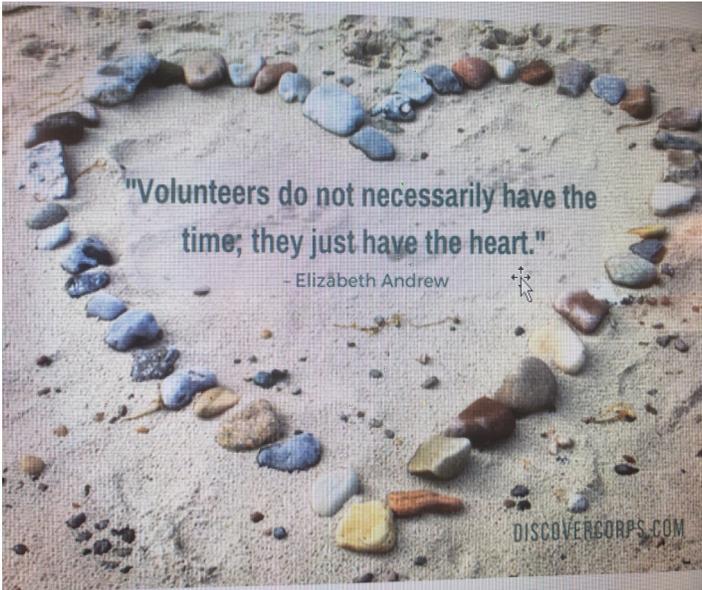
As we near the end of our “garden year,” we begin and end the process by asking our members and community — not just for beautiful flowers and yard art for our fundraising efforts, but for your time.

The River Valley Garden Club is dedicated to giving back to our community. We have dedicated a Blue Star Memorial at the gazebo in RM North to remember all those who served. We provide grants to local community efforts and scholarships to local youth — helping them in their quest for higher education as they focus on the environment and all the natural world around us. And we have fun, welcoming new friends into our community.

For the coming year, we will continue to support those efforts and more — but we need your help. Just a little. I think of volunteers as trusted hands, contributing time and effort to bring small changes into our community.

Volunteering can be a scary word — thoughts of asking for too much time, too much work, one more ask for money. But what I've learned is that volunteering has many looks.

Volunteering to support our club can be one meeting a year — greeting at our membership meetings. Volunteering can be something you enjoy — baking treats for a meeting. Volunteering can be fun —



being a part of a team to plan a party, brainstorming with a group for ideas on field trips and programs, inviting students to apply for scholarships, planning a family event for the community organizing the garden club golf carts for the 4th of July parade (new idea??!!)

There are always bigger jobs — want to be President? We got you! But really all the little ways to support add up. Every single contribution adds up to the whole, and together we can do so much! There are so many ways to be part of the fun — to become involved.

Give us a try — what's your super power? We welcome you with open arms! *Deb*



An Unusual Tradition

A recent post on our club's Facebook page featured an unusual tradition related to bees following the death of a family member in rural regions of Great Britain in days gone by.

Partial list of foods that would not exist without bees:

- ◆ Apples
- ◆ Almonds
- ◆ Blueberries
- ◆ Cherries
- ◆ Avocados
- ◆ Cucumbers
- ◆ Onions
- ◆ Grapefruit
- ◆ Coffee
- ◆ Tomatoes
- ◆ Cocoa
- ◆ Squash
- ◆ Strawberries
- ◆ Pumpkins
- ◆ Watermelon
- ◆ Peppers
- ◆ Oranges

It is told that whenever there was a death in the family, someone had to go out to the hives and tell the bees of the terrible loss that had befallen the family. Failing to do so often resulted in further losses, such as the bees leaving the hive, or not producing enough honey, or even dying.

Traditionally, the bees were kept abreast of not only deaths, but all important family matters, including births, marriages, and long absences due to journeys. If the bees were not told, all sorts of calamities were thought to happen. This peculiar custom was known as "telling the bees."

The practice of telling the bees may have its origins in Celtic mythology that held that bees were the link between our world and the spirit world. So if you had any message that you wished to pass to someone who had died, all you had to do was tell the bees, and they would pass along the message.

The typical way to tell the bees was for the head of the household, or "goodwife of the house," to go out to the hives, knock gently to get the attention of the bees, and then softly murmur in a doleful tune the solemn news.

Little rhymes developed over the centuries specific to a particular region. In Nottinghamshire, the wife of the dead was heard singing quietly in front of the hive. "The master's dead, but don't you go; your mistress will be a good mistress to you." In Germany a similar couplet was heard: "Little bee, our lord is dead; leave me not in my distress."

But the relationship between bees and humans goes beyond superstition. It's a fact that bees help humans survive. Seventy of the top one hundred crop species that feed 90% of the human population rely on bees for pollination. Without them, these plants would cease to exist and with it, all animals that eat those

plants. This can have a cascading effect that would ripple catastrophically up the food chain.

Losing a beehive is much worse than losing a supply of honey. The consequences are life threatening. The act of telling the bees emphasizes this deep connection between humans and bees and how well this was understood by people of a bygone era.



Scholarships Awarded

At the April meeting of the River Valley Garden Club, Bernice Jones, Scholarship Chair, announced the winners of the 2022 scholarships. Each of the scholarship winners was awarded \$1,000, funds raised primarily through our plant sales.



Bernice Jones with scholarship winner Kathleen Walker

Katherine Walker, the first winner announced, has been attending American River College, and plans to have her own business as a landscape designer.

Her background includes participating in a Future Farmers of America Floriculture team and competing in floral competition where she won second place in the State of California.

Kathleen said she is eternally grateful for this opportunity, and thanked the garden club for its support of her aspirations.



Robert Swenson with Scholarship Chair Bernice Jones

Robert Swenson, also a winner, is attending Cosumnes River College and plans to transfer to California State University, Fresno, to continue his studies in the field of agriculture. Robert has an extensive background working in the agricultural industry, and one day hopes to own his own hop farm.

Robert's letters of recommendation were very strong. One of his professors stated that he has set a great example for younger FFA members on how to succeed as a leader, and how to be more competitive in state level competitions.

He also has vast experience in supervising an Agriculture Experience Program at Delta High School in the Career Technical division where he worked for the past three years for Hoppin' Raccoon Ranch helping to establish a new hop operation, and for Minors' Leap Winery helping maintain landscapes and hardscape displays.

Meeting and hearing from these young people aspiring to work in the field of agriculture, floriculture, horticulture, landscape design, environmental studies, and related fields is so rewarding. This is why we work so hard on our plant sales so that we can help students reach their potential and achieve their goals.

Upcoming Events.....

- ◆ **Tuesday, May 24 at 7 p.m.** "All About Begonias." A member of the Begonia Society of Sacramento will provide a presentation on these beautiful and versatile plants.
- ◆ **Wednesday, May 25 at 10:30 a.m.** Pioneer School Garden Tour hosted by Michele Blomberg. Meet at the RMA parking lot to carpool. Lunch afterwards at a local winery. Contact Sharon Barton.
- ◆ **June 7-10, 2022.** California Garden Clubs, Inc. annual convention. Handlery Hotel, San Diego.
- ◆ **Tuesday, June 28, 7 p.m.** End of Year Luau at RMA building. Pam McCabe to provide presentation on Hibiscus, the official flower of Hawaii. Officers for 2022-2023 installed. State Awards announced.

Coping With Another Dry Year.....



California is once again in the midst of a severe drought. What should we be doing to help our gardens cope now, as well as during the inevitable dry years to come?

The Sacramento Regional Water Authority has put together a publication called, "Garden Smart," which provides a number of suggestions for keeping our yards and gardens hydrated and presentable. Here is a summary:

1. **Stress Your Lawn — but Save Your Trees.** Even a brown lawn can recover quickly, but drought-stressed trees may be lost forever. Cut back on lawn sprinkler time, then deep-water trees with a soaker hose or use the bucket method, which involves punching a hole in a plastic bucket an inch or so above the bottom, then filling the bucket and letting it drip slowly over your tree roots.
2. **Upgrade Your Sprinklers.** Replacing older sprinkler heads with high-efficiency rotator nozzles can improve your sprinkler system's efficiency by 30% while building a healthy lawn. This simple switch also cuts down on runoff.
3. **Install a Weather-based Smart Sprinkler Timer.** Like a thermostat for your sprinkler system, this handy device automatically adjusts how much water your landscape receives according to weather, soil, sun conditions, and plant type.
4. **Water Early in the Morning.** Scheduling irrigation before 8 a.m. can reduce evaporation by as much as 50 gallons each time you water.
5. **Fix Leaks.** Leaky sprinklers or breaks in irrigation can add up to hundreds of wasted gallons.
6. **Mulch, mulch, mulch!** Three inches of organic mulch — leaves, straw, wood chips, etc. — acts like an insulating blanket, keeping moisture in soil, and roots cool.
7. **Check Your Soil.** Before watering, use a moisture meter or insert a long-handled screwdriver into the ground. If the screwdriver penetrates more than three inches, wait to water.
8. **Add Compost.** Dig it into your soil. Compost acts like a sponge, retaining moisture while also nourishing plants.
9. **Prioritize Your Landscape.** Ration water to valuable trees and shrubs that take years to grow. Then move on to the moderate and low-value plants.
10. **Watch for Signs of Heat and Water Stress.** Browned leaf edges or morning wilt are signs that plants need immediate water.



River Valley Garden Club Hosts Valley Lode District Meeting

- ◆ 21 Garden Clubs
- ◆ 74 attendees
- ◆ 15 raffle prizes
- ◆ Beautiful floral centerpieces
- ◆ Taco bar and flower cookies
- ◆ Golf cart Chauffeurs

Three times a year the membership of the Valley Lode District gets together for a district meeting hosted by one of the member clubs. May 2022 was our turn, and we did not disappoint. All of the items listed on the left — and all of you made the Valley Lode District Meeting at the Rancho Murieta Country Club a great success.

Our greeters were out in the cold, showing our guests the way to the club. The morning started with coffee, tea, and pastries, while everyone shopped the fabulous raffle put together by Vivian Baier and Rosann Stevenson.

The business meeting was kicked off with a “Welcome” from our club’s president, Deb Rooney, and from Berni Hendrix, District Director for the Valley Lode District. Several business items were approved, and updates provided by each club on what they had done the past few months, and what they looked forward to in the coming months.

Marlene Simon, from the UCD Arboretum, and a *Good Day Sacramento* host, spoke on “Plant Hormones — the Big 5”. She was so interesting, and we all had so many questions for her that she could have stayed all afternoon!

A huge “Thank you” to everyone who volunteered and donated!

All in all — a fun time was had with the Valley Lode District.



RVGC members Donna Hansen, Penny Pines Chair; Deb Rooney, President; Pam McCabe, Past President and Event Chair



Fabulous centerpieces made by Chris Reuter and her team



Peggy DeMello and Chris Reuter

Event Chair Pam McCabe said in her written message, “What a team! You all made the district meeting a great success! Although the numbers are not yet final, it looks like we made \$1200 on the raffle! The next district meeting will be hosted by the Tuolumne County Garden Club and they plan to hold it at the Chicken Ranch Casino.”