



# Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

Deb Rooney, President

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

Fall has arrived like it always does in our area, slowly sauntering from the last warm days of summer towards the long-awaited cooler days and nights. I love Fall—falling leaves, changing colors, cooler weather and Thanksgiving — my favorite holiday.



Why? Probably because there's no racing around to find the perfect gift, no frantic decorating, no countdown or race to the end. Simply people looking forward to sharing a meal and enjoying the time together. Whether family or friends, or both, just people together, expressing their thanks for everyone in their lives, and everything we have on this day, in this place we call home.

One of my favorite things to do in the Fall is walking along the cart path, along the Cosumnes River to the wooden bridge. It's a meditative walk — no fast pace. It's on these walks where I say a few prayers, count my blessings, and (maybe sometimes)...sing a little too loud with my headphones on.



Today on my walk I was reminded of how very lucky we are to live in this beautiful community. How very thankful I am. On this walk, in this community, nature is all around us. Fall is on full display. Leaves of every Fall color — maples, Chinese pistache, oak trees — all showing off. Squirrels, quail, geese, and deer — all very busy. Acorns—ah, yes, acorns...well, acorns everywhere!

And on this walk, people from this community wave, say hi, nod hello — we are neighbors — people supporting the community and people in it. Oh yes, we have our ups and downs, but the bottom line — if something is needed, we show up.

Whether it's helping a neighbor, supporting a cause, or simply supporting the River Valley Garden Club, you show up. Help needed to look for a location to hold meetings? You show up! Donations needed for our Plant Sales to support local scholarships, grants, and community projects — you show up! Setting up an event early on a Tuesday, Thursday, or a Saturday? You show up! Washing donated pots — You show up!

Propagating plants for the Plant Sale? You show up! Coming out to the Plant Sale at 8 a.m. on a Saturday morning to buy a plant you may or may not need? You show up! Helping a neighbor clean up a yard? You show up!

Volunteering to support a youth program? You show up! Moving tables, chairs, and ping pong tables for a meeting? You show up! We need cookies? You show up! Being on the garden club board? You show up!

Attending a meeting on Birds or Bats or Begonias? You show up!

Yes —you show up! And for all of that, and more, I am eternally grateful.

Have a wonderful Thanksgiving!



*Deb*

## *A Visit to Park Winters*



*Visitors are greeted by a friendly red tractor*

At first glance, visitors to the dusty, remote areas surrounding Winters, California, do not expect to come upon a Victorian country estate featuring native plants, a farm, a large cutting garden, and a stunning wedding venue.

But there it is — Park Winters — a lovely country estate and organic farm with sweeping views of farmland and the coastal range in the distance.

The original owner of this country estate was George Washington Scott, born in New York, the fourteenth of fifteen children, who had never traveled west, but with a wife and all of his belongings, he crossed the continent to begin a new life in what is now Yolo County. The original house, built in 1865, still stands, and may be accessed by visitors, many of whom left wondering how they lived in it with no kitchen.

Twelve garden club members were greeted by Rafael, our knowledgeable host and guide. The first point of interest was called a Fig Forest, named for the multitude of 150-year-old fig trees that have grown into a shady canopy. As we strolled and learned the history of the farm, Rafael would bend down and pick a clump of herbs, describing their aroma, their growing habit, and their use in the kitchen, where large banquets are prepared and served to wedding guests and others who visit the venue for special events.



*Pam McCabe selecting her flowers*

The highlight of the tour was the opportunity to pick our own bouquet, and although it was the end of the season, we still managed to find flowers that created sprightly and colorful bouquets, such as poppies, cosmos, Bells of Ireland, and sunflowers.

Members who toured Park Winters agreed that it would be fun to return during another season and partake in one of their workshops, like dried flower arrangements or wreaths.



*Cindy Bracisco with a pocket bouquet*

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*The original house, built in 1865*



*Members viewing the Fig Forest*



*Group photo taken just before enjoying a picnic lunch*

## *What is Penny Pines?*



At each of our meetings a cute little basket is passed around for us to toss in our change or dollar bill(s) for our Penny Pines program. But just what is Penny Pines...and why should we contribute?

The history of this program begins in 1941 when the San Francisco Sports-Women's Association recognized the great need to restore devastated forest areas. They therefore took up a collection and sent the monies to the Shasta-Trinity National Forest in Northern California. Since that initial contribution, the number of groups participating in this program, especially the California Garden Clubs, Inc., has grown exponentially.

At the beginning of the program in 1941, seedlings could be produced for about one cent each. Approximately 680 seedlings were used to plant an acre in a forest. So for \$68, seedlings for ten acres could be purchased. Site preparation and planting costs have been covered by the U.S. Forest Service.

In 1964, the original agreement was rewritten to provide that funds contributed to the program be used for reforestation, rather than solely for purchasing seedlings.

Over the years, more than one million dollars have been donated to the Penny Pines Program, and more than 27 million seedlings have been planted, renewing 88,000 acres of national forestland in California. Contributions may be used to prepare plantation sites for new trees, or to plant seedlings grown in Forest Service nurseries throughout California.



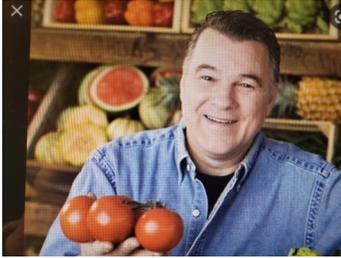
Seedlings are grown from local seeds and acorns, and are replanted near the areas where the seeds were collected to improve their chance of survival. The funds may also be used to maintain existing tree stands and improve wildlife habitat. Plantations are important for watershed protection, soil stabilization, and shade for recreation areas.

The Penny Pines Program plays a vital role both in renewing the national forests in California and in multiple-use management. Trees help the ground store precious water, protect against soil erosion, and add to the scenic beauty of our national forests.

So when the Penny Pines basket comes around, dig deep and contribute to this wonderful program that brings new life into the national forests throughout our beautiful state.



## Valley Lode District Featured Speaker Michael Marks — The Produce Man



Michael Marks, The Produce Man

On Tuesday, October 12, five RVGC members traveled to Turlock to attend the fall Valley Lode District meeting that was held in a lovely country club. The featured speaker, Michael Marks, who calls himself The Produce Man, shared stories about his experiences, especially his interactions with children, as he encourages them to become gardeners and eat healthy food. He also shared information on vegetables, much of which was new even to those of us who eat a diet heavy on produce.

For example, the first thing to do after arriving home from a trip to the grocery store is to take off the metal thingy that is wrapped around the bottom of the lettuce to keep the leaves together. Then plunge the lettuce into ice water briefly, then shake it off, take each lettuce leaf individually, then remove the moisture with a paper towel. The lettuce leaves are then ready to be put into a plastic bag, and be sure to compress the plastic bag with your elbow and forearm to remove all the air. Your lettuce will stay fresh for a week.

Presidents from each of the twenty clubs reported on their respective club's activities. We realized what a busy club we are when Deb reported on the many programs and activities we have engaged in during this past year, including the installation of the Blue Star Memorial, all of our programs, our many tours, the two ample scholarships we awarded, our



RVGC president Deb Rooney giving a Presidents Report

Farmers Market and Plant Sale fundraisers, the grants we awarded to the Murieta Trail Stewardship and Mountain Creek Middle School, and the ten new members who joined this year. Following his presentation, the Produce Man left an entire pile of vegetables on the table which quick-thinking District Director Berni Hendrix decided to auction off, as in .... "I hold in my left hand an eggplant..." It is our understanding that \$50 was promptly added to the Valley Lode treasury.



Marianna Hashorva, Ellison Cowles, Deb Rooney (back), Nancy Compton, Pam McCabe



Pam and Nancy both won raffle prizes. Pam's was a cool wagon planter; Nancy's looks like a tacky scarecrow, but a nice gift card was attached to his belt.



# Annual Monthly Plant & Garden Fundraiser Event — A Huge Success

By Debbie Kolmodin

I would like to extend a HUGE thank you to all who contributed to our fundraiser events each month May through October this year by donating plants, pots, garden art, and other garden-related items.



Debbie Kolmodin, Nancy Compton, and Donna Hansen

A special “thank you” goes out to Rancho Murieta resident David Clifton for his most generous donation of over 100 planting pots of all sizes, and yard art. Also, many thanks to Green Acres of Elk Grove with the assistance of Greg Gayton for their most generous monthly plant donations in the amount of \$100+!



Garden art planted with annuals

Because of all these generous donations we were very successful in raising funds to help with awarding local organizations with horticulture grants, horticulture scholarships to local college students, and funding our upcoming Community Outreach Projects.



Children's bench painted by Don Kolmodin

As you all know, we are a nonprofit organization and appreciate all of your donations to help us with this event. A special thank you to the volunteers who helped set up and work the event, both members and nonmembers alike: Don Kolmodin, John Davis, Jim Reuter, Rick Feldman, Ray Trujillo, Pat Rooney, Deb Rooney, Nancy Compton, Donna Hansen, and Candy Hearn.



Tables at our plant sales ready for customers!

And a big THANK YOU to all our members who contributed to the cause by propagating plants, growing plants from seeds, scrubbing pots, creating interesting garden art, and each doing his/her part to ensure the success of this effort. With everyone pulling together we raised an unbelievable **\$4500+** for our Scholarships and Grants programs. This is a record!

We couldn't have done all this without all of your generous support! If you have any donations, please contact me, Debbie Kolmodin, at [cagod-mother60@gmail.com](mailto:cagod-mother60@gmail.com).

**See you in May 2022!**



Interesting garden art



## Bats: A Love Story



*A bat being held in the gloved hand of JoEllen Arnold, a bat expert*

Who ever knew that bats were cute? Or that they resemble chihuahuas? Those who attended our October 26 meeting now know that not only are they cute, they are important pollinators, they eat insects, and they are the fastest mammal on the planet with the ability to fly over 100 miles per hour.

JoEllen Arnold, our presenter, is a bat expert who has traveled all over the world studying bat behavior. She shared that bats control insects, are important seed dispersers, and interestingly there is not a single blind bat in the world. In fact, they have better eyesight than humans. Furthermore, since their noses are much more sensitive than humans or most animals, strong

scents tend to scare them off — scents like cinnamon, eucalyptus, cloves, mint, and peppermint. Now you know what to put up in your attic if you don't want bats to roost in your home.

Here is a new word for your vocabulary: *chiropterophily*. Although it sounds like a condition that could be cured by a quick visit to a chiropractor, it is actually the official term for pollination by bats. Bats typically pollinate tropical or desert flowers that are white or pale, nocturnal, and bloom at night. Of great importance, is that bats pollinate the agave plant, which is the principal ingredient of the margarita — an all-time favorite summer drink. So please say “cheers” and “thank you” to bats the next time you are enjoying a margarita with a little umbrella beside a swimming pool.

Along with so many other of our animal friends, our bats are in decline. For one thing, they are slow reproducers, birthing only one pup per year. They have also been negatively affected by climate change, human ignorance, habitat destruction, disease, and wind turbines. The key to their very survival is human understanding of their importance in our environment and the willingness to provide habitats for their continued existence.



*Sleeping bats*



*Our lively refreshment table featured Halloween brownies*



*Halloween décor on the refreshment table*



*Vivian Baier enlivens the meeting dressed as a bee*

Sharon Barton, our busy Tour Captain, has already announced that we will be scheduling a tour of the Yolo Basin Foundation in the spring. This is an area of the Yolo Causeway where up to 250,000 bats flock every year. And let's dispel the rumor surrounding bats and vampires. There are three species of bats that do, indeed, feed on blood; however, it wasn't until the late 1800's when Dracula was popularized that the myth of bats turning into vampires came to be. In reality, they're cute little mammals that are an integral part of our environment and do their share to eat insects, pollinate certain species, and ensure that we have an unlimited supply of margaritas.

## Tour of Sherwood Demonstration Gardens

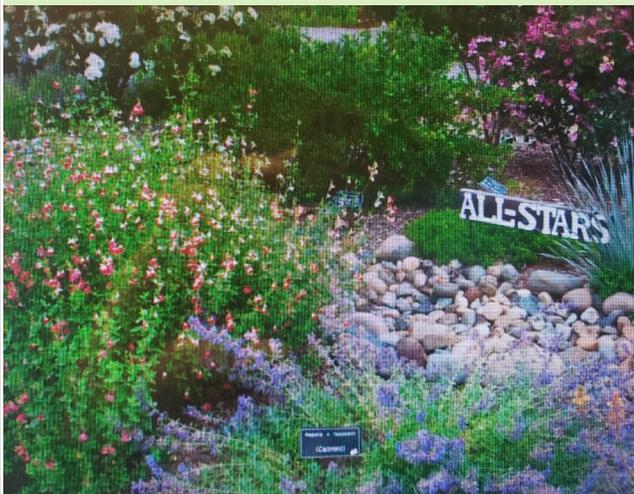


*Sue Summersett, Nancy Compton, Paula Swanson, Sharon Barton, Helen Mary Scheinert*

It was a beautiful autumn day when five RVGC members traveled to Placerville to visit the Sherwood Demonstration Gardens, which were developed and are maintained by the El Dorado County Master Gardeners.

These Master Gardeners are committed to educating the general public on sustainable horticulture and pest management policies based on current and evolving research.

Sixteen demonstration gardens have been developed, ranging from a shade garden to an orchard garden, a rock garden, a cottage garden, a native species garden, and a garden devoted to the UCD All-Stars — plants that are reliable performers in our growing zone.



Pictured at left is the Arboretum All-Star Garden that includes a variety of ground cover, shrubs, and trees with low water needs that like full sun. These are reliable plants for our zone which have few diseases and few pests, and support native bees, birds, and insects. They are easy to grow and remain attractive most of the year.

Environmental benefits of using All-Stars include reduced water use, reduced carbon emissions from power equipment, reduced chemical run-off as they need no fertilizer or pesticides, and they support native birds and pollinators. You can search the [Arboretum All-Star](#) plant database to find the All-Star plant perfect for your garden.



*Purple bottlebrush*

Some of the native plants recommended for Zone 9 include island pink yarrow, serpentine columbine, marina madrone, vine hill manzanita, California pipe vine, pigsqueak, blue grama grass, purple bottlebrush, concha ceanothus, snow-in-summer, Western redbud, and dwarf plumbago.

These native plants are often unfamiliar to gardeners, simply because most nurseries and garden centers only carry plants that are more familiar and easier for them to obtain. They are, however, available through the U.C. Davis Arboretum in Davis and Soil Born Farms in Rancho Cordova, as well as select nurseries.



*Concha ceanothus*

## What's Coming Up for 2022?

- ◆ **January 13, 2022: Refresh Your Garden Design: Simple Strategies to Awaken a Weary Garden.** Speaker: Rebecca Sweet, a garden designer whose gardens have been featured in many national publications, including *Sunset*, *Fine Gardening*, and *Womens Day*, and has been featured on the critically acclaimed PBS series *Growing a Greener World*. Combined meeting with the Elk Grove Garden Club and Gardeners of the Grove. Laguna Town Hall, 3020 Renwick Avenue, Elk Grove. Program begins at 10 a.m. Carpool from RMA.
- ◆ **January 25, 2022: Re-scape Your Outdoors – Design for Changing Times.** Speaker: Soleil Tranquilli. Owner of Tranquil Gardens, a landscape consulting company, Soleil will present climate-wise solutions for our landscapes and gardens.
- ◆ **February 22, 2022: Attracting Hummingbirds to Your Pollinator Garden.** Speaker: Carolyn McMaster, Master Gardener, Sacramento County.
- ◆ **March 22, 2022: Why Bees are Critical to Our Ecosystem.** Speaker: Sean Krietich, Palo-ma Pollinators. Sean started with a couple of bee hives when he was nine years old. Over the years, he has witnessed the degrading of our ecosystem which has killed off billions of bees. He knows that the only way to help bees is to educate humans and improve the health of the ecosystem we inhabit together.
- ◆ **April 20, 2022: Flower Show Fun: How to Grow Amazing and Prize-Winning Flowers.** Speaker: Nina Blonsky – CGCI Judges Council. Nina is a Certified Flower Show Judge certified through the National Garden Clubs, Inc.
- ◆ **May 24, 2022: The Wonderful World of Begonias.** Speaker: Paul Tsamtsis of the Sacramento Begonia Society. Everything you wanted to know about growing this beautiful addition to your home garden. Paul will bring several samples for display and sale.



### **Pismo Beach Butterfly Grove Sees 3500% Increase in Monarchs** .....

California State Parks officials were thrilled to discover a 3500% increase in monarch butterflies at the Pismo Beach Butterfly Grove this year.

Experts are cautiously optimistic that the species may be edging away from extinction. Monarchs are among the candidates for listing under the federal Endangered Species Act, although they were denied federal protection in 2020 due to higher priority species. California State Parks personnel have planted new trees in the Pismo Beach grove to bolster the monarch’s habitat while they overwinter there, and have also planted native nectar plants that flower in the winter to provide a food source for the butterflies.