



Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

Pam McCabe, President

Nancy Compton, Editor

Rooting for You.....

By Pam McCabe, President

There are very few September entries in my garden journal. For a retired person, September is a good travel month — kids have gone back to school, the weather is mild in most places, iconic sites are less crowded.

This September my husband and I were scheduled to take a 28-day cruise that started in Stockholm and ended in Barcelona. Not happening!

I volunteered my backyard for the club's September member garden tour. In preparation, I checked my garden journal to find what has grown well in past Septembers. Finding almost no entries, I started Googling, "what to grow in September in Sacramento."

First we had to deal with the pandemic, then came many, many days over 100 degrees, and then came the smoke. My husband and I escaped to Tahoe for a few days to get out of the heat, but found ourselves engulfed in smoke. When I got home, I donned my N95 mask and went to check the damage to my garden from the triple-digit heat, smoke, and ash. I found that pests had multiplied in this environment. Many plants just gave up. It's hard, under these conditions, not to give up.

I'm working myself up for a pep talk. You have known me as a positive person that doesn't let a pandemic sideline our garden club. I'm going to need your support. We truly are all in this together. It has been so inspirational when members stepped up and donated things for the plant sales, learned how to propagate, sent photos of their gardens, participated in an unconventional general meeting, and offered unique ways to move forward.

As I talk with other garden club presidents, there is a lot of discouragement, as the pandemic has cancelled all the things they love about being a garden club member. The River Valley Garden Club has flourished during the pandemic, and it is thanks to the willingness of our membership to embrace "different."

I have to remind myself, it's just gardening. So many people have lost so much. We can do this. I hope as you read this that the temperature is lower and the smoke has lifted. Then all we have to deal with is the pandemic.

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RVGC and the Local Farmers Market – a Winning Combo



Peggy DeMello and Debbie Kolmodin

Summer is not only about fruits and vegetables – it's about flowers, plants, garden art, bird baths, and sharing gardening information with our community. That's what President Pam McCabe believed when she suggested that our club join the neighborhood Farmers Market on Cantova Drive across from the Catholic church.

Before embarking on this venture, Pam visited the Farmers Market in March to check out available space, determine what safety protocols were in place, and to generally scope out the landscape.

The next step was to email members, inviting them to bring plants from their gardens on the Second Saturday of each month, April through September. Although we had no inventory, our club members made it happen. An hour before the market opened, members started streaming in, bringing all manner of plant material and related items, most of which were sold within the first couple of hours.

Debbie Kolmodin, Community Services Chair, has been able to obtain a substantial number of plants generously donated by Green Acres.

The response from the public has been overwhelming and positive, with many repeat customers, several of whom have joined the club.

The Farmers Market venture has also been financially rewarding, ensuring that the club will be able to fully fund both our Scholarship and Grants programs.

The River Valley Garden Club will participate in two more Farmers Market dates – September 12 and October 10. If you can contribute plants and related items, please bring them the day of the sale between 7:15 and 7:45 a.m.

And be sure to come by and take a look at the many and varied items for sale. You're sure to find a bargain, buy a healthy plant, and enjoy the interaction with club members and shoppers. ☐



Our youngest groupie...this young man must have quite a garden! He's been a really good repeat customer.



RVGC booth set up and ready for shoppers



River Valley Times (and club member) Gail Bullen with Debbie Kolmodin, Community Services Chair



Get Your Garden Gloves Before They're All Gone!

A gardener can never have enough gloves, because, — let's be clear on this — you've left a pair out in the east 40 somewhere, two pairs are in the wash, and heaven only knows where you left your favorite pair.

To remedy this common gardener's dilemma, the River Valley Garden Club has been selling beautiful, functional, and comfortable garden gloves in pretty colors for only six dollars. Yes. That's \$6 for top-quality Atlas 370 garden gloves, which are perfect for a variety of gardening tasks, like weeding, pruning, planting, digging, and all of the other activities that keep us busy out in the garden.

These gloves have a lightweight, yet durable nitrile coating for palm and fingertip protection. The nitrile coating also allows for greater protection than rubber, while still allowing you to perform gardening tasks.

And here's an idea — think about birthday and Christmas gifts for friends and family members who enjoy gardening. Where else can you find a pretty, yet functional gift for only \$6?

You can even purchase your gloves without even leaving the neighborhood. We have experienced brisk sales at our monthly Farmers Market outings, but you can obtain yours directly from Pam McCabe by contacting her at (916) 354-0913 or by email at pamsaloha@gmail.com.

And the best part? This is a club fundraiser; we get \$3 for every pair sold!



I know these aren't gloves. I just thought it was a cute picture. Signed, Your Editor.

Planning for August–December



Your garden club board has been diligently working to provide fun, informative, and safe activities for our club for this coming year. Due to the uncertainty of our times, the decision was made to plan August through December, and then re-evaluate the landscape to plan for the spring.

The programs for September and October will still be held on the fourth Tuesday of the month, but will be held in the morning, rather than the evening. We think you will enjoy what's been planned thus far:

* **Tuesday, September 22, 10 a.m. — A Tour of Members' Gardens**

Four of our members have offered to host a tour of their gardens. This will be done in small groups, and members will need to R.S.V.P. to be assigned to a group.

* **Tuesday, October 27—10 a.m.—Stonehouse Park**

Topic: Plant Propagation

Stay tuned.....More information to come.

Additional dates for your calendar include: **November 11 — Blue Star Memorial Plaque Dedication**

December 13 — Holiday Party

The board is confident that this will be an interesting and fulfilling year for each of our members.



River Valley Garden Club to Honor Veterans with a Blue Star Memorial By-Way Marker

November 11, 2020, will be a memorable day in our community as we honor our veterans and currently serving military men and women with the dedication of a Blue Star Memorial By-Way Marker.

You've probably seen a Blue Star marker or two during your travels. They appear on highways, in parks, historic sites, national cemeteries, and civic areas.

The Blue Star Memorial program has an interesting history. In 1944 the New Jersey Council of Garden Clubs planted 8,000 dogwood trees along five and a half miles of U.S. Highway 22 as a living memorial to veterans of World War II. In 1945, the National Garden Clubs adopted the program. A Blue Star Highway system was designated, consisting of one east-west and seven north-south highways, covering each state in the continental U.S. Today many more highways have become designated, and Alaska and Hawaii are included as well.

The name Blue Star was chosen for the star on flags displayed in homes and businesses denoting a family member serving our country. Garden clubs pictured a ribbon of living memorial plantings traversing every state. The designation of Blue Star Highways was achieved through petitions to state legislatures and cooperation with the Departments of Transportation.

Today, Blue Star Memorial Markers extend thousands of miles across the United States to honor all our Armed Forces, and continue to be dedicated each year on highways, at veterans facilities, and civic areas to show and acknowledge appreciation for those who have served.

The dedication ceremony has been scaled back from the original planned fanfare, but the club will go ahead with a ceremony, and details will be announced as they become available. The date, however, will not change; the time is dependent upon when or if we can obtain a color guard and other details appropriate to ensure the event is celebratory and memorable.



Winners will be presented at the Farmers Market on Saturday, September 12

On Saturday, September 12, beginning at 10:30 a.m., the RVGC will present two scholarships of \$1,000 each to two deserving students. All members are invited to attend this presentation and hear the future plans of our winners. Please wear a mask and stand six feet apart around the staging area.

Our scholarship winners were chosen from applications by a committee consisting of Barbara Anders, Joyce Adams, Elaine Stout, and co-chairs Loretta Lutz and Berniece Jones.

The October newsletter will feature pictures of the scholarship winners and further information about their future goals. See you there!

Berniece Jones



Propagating African Violets.....

As a highlight of our June meeting, held outdoors at Stonehouse Park, Berniece Jones made the rounds to each group and demonstrated the skills and knowledge needed to successfully propagate African Violets.

If you have seen Berniece's collection of African violets, you know that she seems to have the magic touch when it comes to this lovely indoor flowering plant. She also made propagating look so easy that even a novice African violet aficionado could soon become an expert African violet propagator. Let's look at the steps involved:

1. Select a healthy leaf (not a baby or a tough older leaf). Using a sharp sterile knife, remove the leaf along with its stem from the base of the plant.
2. Trim the stem down to about 1—1 1/2 inches.
3. Dip the stem into rooting hormone.
4. Place the cutting into a one inch deep hole in potting soil. Press the soil firmly around it and water thoroughly with tepid water (African violets do not like cold water).
5. It's a good idea to create a little greenhouse environment for the cutting by covering the pot with a plastic bag and securing it with a rubber band.
6. Place the pot in a sunny location, keeping the soil just moist, but not soaked. The leaf will root in about 3-4 weeks. Leaves of the new little plant will appear in about 6-8 weeks. You should see several plants form at the base of the cutting.
7. Separate the small new plants by carefully pulling or cutting them apart. Each of them will give you a brand new plant.



Give this propagation method a try. As propagation will be one of our focuses for this garden club year, the African violet is a relatively easy one to start with. Enjoy your new skill!



Time for a gardening joke.....

- ***My neighbor is an avid gardener. How do I know?
Last night he was up digging at 3 o'clock in the morning.
AND...
He is so good that this morning the police came to see his work!***





Tour of Signorotti Hop Farm

Our first tour of the 2020-2021 garden club year was to an interesting and historic venue right here in the River Valley – the Signorotti Hop Farm. Historically, growing hops on family farms was the norm. In fact, who knew that at one time, south Sacramento County was the world’s largest hop-growing region?

After Prohibition, however, a focus on yield per acre led to the rise of the Pacific Northwest as the nation’s leading hop region. Following World War II, large conglomerates were taking over the beer industry, and hops production dwindled in the Sacramento area.

Dave and Dia Utterback, who also own and harvest a large adjacent sod farm, purchased the Signorotti Hop Farm several years ago, and today sell their hops to Ruhstaller Beer.

The part of the plant used in brewing beer, and what gives beer its flavor, is the hop flower, a pale green papery cone full of perishable resins. Hops also help to keep the beer fresher longer, and helps beer retain its head of foam – a key component of a beer’s aroma and flavor.

In 2005, Signorotti’s was featured in the PBS series “California’s Gold,” hosted by Huell Howser. During the program, Howser meets with George Signorotti, owner of California’s last family-owned hop farm, and learns how hop farming has contributed to the agricultural and social history of the River Valley.

Today at Signorotti’s, harvesting hops is a family affair – actually a family and friends affair. The pickers – and family members— gather out in the field, picking and chatting while bringing the hops to harvest. Hop growing in this family seems to be more of a hobby – a way to connect with the past and the fertile earth of this amazing valley.



Hops growing on their vines, nearly ready for harvest



A socially-distanced group photo of club members at Signorotti’s Hop Farm in Sloughouse, courtesy of Gail Bullen

Welcome



to our new members!

- | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Karen Bengard | Cindy Bracisco | Kathryn Cooley |
| Laura Keister | Nancy Smith | Laurie Taylor |
| Nancy Smith | Laurie Taylor | Ray Trujillo |
| Patrick McCabe | Roger Brandt | Sean Corcoran |
| | Bruce Holtz | |

2020 Grant Winners Announced



The RVGC Board is proud to announce the winners of this year's Grant Awards. Four nominations were submitted for consideration; two will receive an award of \$500 each. The winners are the **Murieta Trail Stewardship**, and the **Youth Garden and Junior Garden Club at Mountain Creek Middle School**.

Highlighted in this month's newsletter will be the **Murieta Trail Stewardship (MTS)**, with the youth garden and club being highlighted in October's issue.



If these scenes look unfamiliar, it's because they are file photos. Actual photos will be taken during our tour.

Unbeknownst to many residents (including your editor), the Rancho Murieta community offers seventeen miles of single-track trails, and is one of the reasons why so many families chose to live here. Trail building began in the 1990s at a time when the undeveloped area of Rancho Murieta was owned by the Pension Trust fund for Operating Engineers. This undeveloped land was considered a common area, rather than private property. By 2010, developers became interested in this land. To preserve the trails, the Murieta Trail Stewardship was formed as a community member volunteer service organization working in cooperation with the landowner and local agencies to support the trail network.

The mission of the Murieta Trail Stewardship is to create, enhance, and preserve great trail experiences for hikers, walkers, bird watchers, mountain bikers, trail runners, equestrians, and all those who enjoy the outdoors. MTS believes in partnerships, safety, advocacy, and promotion of the trails for fun, fitness, scenery, and pure enjoyment.

The MTS has eight people on their Board of Directors, and it appears that these members not only do most of the work, but contribute to the funding of the organization. Some of their projects include the following:

- Producing a trail map along with GPS coordinates. This also includes landing zones for choppers in the event of medical emergency.
- Sponsoring mountain bike safety programs, along with a variety of sponsors that include Summerfest, Solos, and Kiwanis.
- Filing a permanent trail system on record with the county for when the property is developed.
- Coordinating volunteer efforts to keep the trails safe and open.

Ruth Lechler Moore, who submitted the nomination, will organize a trail hike for RVGC members, many of whom have been unaware of this remarkable opportunity to enjoy the outdoors, right within our own neighborhood.

RVGC is proud to award this grant to the Murieta Trail Stewardship to help maintain a real treasure for the benefit of our community now and into the future.

Schedule of Activities — September—December, 2020

Day/Date	Time	Event	Location
Saturday, Sept. 12	8 a.m.—12 noon	Farmers Market	Cantova Drive parking lot across from Catholic church
Saturday, Sept. 12	10:30 a.m.	Scholarship Presentation	Farmers Market stage area (parking lot)
Saturday, Sept. 12	Noon	Vanetta Winery Tour (1st group of 10)	8718 Grant Line Road, Elk Grove
Sunday, Sept. 13	Noon	Vanetta Winery Tour (2nd group of 10)	8718 Grant Line Road, Elk Grove
Tuesday, Sept. 22	10 a.m.	Member Garden Tour	Each group will start at an assigned location, and then rotate. Addresses provided with printed program and instructions.
Any day in Sept. — your choice	Your choice	September workshop, “How to Make an Indoor Water Garden”	Video via YouTube under “Garden Answers”
Saturday October 12	8 a.m.—noon	Farmers Market (last one of the season)	Cantova Drive parking lot across from Catholic church
Tuesday, October 27	10 a.m.	Program #2: Propagation	Stonehouse Park
Wednesday, Nov. 11	TBA	Dedication of Blue Star Memorial Marker	Gazebo area near Lake Joaquin
Any day in Nov. — your choice	Your choice	October workshop “How to Create Height in a Succulent Arrangement Garden”	Video via YouTube under “Garden Answers”
Sunday, Dec. 13		Holiday Party	Details TBA