



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

Good Morning, River Valley Garden Club members! I'm Deb, the new RVGC President for the coming year. I realize many of you don't know me, and I'm so looking forward to meeting each one of you. I was going to tell you a little about myself, but decided, "how boring." So I thought I'd write something different and share a little of who I am, something important to me, and something I'm curious about from you: **What does your garden mean to you?**

I'll go first — here's a little of what my garden means to me...

My sweet Grandma introduced me to houseplants when I was in high school. My bedroom in high school was filled with houseplants — philodendrons, spider plants, purple velvet plants, peperomia...My Dad made me plywood and cinder block book shelves, which I varnished to hold those first house plants and books. Between these shelves, my books, and my plants, I was a happy camper. Oftentimes, my Mom would join me in taking care of these plants and having simple conversations about life.



Spider plant

My mom loved irises and tea roses. She taught me how to feed and properly deadhead roses, and when, where, and how to grow irises. She also taught me how to talk to my plants. I remember her telling the roses how pretty they were and how good they smelled, and I remember her constantly berating that HUGE (and deadly) pampas grass in the corner of our backyard.

My Nanny, grandma #2, taught me to truly garden, to get down in the dirt and get my hands dirty. She had a beautiful way of planting — each plant was set up as a beautiful piece of art, inviting each to be lovingly adored. Lots and "oohs" and "aahs" in Nanny's garden, like brown-eyed Susans brightly greeting me at the gate, jasmine trailing up a fence post, roses bright and beautiful, snapdragons lifting their flowers to the sky, irises unfolding dramatically, and twinkly ground cover peeking out and around each plant. Early mornings were her time to garden. As a youngster, I loved those mornings. As a teenager, I still loved the garden, but not so much those early mornings.



As an adult, my garden is where I continue to talk to each plant, telling them my funny/sad/sometimes interesting stories of the day, exclaiming at a flower so pretty, complaining about those errant weeds, or my "oaks-from-acorns" crop. And, yes, while I'm talking to the flowers, I also turn and talk to my plants. I let them know how they're doing, the good, the bad, and the ugly. I cajole, praise, and threaten my plants. But I also sing, laugh, cry, pray, and contemplate my day, my world, and my life.

It's all good out in my garden. My happy place, my peace, my serenity — a place to read, to think, and to simply sit. I am a lucky girl, and am truly blessed to be where I am today, sitting in my yard, enjoying the hummingbirds and the roses, and those brown-eyed Susans all winking at me...telling me their secrets.

What does your garden mean to you? I'd love to hear. Share, please!

She/he who plants a garden, plants happiness. I do agree.



Scholarship Winner Laura Halpenny Prepares for a Career In Landscape Design



Laura Halpenny, our 2021 Scholarship Winner, is a woman of many interests, many talents, and many goals. After completing her AS in Landscape Design Technology, she decided to pursue an AS in Horticulture. In addition, she is looking at a certification program in Horticulture Therapy, which, together with her B.A. in English Literature, will prepare her for her ultimate goal as a Landscape Designer.

Currently Laura is interning with a local designer, Roberta Walker, for a few hours each month. In this capacity, she measures residential properties that Ms. Walker is designing. This requires her to carefully measure the property lines, as well as the house, window placement, and doors. Then she returns to her drafting table to draw the base plans for the job. Laura describes her internship as “fantastic and really helpful.”

Laura’s long-term goals include using her horticultural knowledge to create designs and provide clients with beauty in their world. Together with her Horticulture Therapy Certification, she plans to help people by sharing the health benefits of plants, nature, and soil with those who have disabilities, or people in nursing homes or hospitals, or even those who are incarcerated.

It is certainly gratifying to know that our club fundraising efforts have gone to an outstanding young woman with solid goals which will translate into a more beautiful environment for those she helps through lovely landscapes and positive outcomes through plants, flowers, and nature.



Tour of CSUS Arboretum.. *By Sharon Barton*

It was a beautiful morning when members of the RVGC met at the Sacramento State Arboretum under a cool canopy of trees. Dr. Mike Baad, the curator since 1969, gave us a brief history, and Laura Halpenny, our recent scholarship recipient, took us on a tour of the beautiful botanical gardens. The gardens cover three acres and support over 1400 different species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials from the temperate regions of the world.

This arboretum provides a diverse palette of what can grow and bloom in our region, with a little attention to exposure and draining. Laura also pointed out several interesting trees that Dr. Baad had bought at Annie’s Annuals, one of his favorite nurseries. She encouraged us to return in the Spring when the flowering trees are in bloom, and later in the Fall to experience the spectacular colors.



Plant/Garden Sale Monthly Event



*Debbie Kolmodin and Donna Hansen
staffing the Plant Sale Booth*

Each month, May through October, the club has had a fundraiser to support our Grants and Scholarship program.

This is our second year and we have been quite successful! We are currently located at the Murieta Plaza Shopping Center in the parking lot closest to the street across from the vacant bank building. The owner of this shopping center has been very gracious in allowing us to hold our monthly sale at this site.

Our donations have once again picked up with this relocation, letting us know that our residents are very happy to see that we are back in Rancho Murieta. Our donations have come primarily from residents and club members. We listened to the people of Rancho Murieta to keep our sales event local and in

our community. So we are here to stay! Please come out and support us on September 11th and October 9th — our last two sale days of the year.

Looking for a plant or container arrangement as a gift? We have them! You'll find freshly made container arrangements ready to place on your patio, deck, or porch areas, and even give as a gift. Also available are seasonal bedding plants and perennials ready for you to add to your landscape. And don't forget our gardening gloves that truly fit like a glove!

Our upcoming sales will feature assorted seasonal yard art for Fall and Halloween, along with other gardening related items that are gift-worthy. Come on out and shop with us for those unique one-of-a-kind items. Look for flyers posted at the local merchants in the Murieta Plaza shopping center promoting this event. Looking forward to seeing everyone! Thank you all for your continued support

By Debbie Kolmodin

Become an Acorn Harvester!

The Sacramento Tree Foundation is now accepting registration for this popular program, an integral part of its oak reforestation program. Each year the Foundation trains volunteers to gather viable acorns to grow into trees.



Registration is now open for the two-part training schedule, which is scheduled for 6 p.m. on Wednesday, September 22, and the following Sunday morning, September 26. The Wednesday evening session is virtual and will be held online. The follow-up morning session will include hands-on acorn-gathering at a site to be determined. Participation is free, but space is limited.

Acorn Harvesters will learn how to harvest in a sustainable and ethical way, and how to work under the organization's harvesting permits. Other than training, no tools or advance knowledge is required. Families are welcome.

For more information and to sign up for this program visit **www.sactree.com**.

Plant of the Month: The Prolific Spider Plant



Chlorophytum comosum, more commonly known as a spider plant, is native to tropical zones, but has adapted exceptionally well to other parts of the world, including western Australia. The spider plant is also wildly popular as a house plant, and, in fact, was my introduction to house plants nearly 50 years ago.

I was looking for an inexpensive way to decorate my home, and decided I would do so by bringing the outdoors in. So my décor featured a spider plant, a pothos, a basket of pine cones, and a large glass vase filled with sea shells.

The spider plant soon sprouted babies, known as *plantlets* or *pups*. It also grew more quickly than I anticipated, and before long it was in the way of a ping pong table that we had on the enclosed patio. So when it ended up on the ground as the result of a lively game of ping pong, it was moved to the living room where it could look outside.

Propagating spider plants is easy — almost too easy. The pups may be planted directly into potting soil while still attached to the main plant (sometimes known as The Mom), and after it is evident that they can live and thrive on their own, they may be cut loose from the running stem. You can also just plant the little babies directly in soil, even if they're not connected to the mom.

Spider plants are able to not only survive, but thrive in a wide range of conditions. They will tolerate temperatures down to 35 degrees Fahrenheit, but prefer temperatures between 65 and 90 degrees.

Spider plants are non-toxic to humans and pets, and are considered edible, although I've never met anyone who has tried to include it on their dinner menu.

Here's a fun fact: NASA recently conducted a Clean Air Study and determined that the spider plant is effective at removing the common household air toxins formaldehyde and xylene. The most surprising thing about this study is that formaldehyde and xylene are considered common household air toxins. Who knew? Another surprising fact is that spider plants may be damaged by high fluoride or boron levels. I suppose that means that we need to keep them away from our toothpaste.

My most recent encounter with a spider plant occurred over Labor Day weekend, when a friendly neighborhood resident called Debbie Kolmodin to offer an enormous spider plant to our club. Apparently they are redoing their landscape, and this spider plant does not figure into the new design. I offered to pick it up, as the address is right around the corner from me. I was advised to bring a wheelbarrow. I really needed two.



Pictured at left are two different bunches which will be divided and potted up ready for our next plant sale. It is entirely possible that we may get 50 plants from this giant spider plant. So come on out to our last two plant sales — September 11 and October 9 — and you, too, may be the proud owner of a spider plant.



Grants Program Nominees



At the club's Board of Directors meeting on Tuesday, September 7, four garden and nature-related nonprofits were nominated to receive our annual grant:

- ◆ the Arboretum at CSUS
- ◆ Deer Creek Conservancy
- ◆ Sherwood Demonstration Gardens in El Dorado County
- ◆ Murieta Trails Stewardship

A brief description of each entity is provided below. Any member who would like to speak in favor of one or more nonprofit(s) may contact Nancy Compton, Chair, Grants Program.

CSUS Arboretum: Founded in 1959, the three-acre botanical garden currently supports 1400 different species of trees, shrubs, and herbaceous perennials from the temperate regions of the world. The collection provides the university and Sacramento community with a diverse palette of what can grow and bloom in our region.

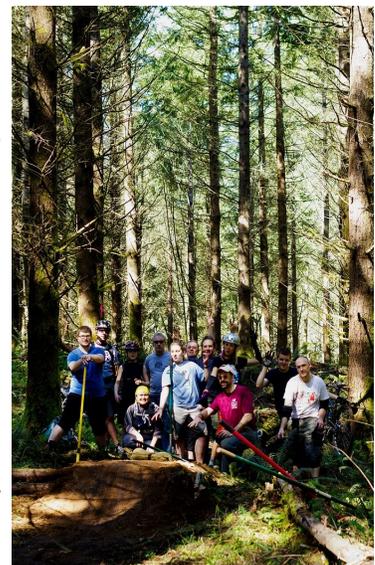
Winner of this year's Legacy Award, presented by the Sacramento Tree Foundation, the arboretum is used by classes in several university departments and continues to offer free guided field trips to Sacramento's public schools. Plans are moving forward for the construction of an open air classroom or pavilion to be located in the center of the garden, providing university and visiting classes, as well as community organizations, with a shady and aesthetically pleasing venue for meetings and instructional activities.

Our club was fortunate to have a guided tour of this arboretum which was led by Dr. Baad, Emeritus Professor of Biological Sciences and Director of the University Arboretum, and this year's scholarship winner Laura Halpenny.

Murieta Trail Stewardship: Due to the continued focus and dedication of a small number of volunteers, the Murieta Trail Stewardship (MTS) was formed as a community volunteer service organization working to build and maintain seventeen miles of single track trails. 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 its 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.
- ◆ Coordinating volunteer efforts to keep the trails safe and open.



Grants Program Nominees...continued from page 5.



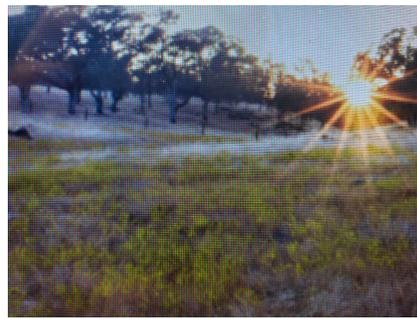
Sherwood Demonstration Garden: This demonstration garden formally took root in 2008 when a group of farsighted El Dorado County Master Gardeners entered into an agreement with the El Dorado County Office of Education (EDCO) to build and maintain a public outdoor learning facility on property owned by EDCO — a project that would not only beautify the local area, but provide important educational and science-based horticultural programs to local residents.

As such, the Sherwood Demonstration Gardens educate the general public on sustainable horticulture and pest management practices based on traditional, current, and evolving research. Funding for the Sherwood Garden has come from proceeds of Master Gardener plant sales, donations from the community, contributions from businesses, local and national grants, and adoption by community service clubs.

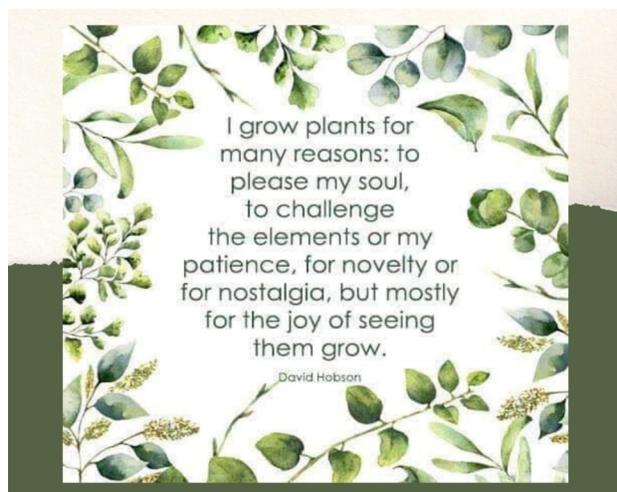
Deer Creek Hills Preserve: This 4,500 acre preserve is right in our own back yard, being located off Latrobe Road in Sloughouse. The largest nature preserve in the Sacramento region, it includes a working cattle ranch and 4,500 acres of blue oak woodlands, seasonal creeks, and grasslands.

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

This preserve is open to the public for hiking on Saturdays from 9-1 February—May, and October—November. Sacramento Valley Conservancy docents lead guided tours and hikes featuring botany, birding, geology, history, astronomy, photography, and more. Check the online calendar for upcoming hikes.



Hiking the Deer Creek Hills Preserve, one of the largest nature preserves in the Sacramento region



Tri-County Wildlife Care – our first program of 2021-2022



Our club's first program of the 2021-2022 year will feature the Education Team from **Tri-County Wildlife Care (TCWC)**, a non-profit whose primary cause is to provide for the rehabilitation of our native wildlife.

This nonprofit operates by volunteers who answer over 2500 calls each year 24/7 and 365 days a year reporting injured or orphaned wildlife.

Following established protocols, volunteers determine if the bird, mammal, or reptile is truly distressed, and recommend a course of treatment. Sometimes x-rays or surgery are required, and these

services are often donated by Jackson Creek Veterinary Clinic, Angels Camp Veterinary Hospital, Acorn Hills Animal Center, and Dr. Jeanne Smith, Avian Veterinarian. For complex cases that may need extraordinary protocols, TCWC consults with U.C. Davis Veterinary School.

The wildlife patient is then transported to the appropriate rehabber and rehabilitation location for care that begins with a quiet place. As the patient progresses, it is moved outdoors to a cage for more exercise and a more natural habitat, and eventually released to return to the wild.

TCWC volunteers visit schools, clubs, and events, reaching all ages from preschool children to adults. The lessons on wildlife conservation and living green include the harmful effects of pesticides, insecticide, and poisons on wildlife and subsequently, on us.

The topics range from Amazing Owls, to the Grey Wolf of Yellowstone National Park, to the near extinction of the Peregrine Falcon, due to the use of DDT. But the theme of the presentation is always **Saving Wildlife Saves Us**. The presentations teach that biodiversity provides the healthy ecosystem with clean air and water that we all need to thrive. Our future depends on living in balance with nature.



Our meeting location has changed –

Due to the RMA community room being unavailable to us, our September 28 meeting will be held **at the Rancho Murieta Community Church located at 14670 Cantova Way**. Enter the building through the main entrance and we will be in the first room to the left. Look for our friendly greeters who will ensure that you are at the right place.

The meeting time will be the same, with 6:30 to 7 being a time for fellowship, raffle tickets, and refreshments, and the general meeting and speaker at 7:00 p.m. We will be following the same health protocols as the church does, which means that we will be wearing masks. Looking forward to seeing everyone again!