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Here's the Dirt

A publication of the River Valley Garden Club

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Rooting for You.....by Jayne LaGrande, President

We're fortunate to live in an area with so many great gardening resources for acquiring knowledge. The UC Master Gardener program produces many graduates who provide programs and information for growing plants in local environmental conditions. In addition, there are specialized clubs such as the Sierra Foothills Rose Society that offer classes with Master Rosarians providing information on growing and maintaining roses.

On Saturday, I attended a class, "Growing Plants from Seeds" sponsored by the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County. Their calendar of events shows a variety of relevant topics for the home gardener offered 2-4 times a month on Saturdays, 9-12, at various locations in El Dorado County.

I came away with skills, confidence, and information on sexual propagation, obtaining and storing quality seeds, germination, planting and caring for seeds, plant maturity, and growth and transplanting. Under the guidance of the master gardeners, attendees planted six packs of seedlings to take home and exercise their newfound knowledge. Offerings included tomatoes, squash, cucumbers, marigolds, cosmos, zucchini, calendulas, and basil. They also gave away other free seeds for planting.



There is no fee for their classes, and they provide materials and supplies for attendees. It was clear they are dedicated to their craft as the master gardeners who taught the class showed slides of their dining room tables festooned with trays of seedlings under elaborate grow lights and heat mats in preparation for their upcoming plant sales in April. The information is tailored to those located in Zone 9b, which includes Rancho Murieta. In case you are interested in learning more, here is a link to their website: [UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County](https://www.ucce.org/ElDoradoCounty). They welcome residents from other counties.

Cheers,

Jayne La Grande, President,
River Valley Garden Club

Garden Stroll and Gala Plant Sale

Spring is always an exciting time for our club as we gear up for our **Garden Stroll and Gala Plant Sale**.

This year's big event is scheduled for **Saturday, May 10, from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** in the RMA parking lot. The planning team has been hard at work pulling together the countless details that have always made this event such a success. For those of you who have already volunteered to host a garden, work at the plant sale, grow seedlings, donate pots and/or garden art, we thank you for already being on board.



Garden Stroll and Plant Sale
2023



Another photo from the 2023
event



The ever-popular Kids Table

Some of you who missed the February meeting and may not have had the opportunity to sign up — it's not too late! Here's how you can help:

1. **Join the Plant Sitters Club.** This is a group of volunteers who have agreed to plant flowers and watch them grow. The club will provide pony packs of flowers, the soil, and 4" pots, and the plant sitters will take the baby plants and plant them in the 4" pots where they will grow larger and more appealing just in time for the plant sale. What fun!
2. **Donate plants.** Maybe you've been growing and/or propagating indoor or outdoor plants. We'd love to have your donation!
3. **Donate pots and/or garden art.** Don't worry if these items need a bit of painting or refurbishing. We can do this!
4. **Volunteer to be a garden host.** This will be a three-hour shift, whether morning or afternoon. Hosts will have an opportunity to spend time in a lovely garden greeting guests and answering questions.
5. **Volunteer for planting day.** This will be at a member's house where we plant flower and plant donations, figure out which plant would look best in which container, put together succulent donations, clean pots, and basically pull things together. This is always a lot of fun!
6. **And finally — be sure to purchase some beautiful plants for your own collection or a Mothers Day gift!**

To volunteer for any or all of the above activities, you may contact the following members:

- ♦ **Peggy DeMello:** pdemello22@gmail.com
- ♦ **Deb Rooney:** debjrooney0120@yahoo.com
- ♦ **Nancy Compton:** ncompton43@att.net

Also — we're looking for two more gardens on the North to be included in the Garden Stroll. Can you recommend your backyard/garden? Do you have a neighbor with an amazing back yard and gardens? Please let us know! *Many thanks.*

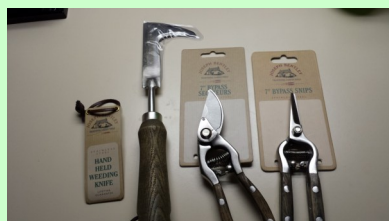


Danny Carillo with the first sale of
the 2024 Plant Sale

Are Your Tools and Equipment Ready for Spring?



Are these your tools?



Or do yours look like this?



Okay gardeners — spring has sprung and the time for garden clean-up is upon us. That means trimming and pruning back bushes, small trees, and other plants so they can grow and thrive for another year.

But what do your tools look like? Did you put them away cleaned-up spic & span — or are they lying in a heap on the floor of your shed? Would you even admit to what they look like?

Dull, dirty or rusty hand tools that don't open and close easily can ruin your day. And your hands. Keeping your pruners dirt-free and sharp will help you cut smoothly, preventing stress on your hands while creating a clean cut that minimizes the risk of infection or disease on your plants.

Vinegar works well in cleaning up rusty tools, as the rust reacts to the vinegar which breaks it down. Soak pruners overnight and the rust will fall to the bottom of the container. After soaking, use a wire brush to clean up any residual rust — then buff the blades to a shine with fine grade steel wool.

Hand pruners are best used for cutting small stems. Bypass models are recommended, as they work like scissors to make a clean cut. Look for ergonomic models for a comfortable grip.

It is recommended that hand pruners be used on branches up to 1/2" thick. Don't take a chance on larger branches by wrestling blades through them, as you could damage the tool, the branch — or worse yet — your hand.

Springtime is typically when I discover that some of my tools are missing — likely left outside all winter and now hopelessly buried under leaves, mulch, and debris, never again to see the light of day. In the twenty-five years I've lived in Rancho Murieta, I have probably inadvertently buried 35 garden tools which may be unearthed at some point in the future when another owner decides to relandscape this yard. By then they will likely be considered antiques.

Loppers are much stronger than hand pruners, and the longer handles provide more leverage. The more leverage, the larger branch you can cut. Some loppers have ratcheting gears to assist in cutting, and this means less pressure on your hands. Loppers will cut branches from a half inch to one and a half inches thick. Loppers with telescoping handles can help grasp out-of-the-way branches that otherwise would be difficult to reach.

A **pruning saw** is a good tool for pruning larger branches. This tool cuts on the pull stroke, which allows you to use body strength. Folding pruning saws are a good option, as they don't take up a lot of storage space. Use a pruning saw on branches that are between one and ten inches in diameter.

When you can't reach branches that you want to prune, this is a good time to call a tall neighbor or contact your friendly tree service. And never, ever, stand on a ladder unless you're on the bottom two steps. Your safety is more important than a perfectly pruned tree!



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RVGC Grants Program

For many years, the River Valley Garden Club has offered grants of up to \$500 to a variety of worthwhile programs and projects that align with our club's stated objective "to create, promote, and develop further interest in horticulture, gardening, landscape design, plant, bird, and pollinator life, and the natural beauties of our local area."

Recommendations for a grant award may come from members who forward suggestions to the board which then discusses and votes on each recommendation. Past grant recipients include the Murieta Trails Stewardship, SOS (Saving Our Lakes and Open Spaces), Cosumnes River Elementary School (for their school garden), Tri-County Wildlife Rescue, Pioneer School (a two-time recipient), and Deer Creek Conservancy.

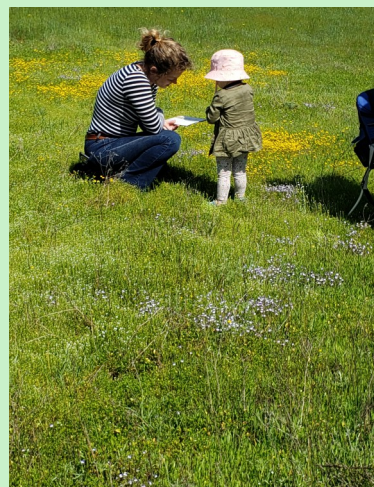


A little boy studying nature's creatures with a magnifier

Thus far this year the board has received two recommendations. The first was a recommendation that has already been granted and involved a \$200 grant to Alexander Hoberg, a member of Scout Troop #633, for some upgrades to the Cosumnes River Elementary School garden. The second recommendation is Sacramento Splash, a small nonprofit located near the corner of Jackson Highway and Excelsior Road on a portion of the property that was once occupied by Mather Air Force Base.

Sacramento Splash is the brainchild of a group of nature enthusiasts, scientists, and educators working together toward ensuring that every child develops an interest and has access to nature and the beautiful outdoor world.

Sacramento Splash has partnered with area elementary schools to bring children to the site where they have an opportunity to learn about vernal pools, witness the tiny critters who live in this specific environment, and enjoy the swath of wildflowers native to this habitat, including Frying Pan Poppies, Fiddleneck and Narrow Leaf Mule's Ear, Scarlet Pimpernel, Blue Field Cluster Lily, and Common Owl's Clover. One year a little girl asked, "Who planted all these flowers?" The concept of wildflowers growing out in nature is apparently unfamiliar to the 95% of California's children who live in urban areas.



A little girl enjoying wildflowers with her Mom

Posted on the wall in the Splash Education Center is a sign stating that "every child should have the opportunity to explore nature, play in a safe place, splash in the water, camp under the stars, discover California's past, learn to swim, play on a team,

celebrate one's heritage, catch a fish, and follow a trail. The Splash team believes that if you create something children will love, they will develop a respect for and connection with nature's critters and flowers, inspiring a passion to preserve nature's gardens for future generations.

If there are other recommendations to consider, please contact Nancy Compton, Grants Chair, at ncompton43@att.net.