River Park Garden Club Newsletter

September 2022

We Love a Parade!

The River Park Garden Club participated in the neighborhood's 4th of July parade and festival. Many club members joined in the stroll down Carlson from Caleb





Greenwood School to Glenn Hall Park, marching to music, waving flags and smiling at onlookers. At the festival in the park, the RPGC shared a booth with Kate Riley and the Tree Canopy Project. Together we hosted Dilly Dally the Clown



who entertained a crowd with her clever and colorful balloon creations! The photos show the comradery of club members, plus a constant stream of neighbors and their children who enjoyed the event and kept us company.



President's Message:

I like hats. It's a good thing. I am currently wearing a lot of them. Even in this heat!

Right now, I have on my RPGC newsletter editor hat, red pencil in hand. By January, I will don the "Seven Special Garden Spaces" RPGC garden tour chairperson hat. Throughout the year, I also keep tabs on our Member Directory, wearing a visored hat.

Recently, I was given a new hat: a floral number to be worn by the President of the River Park Garden Club. It will be my honor to wear it. Many thanks for your confidence in my ability to lead one of the area's oldest clubs! I will certainly give it my best. I encourage members to send in ideas for improvements and comments on club matters. They will help us plan.

Speaking of which...I hadn't planned to become RPGC president, but it is a great opportunity. No way to train for it exactly, but I have been a journalist since the 4th grade, so the newsletter comes more or less naturally to me.

I grew up in Michigan. That brings me to my next point, a confession really. I am not what anyone who is one, would call (see **President**, page 4)

Please Don't Eat the Flowers!

I've previously written of the perils of mixing plants and pets. Well, I failed to follow my own advice. Early August, my golden retriever Winnie began to have tummy troubles. I won't go into detail,

but you can imagine. Four days later, we were at doggy emergency. Winnie, right, had eaten several Rose of Sharon blossoms. In our own backyard. Big sigh. Apparently, pups find the blossoms (related to hibiscus) quite tasty, but they are bad news for their guts.



My tummy says that was a bad idea

After a month of tests, more tests, rounds and rounds of different medicine, probiotics, special kibble and more, Winnie's better, but a tummy ultrasound is coming up. Poor Winnie!



First order of business in my yard? Rip out that Rose of Sharon, left. (Erik's job.) The abutilon (flowering maple) will probably come out too.

There are a surprising number of common garden plants that are poisonous to pets. Did you know that azaleas and rhododendrons are toxic? What about calla and day lilies? Tomato plants are also a big no no.

In the nightshade family, a tomato's foliage is particularly harmful. The flowers and bulbs of daffodils, tulips,

and hyacinth are dangerous, as are mums and geraniums. Holly, hydrangea, peonies, some ivies, mushrooms and sago palm? All on the bad list.

But the *baddest* of the bad has to be

oleander, right. Potentially deadly to humans and their furry friends alike, I



would never include this large shrub in my home landscape, no matter how hardy and attractive. Exile them to highway medians thank you very much!

And don't forget to be cautious with all fertilizer and pesticides, even the natural ones. Winnie is attracted to the smell -bat guano and such. Ewwww!

The American Kennel Club is an excellent resource for identifying dangerous plants. The club also has suggestions for *safe* plants, even some *good* for pets, in moderation of course. Winnie loves to nibble on the orange rinds squirrels drop. However, most fruit and nuts are considered potentially harmful due to risk of mold or blockage. Green beans, most berries (small quantities), melon, and some herbs including dandelion greens, rosemary, curly-leafed parsley, basil, and thyme have beneficial properties.

If Spot or Whiskers gets into something scary, contact your vet or Pet Poison Helpline (855-764-7661, \$75 fee). But best to just eliminate harmful plants in your garden and allow your pets and plants to peacefully coexist.

By Anne Mazur Fay

After A Long, Hot, Very Hot, Summer...

As the days shorten and temperatures mellow out, it's time to plan your Fall and Winter garden, perform chores and plant some things. Here's how:

- Reduce garden and lawn irrigation accordingly.
- With a strong stream of water, hose the dust and cobwebs off foliage of perennials, shrubs and trees to prevent insects from wintering over.
- Remove spent hot weather annuals as they die off – this prevents diseases and pests from over-wintering.
- Plant perennials, shrubs and trees they can get established with a strong root system before



new growth in the Spring.

• Order Spring bulbs online or purchase at a local

nursery. Include tulips, daffodils, hyacinth, muscari, crocus, freesia, and etc. for delivery to our 9b zone in early October. Then you can pre-chill the tulips, crocus and hyacinth for six weeks in a refrigerator before planting in November or early December. (Do not store ripening fruit with the bulbs, the ethylene gas given off by the fruit will affect the development of the flowers.)

• Broadcast California Poppy seeds in mid-Fall (you can mix them with horticultural sand to broadcast more evenly) for bloom in early Spring.

- Be sure NOT to use a preemergent, such as Preen, anywhere you broadcast seeds.
- Plant seeds or transplants for Fall vegetables lettuce, cabbage, broccoli, carrots, sugar peas, kale, onions, and etc. All of these can be grown in large pots.
 Remember to water if we do not get rain in September, October and November.
- Lift, divide and replant iris,



agapanthus, daylilies, and other crowded perennials before it begins to rain.

- Now is the time to renovate tired lawns, too, by aerating, dethatching and winter fertilizing.
- Deadhead roses for a final time for a beautiful Fall bloom, then let hips develop before winter pruning. Colorful rose hips look great in flower arrangements.
- Quit fertilizing houseplants. If they have spent the summer outside be sure to hose them off and inspect them closely for any pests. You don't want to bring them into your house.
- In late September and early October, plant colorful coolseason plants such as: snapdragons, pansy, dianthus violas and alyssum. (See Fall Garden, next page)

(Fall Garden, cont'd)

- Plant herbs such as cilantro, parsley, thyme, dill, fennel and sage.
- Fertilize citrus in late September or early October.
- More on bulbs: When you order or purchase tulip bulbs at a local **v v** nursery look for "early or mid-spring bloomers." By the time late blooming tulip varieties flower in our USDA 9b Zone, it is already warming up and the blooms will not last long. If you do plant late blooming tulips -- many of the double and parrot tulips are late varieties -- try to put them in an area of the garden where they will be shaded from late afternoon sun.

A **Special Note**: Try some bulbs in pots – you can layer your bulbs – tulips or daffodils at approximately 6" deep, then daffodils at 5" then muscari, ranunculus or anemone at 3", top the pot with pansies, violas or alyssum to give them some color until the bulbs bloom. Such pots make great holiday gifts or can brighten your own porch.

Amaryllis also make great holiday gifts. I buy them early to get them started.



They need to be planted with at least one-third of the bulb above the soil line. Water sparingly until growth starts. Watching the plain brown bulb push out strappy green leaves and then finally a beautiful flower(s) -- in shades of red, pink, white, bi-colors and even one that is white, green and burgundy (Papillion *"Butterfly"*)—is a small miracle. They are available in double, ruffled blooms, single blooms and multiple blooms on one stem.

"Google" Amaryllis to see all the possibilities!

By Therese Ruth



(President, cont'd)

a gardener. The major reason is that I grew up in Michigan and my parents were not avid gardeners. Even though it is much easier to garden in Michigan because you rarely have to water anything there, gardening, for my family, came in second to going to school, singing, writing, sports, cooking and taking care of myriad dogs.

Mind you, in California. where I have now lived for almost 40 years, I have what *I* call a garden. But only because my gardener friends tell me what to do with it. "Water!" "Prune!" "Pull the weeds." I get those a lot. That said, please know that I love gardens. Friends' gardens may be the best because they reflect their owners' diverse personalities. But I am perfectly happy in my overgrown, by choice, verdant landscape. My house, fortunately, came with an array of mature camellias (so lovely, so abundant), delicate, colorful azaleas and elegant Crape myrtles. I added more camelias, some agapanthus (I love purple anything) and roses, all of which have been forgiving and generous. Now and again, my garden yields tiny tomatoes, plenty of herbs and fruit from the Meyer lemon I planted. I can't live without them!

Counting the Ways I Love a Garden...

Walking around the block on a path of symmetric, equally spaced 4'6" x 3'11" square-foot rectangles, widely known as a sidewalk, I look to my left and right.

What would make an interesting article for the RPGC newsletter? I see a sword fern and notice the blades have a symmetric pattern



of leaflets which I learn are called pinna. I notice the thorns on a rose bush and wonder if there are patterns governing their size, spacing and angle of growth.

One neighbor has a geometric dome play structure in their front yard; and another has a pathway to the porch consisting of just-so placed octagonal pavers.

What I realize is that math is my constant companion.

Further, plants imbue mathematics. I thought it might be fun to explore some of the places, some of the ways, we find math in the garden.

One of the first things learned during my research is that roses don't have thorns, they have prickles. A 2019 study on the patterning of prickles on the stem of a rose, suggests their placement can be described by mathematical modeling relative to the leaves. Through some leaf-to-prickle measurements, graphs and computer simulations it was determined that "prickle spatial patterns on rose stem depend on leaf position." And the authors "...developed a simple mathematical model of prickle patterning based on a diffusive inhibitor secreted by leaves." (Amikura, Ito, Kitazawa)

While the prickles of a rose are placed relative to the leaves on the stem, is there a pattern to the placement of the leaves? This question brings us to phyllotaxis.

The term phyllotaxis, coined by Charles Bonnet in the 1700s, provides a way of describing the arrangement of leaves on a branch or stem. The placement of rose leaves follows a pattern of *Alternate phyllotaxis*, which is when a single leaf emerges per node at alternating sides of the stem.

Two other types of phyllotaxy include *Opposite*, when a pair of opposing leaves develops at a single node; and *Whorles:* when more than 2 leaves emerge from a single node, such as occurs with the sunflower. Leaves on the plants and flowers we love follow patterns!

Getting up from a particularly head scratching article to ask Charles how things are going outside -



he's in for a quick break from making some shelves for the back bedroom - I look past him, out the kitchen window, to see the sea of leaves dangling from my big Tennessee

(see Math, next page)

RPGC's First Meeting of the Season to Feature a Biophiliac

Genelle Treaster, the speaker at our next meeting, at 6:30 p.m. Sept, 15, will tell us how she got her interesting moniker and how she defines it.

Owner of "All Things Wild," Treater sells California native plants raised in her drought-tolerant private nursery. She says she has been an ardent "biophiliac," for 25 years, working "professionally and personally for Nature." She will discuss tangible ways to apply conservation in your own landscape and community.

When she's not immersed in growing native foliage, surrounded by habitat and wildlife at her ranch in Wilton, she is an interpreter for the California Dept. of Fish and Wildlife.

Our meeting will be held at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Please bring your own supper; beverages, cups and ice will be provided.

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(Math, cont'd)

Tulip tree. What kind of patterns and math do the leaves embrace? Does the bark on the tree, the beautiful bark I often stare at in awe, follow a pattern as well? How is it formed and what rules does it follow? More research.

While researching the link between leaves and patterns and math, searching for an interesting tale to tell, I keep seeing references to the *Fibonacci sequence*.

The Fibonacci sequence is a series of numbers beginning with 0 and 1 and continuing on with each number being the sum of the two previous numbers: 0, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, 34 and so on. What makes this set of numbers relevant to our interest in gardens is how this sequence appears throughout the garden.

The numbers in the Fibonacci sequence can be placed in such a way that a unique, "Fibonacci" spiral is created. This spiral is the form we see in the



many plants and critters we encounter whilst weeding, planting and enjoying our gardens.

Thank you for taking this mathematical journey with me through the garden, pondering the ways that math and nature intersect. Perhaps it is just my penchant for a good math phrase, but finding math in the garden is a great way to weave the following wise and true observation from Dean Schlicter into my closing;

"Go down deep enough into anything and you will find mathamatics."

By Debbie Eldridge

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Ъ են RPGC will participate in the Shepard Garden and Arts Center's sale Oct. 1 and 2. Volunteers are needed to work from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., in two-hour shifts either day. Sign up at the meeting Thursday or call Lynn McCormack at 916-455-4159, to volunteer. Ъ

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Ъ Wouldn't it be nice to have home-baked cookies, brownies and cupcakes at every club meeting? Bakers, get out your recipes! A sign-up sheet will be at each meeting for the next meeting. Details on sign-up sheets and our website. Ъ