

April 2023 Newsletter

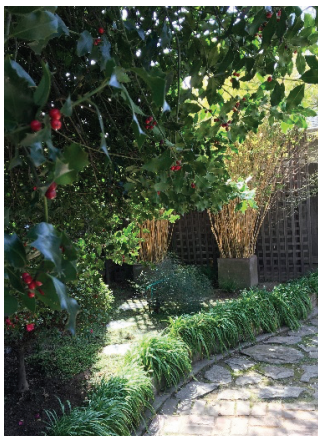
River Park Garden Club

Attention garden lovers! The third “Seven Special Garden Spaces,” River Park garden tour is just around the corner.

The gardens on this neighborhood tour will be open from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, April 22. Tickets (\$5) will be sold on tour day at the corner of Carlson and Camelia. Tickets may also be reserved ahead by calling 916-451-4658.

All seven gardens on this River Park Garden Club-sponsored tour, offer something unique. Look for the friendly dragon in the young-at-heart fantasy garden on the tour. And the immaculately kept garden (below). with a sense of history and humor. Marvel at the garden that replaced a huge swimming pool with a koi pond, edibles and magnificent Japanese maples(right).

Shhhh. One of the gardens is a quiet nesting place for 12 soon-to-be ducklings and their parents. Another is a large family garden -- with an intact swimming pool, entertaining areas *plus* raised vegetable beds and fruit trees.



Club members will be the official greeters in each garden, along with the garden owners, who, don't worry, will love talking about their special spaces.

The Perennial Plant Club of Sacramento will bring well-tended plants to sell in one of the gardens and a group of artists will exhibit and sell their garden-centric paintings, jewelry, clothing and garden ornaments in another garden.

By Pat B. Smith

p.s. We are looking for great gardens for our 2024 tour. If you know of one, please call 916-454-5637 with info. We need to see them in the spring!

Gardening is a Great School

Gardening author Pam Farley says “Yellow leaves are ok!”

“Gardeners who haven’t had much experience, often get very upset if they find one yellow leaf in their garden,” said Farley.



She will share gardening experiences at the next River Park Garden Club meeting at 6:30 p.m. Thursday, April 20 at Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd.

It will be Farley’s first “foray into *speaking* about gardening,” she said. Up to now, the CSUS graduate (she was an English major), has concentrated on *writing* books. She also writes a blog called “Brown Thumb Mama,” that is filled with “natural living” tips and has been online since 2009.

The author of four books in a series called: *The First Time Gardener*, Farley will focus Thursday on *Container Food Gardening*, her latest edition. (The other three in the series feature growing vegetables, plants and flowers and raised-bed gardening.)

“The books are for super beginners,” Farley explained.

“The new book answers questions new gardeners shouldn’t be embarrassed to ask.”

Native Sacramentan Farley, said she has been gardening in her Rosemont neighborhood for almost 30 years and admits that in the beginning, she was a real novice, a point that spurred writing the books.

“I have two gardens; one in the front yard and one in the back, plus about 10 large containers where we grow fruits and vegetables,” she said. She credits her Aunt Janet with teaching her many lessons in gardening

“Gardening has brought me so much joy. To garden with my kids? Great. From when they were very young, sitting in the strawberry patch eating strawberries or picking the snow peas off the vine. Gardening is something kids can grow into, nurture, then enjoy,” she enthused. But the greatest lesson, she said, is patience.

“You can plant something and wait for it to grow, or you can go to the grocery store,” she quipped. “The best advice (from Aunt Janet) is: Even if it doesn’t work out this year, there’s always next year.”

(Please bring your own dinner to the meeting. Desserts and beverages will be a provided.)

By Pat B. Smith.)

Made in the Shade: *Shade-loving plants*

All the large shade trees in River Park have changed formerly sun gardens into shady places -- where sun-loving annuals, perennials, shrubs and smaller trees no longer flourish.

There are quite a few plants that require shade and can still provide flowers and interesting foliage.

Annuals – a favorite with most gardeners are Impatiens, available in almost all colors except blue and doubles that look like small roses, Alyssum, bedding begonias, Lobelia, Larkspur and Coleus to name just a few. These all can be planted in early Spring when it is still cool and before trees leaf out to provide the shade from summer heat.

Perennials – In our zone 9b, perennials winter over fine and may die down totally then re-flush in the spring. Perennials for shade include, but not limited to, Abutilon



Fuchsias are shade-loving

(Flowering Maples), Bleeding Hearts, Heucheras, Ferns, Pulmonaria, Trillium, Brunnera, Hellebores (these actually start to bloom in winter and continue into early Spring), Lamium, Fuchsias (left), Astilbe, Balloon Flowers, Toad Lily and Caladium.

Hostas such as *White Feather*, *Spring Morning*, *Pathfinder* and Caladiums such as *White Queen*, *Allure* and *Florida Moonlight*, are grown more for their light leaf color more than their flowers. Their light foliage lightens up dark spots in shade gardens.

Caladiums (right) are a bulb and grow in the heat of summer in shade or morning sun and afternoon shade. They can also be grown in pots.



Shrubs – Camellias, Viburnum, Rhododendrons and some Azaleas may need shade, especially from the hot late afternoon sun.

Hydrangeas – There are several different types of hydrangeas that grow well in our area:

Macrophylla (Big Leaf) These hydrangeas include mophead and lacecap and they bloom on old wood so any pruning needs to be done after blooming. The composition of the soil determines if the flowers will be pink or blue. Some samples include “Let’s Dance,” and “Endless Summer.”

(See Shade, next page)

(Shade, continued)

Panicle (paniculata) bloom on new wood and should be pruned in late winter or early spring. Some samples include: “Limelight,” (and “Little Lime” a dwarf version of Limelight), “Little Quick Fire,” and “Bobo.”

Oakleaf hydrangeas (below) do not need to be pruned and should be left to grow to their natural size. If they need light pruning to shape, do this after they bloom. Blooms age from white to dark rose. You can remove any winter damage in early Spring. They also have very colorful leaves in the Fall. Samples are “Pee Wee” and “Ruby Slippers.”



Smooth Hydrangea (arborescent) bloom on new wood and can take bright shade and morning sun but they cannot tolerate drought. These hydrangeas can be cut all the way back to the ground in winter to encourage blooms. Samples include “Annabelle” and “Incrediball.”

Serrate hydrangeas bloom on old wood and are similar to *Macrophylla* but smaller. Prune after blooming if needed. They usually grow to 2’ - 4’ tall. Samples include “Tuff Stuff” and “Bluebird.”

All hydrangeas need sufficient water, thus the “hydra” in their name.

Trees – There are a few trees that require shade to flourish, among them are fine lace leaf Japanese Maples (right) with light color leaves. They require more shade than their cousins with dark red leaves or larger green leaves. Dogwoods are considered “understory” trees which do best near a larger tree that shades them from summer’s late afternoon hot sun.



NOTE: Shade plants, with their tender new growth, are especially inviting to slugs and snails who prosper in cool, damp locations, so be sure to bait for them before setting out plants. Sluggo, a pet and child safe bait made from iron phosphate and spinosid, works much more slowly than instant kill baits, so you need to apply “Sluggo” granules to your flower beds a week or two before you plant and about every four weeks thereafter.

If you lost large trees during recent storms, you have a different problem -- lots of sun where there was shade before. Plants that were growing in the shade and will no longer be shaded, can be moved in early Spring, if their size permits. You will want to give them some root stimulating fertilizer (usually sold as starter fertilizer) and get their roots settled in their new spot before the heat of summer hits.

By Therese Ruth

Vernal Pools: Threatened Ephemeral Wetlands

If you have never visited a vernal pool, this is a great year to do so. Vernal pools are rare winter and springtime wetlands that occur primarily in regions with Mediterranean climate conditions, such as California's Central Valley.

According to the Sacramento Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, there are several accessible vernal pool complexes in our area. At Mather Field, Walking Tour #2 leads to a complex in the Illa M. Collin Conservation Preserve. (sacsplash.org)



In Fair Oaks, the Phoenix Park Vernal Pools, a National Natural Landmark, offers a short walking path around the complex. (forpd.org) A little farther afield is the Jepson Prairie preserve in Solano County, which offers a short, self-guided trail that winds through prairie to the edge of Olcott Lake, a large vernal pool. Guided tours are also available. (solanolandtrust.org).

So, what exactly is a vernal pool? It's a small temporary wetland created by seasonal rains that drain into a depression in a gently sloping grassland. Hardpan prevents the water from draining into the subsoil, allowing a pool to form. However, as the weather warms, the pool gradually evaporates and dries out.

Vernal pools can vary in size from that of a small pond to a lake, and may form a system of multiple pools connected by swales. The term "vernal" means something that relates to, or occurs in the spring, like the vernal equinox. The name "vernal pools" came about because these temporary wetlands are most visible in the spring.

Plants and animals have adapted to live in these ephemeral wetlands. Annual seeds lay dormant until the pools fill and then germinate and begin to grow submerged. As the pools begin to evaporate, so-called fairy rings of small wildflowers hug the edges of the gradually shrinking pools. Aquatic invertebrates, such as fairy shrimp, hatch from hard resting eggs, called cysts, deposited during the previous year's rainy season. Certain amphibians breed and lay their eggs in vernal pools, which hatch to larvae or tadpoles that sprout their legs as the pools dry.

(See Vernal, next page)

(Vernal, continued)

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recognizes vernal pools to be “a valuable and increasingly threatened ecosystem...” The EPA reports great efforts are being made to protect vernal pools because “their disappearance marks the loss of rare and important habitat and some of the associated plant and animal species as well.”



Baker's Stickyseed, one of the plants in California's vernal pools

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife (CDFW), considers these wetlands some of the most ecologically important and distinctive areas in California. As explained by CDFW, it is unknown how much of California was once covered by vernal pool systems, but it is known that since the arrival of Spanish explorers most of the vernal pool habitat has been destroyed, first by agriculture and to a lesser extent, by urban development.

“Estimates suggest that close to 90% or more of the vernal pool habitat in the Central Valley and in other parts of the state has been lost,” according to CDFW. Vernal pool habitat continues to disappear. Of the 137,100 acres of vernal pool habitat documented from 1976 to 1995, more than 13% were lost by 2005. In addition, “agriculture and development have also altered the hydrology of land surrounding vernal pools, increasing erosion and runoff and contributing harmful pesticides and fertilizers,” the CDFW says.

Vernal pools are protected by state and federal laws. In 2005, the US Fish and Wildlife Service issued a recovery plan for vernal pool ecosystems in California and southern Oregon. The plan addresses 33 plant and animal species endemic to vernal pools, including 15 plants that are listed threatened or endangered in California. The recovery plan outlines conservation steps such as habitat protection, restoration, and monitoring.



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Astragalus tener

We live in a region blessed with these special and ephemeral wetlands. Now is the time to see them!

By Anne Mazur Fay