

River Park Garden Club

February – March 2025 Newsletter

We Learned a Lot... from the Drought!

“Gardening is going back to its roots,” said the club’s perennial guest speaker, Greg Gayton, right, of Green Acres Nursery & Supply. He will talk more about that and also what’s new in the nursery, Thursday, February 20, at 6:30 p.m. at Shepard Garden and Arts Center (See more info below.)



“We are going back to the way our grandparents gardened. They used only organic plants and products. We realize now that the old ways are the good ways. We learned a lot of that from the drought. It made us realize that we have to use the best gardening methods and that means going organic. Organic gardening is working *with* nature, not against it.”

He learned about organic gardening early, though it wasn’t called that, when he gardened with his grandfather during summers in Texas. Plus, he also grew up in Colorado where he also gardened. Though very different growing environments than California, their extreme conditions also required careful, time-tested plant choices and methods for planting and irrigation to survive, he said.

“Organic fertilizers, (as an example of what we are offering more of these days in our nurseries), apply (scientific) soil biology to help the soil stay alive, They also help the plants’ root systems develop and actually produce more flowers while surviving droughts during our hot summers,” Gayton (above) explained.

(See **Greg Gayton**, next page)

Join us at our first general meeting of 2025

Certified California Nursery Professional, and favorite presenter Greg Gayton, will be our speaker, at 6:30 p.m., Thursday, February 20, at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. (Parking available behind the building, off Park Way, between 33rd and 35th streets.)

Guests are welcome at our free meeting. Desserts and beverages will be provided. Bring your own supper, utensils, and plates.



Shade for the Kids

There are two new trees in the playground at Glenn Hall Park, thanks to RPGC's very active past officers, Lee and Therese Ruth (below, with planting crew.)



“The kids need shade there since the big redwood that was there was struck by lightning and had to be removed. So we got 10-foot trees,” Lee explained.



They personally underwrote the cost of a colorful Trident Maple (above, right) and a majestic Valley Live Oak and oversaw their planting as well. Good thing that was a few weeks ago before Therese broke her arm! Ouch! Heal fast and...

Thanks for being botanical champions for our neighborhood!

(Gayton, continued)

Among the organic fertilizers available, Gayton said, are those made by E.B. Stone, a family-owned company started in San Jose 119 years ago. The entire operation is wind-powered, he said, plus all their buildings are studded with skylights to further reduce power usage.

“The organic fertilizers are essential to plant health. Synthetic fertilizers just make the plant grow faster. They do not add anything to the soil’s health,” he said.

Among the other big trends in California horticulture today, he said, are plants that attract pollinators, mulch, and drip watering systems.

“The volunteer Master Gardeners are really responsible for bringing new/old gardening ideas into practice here,” Gayton said. “They are the movers and shakers of gardening, the people who have introduced and educated gardeners here about the leading edge organic gardening ideas -- that treat the environment better.”

“In California, the Gardening Mecca of the world, we have to consider good gardening practices all 12 months of the year. We are lucky to be able to garden all year!”

What’s the first thing he has planted this season? “I’ve already put in my onion sets.”

We Need Your Help, Members!

Our club's most successful income source, the Spring Sale at Shepard Garden and Arts Center, is coming up March 15 and 16. We need to gather items to sell there.

Donations of anything to do with gardening would be appreciated. That means plants, pots, seeds, gardening tools, books on gardening, garden decorations, and indoor garden-themed items -- artwork, pillows, dishes, glassware and vases. Costume jewelry also sells well at these sales.



It would be great if members could pot up cuttings



from plants in their gardens – roses, geraniums, herbs, split agapanthus and etc.

If you have items you'd like to donate, please deliver them between Noon and 3 p.m. on Friday, March 14, to the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. The doors on both McKinley and Park Way will be open.

If you need assistance with delivering your donations, please call Lynn McCormack for help – 916-455-4159.

Help is also needed for our...

Fifth Annual River Park Garden Tour

This year's tour of River Park neighborhood gardens will be on Saturday, April 26, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. The tour requires a large staff of volunteers to be successful. This is an opportunity for club members to participate in a delightful neighborhood event, get to know other club members and also River Park neighbors.

At least two member-hosts are needed in each garden to welcome visitors and guide them through the garden with provided info on the plants and general design elements of their garden. (see **Tour**, next page)

(**Tour**, continued)

Volunteers are also needed to run the ticket table and photograph the event. Pre-tour tasks include fielding telephone reservations, selling advertising for the \$5 program/ticket, doing publicity and setting out signage, among other tasks.

Volunteers will be invited to a pre-tour tour and reception at 5 p.m., Wednesday, April 23, so they can tour all the gardens, meet the garden owners and see where they will be stationed during the event. Volunteers are also needed to help make the pre-tour a success. Think drinks, ice and food!



Anyone interested in volunteering for the tour, and we hope there will be many, may put their name on the signup sheet that will be passed out at our next meeting, February 20. If you are interested and or have questions, please call tour chair, Pat Smith, at 916-454-5637.

Think sunshine!

Garden Tips:

Bewildered friends recently asked: “What should we plant in our front garden? When we go to nurseries, there is so much to choose from that we get confused and end up buying nothing.”



“Plant cycads!” suggested a retired botany professor from Sacramento, who used them extensively in his landscape. He said the family is older than dinosaurs, dating from about 300 million years ago. And cycads are evergreen, live a long time, (some of his are more than 60 years old, see left) and are also disease resistant, drought tolerant, pest free and they make a dramatic and elegant botanical statement in a garden. Sounds perfect -- unless you want flowers. They do not flower.