



# River Park Garden Club Newsletter



November-December, 2025

## *Homegrown Habitat*

Saving our planet is a convincing motivation for including native plants in home landscapes, says Colene Rauh. She will give a slide presentation on the subject at our next meeting, Thursday, Nov. 20, at 6:30 p.m. at the Shepard Garden and Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd.

A volunteer for the Sacramento Valley Chapter of the California Native Plant Society since 2009, Rauh, is a passionate advocate for creating natural, native plant habitats around our homes because they support wildlife, in general, and in particular, bees, other good insects, birds and consequently, us.

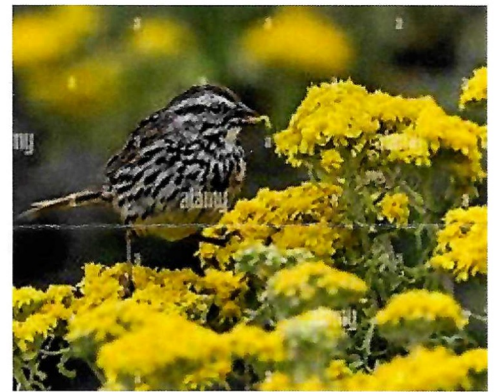


“We’ll need a paradigm shift to make it work. Plants are not here for their aesthetic value,” she explained, but instead we need to think of them as agents for our own survival. Native plants are, importantly, also drought tolerant, she emphasized.

This Master Gardener walks and talks the message as shown (*above*) with her husband in their home’s large garden.



“We had a soccer field and converted it to a native plant garden.” But you don’t need a large space to make an affective scheme with “natives,” she said. “They can be used in every kind of space -- from balconies to yards of all sizes. Even a few potted natives can help with the eco-system.



“Using local, not coastal or foothill natives is important,” Rauh said. Among her favorites are California fuchsia (left), yarrow (right) and Toyon. She’ll tell us how to find them, too. For more information, visit [www.sacvalleycnps.org](http://www.sacvalleycnps.org).

*NOTE: Guests are always welcome at our free meetings. Desserts and beverages will be provided, but please bring your own supper, utensils and plates. See you soon!*

# Beyond the Douglas Fir

Holiday season always makes me think about cheery greenery, even as the autumn leaves color-up and drop. Many of us will set up a tree, hang wreathes, and blanket mantels with boughs. These traditions have deep history. Pagans decorated with evergreens because they symbolized the promise of life, hope, and renewal during a long dark winter. Interesting!

Our Sacramento winters aren't so long and dark, but we still love to display a lot of greenery. Seasonal tree lots are stocked with Douglas and Noble firs, mostly grown in Oregon. California's Sierra Nevada, however, has an impressive variety of native evergreen trees, well beyond what we usually drag into our living rooms every December.



Driving up into the western Sierra Nevada, most recently to the Sierra Buttes in Sierra County, I'm mesmerized by the transition of trees as we climb in elevation, from oak woodlands of the low foothills, to mixed conifer forests, and then up to fir forests.

First, the valley floor becomes gentle undulations dotted with chaparral, oaks, and shaggy gray pine (*Pinus sabiniana*). Then, the higher we drive, the denser the woods. Beginning around 2,000 feet in elevation, the mixed conifer forest includes well known varieties such as Douglas and white fir (*Pseudotsuga menziesii* and *Abies concolor*,



respectively); very fragrant incense cedar (*Calocedrus decurrens*); and Jeffrey, ponderosa and sugar pine (*Pinus jeffreyi*, *Pinus ponderosa* (*above*) and *Pinus lambertiana*, respectively).

About 6,000 feet up to 9,500 feet, we enter fir forests with Lodgepole/Tamarack and western white pine (*Pinus contorta* var. *murrayana*, *Pinus monticola*, respectively), red fir (*Abies magnifica*), and (*left*) Sierra juniper (*Juniperus occidentalis*). Each is better evolved to shed heavy snowfall than their lower elevation cousins.

Identification of Sierra trees can be tricky, but there are telltale characteristics.

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A pine typically has long bundled needles. The cones of a sugar pine are over a foot long. The backside of bark flaked off a ponderosa pine is yellow.

The trunk of a Jeffrey pine smells like pineapple. Firs have short needles that are not bundled. Branch ends of incense cedars are flat and jointed.

Sierra juniper (*right*), is gnarled with red bark and dark berries.

I picked up a great little handbook titled Pacific Coast Tree Finder: Identifying Trees of the Pacific Coast by Tom Watts. I'll be using it often to appreciate California's mountain greenery in spring, summer, and fall, as well as our not-so-long, dark winters.

--Anne Mazur Fay



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## *Shepard Sale a Success*

The annual Fall Sale at Shepard Garden and Arts Center in October was wildly successful. Proceeds were nearly \$1,000 -- one of our best sales ever. The funds are used

to pay for our meetings, speakers and other expenses of the club. Best sellers are always plants and pots, garden supplies and jewelry. People tell us they like the variety of things we offer, such as vases, holiday décor and the odd tea cup.

Keep that in mind for the next sale in March when we'll need members to donate items again in each category to fill our tables





*RPGC HOLIDAY BRUNCH*

*Come join your friends at the Annual River Park Garden Club Holiday Brunch!*

**When:** Sunday, December 14, 2025 at 11:00 a.m.

**Where:** Shepard Garden & Arts Center, 3330 McKinley Blvd. Sacramento

**Cost:** \$14.00 per adult; \$5.00 children

**Guests Welcome!**

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Number of: Adults \_\_\_\_\_ Children \_\_\_\_\_

Check enclosed for \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Please use the attached envelope to mail to:

RPGC Treasurer Brian Brosseau  
5319 Shepard Ave.  
Sacramento 95819

Or bring your check to the November 20, 2025 meeting.

