

# The Gardeners' Club

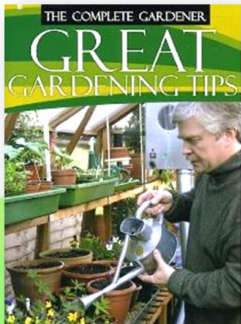
August 2010



## Tips 'n' Treats: Time to Social-Ice!

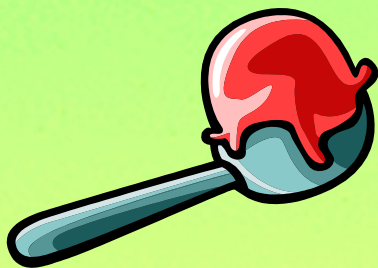
*"Now, therefore, I, Ronald Reagan, President of the United States, do hereby proclaim July 1984 as National Ice Cream Month and I call upon the people of the United States to observe these events with appropriate ceremonies and activities."*

Ooops—July flew by, and we forgot to celebrate National Ice Cream Month. We'll make up for it now with an **Ice Cream Social**. At every meeting, we come together in companionship through our common love of gardening. This month, we're coming together to celebrate our love for ice cream. The Club will provide various ice cream flavors and fixings. We invite you to bring your favorite toppings – especially if they are from a garden or farmers' market. Berries, fruit, herbs, preserves, cookie crumbles - we can't wait to see...and taste...what you bring. See the next page for some inspirations. Don't worry if you can't bring anything – just bring your appetite and enthusiasm!



The second part of the meeting will be just as enticing. Patty Connole will show us some fun and informative garden tips as we watch parts of the DVD "**Great Gardening Tips**". Prepare to be amazed as Steve Brookes, popular British TV gardening host and author, shows a host of money-saving, innovative tips for growing healthier plants and tackling many common garden problems. Using our digital projector, Patty will show us tips on Borders, A Better Garden, Pests, Feeding, Nature's Friends, The Vegetable Patch and Cuttings. Join us as we are both entertained and informed, learning practical, economical and unique solutions to common garden problems. We'll get to browse and buy at our Plant Table, too.

Here's the scoop...



August Meeting

Ice Cream Social & Gardening Tips

Thursday, August 12th

7-9 p.m.

Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Drive

Patty Connole, Marie Moseley & Nancy Cidama—

thanks for refreshments!

# Over-the-Top Ice Cream Toppings



## Garden-inspired recipes to top a sundae

### Fresh No-Cook Blackberry Sauce

1 pint fresh blackberries  
Sugar to taste

Process the blackberries in a food processor until smooth. Pour the sauce through a fine mesh sieve. Be sure to push as much fruit

through as possible with a spatula or the back of a spoon, just leaving behind the seeds. Sweeten to taste— start with one heaping teaspoon. Refrigerate.

### Basil Lemon Syrup

1 cup sugar  
1/4 cup water  
1/4 cup lemon juice  
1 packed cup fresh basil leaves

Place the sugar, water, and lemon juice in a small saucepan. Bring the mixture to a simmer over medium heat and cook until the sugar is dissolved. Cool the syrup completely. In a food processor combine the basil and the cooled syrup. Pulse until the herbs are finely chopped. Strain the mixture through a fine mesh sieve.

### Warm Apricot Topping

1 pint water  
12 oz. granulated sugar  
8 oz. butter  
2 oz. brown sugar  
4 oz. orange juice  
1/2 lb. fresh apricots  
2 oz. lemon juice  
2 oz orange liqueur  
1 oz. apricot brandy  
1/2 tsp. brown cinnamon

Combine water and sugar in saucepan. Cook over low heat until dissolved. Increase heat and bring to boil. Cook 10 minutes until syrup has thickened. Add butter and next 6 ingredients. Add apricots and cook until heated through.

### Sweetened Cucumbers in Ginger-Lime & Mint Syrup

*It's not too often you find recipes using vegetables for ice cream toppings. This one is from the Tangled Noodle, where you can also find a recipe for Golden Beet Dessert Sauce (<http://tanglednoodle.blogspot.com>).*



1 English cucumber, sliced to 1/8" thickness then diced into smaller pieces (about 2 cups)  
3 Tbsps dry white wine  
1 cup granulated sugar  
1 cup water  
1/2" piece of ginger  
1/2 tsp of lime zest  
2-3 fresh mint leaves, torn

In a small bowl, combine cucumbers, wine and superfine sugar and mix well. Refrigerate for at least 1 hour. In a small saucepan, combine remaining ingredients and bring to a boil. Reduce heat and simmer, stirring occasionally, until sugar is completely dissolved. Remove from heat, strain out ginger, zest and mint pieces, and allow to cool completely. Drain cucumbers completely then transfer to a small bowl or container. Add cooled simple syrup by tablespoons until desired consistency is reached. Spoon on top of your favorite ice cream or frozen yogurt.

### Blueberries and Lavender Syrup

3/4 cup water  
1/2 cup sugar  
2 tablespoons fresh edible lavender flowers  
2 teaspoons fresh lemon juice  
10 oz blueberries (1 pt.)

Bring water and sugar to a boil in a small saucepan, stirring until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat and stir in lavender, then steep 30 minutes for dried lavender or 40 minutes for fresh. Pour syrup through a fine-mesh sieve into a bowl, discarding lavender. Stir in lemon juice and blueberries.

*Without ice cream, there would be darkness and chaos. — Don Kardong*



## The Right Shovel *by Bob Denman*

A spade, we are told, is a spade, and not to be confused with a shovel.

Hah!

The common garden spade, as it evolved in Europe and particularly in England, has a blade that is a rectangle.

The digging shovel so ubiquitous here in the U.S.A. has a blade shaped exactly like a spade. (Just compare your shovel, head up, to any deck of cards.)

Go figure.

Shapes aside, the primary difference between a spade and a shovel is its intended use.

The garden spade, with its long flat blade is used to prepare beds to an even depth by loosening and turning soil in place. A round point shovel, being wide and deeply dished, is properly used to loosen, lift and deposit dirt elsewhere—into a pile or barrow. It does best digging big holes. Yes, you can use a shovel for spading or a spade for shoveling, but you sacrifice efficiency.

Not all round point shovels are the same. Knowing a little about their differences can help you select the one that is right for you. When selecting a shovel, pick one with a size that fits your body, a lift and crank that suits your usual tasks, and one that is well made. (You're wondering what all this means, right? Read on.)

First, size. Once, round point shovels came in many sizes: 0, 00, 1, 2, 3, 4, and so on. Today only the four smallest – 0 through 2 – are made, of which the No. 2 (with a head of about 9"x12") is most common. The only No. 4 I have ever seen is in the historical collection at Rancho Los Alamitos in Long Beach. Paul Bunyan must have worked there. The thing is huge!

If you're small, shy of muscle or working in very close spaces, pick a small headed no. 1 (8 1/2"x11"), No. 00 (7"x9") or No. 0 (6"x7 1/2"). Otherwise, go with a No. 2. (By the way, all head sizes are approximate and vary among manufacturers.) The standard handle-length on shovels is 48". If you're tall, try to get one with a 54" handle. The longer tool will provide more leverage and reduce back strain.

Shovels vary widely in lift, the angle formed between the handle and the ground when the head is placed flat on the ground. Irrigation shovels, like spades, are used for turning and have almost no lift. Fire-fighting shovels, which are very pointed, have a generous 45° degree lift. (They are used for scooping and throwing dirt and for bashing embers.)

Choose a shovel with enough lift for you to comfortably grasp the handle with your arms fully extended while driving the blade vertically in the ground.

Crank refers to the radius of the shovel's neck as it curves up from the blade to envelop the handle. The crank varies the height of the handle. Two shovels can have the same lift and different cranks. The one with more crank will be more suitable if you have long arms, and vice versa.

Finally, a word about quality. I recommend forged shovels. They can last a lifetime, will hold their sharpened edge, and the heads won't bend, split or snap. Hollow back shovels, the most common type, are so called because they are fashioned out of a single piece of thin sheet steel. At the neck, where the forged shovel is solid and strong, the hollow back is, well, hollow. And weak. And liable to bend or fracture.

Keep your shovel sharp and free of rust. Keep the handle sanded and oiled. The tool will reward you by being the most efficient earthmover it can be.

"All my hurts my garden spade can heal."--  
Ralph Waldo Emerson

-- Reprinted with permission

# Fool for Tools

There are tools we really need. Practical, affordable, necessary tools. Like the Bond Fruit Picker, carried by The Garden Company on Mission Street (429-8424, <http://santacruzgardenco.com/news/10/29/>). Instead of teetering on a ladder and risking life and limb, keep your feet safely on the ground and harvest fruit up to 15 feet high in your tree. This picker has a foam cushioned, vinyl coated, heavy gauge wire basket attached to a pole with two four foot sections.



Then there are tools which are things of beauty, so well-crafted they make us sigh. It becomes hard to distinguish “need” from “want”. Such wonders are to be found at Red Pig Tools in Oregon. Bob Denman, who wrote the previous article on choosing shovels, is a tool genius. He handmakes interesting tools for interesting tasks, tools that are made to last for generations to come. Like a girdling tool, which cuts a small piece of bark off a fruit tree and shocks the tree into producing more fruit. He makes left-handed hand plows for us lefties. How about a potting trowel with its blade on upside down, that places your hand down and away from a potted plant instead of up and in, to avoid breaking fragile plants?



I may just HAVE to invest in the perfect tool for removing blackberry canes, a long-handled berry hook. This tool has been around since the Middle Ages. The chisel tip is used to cut half way through the base of a freestanding cane. The hook is used to complete the cut and drop the cane AWAY from you instead of ON to you. For canes that are tangled in shrubs or trees, use the chisel to cut through the base of the cane then use the hook to drag the cane from the brush. The long, stout pole keeps you from having a close, personal relationship with thorny stems.



Long-handled berry hook

If you are interested you can check out their website ([www.redpigtools.com](http://www.redpigtools.com)) for the full list of tools they make, or call 503-663-9404 for more information.



Upside-down potting trowel





Our club president Cherry Thompson was invited for an interview on the KKUP Old Time Farm & Garden Show last month, so over the hill she went to broadcast information about our club. This popular, long-running radio show is co-hosted by Master Gardeners of Santa Clara County Jim Maley, Bader Kudsi and Sharon McCray. A wide variety of farm and garden topics are covered on each show and listener calls are encouraged (408-260-2999). Give a listen to this show on the 4th Thursday of every month, 10 a.m. to noon, at 91.5 FM.

Planting peas in August? Sure. Make good use of your huge late season tomato plants by planting peas, lettuce and other leafy greens to the east or north of them. They'll benefit from the afternoon shade provided by their tomato friends.



*Sally's*  
**TIPS & TRICKS**

**Fall Broccoli**

**P**lanting broccoli in summer for a fall harvest can be much easier than raising spring broccoli. Most broccoli pests are gone by late summer, and you'll have fewer problems with heat causing your broccoli to bolt. So force yourself to start a new crop even in the heat of July and August!

When planting a fall crop, add an extra week or two when you calculate planting time, because your crop will mature more slowly in cool fall weather. For broccoli (and also cabbage, and cauliflower) that means starting seedlings 12 weeks before your first average fall frost date and transplanting them 8 weeks before. Mulch your crop with straw or newspaper several sheets thick. Keep extra mulch on hand to pile up around the plants when frost threatens.

From *Great Garden Companions* by Sally Jean Cunningham  
A Rodale Organic Gardening Book

**Greed is Good.** Harvest your basil leaves greedily and often. Trimming a stem back by a half or more will promote bushiness, delay flowering, and keep the leaves tasting sweet.

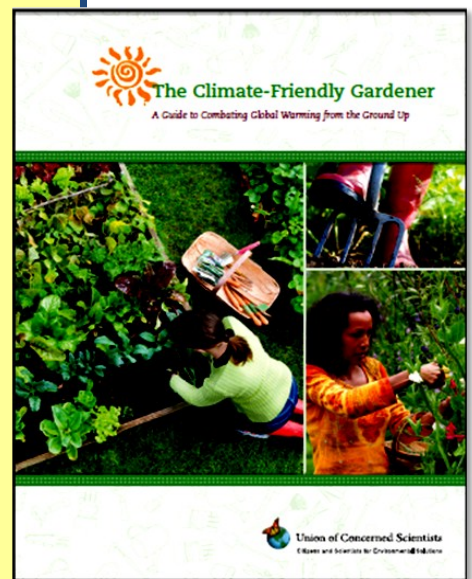
**Reuse, recycle.** Save large tin cans, like coffee cans, to help grow sweeter melons. When melons are about the size of baseballs, lift them gently onto the cans. The elevated fruits are off the cool ground in full sun above their foliage, and the sunlight warms the metal cans, transferring the heat to the melons.



Mr. Tomato Head Game

Ignore the typo on the screen and you'll really enjoy playing the Mr. Tomato Head Game at [www.girlsgogames.com/game/Mr-Tomato-Head.html](http://www.girlsgogames.com/game/Mr-Tomato-Head.html). Actually, you can make a **Ms.** Tomato Head like I did, and there is even a nose-ring option for accessories.

The millions of Americans with a lawn or garden know that even small shifts in weather can affect their outdoor plans. Unchecked global warming, however, could force gardeners to deal with more droughts and floods, and a profusion of pests and weeds. [\*The Climate-Friendly Gardener: A Guide to Combating Global Warming from the Ground Up\*](#), shows you how to reduce the impact of climate change in your own backyard. To download your own copy, go to [www.ucsusa.org/food\\_and\\_agriculture/what\\_you\\_can\\_do/the-climate-friendly-gardener.html](http://www.ucsusa.org/food_and_agriculture/what_you_can_do/the-climate-friendly-gardener.html). To request hard copies of *The Climate-Friendly Gardener*, email [jpalembas@ucsusa.org](mailto:jpalembas@ucsusa.org).



# A Goodbye to the Vollmer Garden

When Edna Vollmer died last year, we lost a good friend and a community treasure. Edna was the ultimate enthusiast — she took joy, pleasure and interest in so many things. She was a tireless volunteer at the Arboretum for years and years (I first met her there as a butterfly census taker). She was an exceptional and prolific artist, a birder, a mentor to many and an avid plant propagator and gardener. If you ever visited the Vollmer garden on Trout Gulch Road, you will remember it with amazement — an incredible diversity of plants and hardscape mixed with Edna’s creations and collections. The time has come for her husband David to leave the garden he helped build so that he can move to a smaller place. Last month he invited a group of people from the Arboretum for a last visit. Daughter April, who was helping David with his move, led us for an exploration. Many of the plants were familiar to us and, conferring, we recalled their names; many we just admired without identifying them. Here we share with you some photographs of our visit and the garden. We hope the plantings continue to thrive for many years.



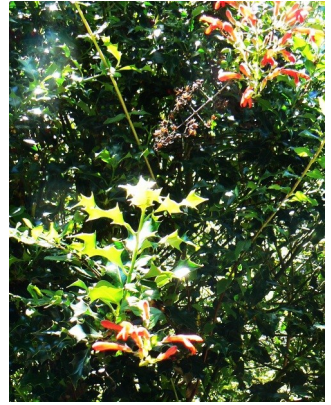
Steve McCabe peers at plant.



Pot with walking sticks to help navigate steep terrain.



April Vollmer and Marie Beckham marveling in meadow.



Still life by Edna



Our group



One of Edna’s unique pots

## Yuck

With the arrival of warm weather, our gardens are visited by new pests. Are your rose leaves mysteriously disappearing, bite by bite?



Look under a leaf and you'll probably find what looks like a small green caterpillar. But it isn't a caterpillar; it's a bristly rose slug. And rose slugs are not slugs at all; they are in the sawfly family. What to do? If you catch the problem early enough, and/or you only have a few rose bushes, you can check the undersides of the leaves every morning and squish the bugs. You can remove defoliated leaves and just live with the problem if it's not too bad; it won't kill your roses. Repeated foliar sprays, with insecticidal soap or horticultural oil, will help (be careful using oils in hot weather, though). Make sure to get both sides of the leaves. Bristly rose slugs can produce six generations a season – yikes! Many rose enthusiasts use Spinosad, a naturally occurring biological insecticide, but if you use it, always spray during the evening hours, in order to minimize the negative effects Spinosad will have on honeybees and native pollinators. If you are desperate and want to use a non-organic alternative, you can apply a systemic insecticide drench such as Bayer's 3 in 1 Rose Care.

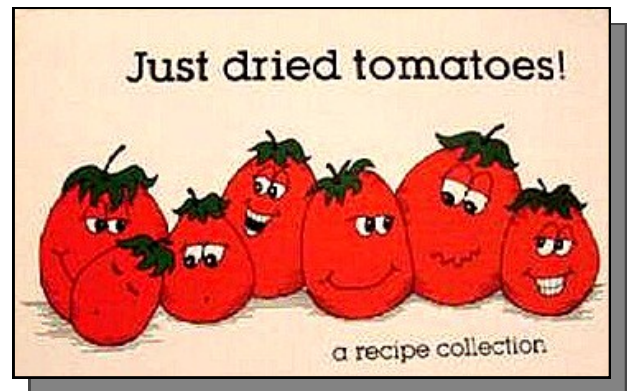
## More yum

Do you want to enjoy local foods like peaches and berries year round? Do you have an interest in food traditions and preservation and want to learn more? Are you interested in canning, but have a fear of not doing it safely? Whatever your motivation, DIG is offering this workshop on preserving local harvests in simple and delicious ways. The class will cover the basics of water bath canning which is suitable for preserving pickles, jams, salsa, tomato sauce and other acidified foods. Anna Cameron, a local jam making entrepreneur, will teach how to can up our spring and summer harvests. Anna, who forages wild and urban fruits to make low-sugar and honey jams and jellies under her Ladysmith label, will show you the step by step process, and you'll even get some tasty jam to take home.

**Sunday, August 1st, 2:00 PM, \$30**

**DIG Gardens, 420 Water Street, Santa Cruz, 466-3444 (www.diggardensnursery.com)**

## Yum



Fellow "tomato-head" Linda Levy of Bonny Doona alerted us to a wonderful book, Just dried tomatoes! by Karen Q. Fox.. Delightfully illustrated and handlettered, it is something you'll treasure, and, boy-oh-boy, are the recipes great! It seems, in my garden, that the tomatoes are *n...e...v...e...r* going to ripen, but I know they will, and when tomato glut hits, I'll be really happy I bought a dehydrator last year. Of course, there are many ways to dry tomatoes—in the sun, in the oven, etc. An unusual method is described in the book:

*"There is even car-dried. I met a woman from Marin County (where summers are hot)...who told me she dried her tomatoes by placing them in the back window of her car. She just drives around as usual and after a week or so her tomatoes are dried."*

You can get your own copy of Just dried tomatoes! at the Just Tomatoes, Etc. website ([www.justtomatoes.com](http://www.justtomatoes.com)). The site is full of other useful things, too, like teacher resources and children's activities. Oh, yes, and you can buy THEIR dried tomatoes in all forms.

Check out this web site for information about "commando canning" opportunities in the Bay Area.

**WWW.YESWECANFOOD.COM**



## New Volunteer Garden Project for Club: The Glenwood House

by Monica Pielage

For years members of The Gardeners' Club have been volunteering to improve the garden area at Cresthaven Nursing Home. We are now moving our volunteer efforts to a new garden at the Glenwood House - an assisted living home for young adults with traumatic brain injuries. It is located in a private home in Scotts Valley. There are four residents plus live-in caregivers residing there. The founders came together to establish Glenwood House as an independent living situation for their children and two others. These young people can now live in a supported yet family-like situation and avoid having to live in a nursing home.

Their large backyard is in full Scotts Valley sun. They have had some major hardscaping projects completed over the years with the help of various civic groups. There is a nice lawn and border circling the patio, a dry creek bed, as well as raised vegetable beds for the residents. They need help with sinking bricks and weed clean-up in their parking area. There is a long fence line that they would love to see covered in ornamental vines and edible plantings. Two large areas remain unplanted which will give us opportunities to be creative in the coming years in designing a drought tolerant or edible landscape to bring joy to the residents.

Consider joining us for our Fall Workday (date to be announced). It should be a fun and rewarding day for everyone who takes part. Anyone interested in looking them up can get more information at their website [assistedlivingproject.org](http://assistedlivingproject.org).



### August Board Meeting

All Club members are invited to the next Board meeting at the home of Suzanne Mercado, 1633 Quail Hollow Rd., Ben Lomond. The date is Monday, August 23rd; we'll meet at 6:00 p.m. to tour Suzanne's garden. If you need directions, call Suzanne at 609-6230.



### Planting the Thanksgiving Feast - Preparing the Fall Garden

**Saturday, August 28, 10 am - 1 pm**  
**Louise Cain Gatehouse, UCSC Farm**

Gardening instructor Trish Hildinger will teach you how to extend your gardening season and prepare your garden for fall and winter. Wear comfortable shoes and bring a snack.

\$15 for Friends' members; \$20 for non-members, payable at the workshop. No pre-registration necessary. Questions? Call 831.459-3240



# Slime Mold

Don't stop reading because of the unpleasant name of this organism!!

Article by Sirleen Ghileri

Have you ever noticed in your garden or during a walk in the woods a bright yellow blob-like thing up to several inches in diameter growing on a decaying log or wood chips or mulch? If so you've seen *Physarum polycephalum*, a slime mold. They're fascinating organisms that are not animals, although at one stage of their lives they can move, and not plants or fungi, either. They're myxomycetes of the kingdom Protocista, the least understood of the five kingdoms of life, the others being animals, plants, fungi and bacteria. The yellow blob is one huge single cell which contains millions of nuclei. During this stage they show a quality that could be called intelligence because if they're chopped up and put in a labyrinth they will put themselves back together and start to move, avoiding dead ends and heading unerringly for the prize – food. For an article with photos go to: <http://www.herbarium.usu.edu/fungi/funfacts/slimemold.htm>

They have an animal-like motile stage where they creep about at the very slow rate of about 1 inch a day by ameboid movement looking for food such as bacteria, yeasts and decaying vegetation. Then before entering their reproductive stage they move to a drier better-lit place where they transform into fruiting bodies which are topped by a spore-producing capsule. For photos of their beautiful fruiting bodies go to: <http://myamazingfact.blogspot.com/2009/09/stunning-slime-mold.html>

A myxo begins life as a microscopic spore. After it's shaken out of the fruiting body it germinates to produce a cell that joins another of its fellows to form a zygote. The zygote devours bacteria found in decaying wood and elsewhere, increases its size by nuclear division, then masses into the blob called a plasmodium. It grows until it runs out of food then moves off to a suitable location to sprout fruiting bodies and the process begins all over again.

Two identical species of slime molds have been found in Northern Germany and the Great Smoky Mountain National Park on the North Carolina-Tennessee border which leads scientists to believe that they are ancient organisms that may have lived on the super-continent Pangea, been carried apart by plate tectonics and dispersed by high-altitude winds.

I gathered up some slime mold recently that I've seen growing in an inhospitable place where the afternoon sun dries it out very quickly. I gathered it along with the wood chips it was growing on and put some on a tray outside in the shade and brought some into the house in a large glass fishbowl, but they didn't transplant well and dried out. I'm going to sprinkle them with water occasionally and leave them alone to see if they do anything.

If you're as fascinated by slime molds as I am look them up on the internet!! I'd love to find some other species. After the poison oak dies back in the woods I'll go looking.



Sirleen isn't the only one fascinated by slime molds. They have attracted attention from many different disciplines – brain science, evolutionary biology, software design, and urban studies, to name a few - because they display such an intriguing example of “bottom-up” organization, orderly cooperative patterns of activity without the direction of a leader. A good read about this is Emergence: The Connected Lives of Ants, Brains, Cities, and Software by Steven Johnson. A review said, “If this book could be said to have a main character, slime mold would be the leading contender” (Harvey Blume, The American Prospect, Nov. 19, 2001).

By the way, not to worry; slime mold doesn't damage your garden. Although beneficial to the soil, if you find it too icky, just rake it away.



"When the blackberries hang  
swollen in the woods, in the brambles  
nobody owns, I spend

all day among the high  
branches, reaching  
my ripped arms, thinking

of nothing, cramming  
the black honey of summer  
into my mouth; all day my body

accepts what it is. In the dark  
creeks that run by there is  
this thick paw of my life darting  
among

the black bells, the leaves; there is  
this happy tongue."



Detail from print by Anita Gwynn

Mary Oliver, *August*

## The Gardeners' Club

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It's easy-peasy to join our club. Dues are \$12 per calendar year. Make check to "The Gardeners' Club" and mail to 270 Hames Road, #50, Corralitos, CA 95076. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange Hall, 2555 Mar Vista Drive, Aptos. Printed on 100% recycled paper.

