



Into the Garden

The Gardeners' Club
Santa Cruz County,
California
March 2025
Writer/Editor: Lise Bixler
(lisebixler@sbcglobal.net)



Plant...Grow...Eat!

Are you a “foodie” gardener who wants to grow a garden to use for preparing a wide range of fresh and seasonal meals? Renee Shepherd will delight us at the next meeting with a talk covering how to plan, plant and enjoy a bountiful, colorful and delicious kitchen garden throughout the seasons featuring vegetables and herbs chosen for fabulous flavor, easy growing, productivity, and top nutrition. She will offer specific variety suggestions, information on how and where we find seeds of many cultures and countries along with lots of preparation and cooking ideas for using your harvests for satisfying everyday meals. Renee brings her expertise as a lifelong gardener,

garden writer, variety trials manager, cookbook author and years of consulting with seed producers all over the globe as she develops her seeds for Renee’s Garden. She is a pioneering innovator in introducing international specialty vegetables and herbs for home gardeners and gourmet restaurants. At Renee’s Garden, she offers her selected choices of seed varieties for exciting new and time-tested heirloom gourmet vegetables, culinary herbs and a wide range of fragrant and cutting flowers sourced from growers large and small around the world. Renee’s Garden seed packets are available directly from www.reneesgarden.com and are offered through independent garden centers in the US and Canada. Her website is also a portal to extensive gardening information, a blog, Instagram and assorted gardening resources such as tools and pest prevention aids.

A long-time garden to table advocate, she has written three kitchen garden cookbooks: [Recipes from a Kitchen Garden](#) and [More Recipes from a Kitchen Garden](#); her newest book, the [Renee’s Garden Cookbook](#), combines expert gardening advice with great recipes.

GIVEAWAY
GIVEAWAY
WIN SEEDS! WIN COOKBOOKS!

EVERYONE WHO ATTENDS THE MEETING WILL BE GIVEN DRAWING TICKETS, AND WE HAVE LOTS OF PRIZES TO SEND HOME. WE’LL HAVE GIVEAWAYS OF RENEE’S SEEDS, AND MULTIPLE COPIES OF HER COOKBOOKS. COME TO THE MEETING AND GO HOME A LUCKY WINNER!



See you there!
Next meeting Thursday
March 13
7:00 pm
Aptos Grange Hall
2555 Mar Vista Dr.

MORE FROM RENEE'S GARDEN

New Renee's Seed Introductions 2025

Can you believe that Renee's Garden has been gifting us for 27 years? After receiving her PhD from UC Santa Cruz and teaching there, Renee Shepherd established Renee's Garden in 1998 to do what she likes best – searching out the very best seeds from around the world, thoroughly testing them in the company's trial gardens. On her web site is a blog with great stories about what happens at the trials. Save room in your vegetable gardens for artichokes, potatoes and horseradish, which you can order online, too. This month we can still plant carrots, beets and many herbs. But look below at just some of the new seeds introduced this year. Container tomatoes, anybody?



Spring may be right around the corner, but we still have some chilly and wet days ahead of us. This soup is a hearty but not heavy dish, a delicious way to enjoy these nutritious greens with chunky potatoes and prosciutto. Add a hunk of crusty French bread and you have a complete meal in itself.

Chard and Potato Soup (Reneesgarden.com)

4 medium potatoes, peeled, sliced 1/4 inch thick ; 1 bunch chard, coarse stems removed, shredded in thin strips (about 6 cups); 2 ounces prosciutto, chopped; 6 cups chicken stock; 1 tablespoon white wine vinegar; freshly ground pepper to taste; 2 tbsp olive oil; 1 large clove garlic, minced; 1 medium onion, chopped; 2 stalks celery, chopped/

In a large saucepan, heat oil, add garlic and onion, and sauté until softened. Add celery, potatoes, chard, and prosciutto and toss with onion mixture. Add chicken stock and bring to a boil, then cover and reduce to simmer, cooking until potatoes are very tender, about 25 to 30 minutes.



Mash potatoes in pan with a potato masher until coarsely broken up. Add vinegar and cook soup uncovered for another ten minutes to concentrate flavors. Add salt and pepper to taste. Serve, garnishing each bowl with a sprinkle of chopped chives and a dollop of sour cream. Makes 9 cups.

Lots Happening at the Felton Library!

[Our Community Reads - From Manzanita to Milkweed: Plants to Support Monarchs and Other Pollinators.](#)

Saturday, March 8th 10:30-11:30 am *

Get to know the best native California flowering plants for your home garden. You'll learn how to source the plants and even propagate some of them from seed. Seeds will be shared, plus a list of additional resources. Register [here](#). UC Master

Gardener Janice Kuch has over 20 years of California native plant experience. She has worked on various local habitat restoration projects, including a current native plant garden project at San Juan Bautista State Historic Park.



BASIC COMPOSTING WORKSHOP

Saturday, March 15th - 10:30-12:30. Join us on the beautiful Felton Branch Library patio for a 2-hour workshop that covers general principles of composting and provides sufficient detail about backyard and worm composting to help someone get started. There is plenty of time for participants' questions to be answered by the presenters who are Master Composters. Registration is limited to 25 participants. Sign up [online](#) or call: 831-824-6484.

Presenter Jeffrey Smedberg was Recycling Coordinator for the County of Santa Cruz for 26 years. Marla King has managed the worm composting operation the Grey Bears for a decade. Richard Dye was a teacher and principal and has been teaching composting for a decade



[Common Birds of SLV & Why They're Fantastic.](#)

Saturday, March 22 10:30-11:30

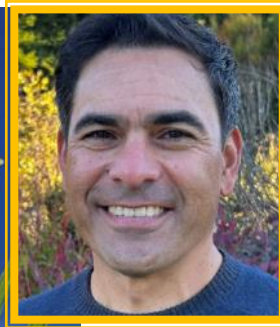
Learn about some of the common and unique bird species occurring in the San Lorenzo Valley. We'll learn a few fun facts about these birds and, furthermore, how to identify them. We'll conclude the event by learning about community science-based ways to get involved. Community-led Learning Instructor Bio: Dylan McManus is an avid birdwatcher with CA State Parks who enjoys spending long periods of time with individual bird species trying to identify why they're so darn cool.



Felton Library Displays the Artistry of our Very own Suzanne Caron!

The Felton Library features a rotating selection of local artists in their display case, and through March 31st they have chosen the Glass Garden created by our membership chair Suzanne Caron. An appreciation of the beauty and fluidity of glass has led her to experiment with many art forms in that medium. In her densely planted Ben Lomond garden, many flowers and art pieces made of glass, metal and other materials thrive. See more of her work at [SuzannesGlassGarden.Etsy.com](#).





Rick Flores Named Executive Director of Arboretum & Botanic Garden

Rick Flores has been appointed as the new Executive Director of the Arboretum & Botanic Garden at the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Flores, a long-time staff member with over 27 years of experience at the Arboretum, steps into this leadership role at a pivotal time for the organization, which recently became part of the Division of Finance, Operations & Administration (FOA).

Flores brings a wealth of experience and a deep connection to the Arboretum. An alumnus, Flores earned his degree in Environmental Studies in 1997. His journey with the Arboretum began during his senior year as a student worker, and over the years, he has held various positions, including Curator of the California Native Plant Collection, Director of Horticulture, and Associate Director.

In 2014, Flores returned to the Environmental Studies Department to pursue a master's degree, focusing on the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band's efforts to revitalize cultural knowledge related to ecosystem stewardship and California native plants. As the Steward of the Amah Mutsun Relearning Program, which he has led since its inception in 2009, Flores has worked closely with the tribe to assist their relearning efforts related to the uses, cultivation, and stewardship of California native plants and ecosystems.

Artwork by UCSC Student Rina Taylor

It's that time of year again, when migrating Allen's Hummingbirds arrive to compete for space with the Arboretum's resident Anna's. The result is an unusually high level of activity, all during an exceptionally beautiful time in the gardens.

Come see these tiny aerial acrobats in action. Be sure to check [our website](#) often for a full list of activities. We will have tours, lectures, workshops, and special merchandise and plants for sale at Norrie's all month long.

3/8/25: Meet with Kevin Lohman in the garden: *tips & tricks for photographing birds (informal)*

3/15/25: Early Bird Members Hours: members-only early access to the gardens (self-guided exploration)

3/16/25: Lecture: *Encouraging Conservation Through Wildlife Photography* with Kevin Lohman

3/30/25: Lecture: *Jewels in the garden: a Darwinian natural history of hummingbirds* with Bruce Lyon

Want hummingbird gardening tips? Go to <https://arboretum.ucsc.edu/eventscalendar/events/recurring-events/hummingbird-month/hummingbird-garden-tips.pdf>

Assess Your Garden's Winter Health

Before spring officially arrives, take a moment to assess the health of your garden. Look for signs of plant survival, check on your soil's moisture, and clear out any debris or dead plants. This initial cleanup is crucial for avoiding diseases and pests. Consider cutting back some natives now so they have a fresh start for spring.

Planning & Preparing Your Vegetable Garden - DEMO

March 22, 2025 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Pinto Lake County Park

757 Green Valley Rd

Watsonville, CA 95076

Contact: Trink Praxel, trinkpraxel@gmail.com

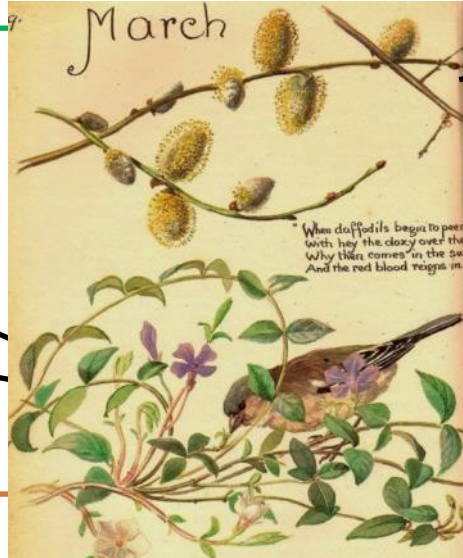
Sponsor: UC Master Gardeners of Monterey & Santa Cruz

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/planning-and-preparing-your-vegetable-garden-part-2-in-person>

Plant sweetpeas directly in your garden, in a 2" deep furrow lightly covered by an inch of soil. You may choose to nick your sweet pea seeds before planting. Nicking the seed with a nail clipper breaks the outer coat of the seed so it can absorb water immediately. By doing this a larger

Plant fruit trees and berries.

Prepare beds for perennial vegetables.



Planning Your Spring Planting

Consider which plants thrived last year, what new additions you might want to introduce, and how you can rotate crops to maximize soil health. Be kind to yourself as you research which strategies and varieties you want to plant!

Divide Perennials & Cut Back

Ornamental Grasses & Herbs: If last year's blooms of day lilies were sparse then it's time to divide. **Dig each clump until the rootball comes up in tact, irrigate gently with water, and cut divisions so that there are some leaves and plenty of roots.** Replant immediately. Ornamental grasses such as Deer Grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens* – a California native) as well as woody herbs can start to look untidy this month. They will benefit from a trimming back of the old growth down to the new.

Starting Seeds Indoors:

Get a head start on the growing season by starting seeds indoors. This allows you to control the environment more effectively and ensures stronger plants that are more likely to survive when transplanted outdoors. This method allows you to plant whatever varieties you want! However, if you are not big on starting your own seedling but are anxious to get started, visit local nurseries to see what is in stock.

Workshop: Tomato Masters. Love Apple Farms, Cynthia Sandberg. March 30, 2025 (Sunday)

10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

\$69 <https://www.growbetterveggies.com/class-tomato-ma.html>



Growing Citrus, March 13

5:30 PM - 7:00 PM ONLINE

Now is a great time to plant a citrus tree! Contact Trink Praxel, trinkpraxel@gmail.com, 831-345-1440, Master Gardeners. <https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/growing-citrus>



15
MAR

Non-Toxic Gopher Control

Center for Agroecology
Saturday, March 15, 2025;
10:00am -
12pm at the
Hay Barn



Gophers! Every backyard gardener's nemesis. Join vertebrate pest control expert Thomas

Whittman for this informative class on effective gopher control methods that are safe for humans and the environment.

Gophers and other vertebrate pests take a huge toll in agriculture as well as your own backyard; as much as 10 to 50% of crops can be lost to animal pests. Thomas Whittman has been working on this issue for over 35 years and has come up with innovative methods and tools to reduce crop damage by managing pest populations in several ways. with innovative methods and tools to reduce crop damage by managing pest populations in several ways. The most effective lethal traps and techniques will be presented along with exclusion barriers, integrating pest predators, and crop rotation.

If there's time, Thomas will answer questions about rats, deer, and squirrels. Towards the end of the class he will do a hands-on demonstration to identify gopher

activity, find the run, and set a few traps (weather permitting).

Bring gardening gloves, layered clothing, sturdy shoes, and rain gear depending on the weather. This event takes place rain or shine. We will be walking up to the farm's greenhouse after a presentation in the Hay Barn, which features a small incline/slope.

Pre-registration is required for this workshop. Email accommodation requests to agroecology.ucsc.edu. Price is based on ability to pay. <https://center-for-agroecology.company.site/products/Non-Toxic-Gopher-Control-p723319785>


Presented by the Friends of the UCSC Farm



29
MAR

Good Weeds, Bad Weeds

By **Center for Agroecology**

 **Saturday, March 29, 2025 10am to 12pm**

& Garden.

Hay Barn, UCSC 1008 Ranch View Road, Santa Cruz

This workshop offers a balanced perspective on weeds, exploring their ecological benefits alongside the challenges they pose in gardens. Learn how some weeds support beneficial insects while also understanding their competitive impact on desired plants.

Led by emeritus farm advisor Richard Smith, the session will focus on practical weed identification techniques, both by type and by season. Participants will also learn how to independently research and identify weeds, a valuable skill for ongoing garden management. A key component of the workshop will be exploring effective

organic management strategies, emphasizing environmentally friendly approaches like hand-pulling, mulching, and other sustainable methods.

Price is sliding scale. Registration is required. <https://center-for-agroecology.company.site/products/Backyard-Series-Good-Weeds-Bad-Weeds-p719943792>

Attendees are encouraged to bring their own weeds for expert identification and will also participate in a guided "weed walk" for hands-on learning in a real-world setting.

Planning & Preparing Your Vegetable Garden - ONLINE

: **UC Master Gardeners of Monterey & Santa Cruz**

March 20, 2025 5:30 PM - 6:30 PM

Ready to start your FIRST vegetable garden? Or IMPROVE upon your previous efforts? Join us for our NEW Vegetable Gardening Class Series giving less experienced vegetable growers the information they need to succeed.

Class 1: Planning & Preparing Your Vegetable Garden. This first class in the series will discuss planning and preparing your vegetable garden, everything to think about BEFORE you plant. This includes the best location, various bed structures, the all important soil and what to plant when.

Each class in this series will have two parts - first, an ONLINE presentation, then an IN-PERSON DEMO in the MG Watsonville Demo Garden. The Demo will build on the information provided in the Online class. You must register for each class segment separately. But please plan to attend both to maximize your learning!

For the ONLINE SECTION of this Class

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/planning-and-preparing-your-vegetable-garden>



The time has come for membership renewal. Annual membership dues, which include all benefits, are only \$20.00. Dues entitle members to all club educational programs, our special events, plant trades and our awesome monthly newsletter. The “green” option is to receive an electronic PDF FULL-COLOR version of the newsletter by checking the newsletter e-mail option below. Consider sharing your passion for gardening, and supporting our club, by giving your favorite gardening enthusiast an opportunity to connect, share and learn with us. A gift membership is a gift nobody will want to return!



Ours is a club celebrating the joys of gardening, friendship, community, learning, nature and growth. We have a history of giving to the community, and have focused this giving in the last few years on scholarships for Cabrillo College students who are working towards careers in horticulture. Because our dues are so low and we’d like to be able to continue to give scholarships as needed, we are giving you the option of making an additional gift with your membership. Thank you! Renew now so you don’t miss anything—you’ll be glad you

Your Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

How would you like your newsletter? E-mail (FULL COLOR!!!)



Paper (Black & white; postal service)

Gift Membership

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address _____ Email: _____

Gift Membership Newsletter —Check ONE:

E-mail (FULL COLOR!!!) (the green option...save trees)

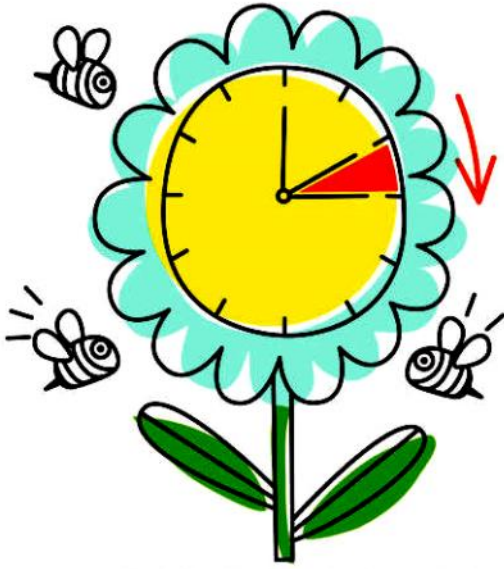
Paper (Black & white; via Snail Mail)



Enclose check for \$20 per member, plus any additional contribution to our scholarship fund, made out to *The Gardeners’ Club*.

Mail to The Gardeners’ Club
c/o Suzanne Caron, P.O. Box 3025,
Ben Lomond CA 95005

Membership amount	\$ _____
I would like to make an additional gift	\$ _____
Total	\$ _____



SPRING FORWARD
Change Your Clocks

**DAYLIGHT SAVINGS TIME BEGINS
SUNDAY MARCH 9, 2025**



“
The beautiful spring came,
and when nature resumes
her loveliness, the human
soul is apt to revive also.

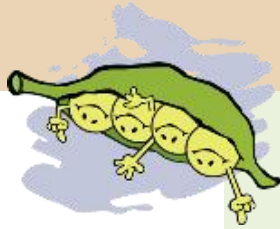
~ Harriet Ann Jacobs



**First Day of Spring—
March 20**

Our front page logo is graciously shared with us by artist Lisa Zador. Order a print or see more of her work at her Etsy shop www.etsy.com/shop/curiousprintpattern.

It's easy-peasy to join our club!
Dues are \$20 per calendar year. Make check to "The Gardeners' Club" and mail to P.O. Box 3025, Ben Lomond, CA 95005. Meetings are held at 7:00 p.m. on the 2nd Thursday of each month at the Aptos Grange, 2555 Mar Vista Dr., Aptos



The Gardeners' Club
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