

Cloverdale Comments

By Carol Russell

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With special thanks to Melanie Bagby, Cloverdale Planning Commissioner, avid gardener, healthful eating advocate, and darned good cook, for her research and contributions to this column.

Ideal climate. Abundant flower and produce gardens. Lush fruit trees. Quality nurseries and expert landscapers. Successful, welcoming garden clubs. Volunteers who donate, glean and distribute excess produce. All nurtured by agricultural roots that run as deep as our tradition of home-grown flowers, plants and food harvests shared with family, friends and neighbors.

No wonder that this spring, as in the 150 or so past, Cloverdadians of all ages and skill levels will get growing once again!

We are especially delighted this year to have easy access to a fabulous new place to network and share food gardening information and resources. Called "iGROW" it is the latest initiative of Health Action, a county-wide collaborative, on which I serve, established in 2007 by the Board of Supervisors and supported by the Sonoma County Health Services. iGROW's goals include promoting healthy and active lifestyles by supporting the efforts of all of us who want to grow, access, share, prepare and eat healthy food.

A one-stop website, www.iGROWsonoma.org, is a clearing house for all kinds of information of interest and use to beginners and pros alike. You'll find workshops, classes and advice on everything from how to get started to how to cook what you grow plus garden maps, lists of clubs and events, water saving tips, ideas on creating "edible landscaping" and a whole lot more.

But this idea of growing healthy, affordable food isn't just for adults. Kids love seeing something they helped plant and tend start to grow and ripen. Even finicky eaters will love to help harvest, cook and actually eat what they grow. There's something about saying "my" fruits and vegetables that greatly increases their kid appeal.

You don't need a garden, much money or even time to give kids, or yourself, a joyous experience. A tomato plant on the balcony or a pot of basil on your window sill are inexpensive enough to buy at your local nursery and need little work or room; yet they yield rewards in good eating along with the many benefits derived from nature's beauty and the personal satisfaction of cultivating it.

Better yet, join a community garden. We have three in Cloverdale and we want more.

Come to think of it, we enjoy a number of free or low cost gardening organizations, activities and resources such as:

- The "Green Thumb Garden Club" welcomes new members, including novice gardeners, on the fourth Wednesday of each month at 1 p.m. They help with community service projects and often have expert guest speakers. Membership is \$15/year. (Call Debbie, 894-7419.)

- Our community gardens at Cloverdale High School, the Senior Center, and the King/Jones Garden all have waiting lists so volunteers are always welcome to help identify, donate and create new ones. (Call Maggie at the Senior Center, 894-4826.)

- "Harvesting Cloverdale's Generosity" started in 2009. Thanks to volunteers as varied as grandmothers and 4-H Club kids as well as the many generous produce donors from around our city, 1 1/2 tons--yes, 3,425 pounds!--of delicious, vitamin-packed fruits and vegetables that might otherwise have gone to waste were gleaned last harvest season for distribution to our Food Pantry and residents in need. Founders, Joan and Lavonne, would love to have more gleaners and produce donors. (Call Joan at 894-0971 or Lavonne at 894-7540.)

- The Alexander Valley Regional Medical Center offers information on how to incorporate gardening and fresh produce as part of a healthy, active lifestyle. (Sign up for their newsletter at www.avrm.org)

So, thanks to all this help, encouragement and inspiration Cloverdale is both ready and set. *Now--let's get growing!*

What's Up in Windsor?

By Debora Fudge

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It's SPRING...Garden Edition!

Community Gardens

We are really excited in Windsor to have two new community gardens. Our original garden, started years ago, was located in Keiser Park. It was an active garden for years. Unfortunately, the area became shaded with our gorgeous oaks, and the garden was abandoned.

In 2009, a team of residents came to the town and suggested a demonstration garden. With help from Town staff, the small lawn between two Town Hall buildings was removed, and a very nice, raised bed garden installed. There are about 10 plots and all are full, growing anything now from winter veggies to some beautiful flowers. Staff can look out their windows and watch the plants grow!

With all the momentum for gardening growing (so to speak!), a Windsor Garden Club was formed by Thomas Eddy, a local resident who also happens to be a professional garden designer. Thomas first contacted me a few years ago when he was concerned about the health of street trees in his neighborhood, and he hasn't stopped his community involvement since. The Windsor Garden Club is a 501(c)3 organization and member of the California Garden Clubs, Inc. The goal of the Windsor Garden Club is to educate the community on horticultural topics, to stimulate interest in the beautification of the Town of Windsor, to engage in charitable activities, and to make contributions to other charitable organizations that promote knowledge and appreciation of horticulture, gardening and conservation. They just recently held classes on how to prune roses. I should have attended, but my Mom comes up from Santa Cruz each year to prune my roses! In fact, she is outside right now pruning as I write this. The Club also has great meetings complete with some outstanding bakery goods made by members, and they raffle off some really cool prizes donated by local nurseries.

The Windsor Garden Club has been instrumental in getting our brand new, larger community garden up and running. The garden is located on Town property just outside Town Hall, adjacent to Windsor Road just north of the Town Green. The Town Council supported the new gardening effort by donating \$15,000 toward its start up, which included fencing the area, and providing water. The Windsor Garden Club is happy to announce that they are now accepting rental agreements for garden plots! The new garden is scheduled to open in early March. We encourage anyone interested in the Community Garden to visit their website: www.telcs.com/wgc or phone 838-5947. Some of the food grown will be donated to the Windsor Service Alliance, Windsor's local food bank.

New Water Efficient Landscape Ordinance

Windsor also just enacted some turf guidelines in town, as part of our water conservation efforts. Turf shall not be planted in the following conditions: Front yard landscape of single family residential subdivisions of 5 or more lots, where backyard landscape is not developer installed. Our new ordinance applies to new construction and also landscape rehabilitations. We require a water budget analysis to effectively limit turf installation, weather or sensor-based controllers, rain shut off devices, and overhead irrigation must be set back 24 inches from hardscapes to limit runoff and water waste. We're proud to be leading the way countywide to preserve our precious water resources, and we continue to look for creative ways to work with Windsor residents to provide the water they need, without wasting any water. Community and individual gardens are a great use of water, and we highly encourage them!

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