

Resources

U P D A T E

Local Agriculture is on the Rise!

by Diana Ruiz

Free “Riverside Grown” Guide

Are you interested in purchasing locally grown foods, but are having a hard time finding them? Download or pick up a copy of Riverside’s first **Fresh and Local** Guide and find a map (pages 18-19) to locate farm stands, farmers’ markets, CSAs, community gardens, restaurants, and stores. The first part of the Guide explains the six ways to buy local, with addresses and contact information. The second half provides healthy living, gardening, and farming educational resources. Find out about sustainable agriculture, the new volunteer organization Gleaners for Good (see page 4), find food donations sites, and much, much more.



Searching for a local fresh food connection?

Pick up a copy of the **Fresh and Local Guide!**

Or find it online at 

<https://www.rcrcd.com/uploads/FreshandLocalGuide2017.pdf>

Learn about the advantages of buying local foods for good health, to strengthen our economy, and to protect the environment at <http://www.rcrcd.org/uploads/FreshandLocalGuide2017.pdf>. If you would like multiple copies of **Fresh and Local** to distribute, please contact Erin Snyder at snyder@rcrcd.org or (951) 683-7691, ext. 207.

Urban Ag Funding

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) is one of 42 conservation districts in 25 states that was awarded funding to help expand the local food system. The funds provide for development of the first **Fresh and Local** Guide; for farmer education about conservation practices that conserve water and soil; for irrigation management assistance to growers, and more.

Many thanks to the National Association of Conservation Districts, with support from USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service for selecting RCRCD as one of two in California to receive the \$50,000 Urban Agriculture Conservation Grant, which is helping to build capacity with the Riverside Food Systems Alliance, Riverside Garden Council, and partnering organizations.

GrowRIVERSIDE

by Joyce Jong, Riverside's Agriculture Business Development Coordinator

Local Farmland

Rich with a citriculture heritage, the City of Riverside is home to over 4,600 acres of preserved agricultural land in the Arlington Heights Neighborhood, an area commonly referred to as the "Greenbelt". Consistent with the rural character of the area, most of the properties within the Greenbelt consist of five to ten-acre parcels, each with a single-family residence. Today, an estimated one-third of the properties in the Greenbelt contain the remnants of the commercial citrus industry, and an estimated 900 acres of the Greenbelt sits vacant awaiting agricultural opportunities.

Training the Next Generation of Farmers

In the past three years, the community supported GrowRIVERSIDE initiative has explored ways to return agricultural vibrancy to the Greenbelt to support an emerging local food movement. Several climate-appropriate, non-citrus crops have been considered, including avocados, pomegranates, mushrooms, vegetables, among others. However, transition and adoption of these crops requires training and resources. As such, a collaborative group of stakeholders including farmers, the Riverside Food Systems Alliance, the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, school districts, UC Riverside, and the City are working to establish a regional beginning farmer training program that will offer internships, short courses, beginning farming certificates, apprenticeships, and incubator farms for emerging farmers. The program is expected to be launched in the spring of 2018.

Information about the GrowRIVERSIDE initiative can be found at www.growriv.com. If you are looking to lease fallow farmlands, contact Joyce Jong at (951) 826-5265 or JJong@riversideca.gov.



PHOTO BY THE CITY OF RIVERSIDE



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Will Allen, a leading urban farmer, spoke at the fourth annual GrowRIVERSIDE conference that was held at LaSierra University in March.

CalFresh Market Match

by Seth Wilson, Executive Director, Riverside Food Systems Alliance

Three farmers markets have been selected to participate in Market Match: CalFresh participants can receive up to \$10 in Market Match funds for \$10 in purchases at farmers markets. The markets include:

- Riverside, open Friday, 8 a.m. - noon, 5261 Arlington Ave., Riverside (Sears parking lot)
- Galleria at Tyler, open Sunday, 8:30 a.m. - 1 p.m., 3485 Tyler Ave., Riverside
- San Jacinto Valley, open Thursday, 8 a.m. - 1 p.m., 2575 S. San Jacinto Ave., San Jacinto.

Market Match helps increase the amount of fresh and local fruits and vegetables that are eaten, and area farmers benefit by selling more produce. Expect to see more markets offering Market Match next year. The Riverside Food System Alliance received a grant on behalf of the market operators and will assist in the marketing of the program.

Riverside Food Co-op

by Scott Berndt, Urban Farmer

The Riverside Food Co-op is a California cooperative owned by its members, consumers who are interested in buying locally grown produce, products, and cottage foods. The Co-op sells an optional monthly crop box for \$27 that is filled with locally sourced fruits and vegetables. The income from the crop box is used to fund the operating expenses of the Co-op. Our goal is to open a local cooperative grocery store once membership is large enough.

The Co-op received a grant from Kaiser Permanente to assist with the Eastside Heal Zone to increase the consumption of healthy, locally grown fruits and vegetables. The Co-op sets up its produce stand on Wednesday from 3:30 – 6:30 PM at Bobby Bonds Park on 2060 University Ave, Riverside, CA. As a result, the Co-op has been purchasing from farms within 50 miles of downtown Riverside and has created seven jobs.

The Co-op was started in January, 2012 at a meeting in the basement of Back to the Grind, a downtown coffee shop. It's owned by its members and run by a board of directors. An annual meeting is held to report results and to vote on relevant items. The current membership is around 130, with a goal of reaching 200 members by January, 2018. For more information or to join us, please visit our website at riversidefoodcoop.com.



PHOTO BY RIVERSIDE FOOD COOP INC.



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Staff from Inland Empire Health Care (IEHP) volunteered on May 20 to help spruce up five Riverside Community Gardens. The group that helped at RCRCD installed sustainable practices in the Ag Area of the LandUse Learning Center. Volunteers spread compost around fruit trees, weeded tree rows, and spread a heavy layer of wood chip mulch to help build soil health and prevent weeds. Thank you, IEHP and instructor Scott Berndt, urban farmer (center back row, right hand photo).

Why RFSA?

by Gurumantra Khalsa, RFSA Advisory Board Chair

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) is a collaborative of community stakeholders committed to leveraging the benefits available from a vibrant, local food system. Members include representatives from agricultural, health, environmental, and educational organizations.

Over a nine month process, a stakeholder group came together to discuss and distinguish several focus areas where food is the central organizing principle. The areas include growing, processing, distribution, marketing, education, land use, economic development, job training, and food access. What started out as an inquiry into revitalizing Riverside's rich agricultural heritage has become a regional conversation that includes other cities as well as county wide community health initiatives.

The Inland Empire has vast swaths of food deserts, resulting in a growing population without access to fresh, healthy and affordable food. This is an unsustainable and untenable situation, given Riverside's abundant local resources, including ample local water, land (approximately 4700 acres still zoned for agriculture), and the social capital available to produce and consume locally produced food.

With an embarrassment of both riches and poverty, RFSA has embarked on three foundational projects to establish and ensure long term food access and success.

- **FARMERS:** We have lots of land but few farmers. The average farmer in the US is 59 years old. We could soon be going hungry or paying much more for our food. That's why our first goal is to establish a farmer training and incubator program. We have to grow farmers before we can grow lots of food.
- **FOOD HUBS:** Local food hubs are needed for the aggregation and distribution of our locally produced food and food products. This will make local food easy to find as it helps eliminate food waste at all levels of the food system.
- **AGRIHOODS:** These are neighborhoods, developments or buildings with a local food or agriculture feature. Instead of living around a golf course or a vacant lot, imagine living around a highly productive and non-polluting farming operation.

UC Riverside and the Riverside Unified School District are our largest local buyers of produce. Both have committed to buy all the locally grown and produced food we can provide. That's an enormous show of support and of market demand. It's also another way of saying that if you've ever considered working in farming or a food related business, your community will not let you fail.

Join us today. Our monthly advisory committee meeting is held the first Thursday of each month at 3 p.m., usually at City Hall. Contact us at RFSAinfo@gmail.com or (951) 640-3868. To follow our activities, join our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance/>

Financial support for RFSA is tax deductible. However, your perspective and your passion for local food are priceless. For more information, see our **Fresh and Local** Guide (membership information: page 34) at <http://www.rcrcd.com/uploads/FreshandLocalGuide2017.pdf> or donate at <https://donatenow.networkforgood.org/communitypartners/?designation=Riverside%20Food%20>



Dig Riverside

by Nick Melquiades

Whether you want to get closer to nature, grow food, meet your neighbors, beautify your neighborhood, or any of the many reasons to participate in or start a community garden, the Riverside Garden Council (RGC) wants to help. Since 2010, RGC has gathered gardeners and enthusiasts together for mutual support, advice, and to brainstorm new ways to spread the benefits of community gardening. Early this year, with help from the Wood Streets Green Team, RGC took the next practical step of registering as a nonprofit public benefit corporation.

“Everyone loves community gardens,” says RGC’s new chair Nick Melquiades. “But what happens on the ground, literally--planning, starting, maintaining a garden--can get challenging fast.” Nick believes that nonprofit status opens the organization to resources that wouldn’t be available to a more informal body, including expanded volunteer networks, grants, and tax-deductible donations of money, goods, and services.

Follow our mission to strengthen Riverside communities by building a garden network for living healthy, active lives growing fresh food. Contact the Riverside Garden Council and join our activities. *Dig Riverside*. As we look ahead to long summer days, remember at the end of the day, gardening is about deep roots. To quote author Anne Raver, “Gardens, scholars say, are the first sign of commitment to a community. When people plant corn they are saying: ‘Let’s stay here.’ And by their connection to the land, they are connected to one another.”

Join us at our monthly meeting: every third Monday of the month, 6:30 PM at Riverside Community College Alumni House, 3564 Ramona Dr., Riverside.

Contact us at riversidegardencouncil@gmail.com. To learn about upcoming events, like our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RiversideCommunityGardens>



Riverside Food System Alliance volunteers hosted the only local food booth at Pub and Grub, a fundraising event to benefit those who are homeless. From left: Nick Melquiades, Gurumantra Khalsa, Joyce Jong, Diana Ruiz. Local farmer Joyce Jong donated eggs for the RFSA dish: *Eggcellent Eggs*



Watch the excellent webinar *Improving Soil Health on Urban Farms* by visiting the National Technology Support Centers online at: <http://www.conservationwebinarsnet/webinars/improving-soil-health-on-urban-farms>, brought to you by the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

Ag in Action

by Diana Ruiz

Altman Plants, Inc. is a 400-acre wholesale nursery outside of Riverside, CA that supplies retail plant nurseries with container plants, many of which are drought tolerant. Altman stepped up its water conservation game when the company installed a tail-water recovery system that reuses irrigation runoff to water the nursery's plants. The system includes lined ditches, filtration, and lined reservoirs for onsite water storage. Different components of the system were funded through grants from partners including Western Municipal and Metropolitan Water Districts and the US Department of Agriculture. Our local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service developed a conservation plan and designed components of the tail water return system. USDA's EQIP cost sharing program is now funding the use of soil moisture sensors in the potted plants.



The wetland removes nutrients and silt from the water that will be reused for irrigation. The wetland also provides habitat for wildlife.

As a result, Altman Plants reuses about 360 acre-feet of water per year, which is equal to more than 117 million gallons in annual potable water savings. Altman's is one of Western Municipal Water District's larger customers, so creative water efficiency projects such as the tail water recover system are a better alternative and less expensive than funding a new source of water. "Our current water reuse system, takes a unique approach to water management and is being used as part of a national study to create best management practices for growers." said Jim Hessler, Altman Plants' director of west coast operations.

Help for Farmers

For applications and conservation planning for the *Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP)*, contact Bob Hewitt, District Conservationist at (951) 654-7139. The local USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) office provides farmers with free onsite technical assistance to help conserve natural resources, such as for erosion control, irrigation, and other conservation practices.

For free irrigation system evaluations to help save water and money, contact Jose Iniguez, irrigation auditor for the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District at iniguez@rcrcd.org or (952) 683-7691, Ext. 208.

Also visit RCRCD's LandUse Learning Center to learn about sustainable agriculture, native habitats, and urban areas. Pick up plant lists for climate appropriate crops. Open: Monday-Thursday 8 AM - 4 PM, and some weekends. 4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside, CA 92501, www.rcrcd.org, (951) 683-7691.

Many more resources for farmers can be found in the **Fresh and Local** Guide (see cover page).

Farm Hedgerows

by Diana Ruiz

A hedgerow is a farm practice used in sustainable agriculture to increase beneficial insect activity, help control erosion and weeds, and foster biodiversity. Basically a variety of native plants are grown at the edge of a farm field including species that are known to be attractive to beneficial insects and that provide flowers and cover over the course of a year. Hedgerows may include trees, shrubs, perennial grasses, forbs, rushes, and sedges.

Come see our hedgerow adjacent to the Ag Area at the LandUse Learning Center. Some species of local plants that are appropriate for hedgerows in our area are listed below. For more information, see *Establishing Hedgerows on Farms in California* at <http://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8390.pdf>

Hedgerow Plants	Bloom Period	Form
<i>Achillea millefolium</i>	spring-summer	perennial
<i>Arctostaphylos pungens</i>	winter	shrub
<i>Asclepias fascicularis</i>	late spring-summer	perennial
<i>Ceanothus tomentosus</i>	late winter	shrub
<i>Corethrogyne filaginifolia</i>	summer-fall	perennial
<i>Encelia farinosa</i>	spring	shrub
<i>Epilobium canum</i>	fall	perennial
<i>Eriogonum fasciculatum</i> ssp. <i>polifolium</i>	late spring-summer	shrub
<i>Grenedia camporum</i>	late spring	perennial
<i>Lotus scoparius</i> var. <i>brevialatus</i>	late winter, spring	shrub
<i>Mimulus aurantiacus</i> var. <i>puniceus</i>	late winter-spring	shrub
<i>Muhlenbergia rigens</i>	summer -fall	perennial
<i>Nassella pulchra</i>	spring	grass
<i>Penstemon spectabilis</i>	spring	perennial
<i>Penstemon centranthifolius</i>	spring	perennial
<i>Phacelia distans</i>	early spring	annual
<i>Phacelia ramosissima</i>	late spring	perennial
<i>Prunus illicifolia</i> ssp. <i>illicifolia</i>	spring	tall shrub
<i>Rhamnus crocea</i>	late winter	shrub
<i>Salvia apiana</i>	late spring	shrub
<i>Salvia mellifera</i>	spring	shrub



A hedgerow adjacent to the sustainable ag area in the LandUse Learning Center helps provide habitat for pollinators and beneficial insects that control pests.

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Pilot Food Hub

by Diana Ruiz

The Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) is looking to work with local farmers to develop a food hub and to purchase agricultural products. The pilot food hub will be the first of its kind operated by a school district in California. The RUSD Food Hub will expand markets for local and regional growers by aggregating, storing, and distributing fresh produce, meat, eggs, dairy, and other agricultural products. The food hub will service corner stores; the Women, Infants, and Children Supplemental Nutrition Program (WIC) stores; childcare centers; and smaller school districts. The food hub will also serve as a “one-stop-shop” for area restaurants and other institutional buyers looking to procure local and regionally grown produce. For information, please contact RUSD Food Hub Coordinator Scott Berndt, at (951) 452-6840 or sberndt@rusd.k12.ca.us.



Kirsten Roloson and Scott Berndt of RUSD provided information about becoming a food hub vendor on June 12, 2017.

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**Riverside-Corona
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- Carl Pongs Director
- John Gless, Jr. Director

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- Kerwin Russell Ext. 203
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- Arlee Montalvo Ext. 218
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- Erin Snyder Ext. 207
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Biological Resources Specialist
- Jose Iniguez Ext. 208
Resource Conservationist
- Erika Presley Ext. 223
Resource Conservationist
- John Dvorak Ext. 217
Plant Materials Assistant
- Tawny Hoemke Ext. 215
Resource Assistant
- Rari Marks Ext. 214
Resource Conservationist

**Natural Resources
Conservation Service Staff**

- Bob Hewitt (951) 654-7933
District Conservationist

All RCRCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, national origin, religion, age, gender, or orientation.



Are you concerned about local air pollution? If so, you may wish to join **Operation Healthy Air** this summer, a research project to study the air quality of the inland region. This community based science project is seeking residents to collect data that will determine how differences in home environments, such as the number of trees or extent of pavement, affect temperature and air quality. As a community science volunteer (citizen scientist), you would host an air sensor at your home, school, or community garden to monitor indoor and outdoor temperature and humidity.

For more information, please contact Erika Presley at presley@rcrcd.org or (951) 683-7691, ext. 223.

The new book **SoCal Yard Transformation: A Step-by-Step Guide to Get the Yard You Want** is now available from Western Municipal Water District. If you've been wanting to save water in your landscape, this free resource will guide you. The soft-bound book has beautiful full color illustrations and photos and is easy to understand. The chapters cover water, planning, soil, planting, using native plants, irrigation and sustainability. Pick up your free copy at WMWD, 14205 Meridian Parkway, Riverside, CA 92518.



Visit the LandUse Learning Center to see four styles of waterwise yards and an arbor trail about trees and urban forestry. The plants are labelled, so pick up a plant list and mark the one's you might like to grow in your yard.



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Buzz About Bees

Thanks to biologist Karen Riesz and her husband Dave, we now have a leaf-cutter bee nest at the LandUse Learning Center. Learn about leaf-cutter bees and their houses from the Xerces Society: <http://www.xerces.org/wp-content/uploads/2009/11/tunnel-nest-management-xerces-society.pdf>

Research has shown that 150 of these bees working in greenhouses can provide the pollination of 3,000 honeybees: <http://www.buzzaboutbees.net/leafcutter-bee.html>

Karen Riesz, Monitoring Program Administrator for the Western Riverside County Multi Species Habitat Conservation Plan