

## Celebrating 60 Years of Service

by Jennifer Iyer

Much has changed since Alfred B. “Bud” Bonnett, Jr. joined RCRC’s board 60 years ago, and some things haven’t. When the agricultural engineer was first appointed to the board on Dec. 2, 1962, citrus groves still flourished in the area.

“One picture,” he mused of Riverside at that time, “of the Arlington heights area from the head of Victoria Avenue out to about Monroe Street, (showed) 100 percent orange trees.”

The District was originally formed in the 1950s to help local farms, but as agriculture was replaced in the area with urban development Bonnett said he was happy to help the district’s priorities shift.

Bonnett said he is particularly proud of RCRC’s current habitat restoration projects such as work to clean up the Santa Ana River, removal of nonnative bamboo-like *Arundo donax*, and planting native plants. He called this work “one of the biggest helps that we can do” for the community these days.

Bud is a community leader and role model of volunteerism. He was a pioneer in the use of drip irrigation in southern California. After studying citrus production at Cal Poly (then at San Dimas, later the campus moved to Pomona) he became a grower, an agricultural engineer, and owner of Bonnett Pipe and Supply.

As a local grower, Bud set the example with efficient irrigation systems on his own property and also installed erosion control practices, such as check dams. As an agricultural engineer, Bud was on the cutting edge of water-use efficiency. He developed a computer program that designed irrigation systems so they would be more uniform to conserve water. He was an early-adopter in the use of automatic clocks (timers), sensors, and plastic pipe. He designed systems that used some of the first micro-sprinklers during 1965-67. His designs were used in many of our large blocks of citrus that were planted from the 1960s through 1970s for major growers of the area. He also worked to bring Agricultural Conservation Program funding to the area and helped local growers apply for funding to convert to low water-use systems.

As a District Director, a volunteer position, Bud has overseen innovative Resource Conservation District programs, including our native fish and amphibian research and rescue efforts, habitat restoration programs, conservation easements, acceptance of donated habitat lands, and more.

Bonnett listed the names of board members, farmers, contractors, engineers, employees and others he worked with over the decades. “I don’t know of anybody else that’s worked that long,” Bonnett said of his service, “but I’ve enjoyed it. I enjoy the people.”



Thank you Bud Bonnett, for 60 years of leadership!

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# Corona Water Education

Are you a schoolteacher or youth group leader in Corona? If you are looking for engaging ways to teach your students about water, then request a free presentation from a resource educator of the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District. The educator is available to visit your site to conduct hands-on activities. Free educational materials are also offered, and can be provided with or without a classroom presentation. The program and materials are compliments of the City of Corona's Utilities Department.

The water education program explains:

- simple ways to conserve water and why it is important
- where the City of Corona gets its water
- storm water pollutants and how we can reduce them.

Students learn to reduce the amount of pollutants that enter our storm drain system that flows to waterways (washes, creeks, arroyos) and ultimately to the Santa Ana River and ocean. Since people unknowingly generate the largest amount of storm water pollution, we can be the largest part of the solution. Educating students about these concepts helps to ensure that future generations will understand the importance of water as an essential resource.



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RCRCD is grateful for its talented education staff (from left): Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker, Jenny Iyer, Erin Snyder

## Did We Say "Free"?

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District provides a variety of educational programs and services, including free conservation education materials to schools, youth groups, and homeschooling families who live or work within our district boundaries. The District offers mini-grants to school and youth groups to help fund outdoor conservation projects such as gardens, tree plantings, and re-vegetation projects. Find order forms, applications, and additional educational resources on our website:

[www.rcrcd.org/educational-programs](http://www.rcrcd.org/educational-programs) .

Residents can access a variety of publications about sustainability and natural resource stewardship on our website at [www.rcrcd.org/publications-and-brochures](http://www.rcrcd.org/publications-and-brochures). In addition, visit our educational sites: The LandUse Learning Center (LLC) in Riverside and Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center (SCIC) in Temescal Valley. Learn about resource management at the LLC, a demonstration of sustainable practices for the three main land uses of SoCal: native habitats, urban areas, and agriculture. The LLC is open daily from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. For Sycamore Creek, follow their page: <https://www.facebook.com/SCICTV> .

Free virtual programs are also available and include the *Power of Pollinators* and *What about Water* for elementary students. The programs include examples of hands-on activities, citizen science projects, and a variety of resources.

For access to online lesson plans, videos, resources and curriculum, please contact Jenny Iyer at [Iyer@RCRCD.org](mailto:Iyer@RCRCD.org) or (951) 683-7691, Ext. 226. Learn about these and our other educational programs at: [youtube.com/channel/UCZ9qcZKB2xePvErzAbsCZuQ/video](https://youtube.com/channel/UCZ9qcZKB2xePvErzAbsCZuQ/video) .



# Thank You Volunteers!

RCRCD extends a special thanks to our stalwart volunteers.

## First Saturdays

UCCE Riverside County Master Gardeners Janice Binam and Michael Fischer staff the *Ask a Master Gardener* booth. Community members are welcome to bring their gardening questions to them on the first Saturday morning of each month.

We also greatly appreciate the speakers who share their expertise with our community. Recent guest speakers who presented on First Saturdays this past season:

- Tom Spellman from Dave Wilson Nursery taught about pruning fruit trees.
- Raquel Falco from the City of Glendora and the Inland Urban Forest Council taught about pruning shade trees.
- Master Gardener Larry Dodson spoke about the propagation of figs.
- Orchid Black of Nature Sanctuary introduced garden planning with native plants. **Orchid will be teaching a full class this coming Spring. If interested, please email [snyder@RCRCD.org](mailto:snyder@RCRCD.org) for details.**

Watch for more great programs on First Saturdays in 2023 and come get your gardening questions answered at the *Ask a Master Gardener* booth from 9 a.m. to noon at the LandUse Learning Center.

## Monarch Survey

In 2022, volunteers dove in head first and maintained their enthusiasm even on the hottest days! With their support, several surveys were conducted each month from April to September. In total these community scientists documented 144 monarch eggs, 26 caterpillars and 10 adults! Their efforts created invaluable data for scientists. Their data was shared with iNaturalist, Monarch Larval Monitoring Project and Western Monarch Milkweed Mapper. As our site continues to mature, we are sure that there will be more excitement to come!



Volunteer looking for tiny Monarch eggs.

## Want to Help the Environment?

Volunteering is fun and educational, so RCRCD offers a variety of opportunities for people to conserve natural resources. To get started as a volunteer, complete this form: [https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc2h0qzX5YaA2UTBjq\\_DPbktjskz\\_FViB7bowdIPHC\\_Sjyggw/viewform](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSc2h0qzX5YaA2UTBjq_DPbktjskz_FViB7bowdIPHC_Sjyggw/viewform) or contact Resource Educator Erin Snyder at [snyder@rcrcd.org](mailto:snyder@rcrcd.org) or (951) 683-7691 Ext. 207.

Upcoming opportunities include:

- Monarch butterfly monitoring
- bluebird nest box monitoring
- growing native plants in our nursery
- group projects
- being a docent at the LandUse Learning Center or Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center

**Join our docent training January 26 from 10-1: <https://www.rcrcd.org/2023-01-26-llc-docent-training>**

For more information about volunteer projects, please visit our website: <https://www.rcrcd.org/volunteer-opportunities> .



Master Gardeners Michael Fisher and Janice Binam

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# UCR Students Make a Difference

RCRCD is receiving help from six **Californians for All College Corps Fellows** from the University of California Riverside who assist with food insecurity and climate action projects. Food Insecurity Fellows Jackeline Armendariz and Janet Lei work on food and ag related projects, including helping with food distribution, at community gardens, and at the sustainable Ag Area in the LandUse Learning Center where they spread mulch and compost around trees.

Four Climate Action fellows have been assisting in a variety of conservation efforts:

- Melita Loper provides help with Monarch recovery and education projects.
- Brianna Lopez assists with habitat management and removal of invasive species.
- Rosie Martin helps at the nursery with native plant propagation and seed collection.
- Carlos Penalzoa helps with environmental education, including events, programs, and tours.

We at RCRCD greatly appreciate the assistance from the UCR fellows who help us accomplish more education and conservation.

#CaliforniansForAll College Corps is a first-of-its-kind service and development program that provides students with financial support and professional experience while engaging them in meaningful community action around education, climate, and food insecurity.



College Corps Fellows Carlos Penalzoa, Melita Kyrtsi-Loper and Janet Lei removed berry canes from the native plant hedgerow demonstration at the LandUse Learning Center.



College Corps Fellow Brianna Lopez planted monkeyflowers in the native cultivar garden at the LandUse Learning Center.

## Claremont Graduate University Contributions

Thanks to the help of Professor Susan Phillips representing Pitzer College and the Robert Redford Conservancy, we were able to meet staff and students who work on some of RCRCD's conservation projects. During 2022, Administrative and Program Coordinator Claudia Prats translated to Spanish RCRCD's *Steps for Success with Milkweed and Monarchs*:

[https://www.rcrcd.org/files/65eb89ba5/2020\\_Monarch\\_Milkweed\\_for\\_SoCal.pdf](https://www.rcrcd.org/files/65eb89ba5/2020_Monarch_Milkweed_for_SoCal.pdf) .

Graduate students Armin Abazari, Medha Gelli, and Marium Mukhtar from the Claremont Graduate University built a story map showing the spread of the invasive plant, Stinknet, and some factors that may be influencing it. This species is of great concern to land managers as it is spreading quickly and taking over habitat for sensitive species. The story map they put together is a helpful resource for visualizing this species' behavior and for learning more about it. It has been shared with local land managers and can be found here: <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/ba20c0cb821c4300a80ed605c8cc6f62> .

Many thanks go out to Claudia Pratz, Professor Brian Hilton and Armin, Medha, and Marium for all their hard work.



# Meet New California Naturalists

RCRCD graduated 33 California Naturalists and 3 Climate Stewards since the Spring of 2022. The two courses, conducted through University of California's Agriculture and Natural Resources division (UCANR), include more than 40 hours of classroom and field learning. The Cal Nat program introduces students to the wonders of California's unique ecology and engages them in the study and stewardship of natural resources. RCRCD's program focuses on the Santa Ana River watershed.

The Climate Stewards course provides locally relevant climate science to improve climate literacy and focuses on earth systems, water, energy and agriculture. The class includes communication training, citizen science, and community service opportunities.



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Summer 2022 California Naturalist graduates: Emily Sluiman, Jenny Iyer, Lexie Gravatt, Sam Ayala, Trevor Ritter, James Malcolm, Shea Milan, Gracie Solevillamoren and Kristen Lewis. Kneeling are instructors Erin Snyder and Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker.



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Fall 2022 California Naturalist and Climate Steward Graduates: Barbara Dawson, Lee-Ann Miller, Corina Jimenez, Eric Reinhard (back, Climate Steward), Linda Reinhard, Wendy Walker, Kim Fasching, Kelly Sipan, Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker (instructor). Kneeling: Erin Snyder (instructor), Amy Fisk (Climate Steward), Mauricio Mata Not pictured: California Naturalist Charlie Harfouch and Climate Steward Carolyn Paul



# Thankful for the Cs!

RCRCD built a stronger relationship with the California Conservation Corps (CCC) during 2022. The CCC provides young adults a unique and challenging paid experience working to help conserve California's natural resources while learning and developing their job skills.

During October, the CCC provided two full-time interns for RCRCD's native plant nursery. Nursery Manager Ernesto Alvarado taught the interns about the proper collection and propagation of local native plants:

- Corps members Mya Covarrubias and Kelvin Lopez started learning the various seed treatments that are required for germinating different native seeds, including scarification, fire treatment, and experimental methods. Both interns also helped propagate plants using cuttings and division.
- Seed Bank collections: CCC interns helped conduct seed collections on wildlands throughout the seasons and learned to properly process and store seeds.
- A CCC team provided and built a new greenhouse for the propagation of RCRCD's seedlings.

The plants that Corps members grow are mainly used for habitat restoration.

The RCRCD education staff conducted a 7-day, intensive UC California Naturalist training for 20 "Cs" in December. Funding for the Youth Community Access program was provided to the University of California via a grant from the California Natural Resources Agency.



Mya Covarrubias provides much needed water to the native plant seedlings that she helped transplant.

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Graduates: Bryce O'Neil, Michael Caamano, Yarley Delahoya, Johnny Gayton, Marc Douglas, Joshua Smith, Daniel Venegas, Devean Garner, Alan Villalobos, Ghage Ridden, Yahir Cruz, Christian Owens, Angel Lino, Justin Lino, and Michael Darnell. Crew Supervisor Bob Salvador.



CCC Cal Nat students learned about tide pools at the Ocean Institute in Dana Point.



CCC students toured the new California Air Resources Board (CARB) labs during one of their ten Cal Nat field trips.

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## National Soil Champion: Scott Berndt

Local urban farmer Scott Berndt has been named a Soil Health Champion by the National Association of Conservation Districts. Scott will be joining 370 US Champions who share their personal experiences through a national network and through NACD-hosted national meetings and events. The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District nominated Scott based on his extraordinary work promoting soil health management and advancing the adoption of conservation practices in our community. You can learn more about his work on his blog: [berndtsplants.blogspot.com](http://berndtsplants.blogspot.com) .

Locally, Scott helps farmers apply for grants that fund conservation practices that improve soil health, such as applying compost and planting hedgerows. He also raises funds and installs owl boxes in the Riverside Greenbelt to help control the rodent population without rodenticides.

Scott owns Fox Farms, runs the RCRC's sustainable Ag Area, works as Riverside Unified School District's Food Hub and Central Kitchen Manager, and serves on the Riverside Food Systems Alliance board. During 2022, Scott was awarded a fellowship from the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation that included a 17-month leadership development program, a 10-day trip to Minneapolis and Washington DC, and a 15-day international trip to the Balkans. To learn more about Scott's international trip, visit the Class's blog at <https://class51internationaltrip.wordpress.com/> .

To arrange a speaking engagement, interview, field tour, or other activity with Scott or the NACD Soil Health Champions Network, contact NACD's Beth Mason at [beth-mason@nacdnet.org](mailto:beth-mason@nacdnet.org) or Scott at [berndtsplants@gmail.com](mailto:berndtsplants@gmail.com).



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## Low Cost Soil Testing

Installing a *waterwise* landscape makes more sense than ever. Before you get started, or if you're having problems now with poor plant growth, consider having your soil analyzed.

It's very important to collect your sample properly, so get complete information here:

<https://www.rcrcd.org/files/32caca30b/soiltesting+2022.pdf> .

## Go Local!

Check out the current news from our partner the Riverside Food Systems Alliance at <https://riversidefoods.org/>. If you are interested in local food and agriculture, you can sign up for their newsletter there.

RCRCD developed the *Fresh and Local* guide to help people know where to find and buy local foods. Locations can be found on the RFSA website at <https://riversidefoodS.org/find-food/>. You can also download a copy from RCRCD's website at <https://rcrcd.specialdistrict.org/files/3ab208586/2019freshlocalguideweb.pdf> .





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**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**LandUse Learning Center Docent Training**

January 26, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.

**Ask a Master Gardener** 9 a.m. - noon

First Saturdays of each month

**First Saturday Speaker Series**

**February 4, 10 a.m.** *How to Control Tree Pests*

Kevin Sims of Sims Tree Health Specialists. Free

**Western Section of the Wildlife Society**

Annual Meeting, Riverside Convention Center, February 7 - 10

<https://riverside2023.tws-west.org/>

**Riverside Public Utilities Landscape Workshops**

Lawn Replacement: February 25, 10 a.m., Janet Goeske Senior Center

Irrigation Troubleshooting: March 25, 10 a.m. at Casa Blanca Library

**RCC Wild and Scenic Film Festival**

Landis Auditorium, March 24

**GROW Riverside and Beyond Conference**

March 30 - 31, [www.growriv.com](http://www.growriv.com)

**UCR Botanic Gardens' Spring Plant Sale**

Members: April 15 • Public: April 16, 6 a.m. to midnight

Virtual sale with in-person pick-up. [gardens.ucr.edu/events/plant-sales](http://gardens.ucr.edu/events/plant-sales).

**Master Gardener Virtual Workshops**

<https://www.wmwd.com/539/Master-Gardener-Workshops>

**Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center**

Story Time Among the Sycamores

Second Saturdays at 10 a.m.

January 14 • February 11 • March 11

To register: <https://www.rcrcd.org/2023-01-14-story-time-among-the-sycamores>

**LandUse Learning Center**

Open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed holidays.

**Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center**

Hours and information at [facebook.com/SCICTV](https://facebook.com/SCICTV)



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

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