

# Fresh and Local News

WINTER 2023



## Grow Riverside and Beyond

March 30 & 31, 2023

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) and City of Riverside invite you to attend the 2023 GrowRIVERSIDE conference that will bring together new and seasoned local farmers, academia, and those passionate about food justice. The program will dive into topics that

farmers face daily and will include urban farming; the business of farming; farm policy and community impact; and food system development.

Keynote speaker Jean-Martin Fortier is a farmer, educator, entrepreneur, and best-selling author who specializes in organic and bio-intensive vegetable production. His award-winning book *The Market Gardener*, now published in 10 languages, has inspired hundreds of thousands of readers worldwide to reimagine ecological human scale food systems.

The conference will be held at the Grove Church Conference Center. For sponsorship and more information, please email to [sandy\\_ramirez@att.net](mailto:sandy_ramirez@att.net).



PHOTO COURTESY OF © ALEX CHABOT

Jean-Martin (JM) Fortier is an internationally recognized advocate for regenerative, human-scale, and profitable agriculture. His life's work has been to share his vision and expertise to promote the growth of small ecological farms and a global transition toward food systems rooted in nature and the community.

## Beginner Farmer Apprenticeship

by Patrick Mitchell

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance is partnering with the Five Keys Schools and Programs' Ecological Agriculture Training Cultural Center (EAT Center) to provide educational opportunities for new, beginning and prospective farmers. The EAT Center is located in Norco and serves as the temporary classroom for RFSA's Next Gen Farmer Training Program. The new training session starts April 17, 2023.

For more information on the Small Farm Apprenticeship or Next Gen programs, please contact Patrick Mitchell at [patrickm@fivekeys.org](mailto:patrickm@fivekeys.org) or call the EAT Center at (951) 255-7092. The EAT Cultural Center is open weekday afternoons and is located at 3954 Old Hamner Road in Norco.



The Riverside Food Systems Alliance is a partnership of individuals, organizations, and agencies, who are working to improve access to, and production of local foods for improving the health of people and the environment. Individually, each partner works on some aspect of the food system. Together we work to identify needs and fill gaps to improve the availability of nutrient-rich, fresh foods.

[www.RiversideFoods.org](http://www.RiversideFoods.org) • Facebook: [RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance)



# A Taste of Riverside

Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) held its first Taste of Riverside farm food fundraiser on September 22, 2022 at Fox Farm, a Riverside urban farm. The event sold out and resulted in raising nearly \$9,000 for RFSA's Beginner Farmer Training Program and the Northside Agriculture Innovation Center (NAIC).

For the menu, local restaurants donated a signature dish using at least one locally grown food item. RFSA would like to thank the following businesses for their support:

- |                               |                         |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------|
| The Salted Pig                | Habanero Mexican Grill  |
| The Rustik Fork               | The Marsala Magic       |
| Papa Joe's Pizza              | Wild Bunch Flowers      |
| Packing House Brewing Company | RUSD Nutrition Services |

These businesses were able to improve their visibility, especially with customers who are interested in eating healthy foods and supporting local farmers.

RFSA's goal is to bring successful urban farming to the greater Riverside region. The Northside Ag Innovation Center will provide for food production and agricultural research in Riverside's Northside, considered a food desert due to lack of a nearby grocery.



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PHOTO COURTESY OF © 2022 PAUL MARK PHOTO/RUSD NUTRITION SERVICES



PHOTO COURTESY OF © DIANA RUIZ 2022-RIVERSIDE-CORONA RCD



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The Northside project will address community needs and sustainability with the development of a community garden, an incubation farm, demonstration gardens and orchards, plus walking and biking paths, improving food access for an underserved area.

The NAIC has a variety of partners, including UC Riverside's OASIS program, which translates agricultural research to commercial application. Lamplighter, a private company, will build innovative solar greenhouses on site.

Like so many RFSA efforts, these projects include participation by the community, nonprofit organizations, educational institutions, and city government resulting in the synergy needed to build an effective public and private partnership.

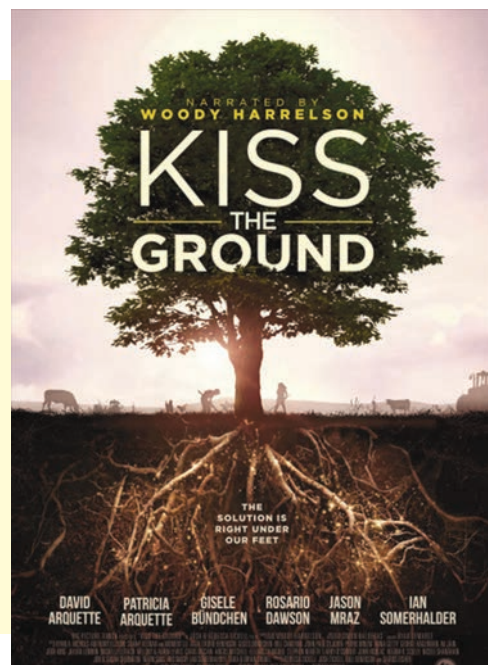
The Taste of Riverside event was a win-win for local farmers, restaurants, residents, and our food system alliance of partners.



## ***Kiss the Ground* Movie**

The Riverside-Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) hosted a movie night November 9, 2022 that was fantastic! We watched *Kiss the Ground*, a great documentary about how regenerative farming could be a game changer when it comes to climate change. Fresh popcorn and chocolates were shared while we explored how important farming is, not just for the food we eat, but for reversing issues that farmers face due to the lack of rain and higher temperatures. If you missed it, *Kiss the Ground*, narrated by Woody Harrelson, is currently on Netflix.

Be on the lookout for future RFSA movie nights.





## Healthy Foods for Students!

Riverside Unified School District's (RUSD) Nutrition Services Department has been awarded a Farm to School Procurement grant for \$270,000.00 from the California Department of Food and Agriculture. The grant funds RUSD's Farmers Market Salad Bar for all 27 elementary schools. The funding includes \$135,000 earmarked for purchasing from local farms.



## Tool Lending Library

Urban farmer Scott Berndt, owner of Fox Farm, was awarded a \$150,000 producer grant, which will be used to create a tool library so local farmers can share equipment including seeders and a BCS tractor with numerous attachments. The grant will also fund Fox Farm to produce trays of low cost vegetable transplants for local farmers.

Both grants will run from April 1, 2023 to March 30, 2025.

## Riverside Food Co-op Updates

The Riverside Food Co-op (RFC) is developing a strategy for raising capital to create the grocery store of its dreams. The co-op board will be reaching out to members' for help with a fundraising project, site selection, and publicity.

Cooperatives are member powered. The RFC grocery store will be owned equally by its members, and they need all hands ready to help! Members will decide goals, policies and product mix. It's time for members to decide how they would like to help and roll up their sleeves.

For more information on how you can help, contact Sue Struthers at [riversidefoodcoop@gmail.com](mailto:riversidefoodcoop@gmail.com)



PHOTO COURTESY OF © DIANA RUIZ 2022 RIVERSIDE-CORONA RCD

## Who is RFSA?

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance is a network of people, organizations and agencies that work on projects to fill gaps in the local food system. They work together as well as individually on food, agriculture, health, and conservation projects. Partners include:

- |   |                      |  |
|---|----------------------|--|
| Local farmers   | Riverside Food Co-op | Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District          |
| Riverside Food Rescue   | Gleaners for Good    | CURE - Citizens United for Resources and the Environment |
| Riverside Unified School District   | City of Riverside    | Riverside University Health System                       |
| Riverside Garden Council  | Kaiser Permanente    |  |
| Farmworker Institute of Education and Leadership Development (F.I.E.L.D.) |                      |  |



The Invest Health Delegation from Tallahassee, St. Paul, Buffalo, and Grand Rapids enjoyed Riverside’s hospitality in June, 2022.

## Invest Health Initiative

The City of Riverside was one of 50 mid-sized cities selected by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF) and the Reinvestment Fund in 2016 to participate in an Invest Health Initiative. The goal of the initiative is to change how cities revitalize neighborhoods to integrate health into community development. Team Riverside worked on improving the food systems landscape and affordable housing.

Food system teams from Minneapolis-St. Paul, MN; Grand Rapids, MI; Buffalo, NY; and Tallahassee, FL visited Riverside on May 16-17 to learn about our local efforts. Over the course of their two-day visit, delegates learned about the vision, progress, and accomplishments of building an equitable food system in the inland region of Southern California. Delegates enjoyed tours of local farms, UCR’s R’Garden, and heard from local growers, city representatives, community organizers, health care stakeholders, and local educators. The health teams learned about the Riverside Food System Alliance and plans for Farm-to-School-to-Workforce development.

We at RFSa thank the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and Reinvestment Fund for providing a Sustaining the Network grant that made the site visit possible. We also thank our local site presenters, event coordinators, Eastside residents and leaders for helping to create a meaningful visit for the delegates, including:

Growing Hope Project, San Andreas High School	Healthy Living Project (HLP) Youth
Residents Active in Eastside Leadership – REAL	Kaiser Permanente
Riverside Community Health Foundation	Riverside Food Co-Op
Riverside Unified School District	City of Riverside
University of California, Riverside: R’Garden and UCANR Agriculture and Natural Resources	

## *Local Ag Feeds You - Local Ag Needs You!*

**We have an ongoing and immediate need for funding to reduce food waste, support local farmers, and create healthier communities and the environment.**

Please donate to support RFSa:

- at our website: <https://riversidefoodS.org/>
- mail to: Riverside Food Systems Alliance, PO Box 324, Riverside, CA 92502.  
Please make checks payable to “Community Partners,” the fiscal sponsor for RFSa.





**American AgCredit**  
Money for Agriculture

## American Ag Credit

One of RFSA's partner organizations is American Ag Credit that provides loan and financial services, sound financial guidance, and product flexibility to agricultural customers. Their mission is to be the best lender to agriculture.

American Ag Credit is a member of the Farm Credit System that supports rural communities and agriculture with reliable and consistent credit and financial services. American Ag Credit was created more than 100 years ago for the sole purpose of serving the financial needs of farmers and ranchers.

RFSA board member Allison Paap is a local lending manager and explains: "We are a customer-owned cooperative with the sole mission of supporting the financial needs of American agriculture:

- We offer term loans, lines of credit, leasing, and crop insurance products.
- Our commodity diversity and willingness to stand by our customers in good times and bad fosters longstanding and productive relationships.
- We are deeply invested in our local agricultural communities through scholarships, youth programs and community development.

The financial and agricultural expertise of our staff enables us to support a wide range of customers in a myriad of ways." [To learn more about American Ag Credit, visit www.agloan.com](http://www.agloan.com)

## Farm Planning Resources

If you are looking to start a farm, begin your planning at the LandUse Learning Center. The Agricultural Area demonstrates crops that thrive in our local climate. Take a tour, pick up plant lists, and see the labeled tree crops. Interpretive signs depict sustainable agricultural practices, including irrigation water management, methods to build soil health, and integrated pest management using a variety of biological controls. **Please check for new hours: [www.RCRC.org](http://www.RCRC.org) or (951) 683-7691. The 3-acre LandUse Learning Center is at 4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside, CA 92501.**

More at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNjFD2e0GM4&t=14s>



PHOTO COURTESY OF CLASS 51 CALIFORNIA AGRICULTURAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAM



Class 51 in front of a waterfall at Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

## Scott Berndt: Ag Leader Fellow

Scott Berndt, Riverside Unified School District's Food Hub and Central Kitchen Manager, was selected as one of five urban Soil Health Champions by the National Association of Conservation Districts. He will be joining 370 national Soil Health Champions and representing the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District. He was awarded \$1,500 to attend NACD's 2023 national meeting.

Scott was also awarded a fellowship by the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation. He was one of 24 ag professionals who were invited to participate in Class 51. The Leadership Fellowship entailed a 17-month leadership development program that included a 10-day trip to Minneapolis and Washington DC and a 15-day international trip. Class 51 visited the Balkans, which included Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Croatia. Class 51's leadership program will end with commencement at Fresno State University in February, 2023.

[To learn more about Scott's international trip, visit the Class's blog at https://class51internationaltrip.wordpress.com/.](https://class51internationaltrip.wordpress.com/)

## New Advisory Member: Richard Zapien

Richard Zapien coordinates and manages R' Garden, UC Riverside's community garden. Richard's programs raise awareness about sustainable agriculture. He teaches UCR students and community members about urban farming methods and manages the UCR Aerated Composting Project. He coordinates community plots where local gardeners can plant and grow their own produce.

Richard is a trainer for nine College Corp Fellows who are focused on food insecurity and climate resilience. He and his fellows engage K-12 students and build small gardens on school sites.

R'Garden provides opportunities for UCR students to train in or conduct research in agricultural studies.

R'Garden is also a food hub where students can pick-up locally grown produce, which reduces food insecurity on campus. R'Garden yields an average of 40,000 lbs. of produce each year, which is provided to students in the Basic Needs Programs via the on campus R'Pantry. Excess produce is donated to Riverside area food banks.

Richard owns Agriculture Integrated Pest Management (AG IPM), a business where he helps farmers control pests and weeds, plus conducts custom fabrication, greenhouse HVAC maintenance, irrigation design and repair. He provides nutrition management, chemical applications, and assists with harvest labor needs.

Richard came to the RFSA board through its Ambassador Program. If you are interested in volunteering, board membership, or would like to know more about the Ambassador Program, please email Sandy at [sandy\\_ramirez@att.net](mailto:sandy_ramirez@att.net) or complete the form online at <https://riversidefoods.org/application/>.



PHOTO COURTESY OF © STAN LIM, UC RIVERSIDE

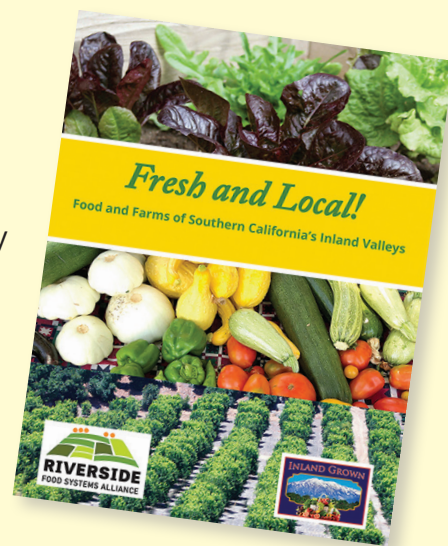
## Find Food and Ag Listings on our Website!

Are you interested in purchasing locally grown foods, but are having a hard time finding where? Now you can find locations and listings on the RFSA website: <https://riversidefoods.org/find-food/>. Find locations on the interactive map to locate farm stands, farmers' markets, CSAs, community gardens, restaurants, and stores.

Looking for agricultural resources? Find farm listings, ag programs, farm services, and ag resources here: <https://riversidefoods.org/farming/>

Locate community and educational resources for the greater Riverside and San Bernardino areas here: <https://riversidefoods.org/community-resources/>. Find gardening, healthy-living, food processing, and agritourism information.

Thanks to a National Association of Conservation Districts' (NACD) grant that was awarded to our partner the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District, you can also download a copy of the entire, award-winning, 48-page Fresh and Local Guide on our website: <https://riversidefoods.org/>.





Do you want to join us as an ally of our work? Our collaboration partners include farmers, cooperatives, foodies, community gardeners, restaurateurs, health and hunger organizations, but we also need people like you! Here are:

## 4 Things You Can Do As An

# RFSA Ambassador



1. **Amplify our message**  
Follow us on our social channels and help spread the word about events, successes, and opportunities to make a difference in our community.

2. **Donate your talent**  
Are you good with bookkeeping or accounting? How about fundraising or human resources? No talent is too small to help out.



3. **Give a presentation**  
Represent the RFSA at a networking event such as a Rotary Club meeting, city or school event, neighborhood group, or church event.

4. **Support us financially**  
Short on time but want to help further the vision of cultivating local food and agriculture for a healthier community? Donate at [www.riversidefoods.org](http://www.riversidefoods.org).



Ready?



Reach out to  
Susan Fahrney (951) 323-7343  
or Cecilia Arias (951) 602-4193

[www.RiversideFoods.org](http://www.RiversideFoods.org)  
Facebook: [RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance](https://www.facebook.com/RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance)

## RFSA 2022 Board of Directors

Sandy Ramirez, Chair - Coordinator Growers Forums and GrowRIVERSIDE

Deborah Ghamlouch, Vice-Chair - The Grove Organic Farm, GAP Trainer

Scott Berndt, Treasurer - RUSD Food Hub, Fox Farms, Healthy Soils Consultant

Susan Fahrney, MPH, Secretary - Education and Community Liaison

Gayle Hoxter - Riverside University Health System

Arthur Levine - Feeding Black Futures Advisory Council, Agroecology Commons Advisory Board

Patrick Mitchell - Ecological Agriculture Training Center

Sue Struthers - Riverside Food Rescue Project Coordinator, Riverside Food Co-op

Allison Paap - American AgCredit

## Advisory Committee

Cecilia Arias, Kaiser Permanente

Gurumantra Khalsa, Nutrition News, World Be Well

Richard Zapien - UC Riverside R'Garden manager

## Working Groups

Northside Agriculture and Innovation Center  
Joyce Jong: [JJong@riversideca.gov](mailto:JJong@riversideca.gov), (951) 826-5265

Beginning Farmer Training and Growers' Guild  
Patrick Mitchell: [patrickm@fivekeys.org](mailto:patrickm@fivekeys.org), (951) 905-8808

Food Hub, Soil Health, Owl Boxes  
Scott Berndt: [berndtsplants@gmail.com](mailto:berndtsplants@gmail.com), (951) 452-6840

Market Match, Food Co-op  
Sue Struthers: [sstruthers@att.net](mailto:sstruthers@att.net), (951) 662-9556

Community Garden Council  
Scott Andrews: [scott.andrews@yahoo.com](mailto:scott.andrews@yahoo.com), (951) 235-6278

Communications  
Diana Ruiz: (909) 238-8338, [ruiz@rcrcd.org](mailto:ruiz@rcrcd.org)

**RFSA's mission is to cultivate local food and agriculture for a healthier community.**