

Fresh and Local News

SPRING 2022



Barn Owls Reduce the Need for Rodenticides

Scott Berndt, a local farmer and Riverside Unified School District Food Hub Coordinator, has been working on a project to increase the barn owl population in Riverside by installing barn owl nest boxes on Riverside Farms.

Barn owls are an environmentally effective way to control rats and pocket gophers. A pair of barn owls will eat a 1000 rats or gophers in a year.

This will eliminate the need for rodenticides and reduce secondary poisoning. Secondary poisoning occurs when a hawk, owl, bobcat or other predators eats a poisoned rat or gopher. It will usually also kill the predator.

Barn owls need wooden barns or hollow trees to nest. There is a small population nesting in palm trees on Gratton street, but the success rate is only around 10%. The babies are taken by crows or raccoons, or blown out of the palm trees during high winds. When proper nest boxes are provided, the success rate is around 80% and the population will rebound quickly.

So far the community has raised around \$5,000 to purchase and install barn owl nest boxes.

18 have already been installed with plans to install another 50, as funding allows. Each nest box costs around \$200 for nest box and installation supplies. Volunteers, including students from California Baptist University install the boxes. Donations are appreciated.



The gofundme campaign is <https://www.gofundme.com/f/riverside-farms-barn-owl-nest-box-project>



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

Growers: Help Make an Impact!

If you work in the food and ag industry and are based in western San Bernardino or Riverside County, please help us better understand your workforce needs. Help identify the agricultural challenges, changes, and potential solutions by completing a survey by June 1, 2022. Your confidential replies will be compiled into a “needs assessment”, and will help UC Cooperative Extension decide whether a program should be developed or improved. For more information, please contact Hung Doan at hkdoan@ucdavis.edu. Thank you for your help providing valuable information about local needs.

Find the survey at https://ucdavis.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_b8VEAnF2ZZ712gS .

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 will serve as the temporary classroom for RFSA’s Next Gen Farmer Training Program, which will kick off in Fall of 2022.

The Ecological Agriculture Training Center has been running a Small Farm Apprenticeship program for the past two years and has graduated eight apprentices who established six new farms so far. There are currently 13 students in the second cohort with several of them graduating onto new farm and agricultural operations in April 2022.

The Small Farm Apprenticeship program is a wisdom-based, science-informed, hands-on training program that meets twice a week for classroom explorations in nine core agricultural areas with more than 70 topics covered. In addition to classroom time, apprenticeship students are encouraged to fulfill 8-12 hours a week in the field putting theories to the test in real working agricultural settings.



Although the first Next Gen farmer trainees will attend class in Norco, the field time will take place at the soon to be Northside Agriculture and Innovation Center (formerly Northside Heritage Meadows) in Riverside. Eventually the Northside site will be home to the classroom and field experiences for Next Gen participants.



For more information on the Small Farm Apprenticeship or Next Gen programs, please contact Patrick Mitchell at 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.

Gleaners for Good Strike Again!

On March 13, 2022, the Gleaners for Good conducted their first harvest of the year, rescuing 4,680 pounds of citrus that would otherwise have gone to waste.

Many thanks to the 40 volunteers who were led by Oscar Perez and Angel Orta-Perez of Riverside Food Rescue. The gleaning was in partnership with TreePeople and the food was given to Inland Harvest.

Watch a video about the program and learn more: <https://riversidefoods.org/food-rescue/>.



Feed People, Not Landfills

HealRx Farm to Fork Pilot Program

by Gurumantra Khalsa

World Be Well, a recently formed nonprofit established to improve community food access in inland Southern California, has received a grant from Molina Healthcare to promote more consumption of fruits and vegetables among individuals with chronic, high-risk health challenges such as diabetes, obesity and heart disease. The HealRx Farm to Fork Pilot Initiative represents the Eastside community's vision for eliminating barriers to healthy food access. Building upon the success of the EastSide HealZone, other key partners for this initiative include the City of Riverside, spearheaded by Ward 2 Councilwoman Clarissa Cervantes, Molina Health Care, UCR's R'Garden, and local chefs. It is a pilot study in collective impact and scalability.

The initiative includes community members from two Eastside health clinics that will participate in a year-long journey toward optimal health. Health markers including A1c will be tracked over the course of the program. Participants receive fresh, organic produce weekly; a starter kit with appropriate seasonings; monthly meal plans; and instructions on meal prep; nutritional information, coaching; and a food journal. Fruits and vegetables will be sourced initially from UCR's R'Garden. Local farmers and farmers' markets will also provide produce as demand grows. A virtual kick-off event took place February 19. Subsequent gatherings are scheduled to occur every other month at R'Garden, COVID permitting.

Northside Urban Greening Project Update

Northside Open House

RFSA hosted the first Northside Heritage Meadows pop-up event in the field at 900 Clark Street on June 24, 2021. The successful event brought more than 200 visitors who were welcomed by 27 volunteers at neighborhood and agency tables and photo booths. Councilmember Erin Edwards of that Ward (1) and Councilmember Steve Hemenway (Ward 7) participated.



Garden Committee

An outgrowth of the event was the formation of a planning committee for the site's future community garden, dubbed Nick's Garden. Thirty people met and broke into subcommittees that have been conducting fundraising and planning different components of the garden since then. Riverside Garden Council chair Scott Andrews is coordinating the committees and site development with the City.



Many thanks to those who have gone on to give of their time towards the garden development: Sarrah Lavergne, Kyle Sweeney, Kim Fasching, Tonya Huff, Jane Burkheimer, Jim Wood, Marilyn Dela Cruz, Emy Kaplan, Mona Lumpkin, Gurumantra Khalsa, Debbie Walsh, Roxanne Robbins, Tabitha Pantea, Kacey Donner, Selena J Wilson, Emily Cummings, Stephanie Fowler, Ernesto Alvarado, Brad Geertsen, Justin Scott-Coe, Elizabeth Prince, and Erin Snyder.

To follow the project's progress, join this group: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2519277775049264>



Cecilia Arias representing Kaiser Permanente; Scott Andrews, Riverside Garden Council Chair; Brian Herlihy representing donor LOVE, Tito's; and Emy Kaplan, garden supporter.

The philanthropy **Love, Tito's** recently contributed to the development of Nick's Garden at Northside.



Three ways to donate to Nick's Garden:

- Donations of any amount can be made online at: https://www.paypal.com/donate/?hosted_button_id=29D7FBE9FTXL8
- Make checks payable to the Riverside Garden Council and mail to 4500 Glenwood Dr., #A, Riverside CA 92501
- Call us at (951) 394-3793 to provide services or arrange for pickup of materials and tools.

RGC is a nonprofit organization, under Internal Revenue Code Section 501(c)(3). Your sponsorship may be tax deductible as a charitable contribution. Please consult with your tax advisor.



Urban Greening at Northside

Here we work with nature to clean and cool the air plus cultivate healthy, local foods.

At this site you will learn how trees, shrubs, and soil are able to sequester (capture and store) carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the air to keep carbon out of our warming atmosphere.

While trees and shrubs also filter pollutants and provide cooling shade, soil building techniques improve agricultural productivity and increase water infiltration that helps replenish our underground water basins, or aquifers.

By working with the natural cycles of air, water, nutrients, and energy, we are able to sequester soil and water and increase biodiversity (variety of species). Sustainable* farmers conserve expensive water, build soil health, and foster on farm biodiversity which reduces the need for fertilizers, pesticides, and energy.

*Sustainable means a system that is able to use a resource so it is neither depleted nor permanently damaged. Sustainable farming, also referred to as regenerative agriculture, relies on the natural processes that do not harm the health of people or the environment.

It's calculated that the variety of trees and shrubs planted here will result in nearly eight million pounds of carbon being stored over 40 years.

Here, you can learn to reduce human impacts on our planet Earth and ways to take care of, or steward, natural resources: soil, water, air, native plants, and wildlife.

Begin by using your purchasing power: Support Local Farms.

Why Buy Local?

Good Health Freshly picked produce normally has more nutrients and superior taste. You can reduce the risk of many diseases simply by eating more fruits and vegetables.

Strengthens Economy Money spent on your community's products recirculates dollars through the local economy, providing jobs and supporting independent family farms and businesses.

Healthier Environment Locally grown foods require less packaging and transportation, which means less waste, pollution, and fewer greenhouse gases that alter climate.

Find locations for buying fresh produce, plus resources for farming and gardening in the **Fresh and Local Food** and ag guide: [Riverside Food Systems Alliance](#) [Riverside Corona Resource Conservation District](#)

Preserving Our Agricultural Heritage

Native Americans used this once abandoned meadow for food and raw materials. Later, in 1918, Densu and Shie Sanematsu developed a working farm on this site, raising chickens and row crops. During World War II the Sanematsus and their six children were forced to leave their farm as part of the federal government's unjust incarceration of persons of Japanese descent. Neighbors watched over the land, so that after the war the family was able to return to the farm. The Sanematsus continued farming for another 50 years growing perennials and vegetables, including Japanese doanai and jooai.

The Sanematsu Family in 1953

Para encontrar las direcciones versiones de letras en español use este código QR.

New Educational Signs

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District created eleven interpretive signs for the Northside urban greening project.

The signs will be placed throughout the 7-acre site along trails, by the native habitat planting, at the hedgerow, near the farm fields, and at the community garden. The signs were funded by an Urban Agriculture Conservation grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts.

The Northside Heritage Meadows project has recently been renamed the Riverside Agriculture and Innovation Center. The project plans continue to evolve, now possibly including greenhouses and solar energy capture.

Learn more about the urban greening project by watching this video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f4itDhwYID8>

Who was Nick?

Nick Melquiades was a community leader and the lead advocate for a community garden in the Northside neighborhood. Nick served as the RGC chair and was a founding member of the Riverside Food Co-op and Riverside Food Systems Alliance.

We were deeply saddened that we lost Nick to the pandemic, and subsequently name the garden in his honor for his dedication to making healthy, local foods available to all.



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.

You can also download a copy of the entire, award-winning, 48-page *Fresh and Local* Guide on our website.



***Congratulations to the Riverside Food Co-op
for surpassing 500 members!***



GAP Training Completed

Many thanks to the USDA for a grant to RFSA that provided for free Good Agricultural Practices (GAP) and Food Safety training for 77 local growers. Participants learned to write a farm food safety plan that permits them to sell to institutions like the Riverside Unified School District's Food Hub.

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District also had the opportunity to present to the farmers about creating on-farm pollinator habitat. Growers learned about planting hedgerows of native plants, especially native milkweed (*Asclepias fascicularis*) which is the host plant for the imperiled Western Monarch butterfly. For more information about Monarchs, see *Steps for Success with Milkweed and Monarchs for the Inland Southern California Valleys* at

https://www.rcrcd.org/files/65eb89ba5/2020_Monarch_Milkweed_for_SoCal.pdf .

Growers can help support beneficial insects, including pollinators, by planting hedgerows along field edges. Find native species to plant and more in the publication *Planting a Hedgerow for the SoCal Inland Region*

<https://www.rcrcd.org/files/4bab03892/Hedgerow.pdf> .



Local Foods Make For Resilient Communities

Climate resiliency groups and agencies convened at the LandUse Learning Center in January to first meet each other and then conduct an event about adapting to weather extremes and climate. The organizations met to discuss ways to attack the climate challenge more efficiently. Many thanks to Dawn Carter, Scott Berndt, and Sammy Carter for representing RFSA. Dawn spoke about the advantages of local agriculture and Scott talked about carbon sequestration in soil, sharing very illustrative samples of soil with and without compost.

RFSA's network of groups and projects help with resiliency and reducing greenhouse gasses:

- The Northside project was awarded a \$3M grant to purchase 7-ares and plant 450 trees and shrubs that sequester carbon. That project will also include solar greenhouses to reduce energy use, composting, and applying compost to build soil health and sequester carbon.
- Food Rescue and gleaning projects remove edible food from the waste stream, reducing carbon emissions from solid waste.
- By purchasing local foods and supporting local agriculture, we reduce food transport and the related pollutants.
- Farmers' markets and Market Match funds for Cal Fresh and SNAP recipients encourage the use of reduced packaging.

A second outgrowth of the meeting was the creation of the Cool Climate Café, an opportunity to meet online using the Meetup app. at <https://www.meetup.com/Cool-Climate-Cafe/> .

To find out more about local groups that are working on climate change issues and resiliency, visit the Community Climate Connection. Find nearly 100 groups, a speakers' bureau, and a calendar of events at <https://communityclimateconnection.org> .



Scott Berndt and Dawn Carter



Roxanne Robbins of Fridays for the Future, Dawn Carter and son Sammy Carter represented RFSA

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.

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



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

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



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

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.



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



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

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