

# The Watercan Post



Newsletter of the Paradise Garden Club, Paradise CA

[newsletter@paradisegardenclub.org](mailto:newsletter@paradisegardenclub.org)

[ParadiseGardenClub.org](http://ParadiseGardenClub.org)

## The Prez Sez



I hope you all had a wonderful holiday season and a joyous New Year! As I write this, we are enjoying another delightful field trip—this time to High Hand Nursery. Thirteen of our club members spent the day exploring the beautiful gardens and galleries. The adventure was perfectly complemented by a delicious lunch at the Cheesecake Factory in Roseville. It has been a grand time for all as we prepare to caravan back home.

The weather has been quite a mix lately, with rain, fog, and windstorms reminding us that it is winter, but thankfully, we've also been treated to stretches of sunshine and lighter weather—ideal for gardening or simply enjoying the beauty of the season.

Our last meeting was a cheerful and relaxed holiday gathering. We were thrilled to present this year's Star Award to Anne Pace and share in the joy of a delicious potluck filled with good food and even better company. It was a lovely way to close out the year together.

Our next meeting will be on Monday, January 13th at 1:00pm at Terry Ashe Park as usual. We will have an exciting program lined up, with Cindy Dawson from Deja Vu speaking on the proper care of house plants, so do not forget to mark your calendars!

Here's to a new year of gardening, growing, and learning together. I look forward to seeing you all soon!

Warmly,  
Todd Hummel  
President, Paradise Garden Club



**PGCI General Meeting, January 13 at 1:00 p.m.**

**Topic: Keeping Your House Plants Alive**

**Presenter: Cindy Dawson, Owner Déjà vu – Gardens Galore Nursery**

Cindy will help us understand how to keep those holiday plant gifts and indoor plants thriving. As long-time Paradise nursery owner, Cindy has seen many plants leave her greenhouses alive and thriving, only to see them returned a few months later. Sound familiar? We may be gardeners, but not all have a green thumb when it comes to indoor gardening. Perhaps Cindy can help us keep those holiday poinsettias and other living gifts alive a bit longer.

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## Upcoming Events

Paradise Garden Club meets every second Monday of each month at 1:00 at the Terry Ashe Center. All are welcome. (Odd months we bring cuttings, plants or seeds to share and even months we share food snacks.) **\*Please bring your own beverage.\***

### **January 13<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m. PGCI General Meeting, "Keeping Your House Plants Alive"**

Presenter: Cindy Dawson, Owner Déjà vu – Gardens Galore Nursery

Cindy will help us understand how to keep those holiday plant gifts and our indoor plants thriving.

As long-time Paradise nursery owner, Cindy has seen many plants leave her greenhouses alive and thriving, only to see them returned a few months later. Sound familiar? We may be gardeners, but not all have a green thumb when it comes to indoor gardening. Perhaps Cindy can help us keep those holiday poinsettias and other living gifts alive a bit longer.

### **February 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m., PGCI General Meeting, "Companion Planting"**

Presenter: Joyce Hill, Master Gardener

Companion planting covers pest control concerns, pollination, habitats for beneficial insects, space utilization, and more. It's a love connection for your landscape. Sound good? It's free, everyone is welcome. Join us!

### **March 10<sup>th</sup> at 1:00 p.m., PGCI General Meeting, "Rebuilding Soil Health After a Fire"**

Presenter – Tom Hansen, Master Gardener

Tom Hansen graduated from CSU Chico with a degree in Agriculture, specializing in tree and vine crops. He has been a Master Gardener since 2010 and has led many workshops on year-round fruit tree care, berries and grapes, and native bees. Tom is a Paradise resident who rebuilt after the Camp Fire. He will be talking about rebuilding soil health after a fire.

#### **Post-Fire Soil Recovery**

Wildfires can damage soil, increasing the risk of erosion and nutrient depletion. This workshop will cover steps you can take to bring your soil back to life, including erosion control, incorporating compost, adding microbes, reseeding, and mulching.

**February 1st Pruning Clinic** with **Ed Laivo** at Hodge's Family Nursery RSVP at <https://www.hodgesfamilynursery.com/>

# Beautification Team Report



It is true that many hands make light work. In December, the Beautification Team planted 1,000 daffodil bulbs into the retaining wall beds in front of Terry Ashe Park on Skyway. Sophia, Recreation Specialist with Paradise Parks & Rec joined us for this event, supplying us with additional tools and her own energy.

Our gardeners also planted five hundred bulbs at the Lutheran Church next to PRPD. David brought an auger to drill the hard ground which helped the bulbs go in quickly.

Todd, Joyce, Ellen, Steve, Joanie, Betty, David, Tina, Linda and Jeudie, we thank you and look forward to the bright welcome that daffodils will bring to spring in 2025.



Photos by Joni Ellison & friends



Join the Beautification Team as we dig into the new year... or as we dig out the weeds. We look forward to tending areas on the Ridge with our loving care and expertise.

Happy New Year!

*Jeudie*

# Gardening For Wildlife

Linda Goddard

## Convert An Empty Lot To A Wildlife Habitat - Part 3

### Himalayan Blackberries: How to Get Rid of Them and Why

Himalayan blackberries (*Rubus armeniacus*) are an invasive species here in Paradise. They may seem appealing with their tasty berries but they cause significant problems for homeowners and local ecosystems.



#### Why Himalayan Blackberries Are A Problem

**Invasive Growth:** Himalayan blackberries have a rapid growth rate, allowing them to quickly dominate landscapes. They form dense thickets that outcompete native plants for sunlight, water, and nutrients.

**Biodiversity Loss:** By overshadowing and depleting resources from native plants, these blackberries reduce plant diversity. This decline can lead to habitat loss for wildlife that depends on native plant species for food and shelter.

**Erosion Issues:** Their dense thickets can change the structure of stream banks, sometimes exacerbating erosion problems. Once established, they are difficult to remove, and their roots can destabilize soil.



**Thorny Hazards:** The thorny nature of these plants poses physical barriers for humans and animals, hindering access to land and posing injury risks. Before the fire, I had rats living in my blackberries. The fire took care of the rats and the blackberries!

#### Effective Strategies for Removal

**Hand Pulling/Digging:** For smaller infestations, hand pulling or using shovels is effective. Ensure you remove as much of the root system as possible, as any leftover roots can regenerate.

**Mowing/Cutting:** Regular mowing or cutting back the canes can help manage growth, but it must be consistent to prevent regrowth. Hedge trimmers can be effective for the tops and then use a weed eater with a blade for the bottom.

**Herbicides:** Applying appropriate herbicides, like glyphosate or triclopyr, can be effective. It is best applied in late summer or early fall when plants actively transport nutrients to their roots. Focus on treating the regrowth after initial mechanical removal to reduce herbicide use and environmental impact.

**Mulching:** Applying thick layers of mulch can suppress new growth by blocking sunlight.

**Planting Competitive Species:** Introduce fast-growing native plants to compete with blackberry seedlings and reclaim the area.



Thank you to all who participated in the Holiday Potluck at our December meeting. It was the first potluck celebration since the Camp Fire and we had about 20 participants and enjoyed a wonderful variety of holiday goodies. The room was beautifully decorated by several club members (Carrie, Toby, Betty, Melissa, Nancy and Anne), each adding their own special garlands, greens and ornaments to the tables. Special thanks to Nancy Howe, our Hospitality lead, for her guidance and coordination and to all who helped with the event. We truly appreciate you! - Anne P., Vice President



Salads and savory delights started off our potluck. Carrie wowed us with a down home spread of red potatoes, brussel sprouts, carrots, with kielbasa and succulent corn beef. Added to that were plates of scalloped potatoes, beans, quiche, stuffed mushrooms, and many more ways to say yum.

The room went from the sounds of happy conversations to the contented quiet of forks to plates and quiet murmurs of appreciation.



Photos by Nancy Howe



Dessert was a choice of many pies, fudge, brownies, bundt cake, and candy.

Gardeners are great cooks too!

A few days before Christmas, we had a fun day traveling to the Cheesecake Factory in Roseville for a holiday lunch, then on to High Hand Nursery in Loomis for plant shopping and Christmas gift buying, perhaps a few for ourselves as well. The fruit shed at High Hand has several fun stores including a great gift shop for pots and other garden gifts, and an olive oil store with so many great selections of oil and balsamic vinegars and a couple of other small shops. As you can see in the photos, a couple of us bought several plants that might be hard to find locally. The best part was spending time with fellow club members and getting to know each other better. Thank you all for another successful field trip!

- Anne P., Vice President



High Hand field trip, Photos by Joyce Hummel & friends





High Hand field trip, Photos by Joyce Hummel & friends



# Nancy's Garden Notes



At eight years old, "Attack of the Mushroom People" a 1963 film did effectively creep me out. For a while, I routinely checked my skin and that of my siblings for signs of mutant changes. I'm relieved to say, there were none. (Unless you count eventual adolescence.)

Now, in my post fire yard, as new things appear to feed on decaying wood and leaves, I marvel at their unique beauty. I want to better understand this part of my biosphere. Plus, it would be fun to safely gather edible fruits as I promote a native landscape.



*"Chicken of the Woods" or "Turkey Tails" or something else?*



In 2025, I will endeavor to learn about fungi and hopefully better identify those around me. Right now, I have a few guesses as I take my rainy day walks.

Please let me know if you can name the mushrooms pictured here. Do you have these in your yard? Send photos of your fungi and we will post them in upcoming newsletters for our mutual discovery and learning progress.

As gardeners, we have a real life movie unfolding before us. Take pictures, share the adventure here in the Watercan Post.







## Gardening with Squirrels: Tips for a Harmonious Coexistence

by Trish Bender

Gardening is such a rewarding hobby that connects us with nature in ways few other things can. Daily or weekly gardening provides us fresh produce, lush landscapes and vibrant floral displays. However, one furry visitor that can significantly change your gardening experience is the squirrel. While some might consider them pests, others find endless fascination with their antics. Understanding their behavior can help us coexist with these playful creatures.

As extremely intelligent and curious creatures, squirrels can outsmart the best gardening hacks, eating your tomatoes, raiding your bird feeders, stealing your precious tulips bulbs and turning their incisors onto your coveted house. Google squirrels and the first ten pages will cite article after article on how to rid your



**The average squirrel can bury up to 1500 nuts per season and only recover 50-74% of them.**

landscape of these pesky creatures. But a recent visitor from abroad made me aware of how special they are to people who no longer have them in their native landscapes.

North America is home to gray, black, red, white, and brown squirrels, fox squirrels, flying squirrels and other members of the Sciuridae family (think chipmunks, marmots, groundhogs and prairie dogs), and they all perform important ecosystem services.

Knowing their vital roles in our ecosystems is paramount to co-existing with them harmoniously.

**Propagation:** Since most squirrels do not hibernate, they collect and stash food during the warmer months to have at the ready in colder months when food is scarce. As a result of their omnivorous diets, squirrels will stash bulbs, nuts, seeds, fruits, berries and even mushrooms. Despite their intelligence, a great portion of these caches remain unclaimed and spread species far and wide. In a 2020 research study on Eastern Gray Squirrels in a suburban area, it was determined that the subjects spread food in every direction across a 10km range. According to Alex Potash, a postdoctoral researcher in the University of Florida's Department of Wildlife Ecology and Conservation. This behavior has had the most significant impact on forest expansion.

**Soil Aeration:** When squirrels bury their food, they sometimes choose ground storage. This can be a blessing and a curse as their tiny paws destroy your flawless turf while aerating the soil at the same time. In addition, during this aeration process, they typically spread healthy fungal spores that extend the fungal network into new areas. For most naturalist gardeners, this is seen a benefit as are mole and vole

Continued

tunnels in a woodland garden. It is only turf growers that find it troubling. The solution? Grow less grass or provide natural deep mulch areas of the landscape where this is more appropriate. It will also become more welcoming to the squirrel.

Food Web: one the biggest benefits squirrels provide is probably the one we are least likely to consider. Squirrels and other Sciuridae are a critical food source for owls, hawks, eagles, foxes, bobcats and coyotes. It has also been observed that the North American alligator may take one occasionally.

So given that squirrels are so important, how do we co-exist harmoniously without tearing our hair out or removing every bird feeder? The simple answer is to outsmart them.

Planting oaks, pecans, hickory and other nut trees provides food and nesting alternatives. This can be very successful if done in conjunction with protection of more precious food like your tomatoes and fruit trees.

Creating squirrel feeders away from squirrel-proofed bird feeders is another simple solution. Beware, however, that squirrel feeders may also attract raccoons and rats who share the same taste for corn, nuts and seeds.

In addition to barriers, bird feeders should be filled with unpopular squirrel foods like safflowers versus sunflowers. There are several squirrel-proof food mixes now on the market and a capsaicin spray that can be applied to bird seed that coats the seed in hot pepper the birds will not mind.

In the garden, barriers can include row covers for food crops, fencing larger areas and using hardware cloth cages to house your precious bulbs. Planting mint, oregano, marigold, and geranium are also great choices to create a scent that is pleasant to humans but unpleasant to a squirrel.

Around the house, think small. A squirrel or any other rodent, can enter a space that is 2-3" wide or smaller if it is wood that can be chewed into larger holes. Using 3/8" hardware cloth is an easy way to seal these spots.

Gardening with squirrels doesn't have to be a battle; it can be a joyful coexistence. With a little understanding and some strategic approaches, you can enjoy your gardening endeavors without unnecessary conflict. Embrace these furry friends, and find balance in your growing space. Happy gardening!

The National Gardener Blog, 11/13/2024

**LOOK FOR THE PASH DONATIONS CAN.**

Remember: Bring your cans & bottles to Northern Recycling. You can donate a portion of your proceeds to PASH.



Thank you!

Cans for cats & canines <https://www.pashcares.org/>

# Contemplate



Photo & Haiku by Nancy Howe

Threads of existence  
Proof that we spin as we seek  
Vibrant sustenance.