

Valley Wilds

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A publication of the LARPD Open Space Unit

70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge

Throughout 2017, the Livermore Area Recreation and Park District (LARPD) will be commemorating its 70th birthday with a variety of public programs and events. As part of this celebration, the open space staff is holding a special challenge to encourage folks to take part in our nature

programs, and to explore local open spaces with a ranger.

The 70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge will be a year-long series of specially designated walks, hikes, and bike rides throughout LARPD open space parks and trails, including Sycamore Grove and Holdener Park. Each month, Open Space staff will offer two or more specially designated ranger-led programs that give participants the opportunity to log miles as part of the challenge. Participants who log at least 50 miles with a

ranger through the program will receive a 2018 Sycamore Grove Calendar, and everyone who logs 70 or more miles with a ranger will receive both the calendar and a free 2018 Sycamore Grove parking pass. And finally, the person who logs the most miles by the end of the Challenge will receive, in addition to the gifts listed above, a free admission for themselves and one guest on a regularly scheduled Brushy Peak Adventure hike! Participants will not need to attend every program to receive an award, as there will be many more than 70 total miles offered.

You can join the challenge by attending any ranger-led activity listed with the 70th anniversary celebration symbol, and asking the ranger leading the activity for a program punch-card. The punch-cards will have 2.5 mile increments for you to keep track of how many miles you go with one of our rangers. Throughout the year, you can log additional miles by presenting the punch-card to the ranger leading any walk, hike, or bike

By Naturalist Heather Day



Hike 70 miles with LARPD Rangers!
Photo by Fred Deadrick

ride marked with the 70th anniversary symbol, and the ranger will punch your card for the appropriate number of miles for that event. Whether you are a first time park visitor, or a seasoned explorer, this celebration has programs for you. There will be short nature walks, long hikes, bike rides, bird walks, flower hunts, and nighttime explorations. We are kicking the program off with this month's January 7 and 14 ranger-led programs (see page 2).

We hope to see many new and familiar faces out on the trails in 2017 as LARPD celebrates 70 years of service to our community.



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Livermore Area Recreation and Park District

4444 East Ave. Livermore, CA 94550
www.larpd.org
Ranger Office: 925.960.2400

Ranger-led Programs

Experience nature and history in a special way. Programs are generally 1 - 2 hours in length. A \$3 donation is requested. A \$7 parking fee is charged at Sycamore Grove Park.

January Programs

Quick Look:

| | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------|
| Animal Sounds | Wednesday, Jan. 4 | 10 am |
| Get Those Boots On | Saturday, Jan. 7 | 10 am |
| Sing-a-Long Campfire (RSVP) | Sunday, Jan. 8 | 4 pm |
| Road Less Traveled | Saturday, Jan. 14 | 1 pm |
| Mushroom Madness | Sunday, Jan. 15 | 1 pm |
| Bright Winter Stars | Saturday, Jan. 21 | 6 pm |
| Tree Time (RSVP) | Saturday, Jan. 28 | 10 am |

Animal Sounds

Wednesday, January 4 10:00 am

Are your kids bouncing off the walls now that winter break is almost over? Bring them to Sycamore Grove Park where they can bounce all they want and learn about animal sounds and communication in the process. This fun program will be a combination of a sit-down talk and games in the meadow. Geared towards elementary-aged kids, but all ages are welcome. Cancelled if raining heavily.

Naturalist Heather Day Sycamore Grove Park, Reservable Picnic Area (call 925 960 2400 for directions)

Get Those Hiking Boots On (70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge!)

Saturday, January 7 10:00 am

"All truly great thoughts are conceived while walking." (Friedrich Nietzsche) It's time to start your 70 mile challenge. And you'll have great thoughts while doing it! Today's hike takes us through upper and lower Sycamore Grove for a 7 ½ mile trek. We'll stop for a break partway through. Dress for the weather, bring water, snack and/or lunch. Cancelled if raining.

Ranger Patti Cole Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)



Storytime and Sing-A-Long Campfire (RSVP)

Sunday, January 8 4:00 pm

Storytelling and singing around a campfire have been traditions for hundreds of years. Join us as we enjoy the warmth of a campfire, tell stories, and sing campfire songs. There are no seats at the campfire area so bring something to sit on. RSVP required no later than January 4 by calling (925) 960-2400 or emailing dsoles@larpd.org. Cancelled if raining.

Ranger Dawn Soles Sycamore Grove Park Reservable Picnic Area (Call 925 960 2400 for directions)

The Road Less Traveled (70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge!)

Saturday, January 14 1:00 pm

Come to Sycamore Grove Park for a 5-mile hike along some of the single-track trails in the park. Learn alternate routes so you can avoid the busy paved trail on busy weekend days. This hike is part of the LARPD "70 Miles for 70 Years Challenge," so you will get a mileage card stamped! We hike rain or shine!

Ranger Danny Haberman Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Rd. Entrance (1051 Wetmore Rd.)



New Year, New Plants

By Ranger Amy Wolitzer

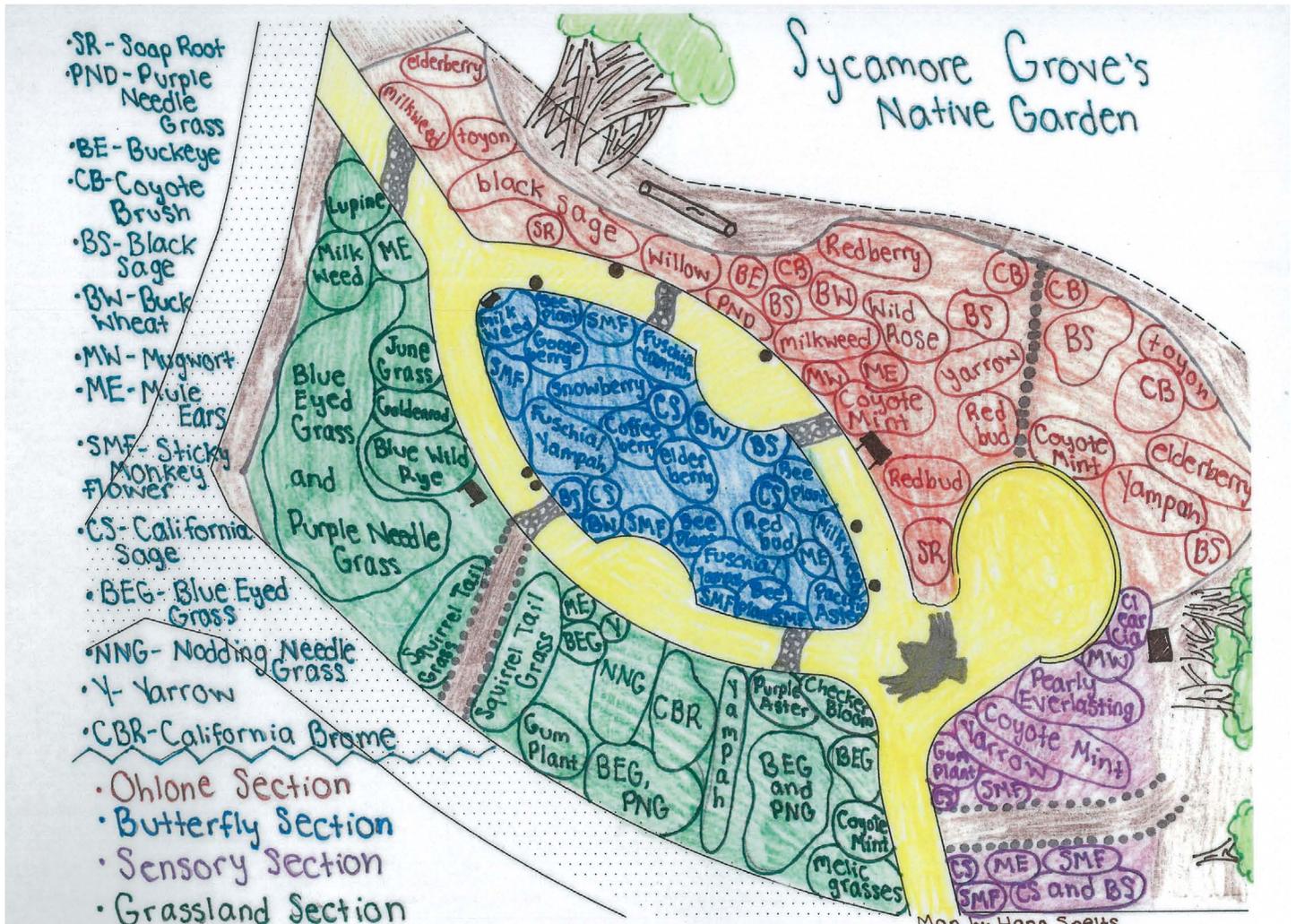
With the recent drought years, many people are rethinking landscaping in California. Although the dry months are when water-saving is on our minds NOW is the time to plant native plants! This article is designed to get you thinking about "Going Native" and provide you with resources about how to get started.

First of all, we encourage you to visit our native gardens in Sycamore Grove Park to get ideas of plants you might want to include in your yard.

The small Native Garden behind the Arroyo Road restrooms was established by former Open Space Volunteer Nancy Harden in 2008. Since Nancy moved out of the area a few years ago, it has been maintained by volunteer Conni Naylor. Visiting this area can give you an idea of what you can hope plants will look like once established.

The larger, fenced Native Garden near the Wetmore Entrance picnic area was planted just over a year ago. The garden was funded by a Nature Education Facilities Grant administered by California State Parks. It is maintained by a large number of Open Space volunteers. The garden includes a rainwater capture system and four thematic sections:

1. Grassland - showcases plants that would have dominated the hills hundreds of years ago, including bunch grasses and wildflowers.
2. Ohlone Garden - features plants that were used by Native Americans for food, medicine, fire making, or tools.
3. Butterfly/Hummingbird - the center of the garden features plants that pollinators love to visit as well as plants that caterpillars depend on.
4. Sensory - this section has plants that are fun to explore with the senses - some smell good, some are interesting to touch!



New Year, New Plants (Continued)

Check out this [map](#) of the garden and [detailed information](#) about the plants completed by Girl Scout Hana Spelts as her Silver Award project. Hana was an 8th grader when she did this project, but this is adult-level work and a great resource!



Frequently Asked Questions

How many plants are in the Native Gardens?

The native gardens contain more than 50 species of native plants! All but redbud (an important plant in Ohlone basketry) are species found naturally in Livermore. The initial planting at the end of November 2015 was 574 plants. Additional grass plugs and seedlings were added in early 2016, bringing the number of individual plants to about 800.

How often do you have to water?

Native plants need to be carefully tended during their first two years; after that most survive without supplemental water. During the dry season of 2016, Open Space volunteers watered the garden once a week using a garden hose and electric pump connected to the 2,500-gallon rainwater collection tank. After we used up the stored rainwater in late July, we refilled the tank with a water truck. A big “thank you” to watering volunteers including Charlie Siders, Cindy Clark, Teri West, Judy Mathews,

Pat MacDonald, Mary Ann Hannon, Holly Massey, Dave Lunn, and Dave Pendelton for their hard work this summer! We will probably water once a week or once every two weeks during 2017’s dry season. Hopefully, after that the plants will be well established and we will only need to occasionally bucket-water certain plants with higher water needs (like willows).

Does native landscaping look pretty year-round?

This is a matter of opinion! Those considering native plants for their yard should be aware many California native plants go dormant in the summer. This can mean they lose their leaves (like buckeye trees) or some plants (such as checkerbloom, mule ears, and buttercups) die all the way back to the roots or corms until the rainy season begins. Bunch grasses may turn brown or die back completely. Maintain a nice mulch around the plants and trim back dead growth, and your yard can look well-cared for year-round.

California Native Plants Resources

Places to purchase native plants:

The Watershed Nursery (510) 234-2222

<http://www.watershednursery.com/>

Grew many of our plants for us from local seed.

Open to the public Tues - Sun 10 am - 4 pm.

601 A Canal Blvd. Richmond, CA 94804

Alden Lane Nursery (925) 447-0280

www.aldenlane.com

Has a section featuring California native plants.

981 Alden Lane, Livermore, CA 94550

Pacific Coast Seed (925) 373-4417

www.pcseed.com

Has a great selection of wildflower and bunch grass mixes. May require \$150 minimum order.

533 Hawthorne Pl, Livermore, CA 94550

Native Here Nursery (510) 549-0211

www.nativeherenursery.org

101 Golf Course Drive, Berkeley, CA 94708

New Year, New Plants (Continued)

Local Native Landscape Designers

Kat Weiss Landscape Design
(925) 518-9083 kat@kwlanddesign.com
www.kwlanddesign.com/

Cindy Angers/ EcoFolia Design
(925) 323-5696 EcoFoliaDesign@gmail.com
www.ecofolia.net

Jennifer Kate Landscapes
(408) 201 3459 jklscapes@gmail.com
www.jenniferkatelandscapes.com/

Additional Resources

Borrowed with thanks from [Watershed Nursery](#).

California Native Garden Foundation
www.middlebrookcenter.com
CNGF is a non-profit organization that promotes gardening with California native plants.

California Native Plant Link Exchange
www.cnplx.info
CNPLX is a collection of links to websites about native plants, indexed by scientific name. You can find which nurseries carry plants you're looking for.

Las Pilitas Nursery
www.laspilitas.com
Species descriptions and guidance on how to select the right plant for the right place.

We hope these resources will help you get started! Watch this newsletter for programs in the Native Garden! Currently penciled in are a family-oriented "Storytime in the Native Garden" at 11 am on 3/26/17, and a Native Garden Open House on 5/7/17 at 1 pm. If you visit the garden on your own, you will find informational signs about the plants as well as a copy of Hana's garden map and plant guide in a mailbox near the garden entrance. You can email Ranger Amy at awolitzer@larpd.org if you would like to arrange a tour of the garden or would like to help with native garden work days.

More January Programs

Mushroom Madness

Sunday, January 15 **1:00 pm**

Join LARPD Rangers and experts from the Bay Area Mycological Society for our annual mushroom hunt! Adults and older children wanting to learn to ID mushrooms can go on a one-mile walk with the experts. Families with small children can take a ½-mile playful wander with Ranger Amy to see what we can find. Both groups will reconvene in the picnic area to examine our findings together. Please be aware that mushrooms may not be removed from the park.

Ranger Amy Wolitzer Sycamore Grove Park, Reservable Picnic Area (Directions? Call 925 960 2400)

Bright Winter Stars

Saturday, January 21 **6:00 pm**

Clear winter nights are the best time to see the night sky without all the summer smog. Come out to Sycamore Grove Park this Saturday evening for a short walk into the park to try out our new 8-inch reflecting telescope for a deeper look into the sky, including a look at the brightest planet, Venus! Cancelled if raining. If it's too cloudy for sky-viewing, we will take a longer walk to look for owls.

Ranger Glen Florey Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)

Tree Time (RSVP)

Saturday, January 28 **10:00 am**

Sycamore Grove has several sites where the rangers have planted native trees and shrubs and it's time to give them some attention. They need weeding, replanting, and mulching. If you would like to help, then this program is for you. Bring proper footwear, water, and gloves if you have them (we have some to lend). Sign up by calling (925) 960-2400 or emailing dsegur@larpd.org. Program will go 1 ½ to 2 hours and may involve a short walk to the sites. Cancelled if raining.

Ranger Darren Segur Sycamore Grove Park, Wetmore Road Entrance (1051 Wetmore Road)