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GARDEN



Seed money

Perennial plant club grows gardening with grants

BY DEBBIE ARRINGTON



Bret Harte School in Sacramento got a new fortified fence and irrigation system for its school garden with the help of a 2019 grant from the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club.

PHOTO COURTESY OF SACRAMENTO PERENNIAL PLANT CLUB

and letting it sit, I said, 'Let's do something worthwhile.' We're still doing that."

From an annual grants' budget of usually \$2,500, the club funds four to five new projects each year. Grants in 2019 went towards a new butterfly garden in Natomas, plus school gardens in Carmichael, Sacramento and Rancho Cordova.

"I go to see all the gardens and projects that receive grants," Wiseman said. "We've had community gardens, schools, church groups, all sorts of gardeners. The elementary schools are my favorites. It's interesting to see how they use the money."

The projects pay dividends far beyond fresh vegetables.

"The school gardens, in particular; the parents are so enthused about what's happening on their campus," Thompson said. "They're excited—somebody invested in us!"

Grants usually go towards projects that are, or will be, ongoing and educational in nature, "not one-time landscaping," she said.

Many grant recipients are focused on edible gardening such as vegetables or herbs, but grants have also gone to projects focused on helping wildlife and other educational themes. One grant went to a garden specialized in natural dyes.

What they all had in common: Hands-on learning.

"We're an education-focused club," Thompson said. "We're people who like to get their hands dirty. We like to see things grow. With these grants, we're encouraging others to grow things, too, and to learn more about gardening. We just want to invest and see what happens." □

Think of this as seed money for the future of Sacramento gardening.

Each January, the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club offers grants to local nonprofits and schools for gardening-related projects in Sacramento County.

Named for the club's longtime former president, the Saul Wiseman Grants promote garden and horticultural education, service and enhancement in our community.

"It's easy to get excited about projects like these," said Jane Thompson, who leads the club's grants committee. "It's not a lot of money—up to \$600 per project—but it gives them encouragement."

And it's not just the money.

"We go visit the projects," Thompson added. "We have a number of master gardeners and people with a great deal of knowledge in our club. They welcome that help, too."

From a little funding, the club has seen all sorts of gardens grow: Community co-ops, educational demonstration beds, wildlife habitats and more.

"It has been a lot of fun," Thompson said. "What really strikes us from the applications is how much gardening activity there is here."

The deadline for grant applications is Jan. 15, with the money distributed in February, "just in time for spring," Thompson noted. "That's when most people want to get started planting."

The grants program started five years ago when the Perennial Plant Club, one of Sacramento's largest gardening groups, decided to invest in tomorrow's gardeners.

"We have spring and fall plant sales," explained Wiseman. "We'd make some money. Instead of just putting that into our general fund



WANT A GRANT?

Visit the Sacramento Perennial Plant Club website (sacramento-perennialplantclub.org) for a Saul Wiseman Grant application and photos of grant-funded projects from previous years. For further information, contact Jane Thompson at sppcgrants@gmail.com.

Debbie Arrington, an award-winning garden writer and lifelong gardener, is co-creator of the Sacramento Digs Gardening blog and website.