



viewpoints

Spring 2014

Volume 44 Issue 3

A Community Newsletter from the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association



Annual Art & Garden Tour

May 4th, 2014 | 12:00 – 4:00 pm

GMIA members will once again delight in our Annual Art & Garden Tour on May 4th. Four generous homeowners in our neighborhood will open their garden gates to welcome you for a look at their unique outdoor sanctuaries.

This is a great opportunity to learn what plants flourish in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix region. Meander through the gardens for a spectacular afternoon of beautiful landscape designs, water-wise plantings, gorgeous outdoor “rooms” and peaceful retreats.

Inside this issue you will find our Garden Tour brochure and map. Be sure to bring this with you as you visit four amazing gardens in our neighborhood. As always, admission to our Garden Tour is complimentary for GMIA members whose dues are current. When members visit their first garden, they will receive wrist bands that will provide entry at each additional garden.

Nonmembers may participate on the tour for a nominal donation (\$5). There is no entry charge for children under 18 years old. While it is not our intention to open our tour to the general public, we will accommodate guests who wish to experience our event. We will gladly enroll new members at the tour for our annual fee of \$18 per household. Please be aware, however, that our organizational by-laws limit membership to residents or homeowners within our borders. Our geographic boundaries extend from east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd.

We hope we inspire you to cultivate your own private paradise, and that you invite us to see your garden in the years to come! 🌱

Come to Dinner You're Invited!

Enjoy mouth-watering fare from Phil's BBQ along with soft drinks, locally produced craft beer and wine. We are so pleased to invite you to attend our Annual Dinner Meeting on June 22nd from 5:30 – 8:30 pm. Our informal buffet style dinner is just \$10 per GMIA member with dues current. The meeting will be at the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden.

For our program, we have asked Supervisor Dianne Jacob to forgo prepared remarks and instead respond to questions from our audience. Please include your question on your reservation form. Note cards for questions/comments will also be available at the dinner. We want to hear about your issues and concerns.

Please be sure to invite your neighbors and encourage them to become GMIA members. Note: reservations are required. Our Annual Meeting is designed for GMIA members but nonmembers may attend for \$20 per person.

As a special bonus, complimentary tours of the Garden will precede the Annual Meeting. If you would like a complimentary tour, please be sure to note that on your reservation. Tour time is 4:30 p.m.

Get to know your neighbors and enjoy an evening under the stars. This is a great opportunity to connect with old friends, meet new friends, and hear what's going on in our area.

Reserve online at www.gmia.net or return the enclosed form. Don't delay, we want to be sure to have an ample quantity of Phil's delicious cooking. 🌱



GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX
IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

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Viewpoints is a community newsletter published by the Grossmont – Mt. Helix Improvement Association. Letters to the Editor should be sent to P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

This newsletter reflects the efforts of your entire Board of Directors.

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www.gmia.net

MISSION

GMIA is a 75+ year old nonprofit 501(c)4 public benefit membership organization. Our mission is to preserve and enhance the character and quality of the community and foster pride in the area. We do not employ a paid staff and are served by an all-volunteer board.

Message from the President

Biophilia: the love of nature

Many of us can relate to famed designer Charlotte Moss, who, when interrupted by her husband with some mundane bit of household business while working among her flowers, told her spouse, “Just pretend for one moment on I’m the ninth hole about to putt. This is my golf.”

Indeed, for many of us, hours in the garden restore our tranquility, lower our blood pressure, and fill our senses. We know we are so fortunate to live in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix region with large residential lots and neighbors who really care about their community.

For decades, GMIA has hosted our Art & Garden Tour because we recognize that pride of ownership and upkeep of our residences goes hand in hand with maintaining the character of our special community.

We all appreciate our neighbors who not only maintain but also improve their properties. To the many residents who have removed tired, thirsty lawns and installed appealing low water plantings, we salute you! For residents who are thinking about going “lawnless,” we hope you will take advantage of the terrific rebate outlined in this Viewpoints edition. Now is a great time to get onboard with water-wise landscaping. Plus, start or add to your drought tolerant plant collection when you attend our Succulent Swap on May 31st. Don’t have anything to trade? Come anyway, because we know that generous gardeners love to share their plant wealth with lots to give away.

Keep “nature deficit disorder” at bay by spending a peaceful day in the garden. On behalf of GMIA, thank you for your efforts to enhance the outdoor landscape around your home. When you maintain and improve your own residence, you also maintain and improve our entire community.



Thank You Donors

Thanks to the following donors who have made gifts to GMIA of \$25 or more in excess of their annual dues. We appreciate your support.

Julie Jessop Steve & Bonnie Turner Gail & Lorrie Bordeaux

Improving Our Community

Avocado & Fuerte

With help from Supervisor Jacob, GMIA representatives met with County traffic engineers to see what can be done to improve the intersection



at Avocado Boulevard and Fuerte Drive. We identified several issues: litter, weeds, faded crosswalk striping, and the ugly “candlesticks” in the center median. We are happy to report the County was quick to respond and sent a crew to remove weeds and trash, as well as repaint the crosswalk. Of course, weed abatement and litter control remain ongoing concerns and we

will do our best to stay on top of these problems. As for revamping the miserable looking center divider, we have been encouraged by Supervisor Jacob to design a project to improve this gateway. Your GMIA Improvement Committee is in the brainstorming stage for this project and we welcome your suggestions or participation with our group. Contact Larry Nichols at 619-440-1607 to be a part of this effort or share your ideas.

Fuerte/I-8 Park & Ride

The ongoing saga of our quest for night lighting at the Fuerte/I-8 Park & Ride continues. GMIA met with Supervisor Jacob and a representative



from CalTrans to discuss our options. Our research indicates that solar lighting might be the most affordable option. (Check out the solar street light at the intersection of Edgewood and Bancroft.) At Supervisor Jacob’s suggestion, we have asked CalTrans to grant a permit for lighting under our current agreement for the Park & Ride. Our hope is that we can use our current permit and avoid the very lengthy timeline for a new permit to be issued. We’ll keep you posted.

See IMPROVING on page 6

Got Fruit?

Many of us have more fruit on our trees than we can consume or have time to pick. If you have excess produce and would like to benefit less fortunate children in our region, here’s an answer.

On May 18th volunteer “gleaners” from Foothills Methodist Church will spread out though our neighborhood to harvest unwanted fruit. Your donated fruit will go to hungry kids at five nearby elementary schools in Spring Valley.

This project is a part of the Common Ground Collaborative, a cooperative effort of churches in our area: Foothills Methodist Church, Santa Sophia Catholic Church, and Shepard of the Valley Lutheran Church. Together they provide schools supplies, art programming, and volunteers for Spring Valley schools. At the schools they serve, the Collaborative has identified kids who come to school hungry due to families with very limited means.



If you would like to donate fruit or other garden produce, contact Susan Naslund to schedule a time for gleaners to come by. Susan can be reached at 619-501-3872 or enaslund@cox.net. The Collaborative hopes to have additional gleaning dates in the future.

Fruit trees and abundant gardens are the hallmark of many homes in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Your excess produce will nourish a hungry child, help reduce waste in our environment, and remove a food source for rodents and other unwanted critters. What a great idea. 🌱

Owl Habitat at Risk

by Tom Osteen

On my daily walks I've noticed that a few neighbors have put in owl houses. You know the ones mounted on a tall pole with a birdhouse-looking structure big enough for a family of owls. What I've found, however, is that few of the owl houses have ever been occupied. In talking to owl house owners and doing a little research, I've learned that owls in our community are at risk. A high percentage of owls are dying due to what is known as a secondary kill from poison used by many people to control the rat/mouse population. These are the pellet type rat poisons that we can easily purchase at all the home improvement retailers. Secondary kill is caused by consumption of poisoned rodents by critters secondary in the food chain. Owls, hawks, coyotes, raccoons, possums, dogs, cats, etc. are included in this category. They eat the poisoned rodent and suffer the same fate.

There are alternate solutions to this problem but they take more time and effort than using the readily available pellet type poisons. There are non-toxic ways to control rodents through snap traps, electronic shock traps (the zapper), glue traps, and by other baits that do not contain poisonous chemicals. I found these baits on-line and local feed stores may carry them.

It takes a collective effort to control rats. If they are in one house, they may be present in other houses in your neighborhood. If you have rats in your home, call the Vector Control Program and request a FREE Rat Inspection and Rat Control Starter Kit. Contact (858) 694-2888 or www.sdcounty.ca.gov/deh/pests/ratcontrol.html

Rat inspections are performed on the exterior of buildings and only in San Diego County. ▲



Rat Control Starter Kits

The Vector Control program distributes Rat Control Starter Kits to residents within San Diego County during site inspections. The Vector Control program is NOT a pest control company and does NOT provide poison bait. This kit will enable you to control rats yourself and provide examples of some of the material needed to perform exclusion. This kit includes:

- Tamper-resistant Trapping Station
- Rat Control Brochure and Instructional DVD
- 1 Rat Snap Trap
- 1/4" Sample Hardware Cloth (used for exclusion)

What Is Up with My Otay Water District Sewer Bill?

by Kathleen Hedberg



Mine went up 40 percent! This huge increase was due to San Diego's dry and warm winters. Let me break it down for you. To create your bill, Otay Water District receives information from Helix Water

District (or your water provider) about how much water you used from January 2013 to April 2013. Otay Water District then averages the water use for those months, (minus 15 percent usage discount in recognition that not all water used by customers will flow to the sewer system), and multiplies the average by a Usage Fee. This calculation, plus a Monthly System Fee, becomes your new sewer monthly charge for the entire year starting in January 2014.

In 2014, our usage fee increased 22 percent from \$1.92 to

\$2.35 and the Monthly System Fee increased 8 percent from \$13.30 to \$14.38. The average customer uses 14 units, thus, their bill would increase by \$6.20 per month to \$42.35 (overall a 17 percent increase). Of course, this assumes you used the same amount of water as the winter before.

However, since last winter was hotter and drier than normal, my water use increased 42 percent (I suspect mainly for irrigation—averaging an increase from 5.6 units to 8 units) and consequently my sewer bill for 2014 went up 40 percent! I am pretty sure that my 40 percent water use increase did not go down the sewer. Perhaps we need to reevaluate that 15 percent usage discount in times when it is hot and dry? Note: For many members, your annual property tax bill includes a charge for sewer service rather than a monthly billing. ▲

Need more information? Check out the Otay Water District link:

www.otaywater.gov/otay/SewerRates.aspx



New Rancho San Diego Sheriff's Station

11486 Campo Road, Spring Valley, CA 91978

Station Phone: 619-660-7090 | Emergency: 911 | Non-Emergency: 858-565-5200

Our Grossmont-Mt. Helix community will now be served by the new Rancho San Diego Sheriff's Station, a 27,000 square foot facility on approximately five acres. At full capacity, the new station can house 90-100 employees, including patrol deputies, detectives, command staff, professional staff, Explorers, Senior Volunteers and Reserve Deputies.

The Station is equipped with a generator which will keep the Station fully operational in the event of emergency situations such as fires and earthquakes. The building includes several green building features such as recycled building materials, natural day lighting, energy efficient mechanical systems, and low water landscaping with drought tolerant plants. ▲

Let's Fix Those Potholes in Our Streets!

by Pat Ryan

How frustrating is it to drive through our Mt. Helix neighborhood trying to avoid those aggravating potholes? Wonder how to do something about it? Well, we have been putting the County to the test, and we have some positive news to report.

I spoke with Tom Herzberger, the Field Manager at the San Diego County Department of Public Works. They are the maintenance arm of public works. Their job is to stripe roads, sweep streets, fill potholes and degraded road edges, replace missing street signs, do sidewalk and bridge repairs, clean county maintained channels and even run snow plows in the winter.

Mr. Herzberger explained, "Customer service is number one for us! We try to make it easy for residents to make road service requests. Our website has a road service request form with a wide-open format so you can provide an explanation of the problem." Their phone number also takes a detailed



Department of Public Works
Hotline: 858-694-3850

sdcounty.gov/dpw/roads.html

message of what you want repaired.

Recently a member called the road service phone number (858-694-3850) to request that four potholes at the end of their street be repaired. They returned home that same afternoon to find that the holes had already been filled! Mr. Herzberger reported that their trucks are at the ready to be dispatched when complaints are filed by phone or on their website. "We appreciate your efforts to get the word out," he commented when I interviewed him recently about road hazards in our area. "We also want to

hear about shrubbery that is blocking visibility on street corners," he added.

Check out their webpage for information listed about all their services. And next time when you drive over that pothole, note the street address and nearest cross street, and email them or give them a call. They are waiting for us to help them take action! ▲

Go Green

If you would like to "go green" and receive this newsletter by email (instead of postal mail) let us know at yourgmianeighbor@gmail.com. We are pleased to offer our online newsletter in full color! Please Note: This special Garden Tour edition is mailed to all members.

IMPROVING from page 3

Grandview & Resmar

Residents who live near and drive by this intersection complained to GMIA about the proliferation of cars, boat, motor



homes and motorcycles that park here displaying "For Sale" signs. We have seen four cars at one time parked in the right-of-way and agree it looks really terrible. No one wants their street corner to serve as a used car lot. To solve this problem, we asked San Diego County to

install "No Vending" signs at this location and for enforcement from the California Highway Patrol to ticket offenders after the signs were placed. A similar situation was resolved a few years ago near the Fuerte Drive and Sunset intersection.

First the good news: two "No Vending" signs were installed early in March.

Now the bad news: vandals worked hard to rock the signs out of the ground and then stole them. We alerted the County who promptly replaced the signs. The new signs were removed and stolen within a couple of days.

Here's what we are doing: we are in the process of meeting with the Traffic Engineer in charge of this project and with the California Highway Patrol to solve this vandalism problem. ▲

Thank You Clean Up Volunteers

GMIA maintains the Park & Ride at I-8 & Fuerte with a once a month clean up on the third Saturday of each month. A big shout out to our members who help keep this area looking good: Tom Ilas, Greathcen & Kathy Morrison, Mary Russo, Bud Willis, Mike Sciulli. Plus an extra special thanks to Kathy Morrison who agreed to take over emailing reminders to our volunteers. We really appreciate the extra help.

Many hands make quick work. Please consider pulling a few weeds and picking up litter. It takes 30 minutes to an hour, depending on how many volunteers show up. Contact Improvement Committee member Tom Osteen at tosteen2@hotmail.com or 619-464-8887. Help one time or make it a habit. Thanks! ▲



In Appreciation

Our annual Garden Tour is made possible by the efforts of your entire GMIA Board of Directors and community volunteers. Our garden tour brochure was edited by Director Pat Ryan. Thanks to Directors Holly Yarris, Allison Henderson, Kay Bickley and Pat Ryan for their great garden descriptions. Director Sue Creveling graciously serves as our Volunteer Coordinator. A special thank you to Director Jeff Rule, who skillfully oversees our event as Garden Tour Curator. Jeff secures the gardens, coordinates efforts leading to the day of the event, procures our event permit, manages logistics and signage, and expertly handles all the myriad details that make the Tour so special.

Thank you to all!

Succulent Swap

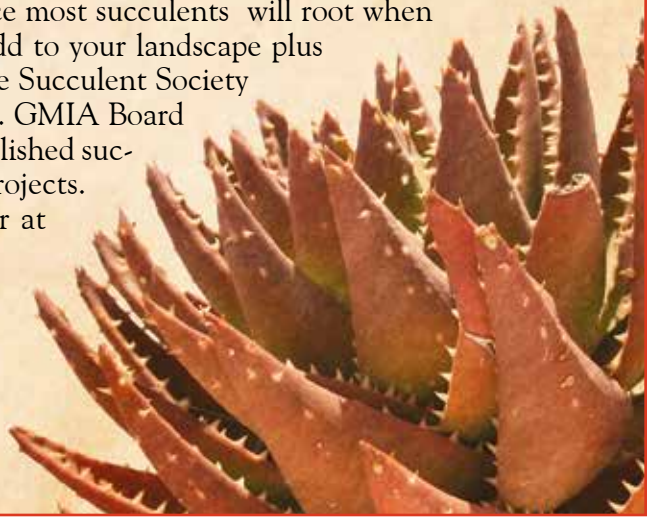
May 31st 10:00 am – 12:00 pm

GMIA members Tere Trout and Jonathan Becker have graciously offered to host our plant exchange in their beautiful garden located at 10805 Melva Road. You may remember touring this nearly two acre fabulous garden at our 2013 Art & Garden Tour.

- * Trade, swap or give away your succulents and other plants
- * Leave with lots of new plants
- * Bring your neighbors
- * This is a FREE event sponsored by GMIA

Bring your cuttings (any size is fine) and extra plants. Since most succulents will root when simply put in dirt, this is a no-cost and no-fuss way to add to your landscape plus meet your neighbors. As a special treat, Terry Parr from the Succulent Society will be joining us to answer any questions and offer advice. GMIA Board Member Don Newcom has donated a few exceptional established succulent specimens for sale to support our Improvement Projects. Questions? Contact GMIA Board member Dagmar Miller at 619-579-1844 or dagmaremiller@yahoo.com.

GMIA encourages everyone to take pride in maintaining their yards and promote water-wise landscaping. We hope you will join us at our Succulent Swap. Together we support the GMIA mission “Preserve and enhance the community and foster pride in the region.” See you there!



Drive Like Your Kids Live Here

Like most Grossmont-Mt. Helix homeowners, we live on a narrow road that has no sidewalk. There are dozens of kids in residence on our block. Unfortunately, drivers careen around our blind curve like Indianapolis 500 racers.

Recently we vacationed in a Northern California neighborhood with winding streets so like our own Grossmont-Mt. Helix community. Many homeowners in the area had simple red yard signs with the message: “Drive Like Your Kids Live Here.” We learned that this grassroots effort to get drivers to slow down has been working in communities across the country.

Inspired, we ordered and placed a sign in our front yard.

Does the sign remind folks to slow down? We think it is helping. Does the sign contribute to visual blight? We hope not. There is no sure-fire way to evaluate our one-house traffic campaign but, according to the National Highway Safety Administration, motor vehicle crashes are the leading cause of death for children aged 3 to 14. We are doing what we can to ensure the safety of everyone, especially kids, on our block. If you would like to try this on your street, check out www.drivelikeyourkidslivehere.com. 🌱



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To ensure your membership is current: please look at your mailing label on this newsletter. On it you will find the renewal date of your membership. Note: if the date is June 2014 or later, your dues are paid in full. Thank you! Annual membership is just \$18. You may renew online at our secure website www.gmia.net or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.



Rebate Available for Turf Removal

by Kathleen Hedberg

Now is the time to re-evaluate your turf landscape. There are two Turf Removal Rebates and when both are applied you can receive up to \$3 per square foot! This is the best Turf Removal Rebate Helix Water District has ever offered! Check it out at:

www.hwd.com/conserves/rebates.pdf

Helix Water District will host a drought workshop to inform the public about statewide, regional and local water supply issues and ways to conserve the precious resource. Thursday, April 17, from 5:30 to 7 p.m., at the District's Operations Center at 1233 Vernon Way in El Cajon, the event will include a question and answer period. RSVP is required by April 3. For more information, visit:

www.hwd.com/news/drought2014-workshop.htm

Calendar

- Sunday, May 4th**
Art & Garden Tour
- Sat., May 31st**
Succulent Swap
- Sunday, June 22nd**
Annual Dinner Meeting

Share Before Recycling
Please share this newsletter with a neighbor before you recycle it.