

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



# viewpoints

Spring 2011

Volume 41 Issue 4



## In This Issue:

**Member Discount at  
The Garden...**

See page 3

**Cell Tower Update...**

See page 3

**2011 Garden Tour  
Program...** See Insert

**Annual Meeting  
Invitation...** See Insert



## ALL NEW Annual Meeting Format

**M**ark your calendar and reserve today for our all new GMIA Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 28th!

Spend an enjoyable evening in the soft spring air at the amphitheater of the magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. We'll "Meet and Mingle" from 5:30 – 7:30 pm. Here's a chance to greet old friends and meet new neighbors. We will taste five outstanding wines (and also offer non-alcoholic beverages) along with substantial appetizers provided by Moose Corner Bakery and Café to complement the selections.

Our private party will have exclusive use of the Garden, lush with spring blooms. The program will include an Annual Meeting to elect the slate of directors and a brief address about the state of our community. This year we will have a limited program in order to provide more time for socializing. Live soft instrumental music will enhance the evening as you explore the winding paths of this gorgeous landscape.

Reservations are \$25 per person; the price is \$30 at the door. Our all-volunteer committee has been hard at work to create this new format. We hope you will join us as we celebrate our unique way of life. Please support GMIA and send in your reservation form found in this newsletter. You may also go online to reserve/pay at our secure website, [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net). ▲

## Condos on Mt. Helix?

**A**t the recent April 13th meeting of the Board of Supervisors, 5 ½ hours of deliberation left significant issues "on the table" that could negatively impact our community. Changes under consideration to the General Plan are of great concern to your GMIA board. First and foremost, we are deeply concerned by a proposed change to allow attached units in single family zones, potentially destroying our unique semi-rural way of life. Our elected representative Supervisor Dianne Jacob presented a motion to oppose this text, but she was unsuccessful in getting another supervisor to second her motion. GMIA strongly encourages Supervisor Jacob to renew her effort to oppose attached units in

our region. We hope she will take the time to secure a second supervisor to support her stand on this critical zoning issue prior to the next Board of Supervisors meeting on August 3rd, 2011. Additionally, Supervisor Ron Roberts' effort to subordinate (marginalize) the effectiveness of all community plans, including our Valle de Oro Community Plan, remains "on the table." If finally approved, Roberts' efforts to marginalize the community plans will be a giant step backwards to the days when unincorporated communities had little or no say in determining their future. We also strongly encourage Supervisor Jacob to renew her effort to defeat Roberts' plan to end the effectiveness of our community plans ▲

GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

**Officers**

Susan Nichols, President  
440-1607

Dan Mitrovich, 1st Vice President

Larry Nichols, Treasurer/Membership  
440-1607

Kay Bickley, Secretary

**Directors**

Julie Ball	Don Newcom
Kay Bickley	Jeff Rule
Sue Creveling	Pat Ryan
Allison Henderson	Mark Schuppert
Rosemary Hewicker	Mike Valley
Dagmar Miller	Dave Zimmerman
Val O'Connor	

**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](http://www.gmia.net)

## Message from the President

May is an important month for GMIA. Throughout the year, our all-volunteer board has been hard at work organizing our Art & Garden Tour and an all-new Annual Meeting for you. These events took many hours to produce. We are so fortunate to have volunteers who provide the great gifts of their time and talent to our community. Please take a moment to express your appreciation for their efforts.

Look for our directors wearing GMIA vests at the Tour, and also identified by name tags at our Annual Meeting.

This year marks a turning point for GMIA as we re-invigorate our Annual Meeting with a new format. Your feedback about past events has encouraged us to depart from our traditional sit-down dinner with speaker program. Also, we were encouraged to seek an exciting new venue.

Come mingle with old friends and meet new neighbors, stroll through the magnificent Water Conservation Garden, and support our community with your attendance. We hope you will embrace our efforts and join us on May 28th.

## Membership Renewals

As we approach our 2011 Garden Tour event and our Annual Meeting, it is especially important that membership dues are paid for the current year (7/01/2010 – 6/30/2011). Please check your mailing label on this newsletter for the date of your membership expiration. Our Art & Garden Tour is open to current members (and their families), and of course voting at the Annual Meeting is likewise only for active members. You may pay your dues (just \$18) online with our secure website using PayPal at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or mail a check to GMIA, P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943.

GMIA would like to thank our members who have generously donated additional funds to support our efforts. As an all-volunteer, non-profit membership organization with limited resources, we greatly appreciate your gifts. Thanks for donations from \$25 to \$100 received this quarter from:

Bob & Amy Hargrove	Gayle Marsh	Fred & Mary Jo Stalder
John & Teresa Fistere	Elsie Gladden	Ruel & Carol Bench
Conrad & Sue	Jonathan Cavan	Gail Andrade (2nd time this year)
BrudererGoefrey &	Melvin Etter	

## Do You Have a Garden to Share?

Please consider opening your garden for our annual tour next year. Sharing your garden is a fulfilling experience that brings a lot of joy and inspiration to our community. Our Garden Tour Committee appreciates gardens of all sizes and styles. For more information about participating, please call Jeff Rule at 619-466-0362. ▲



## Cell Tower Update

A proposed cell phone tower atop Mt. Helix has been tentatively approved by the Valle de Oro Planning Group. The initial plan was modified to include a reduced height faux tree, additional antennae located in two faux boulders, and a small Craftsman style building to house equipment. The goal was to make the installation look as natural as possible. Residents who might be affected by the cell site on the Mt. Helix Park Cox lot received notification of the Planning Board meeting in order to have an opportunity to voice concerns. No objections were presented. The recommended plan will be forwarded to the County Board of Supervisors for review. ▲

## GMIA Membership Discount At the Water Conservation Garden

The Water Conservation Garden at Cuyamaca Community College is in full bloom! GMIA encourages our members to support this magnificent resource by becoming members. Why become a member? When you join, your membership will help provide operating funds to maintain exhibits and programs that serve our community. Opened in 1999, the Garden is now managed by a nonprofit entity, Friends of the Water Conservation Garden, who raise funds to sustain the Garden.

Annual family memberships are usually \$60, but GMIA members who join for the first time in the month of May will be eligible for a special discounted price of \$50. To receive this discount, please call or visit the garden to sign up. Benefits are many. Plus, you will have the satisfaction of knowing you support an organization whose mission to promote water-wise gardening directly benefits our community.

According to the Water Conservation Garden website, more than 52,000 people visited the Garden last year, and the Garden reached more than 100,000 people with its outreach programs. In 2009, Sunset Magazine listed it as one of the "Top Ten Western Public Gardens." How fortunate we are to have the Garden in our neighborhood with its lush but water-wise landscapes, artful plantings, and inspirational design. Want to do more? At the Garden, opportunities for volunteers abound.

The Water Conservation Garden is located on the campus of Cuyamaca Community College and is open daily from 9:00 am to 4:00 pm, some holidays excepted. Parking and admission are free, with a suggested donation. For detailed directions and further information, check out [www.theGarden.org](http://www.theGarden.org) or call 619-660-0614. ▲

## Time for Mosquito Control

According to our San Diego County Vector Control website, mosquitoes need only one inch of standing water (check your plant saucers!) to breed and can complete their life cycle in as little as one week. Mosquitoes can carry the West Nile virus and other diseases. Due to our ample rainfall this year, measures should be taken to eliminate standing water that may have collected on your property or that of neighbors. An alert GMIA boardmember contacted Vector Control to advise them of a deep rut in her neighborhood filled with standing rainwater. Responding within a day, a county technician inspected and treated the problem. Also, if you notice a green swimming pool in your neighborhood or know of a foreclosed or unattended home that has a swimming pool or pond, please contact the Vector Control Program at (858) 694-2888 or [vector@sdcounty.ca.gov](mailto:vector@sdcounty.ca.gov). Vector Control Technicians will treat the pool/pond to prevent it from breeding mosquitoes. ▲

## 5/28 Annual Meeting Agenda

5:30 – 6:15	Socializing Wine tasting & substantial appetizers
6:15 – 6:30	Welcome Election of the board of directors Presentation of the Al Platt Memorial Award Brief address: "State of Our Community"
6:30 – 7:30	Enjoy the Garden, socializing

GMIA is a 70+ 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.

## Save the Dates!

### 2011 ART & GARDEN TOUR

Sunday, May 15th, 12:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Visit four beautiful private gardens in our community. Complimentary admission for GMIA members. ▲

### 74<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting *Meet & Mingle*

Saturday, May 28th, 5:30 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.

Enjoy an evening “Meet and Mingle” at our private wine-tasting at magnificent Cuyamaca Water Conservation Garden. ▲

## In Appreciation

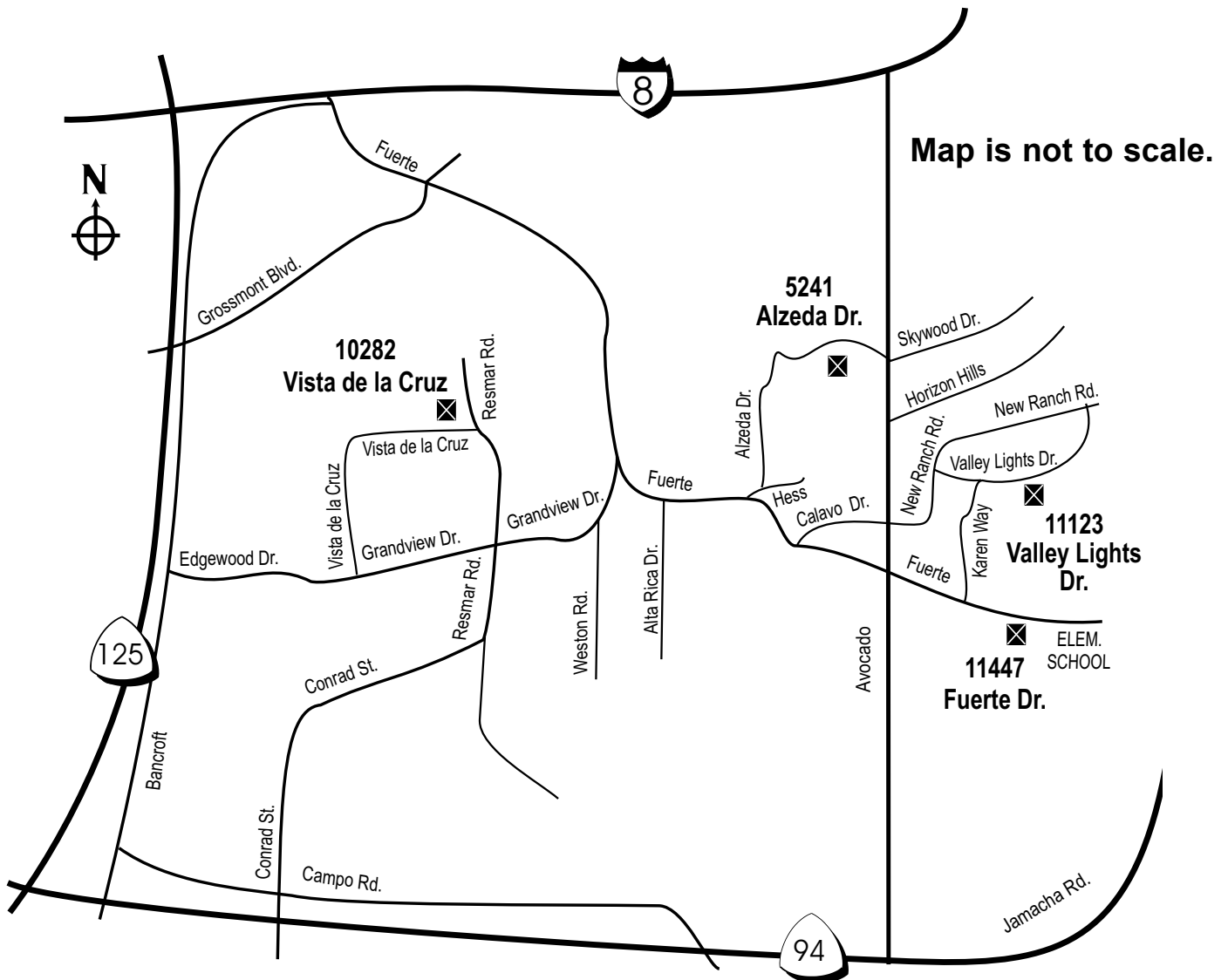
Hats off to GMIA board members Jeff Rule for once again superbly directing the Art & Garden Tour, to Pat Ryan for her brilliant descriptions of the gardens, and to Don Newcom for providing his expertise for our tour. It goes without saying that we couldn't have a garden tour without the gardens! Thank you to our generous members Gregg & Debby Hamann, Larry & Susan Nichols, Jeff & Dawn Silva, and Bill Altonen & Stephanie Young who opened their gardens for our members to view. We also thank members of the Foothills Art Association for their participation in this year's Art & Garden Tour. Visit their website at [www.artid.com/members/Foothills](http://www.artid.com/members/Foothills) to see the work of artists on this year's tour. Kudos to Kay Bickley for chairing our all-new Annual Meeting, and much appreciation to Committee Members Jocelyn Zimmerman, Marty Ornish, Diane Bernal, and Allison Henderson for providing their creativity and vision. ▲

Grossmont - Mt. Helix Improvement Association

2011 **ART &  
GARDEN**  
TOUR

Sunday, May 15th 🌱 Noon - 4 p.m.

On behalf of our GMIA members, thank you to our Art & Garden Tour hosts who have generously provided their beautiful gardens for our event. This year's gardens offer a special look at what homeowners are doing to become more water wise, including removing thirsty lawns and capturing rainwater. Thank you also to our fine artists whose work will be on display for purchase and enjoyment. As always, please show consideration when parking and do not block the road or driveways. Be sure to wear flat walking shoes as some properties have a slope or stairs. Children who are respectful and under control are welcome—no playing or running around. We hope you enjoy this year's tour. 🌿



This Art and Garden Tour is produced by GMIA Board Member Jeffrey Rule; garden descriptions provided by Board Member Pat Ryan; additional committee support by Board Member Don Newcom.

Design & layout by Victoria Vinton, Coyote Press Graphic Communications, [www.coyotepressgraphics.com](http://www.coyotepressgraphics.com).



The GARDEN of  
Jeff and Dawn Silva  
11447 Fuerte  
Drive

When owners Jeff and Dawn Silva bought their 1.13 acre property in 1989, it was considered “the dump” of the neighborhood. Giant boulders left from the grading of Fuerte in the 50’s were piled in the corner of their yard, amid 60 year old eucalyptus trees. Except for some areas of lawn, it was mainly undeveloped. After an extensive remodel of their 1953 home, they embarked on the design of their garden. Their focus was to create a vision from above, down the slope and out to an expansive view across the canyon, reminding them of their travels to Greece and the Mediterranean. Looking down the slope, you will notice a giant Cape plumbago growing over a tree stump, and an area on the left with mixed grasses, statice, aloes, euphorbias and other succulents. The perimeter of the garden is bordered with bougainvillea, giving privacy from nearby neighbors. A large portion of the garden below the house is planted over leach lines and needs little irrigation. Recently the owners installed two 500 gallon tanks to collect rainwater from their roof. The eucalyptus trees to the right at the entry provide them with a cord of wood each year and showcase a “wild” area amid the boulders. A resident bobcat has left his signature scratch marks on their trunks.

The natural flow of sight is down through the blooming annuals to the large entertainment area below. African daisies, Mexican primrose and other colorful annuals fill the garden beds that line the pathway to the patio and barbeque. A lovely custom built gazebo provides a shady retreat, perfect for a wedding. Walk inside and notice the antique metal sculptures hanging from three sides of the gazebo. Doing all the design and labor themselves, they used the leftover boulders to terrace and build a streambed, which cascades down to a hand dug pond bordering the patio. Now filled with koi, gold fish, and mosquito fish, removable netting protects them from birds of prey and a visiting great blue heron. A few citrus remain from the original orchard. A vegetable garden is in the making and a vineyard of 20 Sangiovese grapevines has recently been planted. They expect them to yield grapes for wine in about three years. The owners wish to leave some areas natural, open and undeveloped along the perimeter of their property to attract wildlife and preserve the sweeping views across the valley. The Silva garden is a wonderful example of what homeowners can do with a large property and a desire to design, develop and build a garden over time, lovingly, with their own labor. 🍃

## The ART of Carole McClure

Carol was born in San Diego and taught in Chula Vista for thirty-five years. In addition to teaching, Carol traveled the world with the United States International Shooting team. A multimedia award-winning artist, Carol McClure paints in several media including: oils, pastels, colored pencil and scratch board. Carol is equally adept at painting various subjects and easily moves from landscape to flowers, portraits and wildlife. Carol’s artwork is in collections in the U.S., Europe and Australia. 🍃

## The ART of Betty Johnsen

Betty developed a great interest in art as a high school student in Newport, Rhode Island where she designed many displays and projects. She relocated to Southern California with her husband and three children. Later in life she expanded her interests in watercolor and pastels through classes with various teachers, including Foothills artists Marilyn Grame and Carolyn Teincuff. Later she took workshops with Daniel Green in Ireland, Dianna Ponting in California and Robert Goldman in Arizona. 🍃



The GARDEN of  
Larry & Susan Nichols  
10282 Vista de la  
Cruz

When last we toured the Nichols’ garden in 2007, the backyard was featured, with its lovely blooming cottage garden, roses, iris and perennials, citrus, redwood trees, exotic chickens and inviting pool and patio. Except for the mature citrus, the owners planted the entire garden themselves over the past 24 years. New additions this year include two peppermint weeping willows, and a “potagerie” or a formal kitchen garden planted in the shape of a wheel. Carrots, blueberries, tomatoes, potatoes, chard, lettuces and other vegetables will provide fresh produce while the blooming annuals and perennials will produce continual bouquets.

This year we highlight the Nichols’ front yard. Continuing their mission to conserve water resources, they have removed the thirsty lawn in their traditional circular drive and replaced it with a model water conservation garden. The goals for this garden were to create good bird habitat with seeds on every plant, low water use, low maintenance using succulents and perennials, and “things that wave in the breeze!” With the help of a local landscape architect (look for his plan on display) the Nichols have created the look of a lovely, natural meadow using 500 drought tolerant plants of 30 different varieties. A system of rotat-

ing water-wise sprinklers installed by the homeowner irrigates the entire yard. Jacaranda and weeping bottle brush, along with three Natchez crape myrtles, anchor the garden and will soon provide color and shade. The large pepper tree and the guava tree are originals. Foundation plants, such as rosemary, kangaroo paw, and ‘Wynnabe Gem’ westringia are surrounded by mass plantings with accents that fill out the remainder of the garden. Look for large areas of deer grass, fountain grass and bunny tail grass that flow into borders and other groupings of colorful perennials. You will spot many varieties: agapanthus, calandrinia, pink and red daylilies, white iceberg roses, pink breath of heaven, Coulter bush, ‘Little John’ bottle brush, chalk fingers, waxflower, yellow bulbine, scabiosa, lion’s tail, blue fescue, proteas and leucospernum. Susan asserts that perennials “take care of themselves!” A fruiting passion vine covers the charming wrought iron gazebo set amid the meadow. Walk around the street and driveway and enjoy the garden before stepping through the gate at the right to tour the expansive cottage garden in the rear. This lush garden incorporates sensitive design, careful planning, and easy-care maintenance to inspire the viewer. 🍃

### The ART of Jennifer Meeder

Jennifer is a self-developed watercolor artist, specializing in vibrant flower portraits. Her love of flowers and gardening inspires her artwork. Each portrait is a study of color and shape that captures the character of every petal, leaf, and hue. She has received numerous awards in local competitions and has taught her watercolor techniques privately in La Mesa. She is a member of the San Diego Watercolor Society, Southwestern Artists’ Association in Balboa Park, and Foothills Art Association of La Mesa. Her work can also be seen at Miguelito’s in Coronado. Visit her website at <http://www.jennifermeeder.com>. 🍃

### The ART of Loretta Deczynski

Loretta has loved to draw since childhood, but did not pursue art seriously until she was disabled by carpal tunnel. She developed and enhanced her art as a form of therapy. Each piece is a labor of love. The flowers of California are most often the centerpiece of her paintings, but she also enjoys figures and animals. Her paintings have won awards in various juried art shows. Her paintings are on display at Gallery 23, Spanish Village Art Center in San Diego and Foothills Fine Art Gallery in La Mesa. Visit her website at [lorettaart.com](http://lorettaart.com). 🍃



**Important Note: Close-up parking is very limited. Please park on 2 nearby side streets and walk to this property. The driveway is long and steeply graded. Please be aware of this consideration if you have difficulty walking up or down an incline.**

When owners Bill Altonen and Stephanie Young decided to leave Pt. Loma, they chose the sunnier climes of Mt. Helix and discovered this two acre property and stunning 1987 custom home. Situated on two levels at the end of a long sweeping driveway, it had been landscaped like a park by the original owner and feels very private and secluded from every angle. As you stroll down the long driveway, notice the mature landscaping amid what was once an expansive lawn opposite the entrance. Magnolias, hibiscus and lovely deodar cedars are now growing from a more water conservation minded medium—bark mulch! At the entryway to the house, a beautiful large smooth barked crape myrtle stands amid what will soon become a fountain area. The owners have devoted much of their first nine months of occupancy to painting and decorating the interior of their home. They are generous to share their garden with us at these early stages of its renovation, and their vision is still a work in progress, much like the gardens of most of us!

Walk downhill and through the gate to the pool area on the left, bordered by dozens of rose bushes. A lovely patio overlooks the property. Bill and Stephanie invite you to peek into their sunroom, furnished in a Mexican theme with artwork from their many sojourns to Puerto Vallarta. On the right another extensive lawn area has been removed to conserve water and is now the setting for a gazebo and future relaxation and work-out area under the trees. Notice the owner-made cedar owl box, still hoping for a resident. Don’t miss the Red-tailed Hawk’s nest high up in the eucalyptus trees to your left.

If you wish to view the lower level of the property, walk carefully down the slope toward the large carrot wood tree. A stone drain that runs with the winter rains crosses the property here and is landscaped with drought tolerant plants. Notice the old hay rake in the distance under the eucalyptus trees. Walk on past the former dog yard and along the fence and up the steps. On your right you will pass a large orchard with many varieties of citrus and stone fruit trees which Bill is trimming and bringing back to life. Turn left at the house and pass Stephanie’s small vege-



If you would like to participate in or help with next year’s Art & Garden Tour, please contact GMIA at [www.gmia.net](http://www.gmia.net) or write us at

GMIA, P. O. Box 2751, La Mesa CA 91943-2751

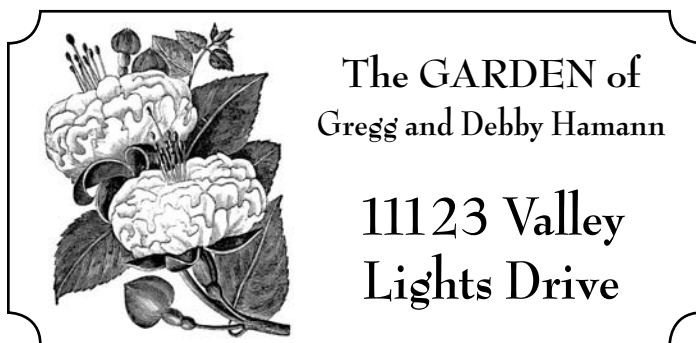
table garden in progress and continue through the narrow hedge on past the pool area to exit. This garden illustrates how an owner is striving to convert a large, once verdant property with 32 sprinkler valves into a more conservation minded, drought tolerant landscape. We look forward to seeing it blossom! 🌿

### The ART of Bob Kelsch

Robert “Bob” Kelsch considers himself a colorist, designer and draftsman who paints what excites him, naturally leading to his focus on landscapes, portraits and figure painting. He has developed his talents in design, drawing, layout, painting, and illustration by studying throughout his life. He enjoys working primarily with such mediums as oils, acrylics and colored pencil. He regularly travels to remote regions of the Western USA and Canada to capture special scenes that would be fun to paint or draw. Bob has won many awards for his portraits and paintings. A very popular artist, his paintings are in high demand. 🌿

### The ART of Hazel Ross (Noisette)

Hazel was born on the island of Arran off the west coast of Scotland where she developed her love for nature and its beauty, which has influenced her painting ever since. After a career and raising a family, she returned to painting while living in France where she studied the local butterflies, wild orchids and mushrooms. Since moving to San Diego in 1999, she has been an active member of the Foothills Art Association, serving as the “webmaster” for their website at [www.artid.com/foothills](http://www.artid.com/foothills). While she is known for her miniature paintings in watercolor and portraits in pastel, she is also showing some oil and watercolor landscapes. Her paintings are in collections all over Europe as well as in Australia, Japan, the United States and Canada. Watch for her selection of miniature paintings popular when she was a previous GMIA garden artist. 🌿



Last seen on the 2000 garden tour, this year marks our third visit to the spectacular palm oasis created on this 1.5 acre property, developed in the 60's by Gregg's father and originally covered in native chaparral. Since 1988 when the Hamanns bought the house from him, they have been adding extensively to the collection that started with the now giant Mexican fan palms, king palms, Senegal date palms and Mediterranean fan palms that form the “Jungle” in the front area across from the Bali Hai style home.

Gregg and Debby have expanded their exotic collection to more than 1200 specimens, including 582 palm trees and

more than 400 other species. Many were started from seeds collected in their travels. The under story of the entire garden is covered with palm mulch created by Gregg from the 300 fronds he trims each week to keep the palms “tidy.”

Enter the garden from the curving driveway of dark stained concrete stamped with the impression of palm fronds. Stroll through “the Jungle” on your left, crossing over the creek on the new bridge. To identify each of the rare and unusual varieties of plants, Gregg has created a new labeling system. You will realize you are in a botanical garden when you see the 660 specially shaped rocks that have been sandblasted and colored to feature the date planted, the size of the container, the species, the genus and the origin of each plant.

Take the pathway at the left of the house to the patio level, opening to expansive views of the mountains to the south and east. Massive boulders which feature a waterfall and a slide, all surrounded by large palms and ornamentals border the newly remodeled pool. Walk out onto the mammoth flat granite slab, a well-known feature in the area before the property was developed. Continue your journey around the pool to the left and down the trail through the palms and past the base of that same massive boulder and the thatched hut built into it. The owners use drip irrigation with water from an 800 foot deep well and rainwater collected and stored in a 1200 gallon tank. Wander the trails throughout the property and emerge at the top to view lush citrus, an orchard with apple, apricots and nectarines, and a vegetable garden. Explore yet another area of palms and fascinating plantings on your left as you walk out the driveway entrance. By now you are bedazzled by the array of exotic species and the devotion of the Hamanns to tending and sharing their palm paradise on Mt. Helix! 🌿

### The ART of Claire Rule

Claire Rule shares her passion of photography by creating irresistible note cards of flowers, animals, beaches, mountains and other vistas around San Diego and beyond. Inspired by the beauty of everyday life, Claire enhances her craft with travel and photography courses in this ever-changing digital age of photography. She has recently been engaged as a freelance photographer for [www.mounthelix.patch.com](http://www.mounthelix.patch.com) where you will find her covering the environs of Mt. Helix, Spring Valley and Casa de Oro. Enjoy a preview of Claire's rich collection of these notes cards by visiting her website: <http://www.clairerule.com>. 🌿

### The ART of Vicky DeLong

Vicky DeLong works as a ceramic artist/sculptor utilizing the hand-built slab technique. Her interest in architecture shows in her highly textured work that also incorporates intricate patterns and abstract organic forms. Her artistic visions and ceramic techniques combine to produce a wide array of vessels, baskets, and wall or table vases. She creates her work in her home studio and in Studio 16B at the Spanish Village Art Center in Balboa Park. She is a board member of both the San Diego Museum of Art Artist's Guild, and the Allied Artists Association of San Diego. She is a member of Spanish Village Art Center and the Clay Artists of San Diego. Visit her interesting website at [www.zhibit.org/vickydelong](http://www.zhibit.org/vickydelong). 🌿