



# viewpoints

Fall 2012

Volume 43 Issue 1



## In This Issue:

**Fire Safety...**  
See page 3

**Oleander Leaf  
Scorch...**  
See page 4

**Mt. Helix Wine  
Growers Assn...**  
See page 5

**Water-Wise Tips...**  
See page 7



## Come One, Come All *New Year's Walk Up the Mountain*

**B**ring your friends and neighbors – everyone in the community is invited to join us! Welcome the New Year with our 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Walk Up Mt. Helix on Saturday, January 5<sup>th</sup> at 10:00 am.

We'll meet at the Fire Station at 10105 Vivera Drive and stroll together to the Mt. Helix summit, approximately 1.3 miles round trip. Enjoy entertainment and light refreshments at the top. Meet your neighbors, relish the beauty of our community, and welcome the New Year! As always, well behaved children and dogs are welcome.

If you would like to lend a hand, your all-volunteer GMIA board would be glad to have your help. We are a friendly group and appreciate any level of commitment to help with things like, set up, publicity, gathering supplies, and securing local entertainment. To join the Mt. Helix Walk committee, contact Susan Nichols at (619) 440-1607 or email her at [Lsnnichols@cox.net](mailto:Lsnnichols@cox.net). ▲



## Community Forum a Success

**O**ur State of the Community Forum confirmed what we hoped: residents in our area have a lot of interest in maintaining, preserving and enhancing our community. Our audience members listened and questioned panelists including **County Supervisor Dianne Jacob**, **Captain Pete Callewaert** (Sheriff's Department), community volunteer **Dr. Noori Barka**, Grossmont Healthcare District **CEO Barry Jantz**, and **Code Enforcement Officer Steve Murray**. Here are some of the highlights:

See **FORUM** on page 6

## 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  
318-5260

**Directors**

Sue Creveling	Tom Osteen
Allison Henderson	Jeff Rule
Rosemary Hewicker	Pat Ryan
Tom Huffman	Mark Schuppert
Dagmar Miller	Mike Valley
Don Newcom	Dave Zimmerman

**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.*

Editor: Susan Nichols

Design & Layout: Victoria Vinton,  
Coyote Press Graphic  
Communications

Printing: Best Printing  
Casa de Oro

**www.gmia.net**

## Message from the President

**I**mprove – to make better. A simple definition; a challenging agenda. By joining together with other like-minded members of the Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association, you have recognized the vital role our stewardship provides for our community. In coming together, we can influence the proceedings of government, developers, and other external forces that affect our quality of life. Thank you for your important support.

Over the 75 years that GMIA has been around, we have had many successes. In recent years, we were successful at stopping the straightening of Fuerte Drive, which would have resulted in increased traffic speed and the condemnation of many homes; we were instrumental in the establishment of the Mt. Helix Nature Park to preserve the historic site when it was in crisis; we stopped the annexation of our community by the city of Spring Valley. These are just some of the accomplishments you have been a part of as a member of our organization.

But not every issue has been an unqualified victory – the fate of the Chicken Ranch still leaves a bitter taste for many of us. It is important to remember that thanks to the efforts of GMIA, the Valle de Oro Planning Board and many concerned residents, we overturned the initial attempt by the developer to reduce lot sizes to just ¼ acre; the lot size must now be ½ acre. However, this was only a partial achievement; this parcel size reduction from the original San Diego County Master Plan for this area (4 acre parcels) was a blow to us all. Most recently, your GMIA board spent countless hours at work to stop cell phone providers from attaching their equipment to utility poles in our front yards. Although we researched and presented ample evidence that these installations were not in the best interest of our neighborhoods, and had the support of Supervisor Jacob, our position did not prevail. Based on this negative experience, we plan to forge new relationships so that those who don't live here but are in positions of power to make decisions about our community will better understand the nature of our community.

Looking forward, I am pleased to tell you about a new direction for our organization. For some time, your Board of Directors has been evaluating prospective projects to improve our community. To that end, we have set aside resources, gathered information, and met with government agencies. Turns out, it is no easy task to spend time and money to beautify our neighborhood – although it should be! Fortunately, Supervisor Jacob has stepped in to facilitate cooperation with various stakeholders. We are working to beautify and improve a major Mt. Helix corridor and hope to have the cooperation of government agencies to do so.

We who live in this beautiful neighborhood have a great stake in the outcome of issues that can change our way of life. If you would like to be a part of our Improvement Committee for this project, or have other improvement projects for us to consider, we welcome your involvement. Please send me an email or give me a call.



## San Miguel Fire Keeps GMIA Members Firewise with Home Fire Safety Advice

By Pat Ryan

It's not too late in the season for GMIA members to enjoy mild outdoor weather all the way through December. John Coleman, KUSI meteorologist and founder of the Weather Channel, considers November to be San Diego's sunniest month of the year! San Miguel Fire District is at the ready to provide information regarding wildfires and weed abatement, as well as safe use guidelines for grilling and outdoor recreational fires in those cozy fire pits and bowls that have become so popular. Wildfires are on our minds as well, and the SMFD website, <http://www.smgfire.org/> provides a wealth of information and links to help us be more prepared and firewise.

Weed abatement and overgrown yards are always a concern of GMIA homeowners, especially in the fire season. The traditional fire season begins on June First, with September

and October historically the worst months. CalFire reports that there is now wildfire danger in every month in San Diego County. San Miguel Fire has an effective weed abatement program and notes that our community is an active part of their program. If you see a fire hazard relating to a weed abatement issue, or a residence with an overgrown yard, call 619-670-0500, or use this link to Fire Prevention Service to file a confidential report: [www.fireprevention.net/hazfbsanmiguel.htm](http://www.fireprevention.net/hazfbsanmiguel.htm).

On the recreational side, San Miguel Fire recommends many safe practices for our outside grilling on those gorgeous fall evenings in our Grossmont-Mt. Helix area. U.S. fire departments respond to an average 8,200 home fires involving barbecues each year. According to the National Fire Protection Association, 29% of

See FIRE on page 5

## Thank You Donors

GMIA wishes to thank the following members who have donated \$25 or more during the last quarter to support our organization and its programs.

Anonymous	Jeff & Gayle Marsh
Ralph & Kathie Allen	Gary & Janice Paul
Jim & Geri Bollman	Paul & Janel Pehau
Russel & Joy Boucher	Harold & Patti Schioldager
Ronald & Mary Alice Brady	Fred & Mary Jo Stalder
Peter & Joan Camana	Fletcher & Marcy Thorton
Eric & Susan Ehrenfeld	Eleanor H. Tobin
Dr. Charles & Gloria Eller	Miles & Carol Todd
Mary Gilligan	Guy & Signa Wilcox
Raymond & Barbara Lee	Oscar & Dorothy Wissell
Charles & Beverly Little	

## Cell Antenna Update – October 2012

The Valle de Oro Planning Group, GMIA, and numerous residents spoke out in opposition of the proposed placement of cell antennas that will be located on utility poles along the roads of Mt Helix. Supervisor Jacob supported the community's efforts, but was unable to sway the other Board Members who voted in favor of the cell phone companies.

Cell antennas are not shared between the various providers and we fear that the Board of Supervisors has set precedent that will result in the potential for many more antennas. We appear to have lost this particular battle; however, you can be assured that GMIA will continue our efforts to protect and preserve our community character. We thank all of you who joined us at the Board Meetings or wrote letters and we appreciate all of you who help support this community by being GMIA members. ▲





## Trees of Mt. Helix

### *Pinus pinea* – Italian Stone Pine

by Jeff Rule

The Italian Stone Pine featured is located in the driveway entrance of GMIA members Helen Robbins and her late husband Attorney A. Ray Robbins. Most likely the tree was planted when the house was built in the mid 1920's by General Leo 'Dutch' Hermle. The 2.25 acre property was referred to by General Hermle as "Sugar Hill," due to all the sweet fruit trees planted on the site. Renamed by the Robbins family as "Loma Dulce" ("Sweet Hill" in Spanish), the family has lived in the Dillon Drive neighborhood in the western most area of the GMIA since they purchased the home in 1966. What makes this tree special to the owners is the incredible size, shape, and beauty of the tree. The tree was most likely planted from three individual trees placed next to each other in the center of the driveway. This specie of pine can grow 40'-80' in height and 40'-60' wide, and has a moderate growth rate. The tree's mature natural form is a umbrella canopy with many branches. This species of pines comes from Italy and can be seen in many San Diego County skylines. Twenty eight huge Italian Cypress line the driveway up to the impressive Stone Pine. The tree has been home for many different kinds of birds and is visited regularly by the 'flying parrots'.

This series of articles is about interesting trees within the GMIA area. Members are encouraged to share their favorite or special tree with others through these articles. If you have a tree that you would like to share with fellow members, please call Jeffrey Rule. ▲

## Oleander Leaf Scorch

by Tom O'Steen

On my daily walks and travels throughout the Grossmont/Mt. Helix community, I have noticed that many oleander shrubs are not looking healthy. These plants have been used for years to define our property lines or as carefree privacy screens. The oleanders with their slender leaves and azalea-like flowers are in abundance throughout this lovely area we call home.

Upon investigation, I have learned these plants have been under siege from two culprits over the past few years. The oleander leaf scorch was first noticed in the Palm Springs-Indio area in the early 1990's. It has since spread throughout most of Southern California and is feared to be moving north into the central valley. This disease is caused by the bacterium *Xylella fastidiosa*. The bacteria feed in the water-conducting tissue of the plant. As their numbers grow, the tissue is blocked depriving the plant of water and nutrients. Symptoms can be found year-round but the warmer weather accel-



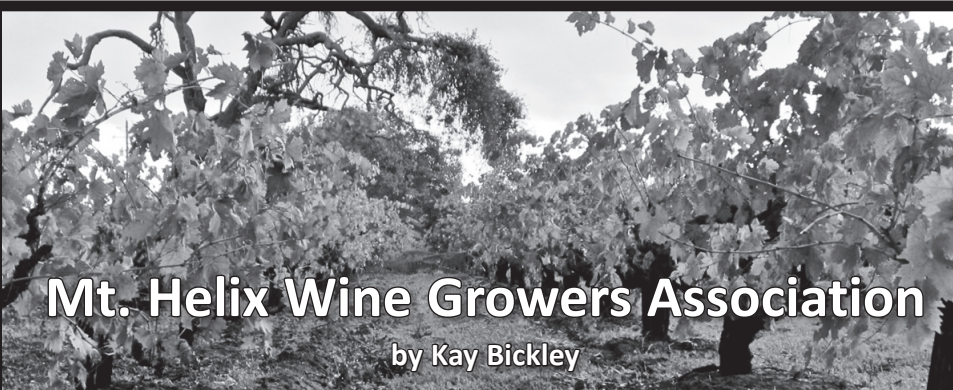
See **SCORCH** on page 7

FIRE from page 3

the home structure fires involving grills started on a courtyard, terrace or patio. Locate grills well away from the home, deck railing, eaves and overhanging branches. Keep the grill clean by removing grease or fat buildup from the grills and from trays below the grill. Never leave your grill unattended. For more information, see San Miguel's website at Fire Prevention & Safety Tips | San Miguel Fire District.

You might be surprised to learn that there are regulations in place for your fire pit. Fire bowls are increasingly popular, and can be placed just about anywhere you can find a spot. San Miguel has established some useful Recreational Fire Guidelines for fire pits. Recreational fires should not be located within 30 feet of a structure unless contained in a fire pit. Having a charged hose or a 4-A rated fire extinguisher nearby is a good idea. An adult should always be supervising. For the full regulations on fire pits see: [http://www.smgfire.org/sites/default/files/Recreational\\_Fire\\_Guidelines.pdf](http://www.smgfire.org/sites/default/files/Recreational_Fire_Guidelines.pdf).

Other services offered by San Miguel Fire include free home safety inspections. As a part of their "Free Voluntary Home Fire Safety Inspection Program", they will check both the exterior and interior of your home and offer fire safety tips and suggestions. The inspection takes 40-45 minutes and no fines or citations are issued on residences. To schedule an appoint call (619) 660-5357. For a link to their useful checklist, see: [www.smgfire.org/sites/default/files/HOME\\_INSPECTION\\_1-10-12\\_Final.pdf](http://www.smgfire.org/sites/default/files/HOME_INSPECTION_1-10-12_Final.pdf). ▲



## Mt. Helix Wine Growers Association

by Kay Bickley

**W**e are happy to report the number of vintners (makers of wine) in the Grossmont-Mt. Helix area has increased from an original core group of eight households to more than thirty. Many of our readers contacted the initial group (mentioned in a previous Viewpoints article) to share their experience and expertise.

GMIA member Dawn Silva continues to serve as the contact for the recently formed "Mt. Helix Wine Growers Association" and has organized gatherings for the group of grape growers. The Association has expanded via word-of-mouth, meeting 4-5 times a year to discuss their ongoing passion with wine: the successes and challenges with grape vine planting, staking, trimming, irrigation and watering, and combining similar varieties to make wine. Some growers have only a few vines while others are changing their landscape to replace trees and other plantings with vines. All have the same desire—to produce grapes and eventually make drinkable wine.

Not only has there been an increase in growers, but the number and different types of grape vines cultivated has increased as well. Of the initial group of Mt. Helix vintners:

- ◆ The Ryders started with 18 vines, now have 34, and expect to add another 50 (out goes the grassy

lawn, in goes the grape vines) – and just made their first batch of wine.

- ◆ The Wermers now have 27 vines, trellises set up for 40 more, and plan to have a total of 100.
- ◆ The Silvas began with 20, currently have 50 vines, with plans to add 25 more.
- ◆ Stephanie Young now has close to 300 vines.

The most common grape varieties grown by the group include: Cabernet Franc, Zinfandel, Sangiovese, Cabernet Sauvignon, Merlot, and Shiraz. Grape stock was obtained locally at a variety of places including Simpsons, Home Depot, Maness in Jamul, and other locations in Potrero and Ramona.

In our area, only resident Henry Arnold has a de-stemmer and a crusher which he very generously allows others to use. Henry began planting vines in 2004 and in 2006 made his first wine (he was very pleased with the outcome); his goal is to continuously make good wine. With no prior knowledge about grapes, he started by reading "From Vines to Wine", learned by trial-and-error experimenting with different grapes, and now grows only those varieties that suit his microclimate.

Those interested in joining this group, or desiring more information, may contact Dawn Silva at [dnjsilva@cox.net](mailto:dnjsilva@cox.net). ▲





## Calling All Photographers

**A**re you a shutterbug who loves to take pics of our Grossmont-Mt Helix neighborhood? Would you like to share your photos of Mt. Helix with other like-minded GMIA members? If so, GMIA is hosting an exploratory committee to bring together photographers from our neighborhood.

We plan to showcase our GMIA Photography Committee with a Mt Helix Photo Gallery at the annual Art and Garden Tour, plus feature their photos in our newsletter, Viewpoints. Maybe even a Mt. Helix photo contest! Please contact GMIA through our website or just drop us a line at: [YourGMIANeighbor@gmail.com](mailto:YourGMIANeighbor@gmail.com). ▲

### FORUM from page 1

Always a wealth of information about what is going on in our community, **Supervisor Jacob** updated our audience about the “missing” Route 125 & 94 connector. This transportation corridor is slated to be completed by 2020, and is important to our neighborhood as it will help reduce commuters driving on Fuerte Drive. Construction delays for our new sheriff’s substation on Jamacha (next to Skyline Church) have pushed back opening until 2014. Supervisor Jacob expressed concern over recent legislation AB90 that will release parolees in San Diego county and reminded residents to secure their homes.

**Captain Pete Callewaert**, recently appointed to lead the Lemon Grove Substation that serves us, has extensive in all phases of law enforcement. “Intelligence led law enforcement” was the method he expounded on, which

includes a multi-agency approach to sharing information. With only three months at his current assignment, Captain Callewaert said he found our semi-rural neighborhood similar to the North County community where he lives with a similarly low crime rate.

Some new residents in our community are members of the Chaldean community, and so GMIA invited **Dr. Noori Barka**, a local business man and Chaldean leader to educate us about their group. We learned that they are Christian refugees from the country of Iraq who fled their war-torn country. Approximately 20,000 Chaldeans live in the East County; one out of five families own businesses. Dr. Barka is currently at work to promote intercultural understanding with the development of a Chaldean Cultural Center.

The Grossmont Healthcare District was established under state law and funded by taxpayers to provide the hospital and services. In 1991, Sharp Healthcare leased the hospital. **CEO Barry Jantz** provided a brief history of the District which included a 2006 public vote to increase taxes to improve the facility. As a result of that funding, the hospital is currently in the midst of new construction to build a heart and vascular center. The Grossmont Healthcare District also distributes grants to organizations that benefit our local community.

**Code Enforcement Officer Steve Murray** spent a lot of time responding to the many questions our audience had for him. The subject of noise came up repeatedly. We learned that “people” noise, such as parties or loud music, is handled by the sheriff, and that noise such as construction or other business related noise is under the code enforcement jurisdiction. Dead trees and other fire hazards are the business of the Fire Inspectors, although Mr. Murray offered to help with referrals to that agency. We learned that Code Enforcement Officer Pete Mendoza is available every Monday from 8:00am – 4:00pm at our local sheriff’s storefront at 9736 Campo (in the Starbucks shopping center). He can also be reached Tuesday through Friday by appointment.

We tip our hats to our Forum Chairperson, Allison Henderson, and Forum Committee members Kay Bickley and Holly Yarris, along with the GMIA Board of Directors who helped out with day-of-the-event assistance. Thanks also to Murdock Elementary School, Principal John Ashley, and the La Mesa School District for providing a convenient venue for our event. We look forward to making this an annual event. ▲

SCORCH from page 4

erates the process. The leaves begin to yellow and the branches droop; soon the margins of the leaves turn brown and eventually die. As the disease progresses, more branches are affected and the plant dies. Cutting off the affected branches may slow progress of the disease, but won't stop it. It can take three to five years from when the symptoms are first spotted for an oleander to die. Some experts predict that more than 90 percent could die in the next few years.

The second culprit that facilitates the bacterial transmission from plant to plant is the glassy-winged sharpshooter. This insect looks like a small grasshopper that is about a half-inch long, brown in color and has clear wings. The bacteria replicate in the sharpshooter's mouth, so that once a sharpshooter adult acquires the bacteria, it is infectious for life. When the sharpshooter moves to another plant to feed, it deposits the bacteria into the host plant and the deadly process begins. There is no known cure for oleander leaf scorch.

The bacteria that causes oleander leaf scorch does not survive in the soil where the plant was growing. Thus other shrubs and trees can be planted in the same spot. Here are a few recommendations from the San Diego County Master Gardener Association as good bets for replacing dying oleanders: *Dodonaea viscosa* 'Purpurea' (Purple Hop Bush), *grevillea* 'Long John', *heteromeles arbutifolia* (Toyon), *callistemon citrinus* (Lemon Bottlebrush), *podocarpus macrophyllus* maki (Shrubby Yew Pine), *anisodonte* 'Tara's Pink' (Cape Mallow), *raphiolepis* 'Majestic Beauty' (Indian Hawthorn) and other suggestions that can be found at [www.mastergardenerssandiego.org](http://www.mastergardenerssandiego.org). ▲

## WATER-WISE GROSSMONT-MT. HELIX HOMEOWNER

### "Smart" Controllers Help Conserve Water

by Jeffrey Rule

Are you guessing when to water or relying on preprogrammed timers that may not be efficient? Consider installation of a "smart" controller which uses weather information and site conditions to determine how much water to apply and when to irrigate. Weather-based smart controllers draw upon a variety of climatic conditions. Some controllers utilize historic weather data supplemented with on-site weather data. Other controllers rely on a subscription service to download information daily.

Soil moisture sensor smart controllers measure the amount of moisture in the soil monitored by buried probes, to determine irrigation schedules.

Pilot studies have shown typical water savings to be in the range of 20%-40% annually, versus homes equipped with traditional sprinkler controllers (i.e., timers). In addition, landscapes that are watered appropriately are healthier and less likely to suffer from fungal disease and insect infestations that can require costly treatment or replacement, potentially saving homeowners even more money. Once these systems

are installed and programmed, they usually require no additional monitoring and will irrigate the landscape at peak efficiency.

The cost of "smart" controllers varies according to the number of zones and features in the controller model selected. A general range is slightly more than three times that of a comparable conventional controller. In addition, some weather station-adjusted controllers require a small monthly or annual fee for

transmission of daily weather information. Other, internal sensor-based "smart" controllers rarely require transmission fees.

The proper installation and initial setup of "smart" irrigation controllers generally require an in-depth knowledge of soils, precipitation rates, slope measurements and related factors. Therefore, it is strongly recommended that homeowners work with a certified irrigation contractor who is specifically trained and experienced in the installation of "smart" controllers.

This article is based upon information provided by the Irrigation Association. For more information please see [www.irrigation.org](http://www.irrigation.org). ▲



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 2013 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](http://www.gmia.net) or mail your payment to GMIA, P.O. Box 2751, La Mesa, CA 91943-2751.

## GMIA *Who We Are & What We Do*

The Grossmont-Mt. Helix Improvement Association (GMIA) is one of the oldest and largest associations of its type in San Diego County. Formed in 1938 as a result of community concern for the lack of adequate land use planning and zoning type requirements, we are a non-profit public benefit corporation. We represent over 7,000 single-family residences with a population approximating 20,000 people. Our region includes parcels east of Bancroft Drive, south of El Cajon, generally north of SR94 and Rancho San Diego, and west of SR54/Jamacha Rd.

The primary mission of GMIA is to work on behalf of all GMIA community members to ensure that the quality and character of our community is preserved and enhanced. Unlike a typical "homeowner's association," GMIA does

### GROSSMONT - MT. HELIX



### IMPROVEMENT ASSOCIATION

not own any property or facilities, nor is it responsible for any property maintenance. GMIA is served by an elected, unpaid Board of Directors and has no paid officers or employees. The GMIA Board works with County and regional governmental entities to help resolve issues that impact our community such as transportation systems, traffic control, planning and land use, zoning, code enforcement, as well as crime preven-

tion and law enforcement.

GMIA invites and encourages all residents in our membership area to become active members and to support the efforts of the GMIA Board to preserve and enhance the character and lifestyle that are currently enjoyed in our wonderful community. For more information on GMIA, please visit our website at [www.GMIA.net](http://www.GMIA.net) ■