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# Management Update

THE ECHO 2025

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## ORGANIZATIONS AND COMMITTEES

### PAC BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Hansen 415-847-7155**  
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COMMUNICATIONS **Mary Currie, Chair;**  
**Carol-Joy Harris, Charlotte Weiser**  
**Stephen Plocher, Chair**

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#### FINANCE SUBCOMMITTEES

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**Stephen Plocher, Greg & Sheri Smyth, Brad Witherspoon**

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**David Gray, John Hansen, Pam Hyer,**  
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### HOL BOARD

PRESIDENT **John Feld 510-495-4138**

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SECRETARY **Anne Lakota 415-713-4606**

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AT LARGE **Charlotte Kells 617-306-0265**

AT LARGE **Kamala Allen 415-306-6865**

AT LARGE **Jill Boland 415-827-3381**

### STANDING COMMITTEE: PARK MARKET

**Jill Boland, Chair; Lynda & Dave Baker, Ginger Christie,**  
**Mary Coyne, Edgar Furlong, John Hansen, Sally Harris,**  
**Susan Hoff, Meg Jordan, Anne Lakota, Joan Leopold, Gary**  
**McClendon, Deb McNeil, Sue Meyer, Steve & Tara Plocher,**  
**Michael Theircof, Brad Witherspoon**

### MAR VAL BOARD

PRESIDENT **Carolyn Corry 415-370-6403**

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2<sup>ND</sup> VP/RESERVATIONS **Susan Hoff 707-365-9426**

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## Ongoing and Completed Maintenance Work

- **Tree Work** (Phase 5): Three large pines and one oak have been removed. Eight additional large pines are in the process of removal.
- **Concrete & Structural Repairs:** One driveway has been repaired to eliminate trip hazards. One retaining wall has been completed.
- **Street & Drainage:** Street paint striping has been completed. The Park perimeter V-ditch and all catch basins have been cleaned in prep for winter rains.
- **Utility & City Coordination:** PG&E has sent follow-up questions regarding transformers for the new streetlights. The City of Novato has awarded a bid for the roof replacement project.
- **Sewer & Water Systems:** Quarterly sewer cleaning is currently in progress.
- **Pool & Spa:** The swimming pool heater is turned off for the winter. The spa remains open and maintained at 103°F.

## Community Reminders

- When children are visiting as guests, please keep them from playing in the cul-de-sacs. It is dangerous for both children and drivers, and the noise has prompted multiple complaints.
- Many driveways and carports are cluttered with trash or stored items. Your neighbors don't enjoy looking at it. These conditions can attract rats and are in violation of Park rules. Please make the effort to clean it up.
- Management has hired a landscape contractor to plant the garden in front of Pumphouse 1 on MVD. Thank you to residents who submitted plant ideas and suggestions.



### Echo Deadline to Submit Articles

Email articles by the 8<sup>th</sup> of the month for the next month's issue with the subject "Echo" to Anila Manning at [anilahere99@gmail.com](mailto:anilahere99@gmail.com).

# *Letter to Residents* **PAC & MVC**

## **A Message from Your PAC and MVC Boards**

### **And the Beat Goes On ...**

In-person negotiations with the City are ongoing, and we are making good progress in presenting and clarifying our differing perspectives. However, resolving those differences continues to use up the remaining time under the ENA.

You can stay informed about what information the PAC is providing to the City in the “Park Documents” section of our website ([marinvalley.net/park-documents/](http://marinvalley.net/park-documents/)), which has been expanded to include these resources.

By the time you read this update, the PAC will have scheduled a Resident Workshop to share our progress with the City. Be on the lookout for continuing Resident Updates about this workshop and likely others.

The City has recently entered into a contract to finally repair the clubhouse roof — but the work is not scheduled to begin until spring 2026 and will cost about twice what we could have spent had we completed it ourselves nearly four years ago. Meanwhile, our patchwork clubhouse roof has successfully withstood its first significant winter storm, though we are still early in the season.

We can rejoice that the budgeted tree-maintenance work has been nearly completed for the first time in three years. This progress reflects the beginning of our budget recovery following the City’s unilateral decision to transfer our insurance to the City’s insurance pool — at a cost of more than three times our previous expense.

As our finances stabilize, we are receiving encouraging reports from our management company. Most recently, our debt service coverage ratio (DSCR) was 1.77. Since the Park’s debt financing was restructured from bonds to a loan from the Bank of Marin, we have been required to maintain a DSCR above 2.0. Our annual debt service — what we pay the bank each year — has been around \$651,000.

A DSCR of 2.0 meant we were required to add that same amount each year to our reserves to fund future capital improvements. Following the questionable insurance transfer, our operating budget could not keep pace with the radically increased insurance costs, and our DSCR dropped to 1.40 the first year (2023), with a slight improvement in 2024. In 2025, the City negotiated a reduced DSCR requirement of 1.74 with the Bank of Marin. Our current level of 1.77 indicates that we are beginning to recover — though this recovery comes at the expense of reduced annual contributions to our capital reserves.

Happy holidays,



415-847-7155 • [johnhansen.emt@gmail.com](mailto:johnhansen.emt@gmail.com)

# Message from MarVal

---

Dear Friends,

A big thank you to everyone who took part in Black Cat — the numerous volunteers who baked, decorated, served, or helped in any way; those folks who came dressed for the occasion; and special kudos to **Cherrie Dougherty**, who once again chaired the **Bakery Boutique**. We are happy to report that Mar Val's liquor license has been secured for another year.

Two longtime residents — one an active Pub and event attendee, and the other a longtime Mar Val supporter who is less active these days — generously offered to “make up the difference” if needed to renew the license. Fortunately, funds raised from the Black Cat event covered the cost of renewing the license, but Mar Val is deeply appreciative of the thoughtfulness of these two dear residents.

Hopefully, you have signed up for the Holiday Party on December 13. We are looking forward to an elegant evening featuring music by the Lee Waterman Trio and a delicious meal prepared by Chef Susan. Please enjoy a complimentary drink courtesy of HOL and Mar Val.

*Several housekeeping items to keep in mind:*

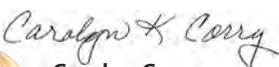
- **Reservations:** Your name on the reservation signup sheet does *not* guarantee a spot. Your reservation is only confirmed once your check has been received. Places will not be saved for you just because you signed the list. The only way to ensure you have a reservation is to place a check in the box.
- **Chair safety:** Please do not fold up chairs and lean them against tables to “save your seat.” They can slide and cause tripping hazards. Instead, use a Post-it, your hat, or another small item to mark your spot.
- **Mobility aids:** Be mindful of where you place walkers, canes, and other mobility aids. Your tablemates will gladly help ensure they are safely stored out of pathways.

Ed Collins has started a “game corner” in the library with several board games available to borrow — just follow the posted sign-out instructions and please return games to their proper place when finished. (See p. 8.)

Come ring in the New Year with our own Park DJs, and join us for a champagne toast on New York time, accompanied by “Auld Lang Syne” on the pipes by fellow residents **Tom Weeden** and **Jan Richey**.

The Mar Val Board joins me in wishing you a healthy, peaceful, and joy-filled year ahead.

Sincerely,

  
  
Carolyn Corry  
MAR VAL PRESIDENT  
ckorry@comcast.net  
415-370-6403



# *Mar Val Holiday Party*

**Saturday, December 13**

**5 pm Cocktails     6 pm Dinner**

***Featuring  
The Lee Waterman Trio!***

Menu

**Pork Loin with Cranberry Apple Compote  
or  
Fettuccine Alfredo**

**Vegetables & Salad  
Roasted Potatoes  
Cheesecake**

**Reservations: \$17 per meal**

**Limit: 2 persons per residence**

**Reservation deadline: Wednesday, December 10, 5 pm**  
(or when 120 reservations are received before the deadline)

Reservations will NOT be accepted prior to November 23

Questions? – Call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426



# *New Year's Eve Party*

**Wednesday, December 31**

**6:30 to 9 pm**



Buffet  
Champagne Toast  
Dancing



**Reservations: \$17 per Resident • \$22 per Guest**

**Limit: 2 guests per residence**

**Reservation deadline: Sunday, December 28, 5 pm**  
(or when 80 reservations are received before the deadline)

Questions? – Call Susan Hoff @ 707-365-9426



# Home Owners League Message

Greetings, everyone!

We have little news this month, but it starts with a huge thank you. The HOL Board is incredibly thankful for everyone who contributed to our latest fund drive. Your generosity ensures that we can continue our work to keep Marin Valley a wonderful place to live. If you have ideas for creating new community opportunities — don't keep them a secret! Please let us know.

## Art Show

As you may have noticed, there is a new collection of artwork in the Marin Valley Art Gallery, featuring pieces by several of our talented resident artists. As mentioned last month, Suzie Lahr has handed over the organization and upkeep of the gallery to David Gray, who — with his first solo hanging — has created another stunning exhibition. The HOL Board extends heartfelt appreciation for this wonderful new show.

## Our Community

Community is one of the most important parts of life here in Marin Valley. It is the essential ingredient — along with affordability, proximity to family

in many cases, and access to all that the Bay Area offers.

What makes our social setting so special? It helps that most of us are in a similar stage of life, managing comparable financial or health journeys, and surrounded by such natural beauty. Somehow, we have created an environment that offers countless opportunities to connect, share common interests, learn new things, and be entertained at myriad events — from Pub Night and the monthly dinners (thank you, Mar Val!) to the many HOL events, classes, and services. Additionally, the wisdom, foresight, and dedication of PAC also greatly enhance the spirit of community in our small village of elders.

But a thriving community doesn't happen by accident; it takes effort from all of us. It starts simply by putting ourselves out there.

Smiling and saying hello is often the easiest first step! A simple greeting while walking around the Park can make a huge difference.

There are so many ways to get involved — such as joining the Book Club, coming to Game

Night, or attending the regular meetings at the clubhouse.

The Breezeway Park Market is another great spot — not only for plentiful free food, but also as a fantastic social hub where neighbors exchange news and ideas. Walking your dog is another excellent way to meet people. Some folks even arrange regular dog-walking meetups.

For some, volunteering is an occasional opportunity; for others, it's a daily or weekly activity. You might lend a hand through Just One Hour or join the Welcome Committee to greet new residents. And if you ever find yourself feeling physically challenged or isolated, please know that asking for companionship — though it can feel difficult — almost always receives a positive response.

Ultimately, building a stronger community begins with simple acts: putting ourselves out there, smiling, and saying hello. The rest tends to follow naturally.

Best wishes for the holiday season to everyone,

  
  
**John Feld**  
**HOL PRESIDENT**  
johnmfeld@gmail.com  
510-495-4138

# Let the Games Begin!

by **ED COLLINS**



## **G**ames Coming to the Library

Ed Collins will be adding a half-dozen or more games to a shelf in the library for everyone's enjoyment. A notebook will be available to sign games out. There is no time limit for borrowing a game, but please return it when you are finished using it. When returning a game, please note if any pieces are missing.

If you would like Ed to explain the rules of a game, feel free to call him. You can also visit BoardGameGeek — a free website with rules, strategies, and videos for nearly every game imaginable. The games will be located on a shelf along the back wall, opposite the door.

### **Poker, Anyone?**

Ed is looking to form a group of community members to play poker once or twice a month. The group will decide the format and stakes. It could be classic Texas Hold 'em, dealer's choice, or Poor Man's Poker, where no one invests more than \$10 — or perhaps table stakes of \$10–\$20.

If you're interested, text or email Ed, or look for a signup sheet at the clubhouse.

## **Second Thursday – Board/Card Game Night**

A reminder that Board/Game Night happens every second Thursday in the Fireside Room from 6–10 pm. Come for an hour or stay for the whole evening! A variety of social, word, and strategy games are provided. Typically, up to eight residents show up to laugh, socialize, and give their brains a good workout.

If you can't attend on Thursdays but would like to expand your experience of gaming, Ed may be able to bring a game or two to your group and teach you how to play. Text him at 415-377-7696.

### **Successful Dump Run!**

The recent dump run was a huge success. With over 50 households requesting junk pickup, we added an extra run on Friday afternoon along with the two on Saturday.

Ed extends his gratitude for the many helpers — **Deb McNeil, Kevin Mulvany, Charles Watson, Paul Weinberger, and Brad Witherspoon** — and to all who donated. Contributions totaled about \$250.

If anyone would like to help organize an additional dump run each year to supplement the two Ed already schedules, please text him at 415-377-7696. ■

**JUST 1 HOUR**



Contact  
Ray Schneider 415-883-4182



# Craft & Flea Market

by **TARA PLOCHER**

**Sunday, December 14 • Ballroom • 1-4 pm**

**J**oin us on Sunday, December 14, from 1 to 4 pm in the ballroom, for our next Craft Market, now featuring a flea market as well!

If you remember the charming rummage sales from earlier Mar Val Black Cat events, this will be similar. It's your chance to turn your clutter into cash. Whether it's a vacuum cleaner, a food mixer, your father's old watch, your grandmother's jewelry, or clothing you no longer need — bring them to sell.

We'll provide a table, and you're welcome to stay until your items are sold, bartered, or given away. There will also be a table for donated items, including furniture, vases, and other household goods.

You don't have to stay, but if you do, you can savor the wonderful baked goods from **Karen Muhly** and **Cherrie Dougherty**! Invite your friends and family to donate, sell, and join the fun. John Feld will provide a complimentary cup of tea.

Contact **Tara Plocher** ([taraplocher@gmail.com](mailto:taraplocher@gmail.com)) to reserve a table. Setup is from 12 to 1 pm. ■



**THE ART AND SCIENCE OF LIVING WELL**

# Preventing Falls Through Strength Training

by **NAN WATANABE**

**F**alls are the leading cause of injury and death among older adults.

Strength training builds the leg, core, and hip muscles that support balance and stability. Stronger muscles also help you recover more effectively from slips and trips on uneven surfaces.

Paired with flexibility and balance training, strength exercises are among the most effective strategies for preventing falls. ■

*Source:* Sherrington, C. et al. 2019. "Exercise for Preventing Falls in Older People Living in the Community." *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, 1 (1). <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/30703272/>

# Salon Conversation

by **KIM HOLSCHER**

**W**e are living in interesting times, with worrisome news available around the clock on every channel and newsfeed. As a community of artists, meditators, health care practitioners, and cultural creatives —

what are we doing to overcome fear? Let's share resources and exchange points of view. How do we grow positivity and serenity in the face of cynicism and helplessness?

## **What Are We Doing to Overcome Fear?**

**Sunday, November 23 • Fireside Room • 4 pm**

Everyone is invited to a salon-style conversation circle on Sunday, November 23, at 4 pm in the Fireside Room. ■



# Christmas Singalong

by **CAROL-JOY HARRIS**

**Sunday, December 14**

**Fireside Room**

**6 pm**

**E**njoy singing Christmas carols together by joining **Carol-Joy Harris, Maggie Siegfried,** and friends singing and playing music in the Fireside Room. It doesn't matter if you think you can't carry a tune — Maggie and Carol-Joy will help you blend right in. We'll have all the words. Bring your musical instruments! ■

# Mah Jongg Tournament a Success!

by **SUSAN MCMUDIE** and **ALICE SHELTON**

**T**he Marin Valley clubhouse was filled with joy as 60 Mah Jongg players gathered on Thursday, November 6, for a fundraising event benefiting the San Francisco–Marin Food Bank. Players came from across the Bay Area, including Marin, Sonoma, Napa, San Francisco, and the East Bay.

The event was cochaired by Marin Valley resident Susan McMudie and tournament director Alice Shelton, who expressed deep appreciation

to Marin Valley for our generous support of the San Francisco–Marin Food Bank. To date, the event has raised nearly \$10,000 for the organization — funds are especially needed at this time.

Mah Jongg players were delighted to enjoy their favorite game while supporting such a meaningful cause and were grateful to Marin Valley for providing the beautiful venue.

Thank you to the community for your patience and understanding regarding parking. Participants loved the location and hope to be invited back for future events. ■



In Memoriam

# Dianne Romaine

November 29, 1949 – August 30, 2025



by **SIERRA ROMAINÉ**

Dianne, beloved by her family and a prolific artist, passed away on August 30 while listening to one of her favorite songs, “Tambourine Man,” by Bob Dylan. She had been lovingly cared for by her children, along with hospice support, for several weeks, and her passing was peaceful.

A resident of Marin Valley for several years, Dianne was preceded in death by her husband, Ron, in 2018. Married for over 50 years, they traveled the world together and had looked forward to a long retirement.

Their grandchildren were the light of their lives, and Dianne and Ron had frequently hosted family gatherings. Kailey, Kailani, and Olivia carry a huge hole in their hearts, as their grandparents meant everything to them.

Dianne was also deeply connected to the artist communities of Marin and San Francisco. Her

home was filled not only with her own artwork but also with pieces created by her many talented friends. She will be greatly missed by her children, Ryan and Laurin; sister Eileen (Auntie Corky to us) and her husband Stu; brother Jim; and daughter-in-law Sierra.

At Dianne’s request, no services were held. The Neptune Society handled final arrangements. The Romaine family extends heartfelt gratitude to Dianne’s neighbors and friends for their love and support, and to By the Bay Health for providing compassionate hospice care that allowed her to remain at home, surrounded by her art, family, and friends.

In her honor, please enjoy her favorite cocktail — a Cosmopolitan — at Friday Pub night. And always, appreciate art.

# Nontoxic Rodent Control

## Protecting Your Yard and Our Wildlife

by **JOHN FELD**

It's safe to say that most homes in Marin Valley share their land with some determined underground neighbors: gophers and moles. While both create tunnels, their motives — and dining habits — are completely different.

### Gophers and Moles

**Gophers** are herbivores.



They feed on roots, tubers, and bulbs, often eating your plants from below ground. They consume a variety of vegetation, including the root balls of trees and shrubs as well as vegetables such as carrots and potatoes.

**Moles**, on the other hand, are carnivores.



They feed on earthworms, grubs, insects, and spiders but do not eat plants. However, their tunneling activity can still disrupt and damage roots as they hunt for food.



Mole

Pocket Gopher

If you have a garden, you are probably familiar with these pests. The good news? There are effective, nontoxic ways to manage them.

### Let Nature Help: Encourage Predators

The best and most sustainable way to control these pests is to support their natural predators.

Electronic deterrents (such as buzzers or sonic wands) are expensive and widely considered ineffective. The safest and most efficient solution is to let nature handle it — and Marin Valley is fortunate to have several natural predators that help keep rodent populations in check.

**Owls** are perhaps the most effective hunters. A single adult barn owl can consume around 500 gophers per year, and one family may eat up to 5,000 rodents during a breeding season. They prey on gophers, moles, mice, rats, and even snakes!

We currently have two owl boxes on the property, and HOL is actively acquiring several new ones to boost our natural defenses.

**Weasels** are quick, nocturnal hunters that blend into the undergrowth. They are rarely seen, so if they live around you, you probably don't know it.

**Coyotes** use acute hearing and a distinctive high-arching pounce to surprise and capture gophers in their tunnels. (Watch here: [tinyurl.com/kv9bttmt](https://tinyurl.com/kv9bttmt))

**Snakes** — including gopher/bull snakes and rattlesnakes — enter burrows to hunt rodents, using constriction to suffocate their prey.

## IMPORTANT: Marin Valley Is a "Poison-Free Zone"

We strictly prohibit the use of poisons or glue traps. These products are inhumane and kill nontargeted wildlife, including natural predators. In fact, in 2012, 78% of raptors brought to a local wildlife hospital tested positive for rodent poison. Without these raptors, our rodent problem would quickly become unmanageable.

Poisons can also contaminate soil and enter the food chain — especially concerning for anyone growing edible plants. Do NOT use glue traps or any outdoor traps that could unintentionally kill beneficial wildlife such as squirrels, birds, or lizards.

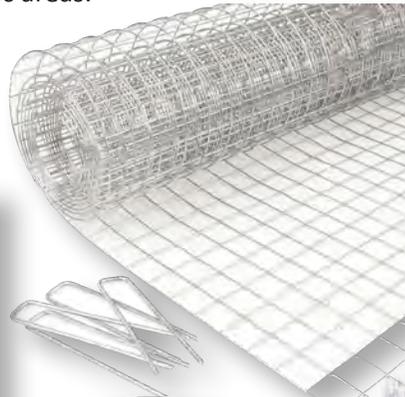
### What You Can Do

While we wait for more owls to move in, here are actionable steps you can take around your home:

#### Prevention and Exclusion

Gophers and moles are solitary and territorial — but once one moves out, another will quickly move in. Exclusion is key.

- **Underground barriers:** Install metal mesh or hardware cloth in the ground to block access to specific areas.
- **Raised beds:** Line the bottoms with 20-gauge gopher wire before adding soil.



- **Plant protection:** Use galvanized wire baskets for vulnerable plants. Inexpensive wire trash baskets from dollar stores can be a cost-effective ready-made alternative.
- **Repellents:** Apply castor oil-based deterrents every 4–6 weeks. These are effective but can become costly (about \$30 per gallon).
- **Plant smart:** Incorporate aromatic and deterrent plants such as gopher spurge, sour clover, and daffodils — although gophers will eat any plant, especially young ones, if they are hungry enough.



### Trapping

Trapping can be effective and humane when done correctly.

**Cinch traps** are recommended — they are easy to use, require minimal digging, and kill the rodent quickly.



#### Disposal Tip:

After a successful catch, place the carcass back into the hole and cover it with dirt. This discourages other rodents from moving into that territory — and provides natural fertilizer as it decomposes. ■

# How to Avoid Plastic Particles in Our Food and Bodies

by **ERMA WHEATLEY**

**Y**ou can't see them, but they're everywhere — In the air you breathe. The food you eat. The water you drink.

As everyday plastics break down, they form tiny particles known as microplastics. Even smaller particles — those under one micrometer in diameter, called nanoplastics — are now found universally, from the oceans to our bodies.

In a world where we are bombarded with microplastics and nanoplastics (MNPs), scientists are zeroing in on their sources and how they enter the human body.

One factor stands out: Studies increasingly show that the release of microplastics is triggered by heat.

## Hot Beverages



A study from the University of Nebraska found that “heat probably plays the most crucial role in generating these micro- and nanoplastics.” When you pour coffee into

a foam cup, bits of the cup can leach into the beverage. When brewing tea, millions of MNPs can spill from the teabag into your cup.

Heat, the report explained, is simply bad for plastic — especially plastics used to store food and drinks. “The heat can actually vibrate the chain, leading to the breaking of the polymers.”

In a recent study at the University of Birmingham, scientists examined 31 beverages sold in the British market — including fruit juices, sodas, coffee, and tea — focusing on particles larger than 10 micrometers in diameter (about one-fifth the width of a human hair). Although all drinks contained a minimum average of a

dozen microplastic particles, concentrations were far higher in hot beverages. For example, hot tea had an average of 60 particles per liter, compared to 31 in iced tea.

## Sources

These particles originate from a range of sources, such as small bits of plastic in coffee cup lids, and the fabric and glue in teabags. When hot water is added, the rate of microplastic release increases. “Heat makes it easier for microplastics to leach out from packaging materials,” explains Mohamed Abdallah, professor of emerging contaminants at the University of Birmingham. Older and degraded plastics produce even stronger effects. For example, coffee made in an eight-year-old home coffee machine with plastic components contained twice as many microplastics as coffee from a six-month-old machine.

When scientists analyzed small plastic jars and tubs used for storing baby food, they found that the containers could release more than 2 billion nanoplastics per square centimeter when heated in the microwave — significantly more than when stored at room temperature or in a refrigerator.

Microplastics are constantly shedding from everyday items like containers and cups. They don't just come from overuse or repeated washing; even brief use of a product with plastic components, such as a new takeout container used just once, can leach into food and drinks — a fact that is alarming scientists.



“Mostly, when a container says, ‘microwave safe,’ it means it's safe for the container to be in the microwave — it's not going to melt,” warns

Victoria Fulfer, a researcher at the University of Rhode Island who studies how microplastics get into water.

“**Microwave safe,**” she cautions, does not imply safety for consumption, because microwaving plastic changes the chemical bonds — making them weaker and allowing chemicals and nanoplastics to leach from the container into the food being heated.

Not all plastics have perfectly formed polymer chains. Defects, lumps, and bumps in any container, when blasted by heat, may cause the polymers to break into smaller pieces.

### **Washing Synthetic Clothing**

Heat also plays a role in how laundry produces microplastics. Not only can tiny particles shed from polyester clothing and circulate inside our homes, but when washing these or other synthetic fabrics in hot water, the fibers begin to break apart, releasing microplastics into the water supply. Higher washing temperatures lead to greater shedding of these tiny particles.

### **Health Effects of Eating and Drinking Microplastics**

These tiny particles have been found in human brains, blood, and lungs, but scientists are still determining exactly how they might contribute to disease.

MNPs detected in key arteries have been linked to a higher risk of stroke and heart disease. The particles can also transport toxic chemicals that have been associated with developmental problems in young children. Early research suggests links between these chemicals and diabetes, high blood pressure, and infertility later in life.

A 2024 study from the University of New Mexico Health Sciences Center found microplastics in human brains at significantly higher concentrations than in other organs. Worse, plastic accumulation appears to be increasing — up 50% over just the past eight years.

The UNM study showed that brain tissue from people diagnosed with dementia contained up to 10 times

more plastic than tissue from those without dementia. While this seems to show a clear correlation, the study cannot definitively state that microplastics cause dementia — they may simply accumulate more readily due to the disease process itself, the study concluded.

Hints of harmful effects also emerge from studies with mice, in which exposure to high levels of microplastics have led to signs of Alzheimer’s disease and dementia.

### **Yikes, What to Do?**



While it’s impossible to avoid microplastics entirely, merely keeping plastic away from heat can reduce your exposure. Foods high in fat or acidity also tend to absorb more chemicals from their packaging, especially when stored in

small or tightly packed containers, where there’s more surface contact.

You can make simple changes, such as:

- **Storing food in glass, ceramic, or metal containers.**
- **Avoiding microwaving food in plastic.**
- **Choosing loose-leaf tea instead of plastic-lined teabags.**
- **Washing synthetic clothing in cold water when possible.**

Avoiding all MNPS may be impossible — but these small steps can significantly lessen their impact on our health and the environment. ■

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### Replacing Plastic with Borosilicate Glass

When replacing plastic for heating, freezing, and/or storing food, consider borosilicate glass, which is approved for food use and is a safer alternative to plastics or regular glass, especially for long-term storage or use with high-temperature changes.

It is used in applications like laboratory equipment and kitchenware because it is designed to withstand extreme temperature changes without cracking. It's available in stores and online marketplaces.

When the Pyrex company was bought in 1998, it switched to a less expensive material, tempered soda-lime glass, to make the product more affordable. Soda-lime glass is cheaper to produce and considered sufficient for most household uses, even though borosilicate glass has superior thermal shock resistance to breakage.

A great find in secondhand stores is PYREX in capital letters, which may indicate it was made with borosilicate glass used by Pyrex under its previous ownership. Pyrex made in France is still manufactured with borosilicate glass and is clearly labeled. Corningware is also a prized treasure. ■



Marin Sanitary Service is now accepting #1 PET(E) plastic clamshell containers, such as those used for berries, salads, and to-go food.

# Socks & Mittens for the Homeless

by **ELIZABETH LEV**



**H**ello, friends in the Park.

Each December I have collected socks/mittens for the homeless, and I would like to do so again this winter.

Please put brand-new socks or mittens preferably labeled **Men, Women, Children** in the box on my front porch.

I'll be accepting donations  
**December 2-10**

Let's help some folks have a warmer winter. ■

Elizabeth  
107 Marin Valley Drive (blue door)

# Wintertime Watering Schedule

by **BOB TANEM**, America's Happy Gardener™, who lived on Club View for many happy years.

**A**s the temperature becomes cooler or colder, the requirements for water to our trees and shrubs become less. One challenge at this time of year is when to water so as to conserve water and continue to have a healthy landscape.

The other challenge is whether we should continue our fertilizer program, because the growth of plants at this time of year is less demanding of nutrients. The solution can be categorized by these simple rules:

## Survey the Needs of the Area

Lawns need very little watering at this time of year, and their need for fertilizer is negative. Turn the sprinklers off. Caveat: If the hills are starting to turn brown, it is time to turn them on. Turn off if it starts to rain.

## Shade

As you are surveying the area, check shaded areas such as under

deciduous trees or under the eaves of houses. If these areas don't get moisture from the rain, you may have to water by hand. Camellias, azaleas, and fuchsia are prime targets for lack of winter rains.

## Trees and Shrubs

Established trees and shrubs can tolerate no irrigation during most winters. My recommendation is that if we don't get rain for three to four weeks, watering may be necessary unless the trees and shrubs lose their foliage. In that case they are sleeping and don't need any water.

## Groundcovers

Check out groundcovers under trees and shrubs. Most can tolerate the wintertime moisture, but if we get a false spring in February, all bets are off.

## Pots and Baskets

Special watering for pots and hanging baskets: Rain has a pH that is neutral, and tap water has

a pH that can be alkaline in most cases. Well water is notorious for being alkaline. The more alkaline the water, the less it penetrates the container soil. Thus, if your pot-watering schedule during the year is every third day, you may be able to stretch that to twice a week during winter.

## When to Water

The rule I would suggest is: If the pot gets rain water, don't water for at least a week. Pinch the soil down about 1 to 2 inches, and if it crumbles, the plant needs water. If it stays together or shows moisture, i.e., drips, don't water.

## Get to Know Your Landscape

For example: Succulent types can survive without winter water, whereas soft, acid-loving plants will need attention.

Our weather cannot be counted on to keep our plants at peak performance, but these guidelines should help. ■

PHOTOGRAPH BY MARIANNE YORK



# Yellow-bellied Sapsucker

Text and Photography by **DAVID GRAY**



**T**he Yellow-bellied Sapsucker (*Sphyrapicus varius*) is a member of the woodpecker family (*Picidae*). We heard and then spotted this female sapsucker well outside its normal range (eastern US up to the eastern border of Montana) in eastern Idaho this past summer. Perhaps it's a hybrid or an off-course migrant coming back from its breeding season in Canada, but to my eye it really looks like a yellow-bellied sapsucker.

With plenty of Douglas firs around the area, it is a haven for woodpeckers. I saw many woodpecker-sized cavity dwellings up and down any dead trees. According to Cornell's Department of Ornithology ([www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Yellow-bellied\\_Sapsucker/overview](http://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide/Yellow-bellied_Sapsucker/overview)), male sapsuckers choose diseased trees for nesting, as the softer heartwood is easier to excavate — and it is the males who do most of the work creating the nests.

True to their name, sapsuckers primarily eat tree sap, which is high in sugar content. One telltale sign of their presence is a series of neat rows of holes in a tree trunk, oozing sap. They also eat insects, listening carefully for movement beneath the bark to know where to start pecking. They're really good at this kind of sonic tracking.



Like all woodpeckers, sapsuckers have relatively long tails with stiff spines that help support them on tree bark, while their sharp claws hold fast to the bark.

They are generally quite skittish, and I was fortunate to be using a long telephoto lens so as not to disturb this one. All these photos were taken handheld at a 1,176 mm focal length.

Happy December and Happy Holidays! ■

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P.S. Please check your vehicle's tire pressure and inflate as needed per the manufacturer's sticker inside the driver's door. With cold weather setting in, tires naturally deflate, which reduces traction, increases stopping distance, and lowers fuel economy. None of those things are good, especially in wet weather, so take care of yourself and check your tire pressure today!

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	<b>1</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ David MacLam	<b>2</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ David MacLam 10:30- Craft & Chat 11:30 Library 11-12 Chair Yoga Fireside Room 5 PAC Board Meeting Ballroom/Zoom	<b>3</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ David MacLam	<b>4</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ David MacLam 12-1 Rollin' Root 	<b>5</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/ David MacLam 12 Mahjong Private, Fireside Room 5-7 Pub	<b>6</b> 4 Dancing
<b>7</b> 7:30-9 Taiji Deck/David MacLam 12-1 Group Strength Training Bamboo Room/ Nan Watanabe	<b>8</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji  ECHO DEADLINE	<b>9</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10:30- Craft & Chat 11:30 11-12 Chair Yoga	<b>10</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 5 Mar Val Board Meeting Ballroom 5 Holiday Party reservation deadline	<b>11</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root  6-10 Board Game Night Fireside Room/ Ed Collins	<b>12</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12 Mahjong 5-7 Pub	<b>13</b> 4 Dancing 5-7 Mar Val Holiday Party Ballroom 
<b>14</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training 1-4 Christmas Craft Market Ballroom 6 Christmas Singalong Fireside Room	<b>15</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>16</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10:30- Craft & Chat 11:30 11-12 Chair Yoga 5 MVC Meeting Ballroom/ Zoom	<b>17</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 11 Ladies Bridge Private, Fireside Room	<b>18</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Rollin' Root 	<b>19</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12 Mahjong 5-7 Pub	<b>20</b> 4 Dancing
<b>21</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training	<b>22</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>23</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10:30- Craft & Chat 11:30 11-12 Chair Yoga	<b>24</b> 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>25</b> 7:30-9 Taiji  CHRISTMAS DAY	<b>26</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12 Mahjong 5-7 Pub	<b>27</b> 4 Dancing
<b>28</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 12-1 Group Strength Training 5 New Year's Eve Party reservation deadline	<b>29</b> 6 Trash 7:30-9 Taiji	<b>30</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 10:30- Craft & Chat 11:30 11-12 Chair Yoga	<b>31</b> 7:30-9 Taiji 6:30-9 Mar Val New Year's Eve Party Ballroom 	<h1>DECEMBER 2025</h1>		