

Erin Snyder's Legacy Still Making an Impact

by Jenny Iyer

It has been a year since we lost longtime educator Erin Snyder, but the lives she touched and the programs she built for Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District are still making a difference. Erin's curiosity about the natural world and her enthusiasm for sharing it were unrivaled.

Over her 24 years here she had a number of roles: she managed day-to-day operations at the LandUse Learning Center demonstration garden, taught California Naturalist and Climate Stewards courses, provided Project Learning Tree and Project WET teacher trainings, shepherded our bluebird nest box monitoring program, helped plan the California state Envirothon competition, offered in-classroom water education programs, and so much more.

Now in the garden you can read words of kindness on stones placed in Erin's honor, see how the desert willow planted in her memory has grown, or just sit on the bench dedicated to her and enjoy the shade and birdsong.

May we all find a curiosity and passion like hers.



Erin Snyder teaches visitors the life cycle of a seed in 2022.

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Become a Certified Naturalist

RCRCD offers a college-level natural history course focused on the Santa Ana River watershed from the San Bernardino Mountains to the Pacific Ocean. The California Naturalist class is a hands-on certification from the Environmental Stewards program of the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR).

The next course will be in-person, and is set for 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. Wednesday nights (except Veterans Day and Thanksgiving week) Oct. 14 through Dec. 16, 2026 with graduation held on Jan. 9, 2027. All-day field trips are scheduled for Oct. 24, Nov. 14, and Dec. 12, 2026. The class is \$500 plus the cost of field trips and the California Naturalist Handbook. Register by Sept. 30. Space is limited.

Students must complete at least 40 hours of instruction, which includes field trips, presentations from experts, and an 8-hour stewardship project. Graduates have the option to receive academic units for an additional fee.

For questions, go to www.rcrcd.org/california-naturalist-climate-steward-programs or contact instructor at valeria.velasco@rcrcd.org.



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California Naturalist students scan for a coyote on a field trip in 2022.

Cultivating Conservation

Guide to local food and farms *out now*

The third edition of a free guide that connects consumers to local farms; and farmers, educators and gardeners to local resources, is available online. The rcrcd.org website features interactive maps, and translates the guide into dozens of languages.

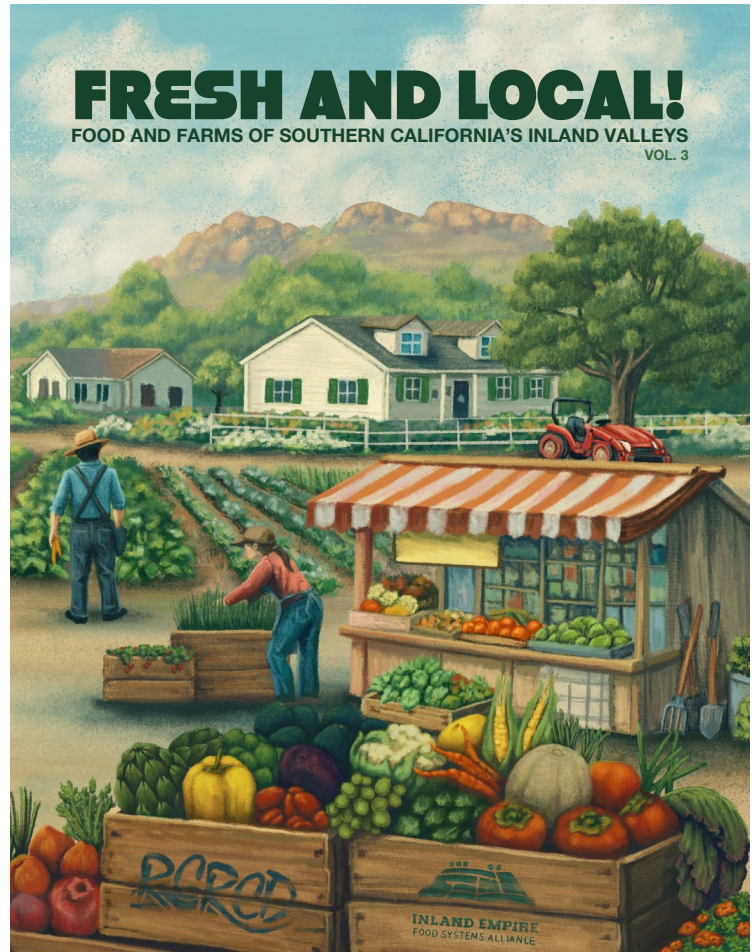
The guide includes listings for 32 farm stands, 19 farmers' markets, 28 purveyors of specialty products and cut flowers, restaurants that buy local produce, and places to purchase crop boxes. New to this guide is a standalone page highlighting local honey producers.

The guide also includes sustainable agriculture resources and lists of community gardens, technical assistance advisors, on-farm educational opportunities for youth, seed libraries and more.

In February and March, a total of 65,600 guides were mailed to local residences. If you did not receive a guide in your mailbox, it is available on our website at www.rcrcd.org, under the "publications" tab.

RCRCD collaborated with the Inland Empire Food Systems Alliance to produce the 48-page booklet.

The guide would not have been possible without the following sponsors: the California Department of Food and Agriculture's Urban Agriculture Grant Program, Kaiser Permanente, Inland Empire Resource Conservation District, Riverside-San Bernardino Chapter of the California Native Plant Society, La Sierra University, Riverside Food Co-op and the Riverside County Farm Bureau.



Organic overview for urban farmers

RCRCD is part of a nationwide collaboration led by the Western/Southwestern Regional Center for Organic Transition, housed at the nonprofit organic certifier California Certified Organic Farmers Foundation.

RCRCD and CCOF are offering a free workshop on the USDA's Transition to Organic Partnership Program at 4 p.m. on Aug. 10 at the LandUse Learning Center, 4500 Glenwood Dr. in Riverside.

The program provides critical funding to build the domestic supply of organic food and products by helping American farmers successfully transition to healthy organic agriculture through technical assistance and community initiatives.

By transitioning to organic production, farmers opt-in for a competitive market advantage. They commit to working with the land, protecting natural resources, and providing clean, healthy food to their communities.

For more information, contact RCRCD's Agricultural Conservation Advisor Adriana Murguia at adriana.murguia@rcrcd.org or (951) 683-7691, ext. 212.

Make a Pollinator Water Station

Just like us, pollinators need to keep the pep in their step by drinking water. This is especially important during our long hot summers. Help keep pollinators hydrated by providing a water source in your yard, garden or patio. When done correctly, pollinator water stations are a fantastic way to create a safe and nurturing environment for our pollinator friends. Watering stations can be as simple or elaborate as you wish. Read on for examples plus tricks and tips for maintenance of your water stations.

Water Station Design:

- Insects, like bees and butterflies, are not strong swimmers, so utilize shallow dishes like garden pot saucers.
- Add safe perches and landing spots by adding stones, moss, pine-cones, twigs, etc., from your surroundings. Sand, soil, compost or salt can also be added to provide essential nutrients.
- Make sure your design allows for easy cleaning and maintenance. Water stations should be cleaned regularly.

Water Station Materials:

- Upcycle or repurpose materials you have available at home. Even adding a lid from an old pickle jar can become a great water station.
- Use non-toxic materials. This includes adhesives and decorative items. Toxic substances can leach from your materials and cause harm or kill wildlife.
- Get creative! Don't be afraid to break out the crafting skills. Water stations can be a simple way to add a decorative touch to your space.



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Placement and Maintenance:

- Place on a level surface near nectar sources with cover nearby, such as a hedge or bush. This will give pollinators protection from predators.
- If you are short on time, consider utilizing a self-watering pet dish or place your station near any available drip irrigation. Adding an emitter or spaghetti line will allow your irrigation system to fill and flush your station.
- Clean and refill stations weekly. More cleaning may be needed during the hottest months to prevent algae, bacteria buildup and mosquitoes.
- Avoid toxic cleaning solutions. Weekly topping off will cause overflow and push out mosquito eggs and larva. Tackle bothersome stains or algae with a scrub brush.

For more information check out: <https://www.nwf.org/-/media/Documents/PDFs/Garden-for-Wildlife/Tip-Sheets/Water-Butterfly-Gardens.pdf>



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Partners in Conservation

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The City of Riverside lent two members of its crew to help RCRCD with the annual Monarch Celebration and Milkweed Sale in May 2026. Jonathan Lopez (left) and Altie Holcomb helped set up and clean up, and also staffed the craft table for the event which saw about 200 visitors and sold 180 milkweed plants.

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At the July 2025 Riverside City Council meeting Mayor Patricia Lock Dawson (right) presented the Mayor's Monarch Challenge proclamation to RCRCD's Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker (left) and Jenny Iyer (second from left) for the District's education programs to save the monarch butterfly.



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RCRCD partnered with the Southern California Bluebird Club, City of Riverside and volunteers to bring back the western bluebird nestbox monitoring program. Pictured are the renewed program's first success story - baby bluebirds in a nestbox at Martha Mclean-Anza Narrows Park in Riverside in May 2026.

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A larval Santa Ana Sucker fish is seen here at RCRCD's main facility, as part of a UC Riverside study on the effect of water temperature on breeding.



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As part of his Eagle Scout project Kale Calleja planted a butterfly garden and erected a bench at the Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center in honor of Tracy Davis and Janlee Watson. Janlee passed away last year. Both women have been big supporters of SCIC and the creation of pollinator habitat in the Temescal Valley.

Thank You 2025-2026 College Corps Fellows!

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College Corps fellows Samuel Pichardo (left) and Gianni Espinoza rehab the pollinator garden at the LandUse Learning Center in Riverside in January 2026.



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College Corps fellow Jessica Leung paints a mural depicting an aquifer and the water cycle in Riverside in November 2025.

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College Corps fellow Justin Aguilar plants native flowers in the LandUse Learning Center in November 2025.



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College Corps fellow Kambrey Friers (brown jacket) leads a tour of the LandUse Learning Center in June 2026.

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College Corps fellow Levie McCluskey prepares educational materials for a field trip in January 2026.



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College Corps fellow Marleen Zarate transplants a sycamore tree for RCRCD's native plant nursery in May 2026.

New Multi-lingual Plant Signs Installed

RCRCD is installing new full-color plant identification signs at multiple locations.

Some of the signs feature names and uses of the plants from the First Peoples of this area - Cahuilla for the LandUse Learning Center garden in Riverside, and Tongva for the Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center in the Temescal Valley.

The signs are in Spanish and English, and include QR codes to scan for more information.

You can also find some of the signs at the Mayor's Monarch Garden at Riverside City Hall, and at Ryan Bonaminio Park in Riverside.

Information: llc@rcrcd.org



The new white sage sign at the LandUse Learning Center features indigenous Cahuilla uses of the plant.

Last Chance for Free Pollinator Plants

As part of RCRCD's 1,2,3...for the Butterflies and Bees program free native pollinator plants are available to groups or residents in RCRCD's boundary, with a focus on helping underserved communities.

These habitat kits can be integrated into farm hedgerows, or used in urban and suburban yards. Apply now to be placed on a wait list for the final round of giveaways in winter.

These free kits are available thanks to funding through the Wildlife Conservation Board of California and the California Association of Resource Conservation Districts. The grant ends in February 2027.

Information: www.rcrcd.org/pollinator-habitat-kit

Free Nature Programs for Children Now Available

Little LandUse Learners is a one-hour children's nature program held at 10 a.m. on the final Saturday of each month at RCRCD's LandUse Learning Center, 4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside. A new topic is highlighted monthly, and includes activities like story time, crafts, demonstrations and nature walks in our garden.

Check out our upcoming topics for 2026:

- | | |
|----------|--|
| Aug. 29 | I <3 Dirt |
| Sept. 26 | Our Four Seasons |
| Oct. 31 | Bat Week |
| Nov. 28 | Three Sisters Demonstration and Native Foods |
| Dec. 26 | California Trees are Mighty! |

Information: valeria.velasco@rcrcd.org



Children create a solarized picture of leaves at a Little LandUse Learners program.

New Employee Spotlight



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Restoration Projects Coordinator Laura Airo (left) and Resource Conservation Technician Joanne Oliva install irrigation pipes at a habitat restoration site in Corona in 2023. Laura and Joanne manage several project sites within the district. This includes site monitoring, maintenance schedules, surveys and writing reports.



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Agricultural Conservation Advisor Adriana Murguia, right, hands a copy of "Fresh and Local!" to farmer Eric Unger at Gable Farms in Riverside. Adriana helps local farmers with conservation practices. More information is available on page 2, at www.rcrcd.org/agricultural-support or you can contact Adriana directly at adriana.murguia@rcrcd.org.



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Education and Engagement Specialist Valeria Velasco leads a tour at the LandUse Learning Center in 2025. Valeria conducts programs on bluebird nestbox monitoring, Conservation Mini-Grants, field trips to the LandUse Learning Center and California Naturalist courses. For more information contact her at valeria.velasco@rcrcd.org.



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Field Assistant Richard Ruiz is seen here planting native bulbs at a RCRCD restoration site in Corona in 2024. Richard is a member of the restoration maintenance team. He conducts the important work of site maintenance. This includes irrigation, planting and weed control at our restoration sites.



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Education and Engagement Specialist Roxanne Robbins teaches a water conservation program in 2024. Roxanne schedules tours at the LandUse Learning Center and water presentations for Corona classrooms. She also gives away free educational materials to local educators. Contact her at robbins@rcrcd.org.



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Resource Conservation District**

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UPCOMING EVENTS

LandUse Learning Center

Open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed holidays.
4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside
Information: llc@rcrcd.org

First Saturday programs

10 a.m. Free.

Sept. 5	Fertilizer Happens: Gardening with Poultry
Oct. 3	250 Years of Ecology in Riverside walk
Nov. 7	California Native Plant Society plant sale
Dec. 5	Tree Pruning

Ask a Master Gardener

9 a.m. - noon on the first Saturday of each month

Organic Transition Workshop

Aug. 10, 4 p.m. (see page 2)

Little LandUse Learners

10 a.m., last Saturday of every month (see page 6)

California Naturalist Class

Wednesday nights, Oct. 14-Dec. 16 (see cover)

Permaculture Design Course

Second Saturdays, 8 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. October-June

Information: dihgeco.org

Sycamore Creek Interpretative Center

11875 Indian Truck Trail, Temescal Valley
Information: scic@rcrcd.org

Story Time Among the Sycamores

10 a.m., Aug. 15 and Sept. 11 Free.

Saturday Speaker Series

10 a.m. Free.

Aug. 29	Nature with Watercolors
Sept. 26	Vermicomposting
Oct. 17	Nature Painting with Rocks



RCRCD serves parts of western Riverside & San Bernardino Counties; areas surrounding and portions of: Riverside, Corona, Norco, Grand Terrace, Colton, Reche Canyon, Temescal Canyon, Gavilan Hills, Highgrove, and Woodcrest. All RCRCD programs and services are offered on a nondiscriminatory basis, without regard to race, national origin, religion, age, gender, or orientation.

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