

## We Are Honored

by Jennifer Iyer

The Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD) has received national and state accolades highlighting our work to preserve the natural resources we all depend on.

### Nationwide Recognition: Shelli Lamb

The National Association of Conservation Districts presented District Manager Shelli Lamb with the 2024 Distinguished Service Award which recognizes individuals who have made significant contributions to the conservation and proper management of our country's natural resources.

Shelli was honored for her 47-year career in which she led the development of award-winning programs in education and habitat conservation services. These are especially critical for densely urbanized Southern California. Her programs have led to endowments of \$20 million for RCRCD and \$25 million for the nonprofit Southwest Resource Management Association. This money funds the care of 22,000 acres, many of which provide essential corridors for wildlife movement between urban areas.



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RCRCD District Manager Shelli Lamb accepted the 2024 National Association of Conservation Districts Distinguished Service Award.

### Education Programs in California

RCRCD was recognized as the statewide Organization of the Year by the Association for Environmental & Outdoor Education (AEOE), Ten Strands, and the California Environmental Literacy Initiative.

The statewide award celebrates the innovative educational projects and programs that retiring Public Affairs Manager Diana Ruiz planned and coordinated over several decades, including the LandUse Learning Center demonstration garden, the *Fresh and Local* food and farm guide, and the *Environmental Learning Resources* guide.

“(The District) does incredible work in their community and the surrounding region,” said Estrella Risinger, Executive Director of AEOE, which bestowed the statewide honor. “I’ve had the great pleasure of getting to know several members of their team... Their dedication and commitment to providing engaging, relevant, and high-quality programming is evident.”

Find out more about these programs at [rcrcd.org/educational-programs](https://rcrcd.org/educational-programs)



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RCRCD was named 2024 Organization of the Year in California. Conservation Education staff pictured from left include Diana Ruiz, Erin Snyder, Jennifer Iyer, and Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker.

## Get Certified as a Naturalist

RCRCD is offering a hybrid California Naturalist class every other Wednesday evening from Aug. 28 through Dec. 4.

The course is a hands-on certification from the Environmental Stewards program with University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR).

Ninety-minute online classes start at 6 p.m. Additionally, in-person six-hour field trips are set for Saturdays Sept. 14, Oct. 12 and Nov. 9. Graduation will be on Dec. 14.

Another class opportunity, an intensive two-week course, may be available in early December.

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

Registration is requested by Aug. 21. Tuition is \$400. Scholarships are available.

For more information about RCRCD's upcoming courses go to [www.rcrcd.org/california-naturalist-climate-steward-programs](http://www.rcrcd.org/california-naturalist-climate-steward-programs). For questions, contact Senior Resource Educator Erin Snyder at [snyder@rcrcd.org](mailto:snyder@rcrcd.org) or 951-683-7691, ext. 207.



Winter 2024 California Naturalist graduates with instructors: Sydney Harworth, Mary Beth Carpenter, Andrea Le, Samuel Rodriguez, Robbie Givens, Sheri Harris, Courtney Whatley, Odessey Langston, Charles Gibbons, Bryan Corona, Melissa Cohen, Jacob Lang, and Amanda Bautista.



California Naturalist students take measurements of an oak tree.

## Farmers, We Want to Hear From You

Thanks to a grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture almost \$300,000 will help Inland Southern California farmers conserve natural resources.

The Urban Agriculture grant allows RCRCD to hire an Agricultural Conservation Advisor to help farmers in our service area. The money will also help update and reprint *Fresh and Local*, a guide to local food with our partner the Inland Empire Food Systems Alliance.

Local growers and ag-related organizations, would you like to be listed in the revised guide or update your listing? Would you like to learn more about how you can conserve water, healthy soil, and native plants and animals?

Contact Resource Educator Jenny Iyer at [iyer@rcrcd.org](mailto:iyer@rcrcd.org) or 951-683-7691, ext. 226.

To check out the guide go to [www.rcrcd.org](http://www.rcrcd.org) and click on "Documents and Publications."





# Environmental Competition Returns

The Envirothon is a natural resource education program for high school students in grades 9-12. Students study about the environment, then as part of a team representing their school, compete in five disciplines: forestry, wildlife, aquatics, soils, and a current topic. Winners of the California event go on to compete internationally. Envirothon equips students with a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Congratulations to Riverside's J. W. North High School team that placed third in the state this past spring!

For more information, please see [caenvirothon.com](http://caenvirothon.com) and [envirothon.org](http://envirothon.org). For RCRCD team sponsorship and local training, contact Erin Snyder at [snyder@rcrcd.org](mailto:snyder@rcrcd.org) or (951) 683-7691, ext. 207.



Students identified animal tracks during the 2024 California Envirothon competition at RCRCD's LandUse Learning Center.

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# Water Ed for Corona Students



Resource Educator Roxanne Robbins shared water conservation concepts with a Corona classroom.

# Grow Your Knowledge

Have gardening questions? Ask the Master Gardeners, as they are an awesome resource! Master Gardeners are volunteers with training through the University of California Cooperative Extension. RCRCD hosts an *Ask a Master Gardener* booth each first Saturday of the month from 9 a.m. to noon from September through June at the LandUse Learning Center.

Master Gardeners also offer classes, such as *Home Gardening 101: The Basics* that will be starting in September. Learn more at <https://ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG> or sign up for their newsletter at [rivctyucmgp@gmail.com](mailto:rivctyucmgp@gmail.com). For questions, contact their helpline at (951) 955-2647 or at [anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgriverside@ucanr.edu).



We, at RCRCD, especially appreciate long-time volunteers Janis Binam (left) and Michael Fisher for sharing their expertise over the years. We will miss Michael and wish him well, as he has retired from the booth.

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# Celebrating Our Conservation Heroes



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Public Affairs Manager Diana Ruiz (pictured on left with Elba Mora of the Wildlands Conservancy) is wrapping up 40 years at RCRCD and flying into retirement. Diana's expertise, creativity and ability to forge partnerships have been instrumental in our award-winning educational work (see front cover).



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Boy Scout Darrin Moss and his team renewed the native plant trail at the Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center. As part of an Eagle Scout project they trimmed and removed dead vegetation, lined the trail with rocks and refreshed the mulch.



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Boy Scout Thomas Aguilar and his mom Sarah organized a group of 28 volunteers to install three donated benches plus landscaping in the LandUse Learning Center.



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Volunteers install landscaping and benches in the LandUse Learning Center. Thank you so much for giving visitors more options to rest and enjoy the view.



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RCRCD staff hosted and helped plan the Environmental Education Collaborative's sold out 2024 Symposium. Keynote speaker Sean Milanovich, Ph.D., pictured, represented the Agua Caliente Band of Cahuilla Indians.



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Attendees work on Bee Buzzer crafts at the Symposium's Make-and-Take fair. More than 110 people attended.



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Artist Iris Escudero painted an inviting creekside scene in the water education room at the LLC filled with a myriad of native animals.

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RCRCN Nursery manager Ernesto Alvarado attended the dedication of UC Riverside's Native American Landscape Garden. The project features plants and other elements important to the local Cahuilla, Tongva, Luiseño, and Serrano peoples. Our nursery supplied many of the plants.

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Permaculture Design Course participants plant a banana circle at RCRCN's LandUse Learning Center. The new season of the class is set to start in October. Information: [dihqeco.org](http://dihqeco.org)



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UC Riverside College Corp fellows finished their service year in June. From left Riley McAlister, Diego Alvarez, Aaliyah Graham-Fajardo, and Reggie Martinez, together completed 1,800 hours helping RCRCN. Thank you for all your hard work.



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Resource Conservation Technician Tevin Bui is a jack of all trades at RCRCN. He maintains the aquatics facilities where we raise native fish, participates in restoration projects, trims tree branches in our garden, and is always willing to teach school children on field trips.



## Go Native!

Fall is the best time to plant native plants in inland Southern California. After watering natives to help them become established, the winter and spring rains will help keep them growing until the summer heat. This follows their natural cycle.

Most plants native to this area are drought tolerant. They have been providing food and habitat for local birds, butterflies and other animals for millennia.



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Native Blue Dicks grow well in pots and attract native pollinators.

Native plant gardening resources include the California Native Plant Society's (CNPS) newly revamped [calscape.org](https://calscape.org) website, and the "Wildflowers and Important Native Plants of the Inland Empire" book available from RCRCD.

Even if you don't have a yard, many local native plants thrive in pots. Check out our container garden display and find other resources at our LandUse Learning Center (LLC) demonstration garden.

**Save the date!** Workshops and the local CNPS native plant sale are set for Nov. 2 at LLC's Birds, Blooms and Butterflies event. Thank you to the City of Riverside for being a sponsor. Plant sale information: [riverside-sanbernardino.cnps.org](https://riverside-sanbernardino.cnps.org)

## Help Monarchs Take Flight

RCRCD's Monarch butterfly conservation work was highlighted by Naturalist Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker in a presentation at the National Association of Conservation Districts (NACD) conference in San Diego. Forty people learned about the "Stewardship of the Western Monarch through Community Outreach." The talk included information for other conservation districts that are hoping to dive into monarch work.

The butterflies are in decline due to a loss of habitat, specifically native milkweeds.

### Volunteer Opportunities

If you would like to volunteer to help monitor Monarch progress by collecting data on eggs, caterpillars and butterflies, contact Michele. Training will be provided.

Upcoming volunteer dates include Sept. 7 and 21. Required: register by 3 p.m. the prior day by emailing Michele at [Felix-Derbarmdiker@rcrcd.org](mailto:Felix-Derbarmdiker@rcrcd.org).

Other volunteer opportunities can be found at [www.rcrcd.org/volunteer-opportunities](https://www.rcrcd.org/volunteer-opportunities)



Michele Felix-Derbarmdiker presented at NACD national conference.

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Surveying for Monarchs at RCRCD's Greenbelt Monarch habitat.

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# Thank You: Guest Speakers

The First Saturday of every month RCRC D hosts guest speaker workshops. We appreciate these experts who have shared their knowledge:

## LandUse Learning Center

- Dr. Hung Doan discussed edible mushroom propagation.
- The California Rare Fruit Growers taught about grafting and conducted a scion exchange.
- Audrey Pongs from Greenbelt Growers shared alternative planting for traditional lawns.
- Dr. David Morgan from the California Department of Food and Agriculture discussed the Asian Citrus Psyllid and invasive pests.
- Master Gardeners Steven Orr and Kathy Swanson taught about aquaponics.



Dr. David Morgan toured greenhouses as part of a talk on invasive pests April 6, 2024.

Check out the upcoming events list on the backpage for the fall lineup. The LandUse Learning Center is open from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m. daily except holidays. It is located at 4500 Glenwood Dr. in Riverside.



Linda Powell displayed different herbs during her presentation at Sycamore Creek.

## Sycamore Creek Interpretive Center.

- Tracy Davis discussed prepping for the return of monarch butterflies.
- The local chapter of the California Rare Fruit Growers talked about backyard fruit growing and held a scion exchange.
- Laura Simpson taught about home vegetable gardening.
- Kathy Steckman demonstrated composting.
- Linda Powell talked about herb gardening.
- George Spiliotis shared about native plant gardening.

The Center is located at 11875 Indian Truck Trail in Temescal Valley. Story Time Among the Sycamores for young children is also offered monthly at the site.

Check out the backpage for the SCIC's fall lineup.

For more information, email [scic@rcrcd.org](mailto:scic@rcrcd.org). Follow us on Instagram at [syc\\_creek\\_interpretive\\_center](https://www.instagram.com/syc_creek_interpretive_center) and/or on Facebook at [SCICTV](https://www.facebook.com/SCICTV).

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Facility Maintenance Worker

**Michele Felix-Derbarndiker** Ext. 218  
Naturalist-SCIC

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**LandUse Learning Center**

Open 7 days a week, 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. Closed holidays.  
4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside



**First Saturday programs**

Start at 10 a.m. Free. (See page 7)

- Sept. 7 Seed Collecting with Christine Lampe
- Oct. 5 Tree Pruning with Inland Urban Forest Council
- Nov. 2 Birds, Blooms and Butterflies event
- Dec 7 Garden Art
- Jan. 4 Garden Tool Fix-It Fair

**Ask a Master Gardener**

9 a.m. - noon on the first Saturday of each month (see page 3)

**Permaculture Design course**

Second Saturdays 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. October-June

Information: [dihgeco.org](http://dihgeco.org)

**California Native Plant Society**

Lectures at 10 a.m. the third Saturday of each month

Nov. 2 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Native Plant Sale (see page 6)

**California Naturalist Class** (see page 2)

Online every other Wednesday

Aug. 28 - Dec. 4, plus field trips and graduation

**Sycamore Creek Interpretative Center**

11875 Indian Truck Trail, Temescal Valley



**Story Time Among the Sycamores**

10 a.m. To register email [scic@rcrcd.org](mailto:scic@rcrcd.org)

Sept. 14, Oct. 12, Nov. 9, Dec. 14 and Jan. 11

**Saturday Speaker Series** (See page 7)

- Oct. 26 Getting Your Yard Ready for the Return of Monarchs
- November TBA
- December TBA

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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