

Fresh and Local News

SUMMER 2020



Northside Heritage Meadows

by Diana Ruiz

The Northside Heritage Meadows (NHM) project will be the first urban agriculture project in Riverside's disadvantaged Northside neighborhood. The neighborhood is considered a "food desert" according to the USDA Economic Research Service. A nearly \$3M Urban Greening Grant has been awarded to the City of Riverside to purchase over 7 acres of blighted farmland.



This project will be a collaboration of the Northside community, the Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA), local groups, agencies and the City of Riverside. Additional in-kind and matching funds by various partners will be leveraged to complete the multiple components:

- 453 tree and shrub species selected for high carbon sequestration and pollution absorption properties
- fields for training beginning farmers, plus incubation plots for small start up farms
- a community garden and carbon-sequestering demonstration orchards
- a composting area to recycle green waste which will be used to increase soil health
- a farm stand that will provide fresh produce in an area with no grocery
- two trails and a bike lane that will reduce vehicle miles traveled and the related pollutants.

The project will improve air and water quality, increase wildlife habitat, as well as provide healthy, locally grown food.

If you are interested in getting involved with NHM, join our Facebook page, Northside Heritage Meadows Community: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/251927775049264>. For more information contact Joyce Jong at jjong@riversideca.gov or (951) 826-5265.



RFSA's mission is to cultivate local food and agriculture for a healthier community.

RFSA's Food System Goals

- Local food security and resilience
- Improve local food access
- Food rescue, safety training, food hubs
- Sustainable restaurant practices
- Community and school gardens
- Farmer training and incubator farms
- Sustainable farming practices and farmland preservation
- Building healthy soils and farm waste reuse
- Carbon capture to temper climate change

Who is RFSA?

The Riverside Food Systems Alliance is a network of people, organizations and agencies that work on projects to fill gaps in the local food system. They work together as well as individually on food, agriculture, health, and conservation projects. Partners include:

Local farmers	Riverside Food Co-op	Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
Riverside Food Rescue	Gleaners for Good	CURE - Citizens United for Resources and the Environment
Riverside Unified School District	City of Riverside	Riverside University Health System
Riverside Garden Council	Kaiser Permanente	
Farmworker Institute of Education and Leadership Development (F.I.E.L.D.)		

Calling All Farmers!

Sell to the Food Hub

by Scott Berndt

The Food Hub of Riverside Unified School District (RUSD) is looking to purchase locally-grown produce, eggs, meat, dairy, and other agricultural products from farmers who grow fresh fruits and vegetables. The purpose of the food hub is to provide marketing and distribution support for local farmers by using RUSD's existing infrastructure, coolers, warehouse, and delivery trucks.

The RUSD Food Hub was launched as a pilot with a CA Department of Food and Agriculture Specialty Crop Block Grant in 2017. In under one year, the food hub was able to demonstrate proof of concept and grow sales by serving smaller school districts, child care centers and local restaurants. In 2018, the RUSD Food Hub was awarded a USDA Local Food Promotions Program grant to incubate the food hub as well as provide funding to support food safety and GAP (good agricultural practices) training for regional farmers. The RUSD Food Hub anticipates purchasing more than \$1 million of locally grown produce over the next few years. **Please contact Scott Berndt at (951) 452-6840 or sberndt@riversideunified.org for more information or to become a vendor.**



Emergency Food Boxes

USDA has contracted with RUSD's Food Hub to purchase and distribute produce for the Farmers to Families Food Box program. The contract provides funding to purchase from local farmers, for packing the boxes, and for distributing the boxes to food pantries, churches, food banks, and other non-profits that are doing food access work.

The Food Hub is currently buying nearly \$19,000 a week in produce to fill the food boxes. They include 5-6 produce items and 2 dairy items, and are distributed at no charge to food distribution groups. RUSD has so far won two of four contracts submitted. With the first two contracts, RUSD will have packed and delivered 18,000 boxes. If all four contracts are funded, the program will continue through December 31, 2020, and a total of 39,000 boxes will be filled and distributed.



Interested in a Grower's Guild?

RFSA has conducted community educational programs, farmer trainings, served on the Ag Water Task Force, and promotes local farm stands, farmers markets, and the food co-op. RFSA helps the City of Riverside conduct Growers' Forums and GrowRIVERSIDE conferences. We would like to know how RFSA can support you, our local farmers. Are you interested in being involved in a Growers' Guild for sharing information? Have other ideas? Please complete this short survey and let us know if RFSA can help you: <https://rfsa.dm.networkforgood.com/forms/growers-guild-inquiry>

What is RFSA?

Did you know the Riverside Food Systems Alliance (RFSA) is the community-based nonprofit partner that helps plan, promote, and produce the annual GrowRIVERSIDE conference and technical workshops that bring resources and information to build the local food system?

During 2019, RFSA and partners launched several programs, including the NextGen Farmer Training Program, Gleaners for Good, and the Riverside Food Rescue Program. These programs engage local growers, food pantries, community members, and the Riverside Unified School District's Food Hub.

Join the RFSA mailing list to learn more about these projects and stay connected to events and activities related to local foods and farming here: <https://rfsa.dm.networkforgood.com/forms/ mailing-list>

Farm Food Safety Training

by Sandy Ramirez

RFSA is pleased to have received a grant from USDA to provide FREE Food Safety and Good Agricultural Practices training. To date, 37 local farmers have been trained and are on their way to becoming GAP Certified Growers! Why is being GAP Certified important? It allows growers to sell to institutions like the RUSD Food Hub.

Day 1 and 2 topics include:

- Review of Produce Safety Issues and Market Implications
- Buyers and Consumers Perspective on GAP and Audits
- Buyer Requirements, 3rd Party Audits and Regulations
- GAP Record-keeping, Glo-germ Exercise and Worker Training
- Manure, Compost and Animal Management
- Water Management
- Transportation and Traceability

Day 3 includes:

- Creating individual Farm Food Safety Plans
- Evaluations

Once training is complete, we provide a walk-thru Mock Audit and completely cover the costs of your audit (a \$1000 value).

The three day training will be scheduled on multiple dates.

Please register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/3-day-good-agricultural-practices-and-food-safety-training-registration-109834191022>

What's Growing On?

Riverside Neighborhood Partnership (RNP) and the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District have partnered to create some vlogs (video logs) called *What's Growing On?*

To learn more, watch vlogs about a variety of local people and projects, including one about RFSA's former chair and RNP's Good Neighbor of 2019: Sue Struthers at <https://youtu.be/PzaegyEvhbA> and another about neighbors growing and sharing their harvests at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nuxXQAcggwk&t=7s>.



Sue Struthers, Frances Borella (2018 Good Neighbor of the Year), Jane Burkheimer (Tequesquite and Emerson Community Garden Coordinator) helped at the Fall Pollinator Festival and plant sale.

Food Rescue Program

by Sue Struthers

Did you know that 40 percent of the America's food supply is wasted, while more than 50 million Americans are food insecure? The City of Riverside and the Riverside Food Coop have teamed up in a grant through CalRecycle to create the Riverside Food Rescue program! The program's mission is to prevent food waste and help food insecure residents.

The Food Rescue program has not been wasting any time! In the first year of operation, the Riverside Food Rescue program saved over 24,000 lbs. of food! Employees, AnaLisa Campos, Zach Ghamlouch and Daniel Carrillo are working to divert perfectly edible food from landfills to the tables of food insecure residents within the city of Riverside. We drive a refrigerated van to pick up leftover food from local food facilities (restaurants, cafes, farms and markets) to redistribute to agencies that offer hunger relief (food pantries, soup kitchens and homeless shelters).



The work has continued through the COVID19 pandemic except large group gleanings. *The need is greater than ever!*

The ChowMatch app <https://www.chowmatch.com/> is available for food donors to submit a request for food pick ups or to remove backyard fruit. After the request is sent, the Riverside Food Co-op will send a food runner to pick up food for redistribution to a hunger relief agency.

Want to get involved in preventing food waste and help alleviate food insecurity? Become a donor. The food we pick up can be frozen, ready to eat, fresh produce, or packaged. Benefits for participating in the Food Rescue Program include tax deductions, recognition and waste reduction!

If you're unsure about particular foods items you'd like to donate - give us a call! Or become a recipient. If you work or volunteer for a food pantry or soup kitchen, please let us know so we can begin coordinating food drop-offs. **For information on becoming a food donor or recipient, please contact: RiversideFoodRescue@gmail.com or call (951) 290-7327.**



Riverside Food Co-op

by Scott Berndt, Fox Farm

The Riverside Food Co-op is a California cooperative owned by its members, consumers who are interested in buying locally grown produce, products, and cottage foods. The Co-op sells an optional monthly crop box for \$30 that is filled with locally sourced fruits and vegetables. The income from the crop box is used to fund the operating expenses of the Co-op. Our goal is to open a local cooperative grocery store once membership is large enough.

The Co-op was started in January, 2013. It is owned by its members and run by a board of directors. An annual meeting is held to report results and to vote on relevant items. **For more information or to join us, please visit our website at riversidefoodcoop.com.**



Free “Riverside Grown” Guide

by Diana Ruiz

Are you interested in purchasing locally grown foods, but are having a hard time finding them? Download a copy of Riverside’s **Fresh and Local** Guide and find a map (pages 24-25) to locate farm stands, farmers’ markets, CSAs, community gardens, restaurants, and stores. The first part of the Guide explains the six ways to buy local foods. The second half provides healthy living, gardening, and farming resources. Find it at: <https://riversidefood.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-fresh-local-guide-web.pdf>

Learn about the advantages of buying local foods for good health, to strengthen our economy, and to protect the environment.



See sponsor ads and listings in purple throughout the *Fresh and Local* Guide



Dig Riverside

by Nick Melquiades

A delightful outcome of the COVID-19 era is how it has excited interest in home and community gardening. Why is no mystery. Gardening is a fun, and a healthy activity for sheltering in place that also secures healthful household food needs. Riverside Garden Council has been busy responding to this new enthusiasm, and hope it’s the foretaste of a more powerful local food movement. We have, for example, been updating the *How to Start a Community Garden* Guide in anticipation of the Northside Heritage Meadows groundbreaking. Projects:

1. Recently we engaged a local landscape designer to help John W. North High School plan its latest campus pursuit, a one-acre orchard. With special thanks to Russ Johnson, we also arranged to transport Russ’ donated aquaponics system to North High School.
2. We’ve continued to develop the Seed Library, a lending resource for all residents. We’ve received a generous donation from JT Seed through Master Gardener Thurman Howard that we’ll share with other seed libraries and the public.
3. We’ve purchased our first piece of equipment for a proposed tool lending library, an electric jackhammer with a spade attachment.

Do any of these projects interest you? Would you like to be involved? Contact us at RiversideGardenCouncil@gmail.com or (951) 394-3793. **To learn about upcoming events, join our Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/RiversideCommunityGardens>.**

Resources to “Get Growing!”

California Rare Fruit Growers, IE: <https://crfg.org/home/chapters/california/inland-empire/>

Master Gardeners: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/RiversideMG/>

Huerta Del Valle Community Garden and urban farming training: <https://www.huertadelvalle.org/>

Find community gardens (pages 26-27) and many more resources in *Fresh and Local*.



RGC helped California School for the Deaf develop their culinary gardens.



Share or pickup seeds from the Riverside Garden Council’s Seed Library at the LandUse Learning Center. (See article page 6.)



LandUse Learning Center

by Diana Ruiz

The LandUse Learning Center (LLC) is a 3-acre garden that demonstrates sustainable practices for the three main land uses of southern California: native habitats, urban areas, and agriculture. The Agricultural Area demonstrates crops that thrive in our local climate. Take a tour and pick up plant lists of climate-appropriate plants. (Plants are labeled.) Interpretive signs depict sustainable agricultural practices, including irrigation water management, methods to build soil health, and integrated pest management using a variety of biological controls.

The LandUse Learning Center is located at the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District (RCRCD), 4500 Glenwood Dr., Riverside, CA 92501 at 14th Street near the base of Mt. Rubidoux. Normally the LLC is open daily except holidays from 8 AM to 4 PM. **Please call to confirm re-opening days and times due to Covid-19:** (951) 683-3814 or check the RCRCD website at www.RCRCD.org.

RCRCD partners with the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service to work with land users to help conserve natural resources.

Conservation Assistance

by Bob Hewitt

The Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) can help local farmers with determining the best way to conserve irrigation water, control erosion, improve wildlife habitat, and more. This technical assistance is provided at **no cost** to the farmer.

NRCS also provides some financial assistance through the Farm Bill EQIP program. The Environmental Quality Incentives Program (EQIP) provides financial and technical assistance to agricultural producers to address natural resource concerns and deliver environmental benefits such as improved water and air quality, conserved ground and surface water, reduced soil erosion and sedimentation, and improved or created wildlife habitat. This program helps pay for a portion of the cost of materials and installation for improvements such as the irrigation system retrofits. It is available to all farmers regardless of acres owned or ag income. Contracts are developed between the farmer and NRCS. Payments are made to participants after practices and activities identified in an EQIP conservation plan are completed. Contracts may last up to ten years.

Agricultural producers, owners of non-industrial private forestland, and Tribes are eligible to apply for EQIP. Eligible land includes cropland, rangeland, pasture-land, non-industrial private forestland, and other farm or ranch lands.

NRCS will help eligible producers develop an EQIP plan of operations, which will become the basis of the EQIP contract. Visit www.nrcs.usda.gov/getstarted or contact District Conservationist Bob Hewitt at Robert.Hewitt@ca.usda.gov or (951) 654-7733.



Thank You, Sponsors!



Harvest \$7000+	Kaiser Permanente California Department of Conservation National Association of Conservation Districts Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District
Farm \$5000 - \$6,999	City of Riverside/Riverside Public Utilities
Garden \$2500 - \$4,999	American AgCredit
Seedling \$1000 - \$2,499	Riverside University Health System-WIC
Sprout \$500 - \$999	Burrtec Waste Industries Citizens United for Resources and the Environment Friends of Riverside's Hills Riverside Food Co-op
Root \$250 - \$499	Riverside County Farm Bureau WRCOG

RFSA works to enhance food security by growing a resilient, productive, and sustainable local food and agricultural system in SoCal inland valleys.

2020 Board of Directors

Susan Fahrney, Chair – Education/Community Liaison
 Scott Berndt, Co-Chair – RUSD Food Hub, Fox Farms, Healthy Soils Consultant
 Sue Struthers – Treasurer – Riverside Food Rescue Project Coordinator, Riverside Food Co-op
 Sandy Ramirez – Secretary – Consultant GrowRIVERSIDE, Coordinator Growers Forums, GAP Trainings
 Deborah Ghamlouch – The Grove Organic Farm, GAP Trainer
 Gayle Hoxter – Riverside University Health System
 Joyce Jong – City of Riverside: Economic Development Division, Local Farmer, Northside Heritage Meadows Project Coordinator
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2020 Advisory Members

Cecilia Arias – Kaiser Permanente
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www.RiversideFood.org or Facebook:RiversideFoodSystemsAlliance

This newsletter was made possible through funding provided to the Riverside-Corona Resource Conservation District by the National Association of Conservation Districts and the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.

You can help prevent waste by recycling this publication or passing it on to a friend.

Local Ag Feeds You - Local Ag Needs You!

Use your “purchasing power” to buy local foods and grow our local economy.

Find locations in *Fresh and Local*, our local food guide (see page 5).



There are many inefficiencies in our local food system from farm to fork to waste. We, at RFSA, are working on all fronts to improve health and the health of our local economy and environment. Volunteers and sponsors have stepped up to create great inroads in filling the gaps in our food system. How can you help?

1. Please share our newsletter and social media posts with your friends.
2. Get involved as a collaborator or volunteer. Contact us at info@riversidefood.org or call (951) 312-4031.
3. During this crisis, we have immediate need for funding to continue with this essential work; please, give what you can.

Your gift helps local farmers and improves health by supplying nutrient-rich foods and reducing air pollution as a result of fewer food imports.



Feed hungry tummies while reducing food waste!

Join us and help build a healthy and sustainable food economy!

Donate/become a member online: <https://rfsa.networkforgood.com/projects/104922-feed-those-in-need-with-healthy-local-foods> or <https://riversidefood.org/>



To pay by mail, enclose this form with check and send to:

Riverside Food Systems Alliance • PO Box 324 • Riverside, CA 92502

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Membership Level

- | | | |
|--|---|--|
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