

OVF

2026 Election Slate

The Chair (President): Shirley Vernale
Treasurer: Mary Harrison
Recording Secretary: DeDe Cooley
Education Chair: Debra Kaufman

Phase 1 Middle: Karen pinto
Phase 1 Lower: Kaitlin Hottage
Phase 2 Lower: Paul May
Janet Williams
Phase 3 Lower: Emily Payne
Phase 4 Lower: Angie Mason

Candidate Statements

The Chair (OVF Garden President): Shirley Vernale

Hi OVF Gardeners,

Many of you already know me as your existing president, but just in case you don't — here's a little about who I am.

After retiring as a librarian for the City of Santa Monica, joining OVF in 2021 felt like the perfect next chapter. Getting my plot assigned and diving into real gardening was a joy from day one.

A few years into membership, the opportunity to serve as president caught my attention — a chance to learn and apply my skills in service to this land and community. With the support of fellow members, running felt right, and being elected in April of 2024 has been a learning experience, sometimes challenging but mostly rewarding. Since then, this garden has had my full time attention and energy: learning its history, understanding its present operations, and helping plan for its future. Believing deeply in what OVF offers hundreds of dedicated gardeners keeps me motivated every single day. And of course — the plants and food deserve a nod too. Watching the wonderfully diverse and individual styles of gardening across our rows is one of the true joys of this community. We are a place rich with knowledge worth sharing. Our plots, the recycling of green materials, building of compost, the greenhouse, the potlucks, the orchards, the donation program, all of it, is amazing what we do working together.

Over the past two years, my work has included necessary administration for OVF's operations, building a strong board of directors, our non-profit corporation and partnership with the Dept of Recreation and Parks. A full write-up of my completed presidential work is available upon request — just email me at svovf47@gmail.com.

A new election cycle is here, and putting my name on the ballot again feels like the right thing to do. Serving this amazing place — and sharing in the appreciation of everything it offers — is a work in progress. The beautiful sunsets, the friendships, the community, the butterflies and bees, this is a happy place for many and it deserves dedicated stewardship.

Join in this election process and together let's look at improvements for the garden and future members. Give me your vote and support so I know you are out there also dedicated to OVF! Thank you sincerely.

Shirley Vernale

Treasurer: Mary Harrison

Greetings fellow gardeners:

I've been a grateful OVF member since 2019 (...OVF *saved* me during the pandemic...). I have the privilege to garden a veg plot in Upper 1 and a couple of IPs (a rose IP up at the top of Phase 1, and an Apple tree plot in Upper 3). I previously served as OVF Membership Secretary several years ago (Lisa Broderick now does such a capable job in that position). I stepped in to the OVF Treasurer's job to fill a vacancy in January 2026, and would be pleased to continue my service to the OVF community as Treasurer for the next term. I greatly appreciate the responsible approach & actions, and the collegial environment that current President Shirley Vernale & Garden Master Les Hairrell (and the rest of the team) have cultivated, and would like to continue as a part of this team.

Thanks for your consideration!

Recording Secretary: DeDe Cooley

Hello garden neighbors,

My name is DeDe Cooley. I am officially running for the position of Recording Secretary. As a dedicated OVF member since 2014, I am eager to continue serving our community.

I have been filling in as interim Recording Secretary since the passing of Rena Rose Sonshine in 2025. I know she was very special to many of you and volunteered as the Recording Secretary for numerous years.

As a quick reminder, the Recording Secretary takes minutes during all Board Meetings and General Meetings. Once reviewed, the minutes are uploaded to the OVF website.

I welcome the opportunity to continue volunteering as your Recording Secretary for the next two years. Thank you for your time and for your support of our wonderful community garden.

Sincerely,
DeDe Cooley
Upper Phase 3, E-50

Education Chair: Debra Kaufman

Hello OVF members and fellow gardeners:

I am a relative newcomer to the garden. When I heard of the opportunity to revive the newsletter, I raised my hand - whereas I am still a novice in gardening I spent my working life in writing and publishing. I love the chance to talk to the long-time OVF members, telling their stories builds the oral history of the garden we all love. I believe the newsletter can and will help build and support community feeling at OVF and provide a forum for your voices.

Debra K

Phase 1 Middle: Karen Pinto

I've been at OVF since 2007, and been Phase Representative for about 6 years. I believe I've been fair and supportive as a Phase Representative. My main request is that you COMMUNICATE with me, particularly if you encounter challenges that impact your ability to garden. Most times, I can help you, but I can't assist if I'm not informed. I look forward to continuing in this role if the phase members agree.

Phase 1 Lower: Kaitlin Hottage

My fellow gardeners. My name is Kaitlin Hottage. I am running for the Lower Phase 1 Representative position to be your voice and to make sure our shared spaces are well-maintained, practical, and productive, in a positive and friendly way.

I have been a member of OVF for nearly four years. When I first started with my plot, I didn't know much about growing anything, and I thought growing from seed was something you could only do if you had magical powers. My initial interest in growing came from taking over the raised beds at a preschool I worked at (as the admin) and trying to grow something the kids could eat. They had terrible sun exposure (shaded by too many trees), so I applied for an OVF plot to see if I could really grow something. I've had my successes (13 tomato plants last year because I couldn't part with any of my seedlings) and failures (corn wasn't pollinating); developed favorites (green beans and broccoli) and frustrations (carrots - why do they take so long to grow?). Through it all, there's been an OVF member at every turn to offer help, advice, or new seeds for my ever-growing collection.

At my job working in the administration of a preschool, I was the liaison between the parents, the administration, and the teachers. I hope to be a representative for you as an individual and help you with your needs as well as be a voice for the administration so expectations are clear to maintain a cohesive community garden space. I look forward to meeting each and every one of you and will try my best to be fair, but I will also set clear boundaries so we can all enjoy this communal space together.

OVF is a special place where we can all enjoy the beautiful sunshine, grow something with our own hands, and foster a community. I look forward to bringing new energy and resolve to make sure our magical space is something we can all keep enjoying together as a community for a long time.

Thank you,
Kaitlin Hottage
2U-G36

Phase 2 Lower: (two candidates)

Janet Williams

It has been an absolute pleasure to serve as your representative and to be part of such a wonderful group of gardeners. I enthusiastically seek the opportunity to continue as your representative as I care deeply about the people in phase 2L - the gardeners who make our garden thrive.

I value the chance to listen, support, and advocate for you. I remain committed to ensuring your voice is heard, your needs are addressed, and our garden continues to be a welcoming and productive place for everyone.

My promise to you is to continue to:

- Listen actively to your ideas, concerns, and needs
- Advocate for improvements that benefit all gardeners
- Support a respectful, inclusive, and cooperative environment
- Communicate clearly so everyone stays informed

This garden is more than a place to grow plants—it's a place that helps you enjoy your time away from the 'outside'. I would be honored to continue serving as your representative.

Thank you for your continued trust and support and for allowing me the honor to be your voice.
Janet

Paul May



Back in 2011 my wife Yoshie's Mother Chizuko was visiting from Japan, she really enjoyed walking around Mar Vista and looking at all of the American gardens. One morning the three of us found ourselves at the gate in front of Ocean View Farms and talking about how it would be nice to have a plot there. That evening I found the website and put our name on the waiting list, five years later in September of 2016 I received an email invitation to become a member. U2F42 was full of weeds and cinder blocks, it took a month and a half to get to this photo October 14, 2016. I would like to put my name on the ballot for Lower Phase 2 Representative with the goal of encouraging new and existing members to find and share the joy and pleasure of spending time in the garden.

All the best,

Paul May

408-761-4155

paulmaytm@gmail.com

U2F42

Phase 3 Lower: Emily Payne

Hello!

I joined OVF in Feb 2018 and was appointed the phase rep of Lower 3 by the OVF board in September 2024. Since the appointment, I have welcomed 19 new gardeners to our phase and represented you at Board meetings. I have worked hard to bring Lower 3 back to life, hopefully making it an area of healthy growth and with bountiful produce, where gardeners learn to work with the sun and the shade. I believe I have communicated well with Lower 3 gardeners on OVF happenings, encouraged you to the garden throughout the year, and listened when concerns were brought to my attention. I hope to remain your representative and to continue working with you to make Lower 3 and OVF grow.

Thank you for taking the time to consider me as your phase rep for the upcoming 2 years.
Happy gardening!

-Emily

Phase 4 Lower: Angie Mason



As a member of the farm since 2015 and your Lower Phase 4 representative, I am committed to caring for our members and plants. Being next to the field, we are at a disadvantage for rodents, but our phase has a good vibe and welcoming energy. We share crops and ideas, help our neighbors water and weed, and fight gophers and rats with humor and patience. I value communication, kindness, and community and will continue to fill our phase with talented diverse future leaders. Though we have the smallest phase, we encompass one of the most creative and diverse sections, including master gardeners, social workers, professional writers, photographers, film producers, web designers, and a retired principal. I am proud of the way we care for each other and enjoy social gatherings, while growing an impressive variety of crops. I love you all. Please vote to reelect me for Lower Phase 4 Representative.

Angela Mason, LCSW
6230 Wilshire Blvd. #1122
Los Angeles, CA 90048
(310) 433-4834

At the April 11 General Meeting, before in-person voting commences, additional candidates who are present at the meeting may be nominated for any office from the floor. These candidates will not be included on the pre-printed paper ballots, but their names may be written in to receive votes.

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