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OVF NEWS

June 2025

Garden Master's Message

Hello everyone,

Two months in as OVF Garden Master, I continue to meet with members and hear interesting things about OVF. During my conversations at the garden, I recently learned of two people doing tasks at OVF that were assigned to them by Ed over fifteen years ago and who are apparently still doing the same thing today. It has been a very enlightening two months. My topic today is OVF community hours. OVF has no employees – all the work running this community garden is done by the members. To belong to OVF is to commit to contributing to the overall care and upkeep of the garden.

Over time there has developed at OVF a rather complex array of workgroups, special projects and calendared and uncalendared assignments. It may be confusing when deciding how to do your hours. Therefore, I've prepared the following organizational list of hour options broken down into categories:

1. Work at calendared times with no pre-approval required (just show up):
    a. Workdays - second Saturday and last Sunday of the month;
    b. Shredding - every Tuesday morning; and
    c. Composting - every Saturday morning.

2. Work at calendared times but pre-approval required (contact the group lead beforehand);
    a. Gourmet composting - every Tuesday morning; ; and
    b. OVF Donates - every Sunday afternoon.

3. Yearly calendared tasks that members sign up to do (bonus time generally credited for the commitment of future performance):
    a. Workday Supervisor (2 hour bonus);
    b. Workday Timekeeper;
    c. Gate closing (1 hour bonus);
    d. Trash can take out/pick up;
    e. Potluck crew;
    f. T Shirt crew; and
    g. Workday bulletin board poster install.

4. Work where the Group Lead assigns the tasks:
    a. Beautification (process described on OVF website)
    b. Greenhouse group;
    c. Pot washing;
    d. Orchard group;
    e. Independent Project Monitor assistance;
    f. Recycling;
    g. Educational tours/classes;
    h. Newsletter;
    i. Office administration; and
    j. Native garden maintenance.

5. Repair crews (work done by a crew member when the need arises):
    a. Hose and Pipe repair;
    b. Wheelbarrow repair;
    c. Mailbox installation; and
    d. Lock and tool repair.

6. Common area maintenance:
    a. Children's/Herb garden;
    b. Asian garden;
    c. Driveway entrance;
    d. Weed whacking; and
    e. Meeting areas.

7. Site maintenance operations:
    a. Heavy machinery;
    b. Garden Master special projects;
    c. Carpentry/construction special projects; and
    d. Garden Angel projects.

This is the most complete list of hours options that I could compile, but I may have missed somebody doing something (perhaps for over fifteen years). If so, please let me know. As GM, I'm still in the discovery phase.

It's important to note that many of the listed jobs have been filled by specific members for some time. There may or may not be an opening in any particular job category. But OVF is a dynamic and ever-evolving garden. If you're interested in a specific task, let me know. If you have ideas for community hour work that would improve the garden and aren't on the list, let me know that too.

Finally, OVF relies on those few members who have stepped up to take on leadership roles in the work groups and operations that keep OVF functioning. The above list is oriented to the general member looking to fulfill their community hours requirement. It doesn't list the leadership and management positions of those who run operations at the garden, or the seventeen members of the OVF Board. OVF and its membership owe their gratitude to those that have stepped up to do so much more than the minimum and committed so much of their time, energy and intelligence to OVF. So I end this message with a thank you to some of those leaders; Alicia, Bob, Dean, Gale, Jay, Karl, Katie, Mark, Michael, Nina, Steve and Therese. OVF is indebted to them all.
See you in the garden,

Les Hairrell
OVF Garden Master

President's Message

The last month, I've been pleased to represent OVF at numerous garden-centric events. Here's a round-up.

LAUSD: OVF docents shared the beauty of our gardens with over 100 students from the local Mar Vista Elementary School. The docents and children toured the grounds in search of flowers, seeds, edibles, and compostables. They enjoyed being here so much and my favorite comment from a first grader was "I am definitely coming here on my birthday." Please keep your garden in tip-top shape for these special visitors and contact me if you have something to taste or interesting to share from your plot for next time.

Mar Vista Arbor Club: This local club of over 50 members is dedicated to the care and planting of trees in our neighborhood, and the promotion of the city's gift of free trees from the city. On Saturday, June 7, I met up with some Mar Vista Arbor Club members and together we cleared and weeded the parkways on the southside of Venice at Centinela. Next up, together we are planning to give club members a tour of OVF and review how we might share our interests and resources.

Theodore Payne: On June 1, OVF's Native Plant Club was pleased to welcome Theodore Payne Foundation's Director of Education. Theodore Payne is a non-profit organization founded in 1960 to promote the understanding and preservation of California native plants. As we look toward the restoration and growth of an educational native plant garden in our driveway -- and throughout OVF -- we are so happy to have support and input from professionals. Stay tuned for further developments and please care for the natives around the garden.

Altadena Community Garden: This community garden, with 2.5 acres divided into 82 plots, was completely destroyed in the Eaton Canyon Fire in January. To heal the contaminated soil, over 50 volunteers are engaged in the greatest soil remediation project I have ever seen. I visited and joined in with the volunteers to help create a run-off protected berm with a recipe of biochar, mycelium, and compost. Wrapped in burlap bags over 100 feet long, the berm will catch run off and collect contaminants in the soil. Along with that we planted rows and rows of sunflowers, clover, pumpkins, vetch, and squash. The plants will grow to flower and then be removed and discarded, having collected the contaminate from the soil. The project was led by the composters from SoilWise, the Altadena Community Garden and students, professors and friends. What a great education and experience!

Thanks for reading,
Shirley Vernale
OVF President

OVF Calendar

Work Days	General Meeting	Board Meeting
Saturday,9am-12pm: July 12 *Sunday, 1-4pm*: July 27	August 9 1:00 pm (Pot Luck at 12:00)	July 19 9:30 am

Full Calendar

Upcoming Events at OVF

(All events are held at the main OVF meeting area unless otherwise stated.)

July 6, 10am - Garden Master available to chat at P1L, plot N6B
July 6, 1pm - OVF Native Plant Club Get Together
July 10, 11am-2pm - Hours opportunity: clerical work at OVF office (rsvp to svovf47@gmail.com)
July 16, 6pm - Garden Master Zoom office hour (rsvp to ovfgmles@gmail.com)
July 17, 11am-2pm - Hours opportunity: clerical work at OVF office (rsvp to svovf47@gmail.com)
July 19, 5pm - Garden Master available to chat at P1L, plot N6B
July 22, 9am - Garden Master available to chat at office
July 24 and 31, 11am-2pm - Hours opportunity: clerical work at OVF office (rsvp to svovf47@gmail.com)

Workgroup Profile

All About Gourmet Composting

The first thing to know about gourmet compost is that it really isn't compost but, rather, mulch. That's according to OVF gardener Mark Jackson who has been part of that workgroup for 20 years, and leading it since the passing two years ago of Warren Miyashiro, who founded the group. Mark points out that this mulch is a key ingredient in OVF's main composting efforts – but can also be used on its own to retain soil moisture and deter weeds (but don't put it directly on plants). "It's like a top dressing to protect your soil from the sun's UV radiation, which can kill the micro-organism life and turn your topsoil dusty and dry," says Mark. "It's organic material but it isn't fully composted. You can also dig it into the soil, but don't put it directly on plants or seedlings – it will burn them."

Every Tuesday morning, starting around 7 am, the gourmet compost team – which includes Warren's son Masao Miyashiro, Brian Kimura, Mark Emerson, Catherine Corwin, and others – meets to put the raw material (horse bedding from stables) on the hopper table and then into the shredder, which dumps it directly into the bin. Mark reports it takes three City truck loads to fill up one of the 30-ton bins. "Once it's full, we cover it and let it start aging," he says. That steam that you might have seen arising from the bins is the tremendous heat that composting material emits.

Los Angeles City's Department of Sanitation provides OVF approximately 70 tons of material each year; OVF is a short, efficient trip for the Sanitation trucks to dispose of Westside horse bedding. In exchange, the City picks up OVF's trashcans for free. And OVF pays the favor forward, providing "gourmet compost" not just for the OVF compost team but also for Santa Monica College and the City of Santa Monica, which distributes it to local school gardens. "It's a mutually beneficial relationship," says Mark.

Here's Mark's tip for the best gourmet compost: "the far left (North) bin holds the oldest and most refined material because it's been through the shredder," he says. "The other bins are straight from the truck and they're aging. By the time it gets into the far left bin, it's been aging at least two to three months and it's great mulch."

It's impossible to talk about the history of gourmet composting without talking about Warren, whose boundless enthusiasm for the task swept up many OVF gardeners. Mark was one of them. In 2005, he used to come to the garden at 7 am to water his plot before he went to work. One day, Warren flagged him down and corralled him into pushing the manure into the shredder, gloveless (as he wasn't prepared for the job).

After returning home, Mark's wife had a very strong reaction to the smell all over him and he took so much time to clean up that he was late to work. He swore to never do it again. The next time, he parked by OVF's northern gate to avoid Warren standing near the main entrance and snuck down to his plot – but Warren tracked him down and, with a big smile, asked if he was going to help again. Mark demurred, but soon found himself on OVF's Toro Dingo tractor navigating uphill blind turns (with Warren urging him to go faster). "He was so persistent and enthusiastic, I had no choice but to follow him," he says. "It was his love for the community that was driving him. I just put the tractor on full throttle and never looked back."

About 10 years ago, Warren asked Mark to become the OVF contact for L.A.'s Department of Sanitation, and shortly before Warren's passing in 2023, Mark promised Warren he would keep the mulch going. The gourmet compost team gave the facility a major upgrade, rebuilding the hopper and many of the walls and walkways, adding safety features and misters to keep the dust down. In honor of Warren, they built a Hawaiian-themed memorial garden on the north side of the composting facility, with a variety of alstormeria flowers from Warren's original IP plot, with a Hawaiian Ti leaf plant and a plumeria tree dedicated to him.

Thanks to the approval of OVF's board, the Mighty Mac Shredder was also replaced with a new machine in the spring of last year. "Warren was a superhero," Mark says. "We need a team to replace him."

June Articles

Plot Twist: A New Member's Journey

Plot Twist is a column by writers Alex and Janet, who joined OVF in April.

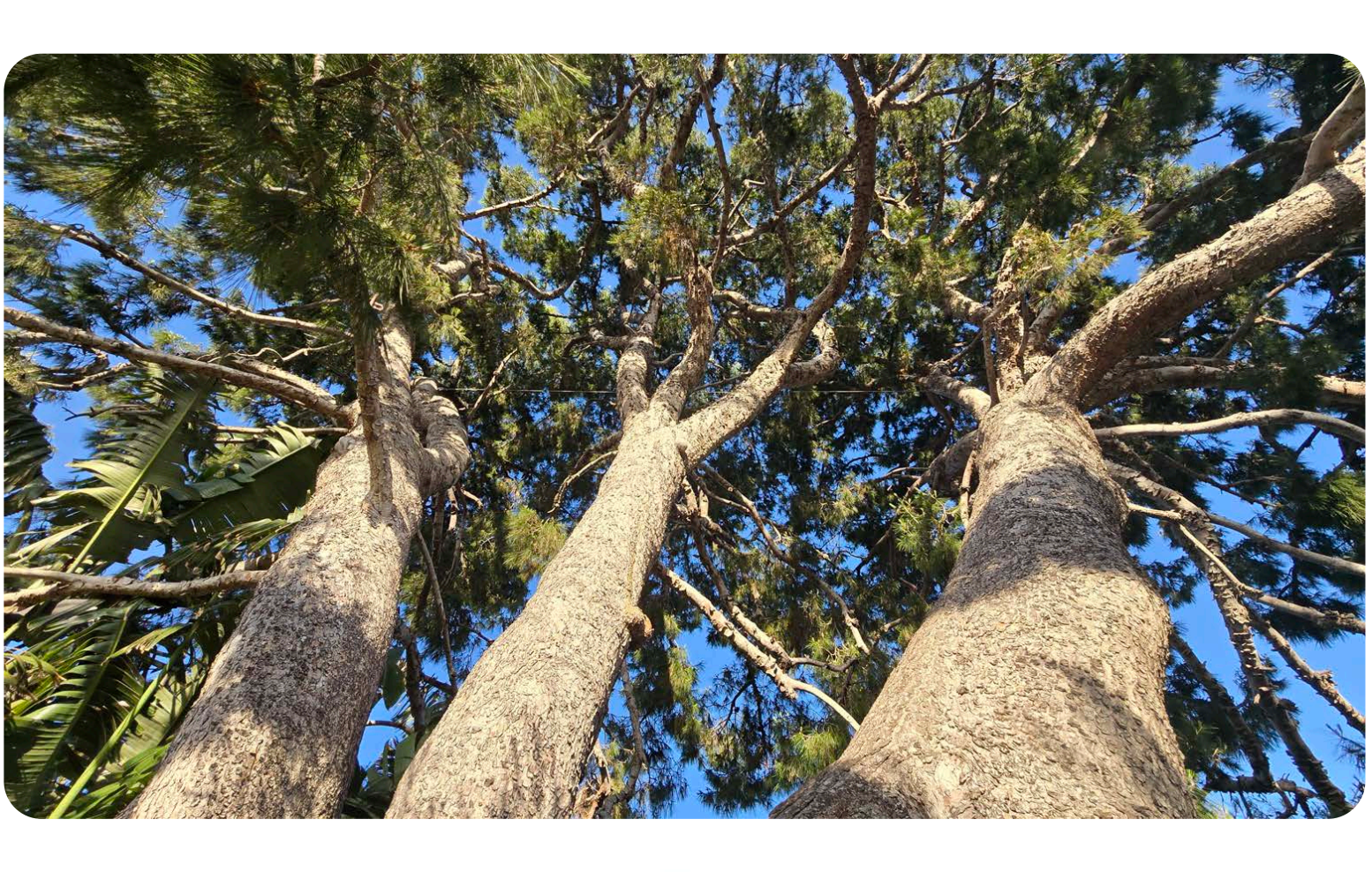
Episode Two

The initial excitement and shock of getting a plot has worn off. Reality hit us! Life always forces a decision between what we want to do and what we need to do. Gardens are a microcosm of this. We want to plant dramatic flowers and bountiful vegetables. We need to clear, weed, and improve the soil.

A month earlier, there was no OVF on our schedule - and we already found ourselves out of time - now we have to find ways to fit OVF in.

OVF volunteers had kindly weeded the plot before it came to us, but rain and a few days of California sun reset the clock. The plot was lush with weeds, clarkias, and California poppies. There was a lot of clearing to do and finally we made the decision that the only way we could get ahead would be to sheet mulch and put down planter boxes.

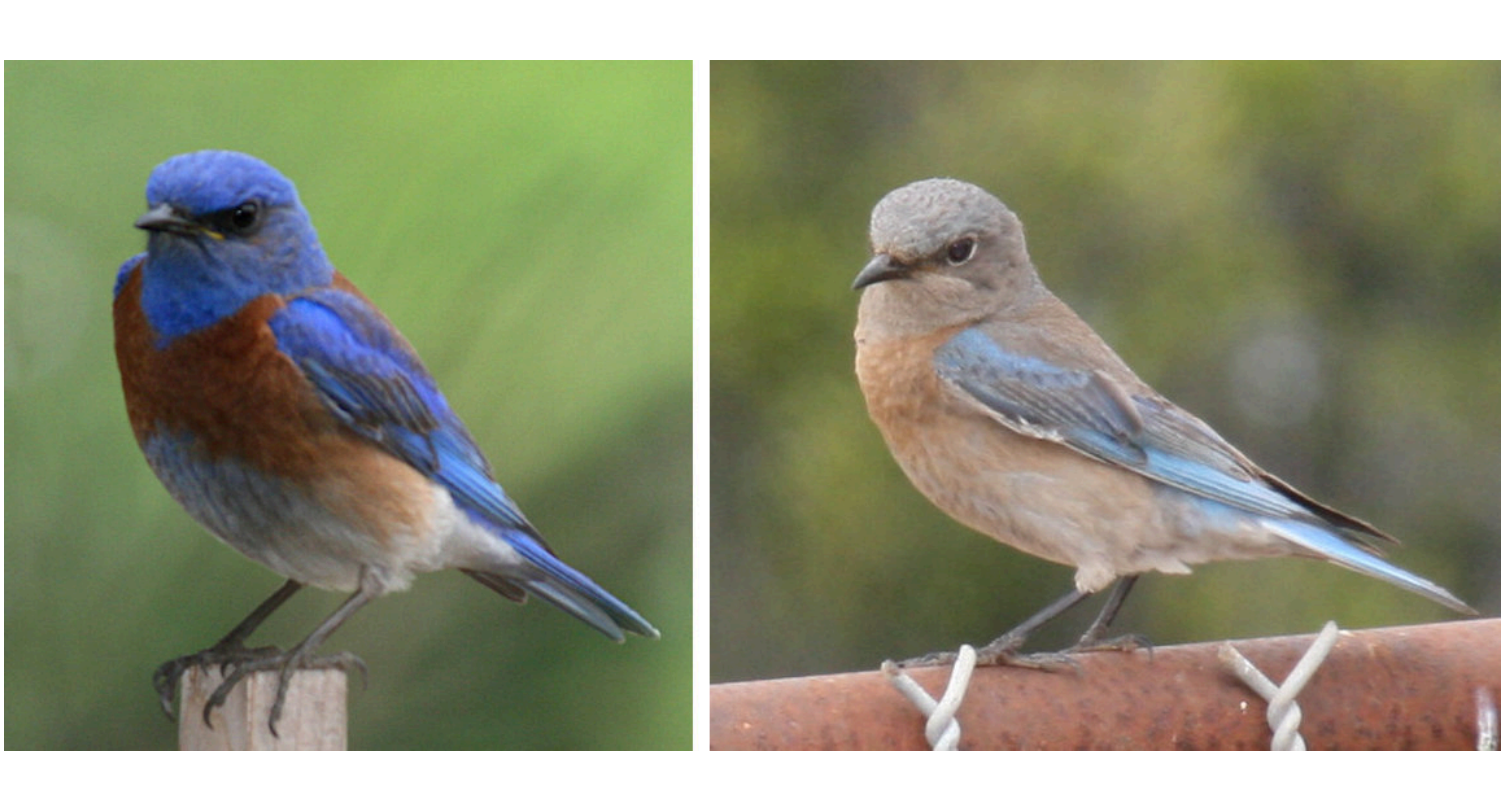
A wise gardener once told us that weeds are just plants in the wrong place. We pulled the dandelion and the nettles. When life gives you weeds, you just have to find the upside and a couple of hungry kids. The dandelion made a nice pasta with some good bacon, the nettle with shallots and a few drops of heavy cream made a great soup. The plot is already bountiful without any intervention from us. Dinner is served!



A Bluebird Family in the Garden

By Gardener Nick, Phase 1U, Plot G1

For the last couple of years I've enjoyed spotting bluebirds around the garden, perched on the fences of the Phase 4 parking lot and in the main orchard near the shredder. The flash of the male's bright blue feathers is always a delight. Having heard about "bluebird trails" and other initiatives that provide nesting boxes with the aim of boosting bluebird populations, I thought it would be a cool thing to do here.

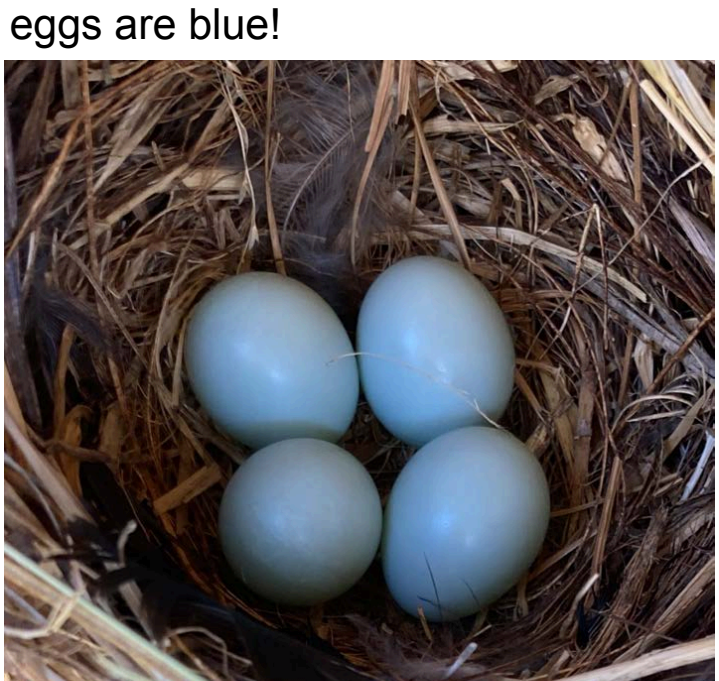


Male (left) and female (right) bluebirds in the garden

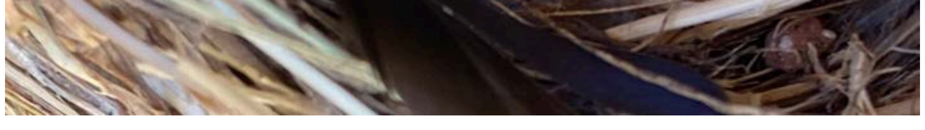
So I built a nest box and in early March, Orchard Supervisor Gale Jones and I lifted the box into the old apple tree in the upper orchard near Gate #1.
The very next day I saw bluebirds in the tree, and in a couple of weeks I opened the box to discover a nest inside. It may surprise you that I periodically lowered the box and peered inside, but all bluebird-supporting organizations encourage monitoring next boxes regularly. Bluebirds tolerate human presence, and opening the box allows you to remove pests like bees and ants, summon a wildlife rehabilitator if the chicks are abandoned, and build a record of the species status.

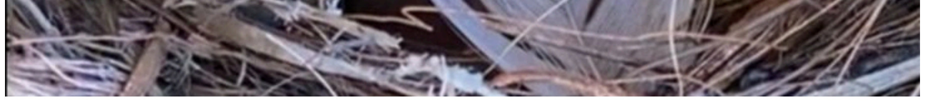
In the following days the bluebirds were active around the box, perching in the tree or going into the box.

A month later, eggs appeared in the nest. And as you can see, bluebird eggs are blue!



Females typically incubate the eggs about two weeks. I discovered the chicks about four days after they had hatched. One mistook me for its mom and begged for food (well, its eyes weren't open yet).





At this stage almost all the feeding was done by the female, who brought insects regularly. I thought the male had abandoned the nest, but when a squirrel came too close, the female's alarm cries brought the male out of hiding and the two birds drove the squirrel away. As the chicks matured and the time for them to leave the nest approached, both parents worked furiously, bringing insects every few minutes.

It was remarkable how quickly they could find insects - one more testament to organic gardening! By the end of May, the chicks had grown large and more bold.

Fledging - leaving the nest - normally happens about three weeks after hatching. And when I arrived on June 3rd, it was immediately apparent that something had changed. There was no feeding frenzy. I rapped on the box. There was no response. I lowered the box and opened it. It was empty. The chicks had fledged.

Where are they now? Have they made it to independent adulthood? Or have they perished to one of the many perils they face: hawks, crows, outdoor cats, or traffic. When you consider that a pair of bluebirds may produce dozens of offspring in their lifetimes yet only two must reach adulthood to sustain a stable population, you realize that most fledglings don't make it.

But the Western Bluebird, our local species, is doing well, thanks in large part to the efforts of the many people who make, install, and monitor nest boxes. And here's good news: the OVF bluebirds have already started a second brood, laying four eggs with an expected hatch date of about July 4th. If all goes well, expect to see adults frequently bringing food to the chicks in the box's new location in an olive tree near Gate #1.

Member Feedback / Submissions

If you have any feedback or comments on the newsletter, please contact the OVF Education Chair Debra Kaufman at ovfdeb@gmail.com.

Land Acknowledgement

Ocean View Farms recognizes that we garden on land originally and currently inhabited by the Chumash, Kizh, Tongva, and Serrano peoples. We respect them as the first caretakers of this land, with gratitude for their wisdom and skills.

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