



LEAF  
GROWING FOR GOOD

# NEWSLETTER

## SEPTEMBER 2021



*a word from elaine*

President of LEAF

**September is the month of transition.** The nights are cooler, mornings are crisp and overcast, and dew collects on our car windows. Sunrises are later in the morning and sunsets seem to happen much sooner than expected. Harvests in our gardens are changing. The summer squash bounties are waning, their leaves turning brown and beginning to be covered in mildew but the colorful summer fruits of tomatoes, eggplant and peppers are still growing with their vibrant reds, colorful oranges, bright yellows and deep purples. There is nothing as sweet as garden fresh tomatoes from your garden.

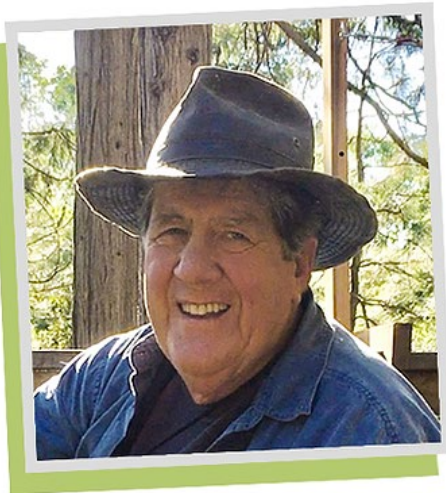
This month, we're introducing a new feature called "Tips for Sustainable Living by Rebecca." [Rebecca's](#) passion is to reduce plastic usage. She will help us by providing tips in this newsletter and on our [LEAF Blog](#). Rebecca has been volunteering at Stone Garden since December 2020 and is also working behind the scenes in nursery operations. She graduated with a horticulture degree from Olds College in Alberta, Canada and has found gardening in [Fremont's USDA Hardiness Zones 9b and 10a](#) very

different from Zone 3b at Olds College. Rebecca will be one of the hosts our the [Talkin' Dirt Webinar](#) where you can ask her questions directly.

This month, I interviewed Bruce Cates, a well-known figure in Fremont who is intimately associated with Niles, music, and the arts. He's also avid environmentalist, and one of the founders of LEAF. So, without further ado, heeere's Bruce!



## Faces of LEAF



a visit with  
LEAF Founder  
& Vice President  
Bruce Cates

### What do you love most about gardening?

I love getting my hands and feet dirty while working the soil. When I do that, I feel a connection to nature that I cannot get anywhere else. I enjoy the smell of the plants, especially the aroma of tomatoes. I also like building large compost mounds called [hugelkultur](#). The mounds conserve water, provide a constant source of nutrition due to the organic material being broken down at varying rates. and since they're above ground, they're easier on the body.

### What is your next gardening project?

I didn't put in a summer garden in Fremont because I left for Canada in June. By then it was too late to plant a garden in Canada because the planting season is much shorter up there. I

might plant a winter garden or volunteer at the LEAF's gardens when I return.

### **What are some of your favorite activities?**

Since I now live part time in Canada next to beautiful Maple Bay, I've become addicted to being near the water, sailing, swimming, kayaking, etc. I enjoy flowing with the currents and wind while sailing from one island to the next. Music is my favorite activity. I play music every day. I love to sing and my guitar is my platform for singing. I especially like jamming with a room full of people. My creative side comes out with new chords, melodies and harmonies. It will be my passion until my final moments.

### **Tell us about your educational and professional background.**

I was born in the late 40s, so my educational background is a combination of classroom learning and life experiences. I went to Chabot and Ohlone, where I was active in theatrical arts and fascinated by sciences and history, which gave me great perspectives on culture and people. Art and craftsmanship have always been part of my life. I have been a professional artist working with wood, glass and clay, and a professional remodeler building kitchens, bathrooms, restaurants, wine cellars and gardens.

### **Describe the early days of LEAF.**

A group of us wanted to preserve the Niles area and especially Cal Nurco (California Nursery Company). Over time, a core group formed including myself, Lorna Jaynes, Bill Merrill, Micheal Joss, Richard Godfrey, Justine Burke, Jenny Kassan, Rachel DiFranco, Steve LaGraffe and others I'm forgetting. In one meeting, Bill Merrill, the guru of Fremont horticulture, came up with the name LEAF, Local Ecology and Agriculture in Fremont. Lorna, Jenny and I drafted the original bylaws in 2009 and by March 2010, LEAF officially received 501(c)(3) non-profit status. Our first gardens were at local churches. Shortly thereafter we moved to a vacant lot I owned in Niles. Later, we started both the LEAF Center at the California Nursery Historical Park (CNHP) and LEAF C.R. Stone Garden. It was a very busy time. I am so proud and thankful to all those who worked tirelessly to make it what it has become.

### **What is your role at LEAF today?**

I see my role as Vice President as supporting the LEAF President; being an advocate of educating others, especially younger people, about environmental sustainability; and championing our fundraising events. I want to continue to carry the LEAF torch, leading by example by being open, honest and transparent about what we do.

### *What excites you about working with LEAF?*

I love the energy comes from working with people who stimulate thought and are committed to further the purpose of LEAF like Mayank, our LEAF Tech Guru. He has so many great ideas about education. Plus, he is focused and is knowledgeable—all traits I admire.

### *If you could have the whole world's attention, what would you say?*

Visualize the big picture and figure out how you can contribute to humanity. Educate yourself about the realities of life from knowledgeable sources. Earth is not going to last long if we continue down the path of resource depletion. We need to make adjustments in meaningful ways with our actions and not with just words, by educating our friends and families about the effects of driving gas-guzzling monsters, releasing carbon by tilling the soil, not conserving water, and introducing chemicals that will affect the soil and water for future generations. We must all look to organizations like LEAF for guidance in these matters. No one has all the answers. But if we humans are to survive the next millennium, we must take good care of our waterways, the air we breathe, our wildlife, and we must make good dirt.







Joyce, Ethan, Sofiya, Sydney, Pranali, Aliya, Vignesh and the farm dawg, Mela

This summer, Students for LEAF volunteers with Joyce as their nurturing leader worked at Stone Garden. One of the biggest tasks they undertook was cleaning used 4" plastic seedling pots. Cleaning pots is dirty business but it's important for two reasons: to recycle the pots, thereby reducing landfill, and to eliminate plant pathogens that could be transferred from the soil in the pots to the transplanted seedlings and then potentially infest the soil in your beds. The students cleaned over 3820 pots and created a YouTube video, [Why Clean Your Gardening Pots?](#) Thank you to Joyce and our Students for LEAF for your efforts!

#### Our Pot Disinfection Method

1. Hose off dirt from the pots.
2. Make soapy water with an eco-friendly plant-based liquid dish detergent.
3. Scrub the pots both inside and out with a bristled brush in the soapy water to remove the dirt.
4. Remove soapy bubbles by dipping the pots in a tub of clean water, then allow to dry.
5. Lay stacked pots horizontally inside our DIY solarizer, made from a used skylight fitted over a wood box painted black.
6. Temps inside the solarizer must reach 122°F and be maintained for a minimum of 30 minutes. We keep the pots inside the solarizer for at least 3 days to ensure disinfection.

Source: [University of California, Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources](#)

Another solution to disinfect dirty pots is to clean them as in steps 1-4, then put them in a sealed black bag in the trunk of your car on a hot summer day where temps should reach 122 °F.



# Rebecca's

## TIPS FOR SUSTAINABLE LIVING



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**500 million**  
tonnes of plastic are  
produced annually worldwide

.....

In 2020 we will generate  
**900% more**  
plastic than in 1980

.....

**By 2050**  
the oceans could contain  
more plastics than fish

Photo by [Iberdrola](#) on How to reduce your plastic consumption

The most important, relevant and “biggest bang for your buck” action you can take to reduce your plastic usage is to use your voice, using positive action to bring about positive change. We should tell companies exactly what we want. This is what I did. I want to buy antiperspirant/deodorant that comes in an environmentally sustainable container instead of a plastic one that will outlive my time on Earth. I picked the two companies I purchase toiletries from most often, Dove and Secret, and asked

them *when* they would be selling an environmentally sustainable container. Not if. Not maybe, but *when!*

I received a quick response from Dove, nothing from Secret. I was pleased with Dove's positive response, "...we're looking to expand into other product lines in the future. We want as many people to find the kind-to-skin product they want in the format that's also kind to the planet!" Can you imagine what the impact could be if we asked every company we buy products from to step up and reduce plastic usage just by asking the question... *When?*



## Tips for Your Garden



### SEPTEMBER

- **Summer crops** like tomatoes, eggplants and peppers can continue to be harvested. BTW, composting tomato plants and even eggplant at home can be a bit risky if composting techniques are not done properly. The biggest risk is spreading plant diseases like late and early blight, fusarium and verticillium wilt, and bacterial canker. These diseases



are double trouble so to save yourself a future headache, put the plant debris in the city's green bin instead of your compost bin. Source: [Gardener's Path](#)

- **Winter squash** is ready to harvest when the stem begins to shrivel. Remove the squash and cure it by letting it lie in the sun for several days. Store it in a cool, dry place for up to 5 months.
- **Fruit Trees:** Fallen fruit should be picked up and discarded for several reasons; it can return disease pathogens to the soil, it can attract all sorts of rodents, and it can be dangerous for your doggies. Fruit pits can cause an obstruction in their digestion system and fallen fruit can harbor molds and bacteria. Take it from a lab owner who after hiking at Garin Park had to bring her foraging dog to the emergency room because he started walking like a drunken sailor. It was a very expensive lesson to learn that black walnut tree nuts and husks can have molds with a potent fungal neurotoxin. BTW, if your fruit is being eaten at night, it's most likely rats, if during the day then squirrels, and if there are holes in the fruit, it's probably birds.
- **Fruit Tree "Mummies":** Remove mummies to stop the spread of fungal spores.
- **Prune apricot and cherry trees** of dead, diseased and broken branches and improve structure by opening the canopy to bring sun and air circulation into the interior. Leave healthy fallen leaves in place as mulch.
- **California natives** and perennials like sage, lavender, and rosemary can be planted and pruned.





## Got Lemons? Got Fruit? Time to Glean Your Trees!

Got a tree full of lemons? persimmons? pomegranates? There are others who would enjoy them also. Harvest your edible fruits and veggies (no damaged, shriveled or moldy fruits) and drop them off at [LEAF C.R. Stone Garden](#). We will take them to the food banks. We are open for drop off Monday and Thursday mornings from 8 to 10 am. For more information, please contact us at [Info@fremontleaf.org](mailto:Info@fremontleaf.org).



LEAF

## PLANT SALE UPDATE

All of us have worked really hard this past spring propagating thousands of plants for the Spring Plant Sale, then transplanting and nurturing hundreds of them in the garden. In addition, we sponsored Students for LEAF and many student projects—all with only a core group of gardeners. So we decided to slow down and enjoy our gardens' transitions from summer into fall instead of propagating plants for a Fall Plant Sale. We will be recharged and ready to go for the Spring Plant Sale.



# Get Cookin'!

OUR FAVORITE RECIPES

## Caprese Salad



The highlight of summer gardening is making caprese salad from garden ripe juicy sweet tomatoes layered with soft creamy mozzarella cheese, topped with fresh aromatic basil, then drizzled with extra virgin olive oil and aged balsamic vinegar from Modena, Italy. So yummy!

This [Caprese Salad Recipe](#) by [The Pioneer Woman](#) adds a special touch by reducing balsamic vinegar which intensifies the flavor.

### Ingredients

- 3 whole ripe tomatoes, thickly sliced
- 12 oz. mozzarella cheese, thickly sliced (Select creamy soft balls floating in liquid. Creamiest mozzarella is made from water buffalo milk. Mozzarella made for pizza is chewy like string cheese and is not intended for caprese.)
- Fresh basil leaves
- 2 cups balsamic vinegar
- Olive oil for drizzling
- Freshly ground black pepper
- Kosher salt (optional)

### Directions

- In a small saucepan, bring balsamic vinegar to a boil over medium-low heat. Cook for 10 to 20 minutes or until balsamic has reduced to a thicker glaze. Remove from heat. Allow to cool.

- When ready to serve, arrange tomato and mozzarella slices on a platter.
- Arrange basil leaves in between the slices.
- Drizzle olive oil and balsamic vinegar reduction over the layers.
- Sprinkle it with black pepper and salt.



## ATTENTION! ATTENTION!

Our Talkin' Dirt webinars will now be held on the first Wednesday evening of every month. Join our next webinar on **Wednesday, Sept 1st** from **7pm to 8pm**, hosted by Master Gardener Volunteers, Guy and Michele, along with Rebecca from LEAF. Click the icon below to register TODAY!

**Afterward**, stay glued to our [LEAF Blog](#) as Rebecca answers more of your questions from the webinar, plus any gardening and recycling questions you may have.





LEAF

**PRODUCE DONATIONS AS OF  
August 30, 2021**

**3,382 LBS**



*Your generosity is greatly appreciated.*



LEAF (Local Ecology & Agriculture Fremont)

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LEAF (Local Ecology & Agriculture Fremont) is a U.S. tax-exempt 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.