



Our monthly collection of news and articles about happenings in and around LEAF

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**from elaine**



**We use regenerative agricultural practices to build healthy soil in our food gardens, and you can too by adding organic materials like**

compost which encourages a diversity of soil microorganisms. You can also implement simple gardening practices, like covering soil with mulch, aerating the soil with a pitchfork, and rotating crops to reduce the build-up of plant diseases and pests. Interplanting edibles with herbs and flowers improves pollination and aids in natural pest control. We also suggest planting cover crops in the winter. This year, we are adding a customized mix of fava beans, clover, vetch, phacelia, triticale, brome, and oats to increase and scavenge nitrogen, add organic matter, attract beneficial insects, and provide good weed competition.

We are also focusing our food gardens to be more closed loop ecosystems. This effort results in a reduction in the amount of inputs (bringing in materials) and outputs (disposing of materials). We do this by composting as much of our plant debris as possible using cold and hot thermo-composting methods and then using the compost in the garden. In last month's news update, we introduced the Johnson-Su Composting Bioreactor—a cold composting system. Cold composting systems encourage fungi growth so has a higher fungal-to-bacterial ratio. Fungi are good for building soil organisms. We are also using the hot composting method which has a higher bacterial to fungal ratio. If properly maintained, this method will destroy weeds, weed seeds, plant diseases, pesticides, herbicides, and insect larvae. If you'd like to learn more about composting, visit the websites of the University of [California Department of Agriculture](#) (UCANR) and the [Natural Resources Defense Counsel](#) (NRDC).

Alan, who has created LEAF's Bee Sanctuary, has been focusing on making improvements to the hot composting method. You can get to know Alan and his passion for gardening in the interview below.

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**assistance needed**



## Attn: Backyard Gardeners!

We would like to expand our composting capacity with more BioStack Compost Bins. If anyone has any of these bins laying around in their yards that they are not using, please let us know at [info@fremontleaf.org](mailto:info@fremontleaf.org).

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## Interview



# Alan

The amazing gardener behind our Bee Sanctuary

## How did you find out about LEAF?

I heard about LEAF early on in its inception from one of the parents at my daughter's elementary school who was one of its founding members. Over the years, I've visited the evolving LEAF gardens during special events and on a work day with my daughter's Girl Scout troop. I fondly remember Bruce introducing us to the hugelkultur mound concept.

## Describe what you are doing with LEAF?

My involvement at LEAF stemmed from an interest in learning about permaculture concepts and using those skills to grow vegetables. Soon after joining LEAF, Elaine mentioned she was looking for someone to take a lead role in developing the Bee Sanctuary. So I accepted the challenge. I have been working with other LEAF volunteers as well to create a productive vegetable and pollinator garden. This has included a lot of soil rehabilitation, composting, and learning from my mistakes as we moved forward to bring the garden to its full potential.

## What excites you about working with LEAF?

Everyone at LEAF is super friendly and helpful, which makes it a special place to work and learn. Even Sawyer, our resident garden cat, comes out to greet me every time I stop by. We're all motivated by the desire to serve and make the world a better place. One goal of mine has been to make the Bee Sanctuary a pleasant place for people to explore and a safe haven for birds and beneficial insects. To this end, I've incorporated year round annual and perennial colorful flowers and green plants into the mix of our seasonal vegetable harvests.

## **Describe your professional background?**

After working as a staff member at the University of California at Berkeley for 14 years, I left to become a stay-at-home Dad for my two young daughters, Kristen and Lauren, while my wife, Janice, focused on her career in the semiconductor industry. After nearly 10 years at home with the girls, it was time for me to look at new career options. Early in my college days, I had an interest in Water Resource Management. So, with my master's degree in public administration, an environmental stewardship program certificate from Ohlone College, and an unpaid internship at the local Tri-City wastewater facility, I set out on a new career as a Senior Wastewater Treatment Plant Operator. I'm in my 12th year and have greatly enjoyed the career move. Moreover, working the night shift has freed up my daytime hours for volunteer activities.

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

Gardening is one of my passions. I love visiting public and private gardens. I also enjoy traveling and have plans to visit Hawaii this winter, Washington DC next spring, and then Japan in the summer.

## **What type of gardening do you like to do?**

In the past, my primary mode of gardening was simply planting seed, watering, and adding a little organic or commercial fertilizer, while hoping for the best. This usually worked just fine. But new challenges, including unimproved soils, more pests and diseases, and experimentation with a broader range of vegetables, has encouraged me to incorporate new techniques into my skill set. At first it was the French intensive method: double-digging and adding composted manure. What I've learned is that double-digging or turning the soil by tilling destroys the soil structure along with the living microorganisms beneath the soil. So now I use no-till strategies.

## What is your next environmental project?

Composting and vermiculture are my new projects. Composting has always been a necessary garden task, but now I'm taking it to a new level with proper management and finding ways to accelerate the composting process. I used to build green waste piles, let them decay over the winter, and then rototill in the spring. I've since implemented regenerative gardening methods which do not include rototilling. I create nutrient rich compost by composting and harvesting earthworm castings to feed my plants.

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

"Find joy in the little things you do every day, and don't stress over the things you can't change"

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**be involved**



Help local families gain access to healthy fruit by gleaning fresh fruit from the trees in your yard. Drop your fruit off at **LEAF C.R. Stone Garden** Monday mornings from 9am to 10:30am, and we'll deliver your donations to a local food bank. We are accepting fresh fruit all year long.

**So far this year, you have donated 1540 lbs of fruit!!!**

Stone Garden is located behind the Mission Valley Veterinary Clinic at 55 Mowry Ave. More info at [fremontleaf.org/glean](http://fremontleaf.org/glean).

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## volunteer



## Lazy Saturdays?

Get **BUSY** as a LEAF volunteer! On the 2nd Saturday of every month, you're invited to help us tackle projects that benefit from a group effort. To find out more information or to sign up, visit

[fremontleaf.org/volunteer](https://fremontleaf.org/volunteer) or give us a shout at [volunteer@fremontleaf.org](mailto:volunteer@fremontleaf.org).

Our next volunteer work day is...



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**in the kitchen**



## Hot Spiced Apple Cider

A simple recipe you'll want to make season after season.

**8 cups of your favorite apple juice**  
**2 cinnamon sticks or 2 teaspoons ground cinnamon**  
**1/8 teaspoon ground nutmeg**  
**4 whole cloves**  
**1 orange cut into thin slices or 1 tablespoon orange zest**  
**Extra cinnamon sticks for garnish (optional)**

1. Combine all of the ingredients except the cinnamon sticks for garnish in a large saucepan or in a slow cooker.
2. On the stovetop, heat on medium high setting. After 5 to 6 minutes (longer if desired), reduce heat and simmer for 15-20 minutes. Strain the spices and serve.
3. Using as slow cooker, repeat these same instructions after cooking for 2-3 hours on low setting.

**Enjoy!**

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**learn and share**



Just to clarify, Talkin' Dirt is an online event. But hey, if you wanna go play in the dirt afterward, we'll be happy to join you! But first, we hope you'll join us for some fun and informative back and forth with your fellow enthusiasts, Master Gardener Volunteers, Guy and Michele along with Rebecca from LEAF.

Sign on this Wednesday evening from 7pm to 8pm.

Register now at [fremontleaf.org/talkindirt](https://fremontleaf.org/talkindirt).

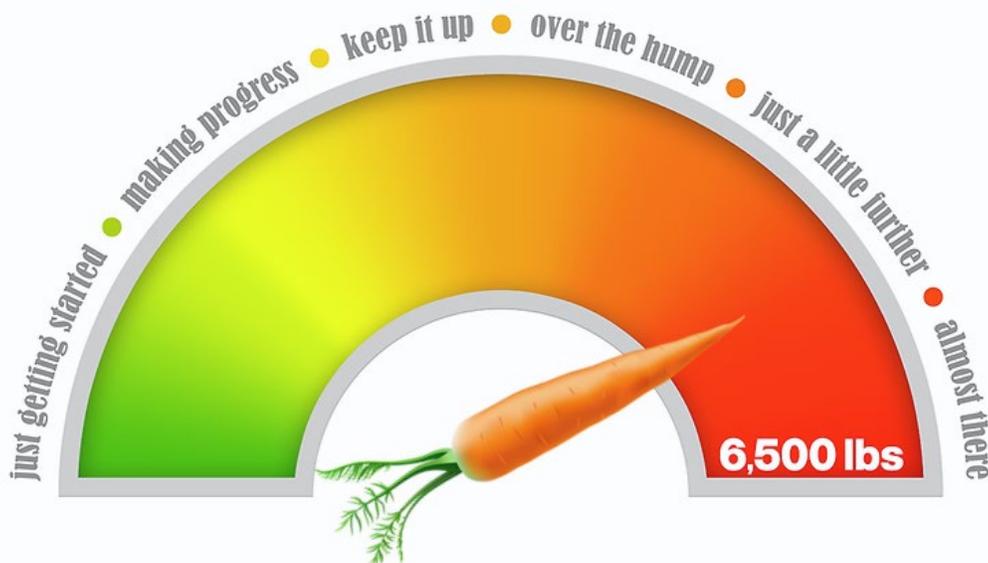
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**in kind**



*Donations*

**2022 YTD: 6,010 lbs.**



**Not waiting hours in line at  
the food bank?**

**Help someone who is.**

**DONATE NOW** 

