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## Critter Tree tradition continues at Moraga Library

By Vera Kochan



Critter Tree Photos Vera Kochan

Just when you think you've seen your share of critters around Moraga, along comes the annual Critter Tree exhibit at the Moraga Library, 1500 St. Mary's Road. These critters come in the form of adorable ornaments handcrafted by members of the Moraga Garden Club, and are on display through Jan. 4, when they are lovingly rewrapped in tissue and stored away at the library for next year's holiday season.

The tradition began in 1998, and was inspired by an annual display at the Brandywine Museum of Art in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. The Moraga Garden Club wanted to display a non-denominational exhibit in the library and decided that a Critter Tree was as close to it as they could get, while still allowing them to display their crafty creations.

All of the critters are made from nature's bounty, such as pine cones, various seeds, dried flowers, hay, pods, beans, tree bark and corn husks. What animals they become is up to the crafter's imagination.

The garden club's publicity chairman, Karin Biasotti said, "We need to have more workshops to create new ornaments, because many of these were made in 1998, and have become fragile. Nature doesn't last forever."

As if on cue, original member Sharon Galliani walked into the library on a personal errand and admitted to having some of her old ornaments on the tree.

Janice Lieu was in charge of putting up all of the decorative garlands and wreaths gracing the entryways, shelves and windows. "We try to reuse them every year, and sometimes I have to refurbish them beforehand."

Another club member, Phyllis Reed, came equipped with her treasured copy of "Brandywine Critters - Nature's Crafts from a Brandywine Christmas" by volunteers of the Brandywine River Museum, Brandywine Conservancy. The small hardcover book is packed with "how to" advice, pictures and "recipes" for creating a critter ornament for those whose imaginations need a little nudge.

The ladies admitted to feeling a bit intimidated at creating a recognizable critter, but eventually got into the spirit of the occasion and were thrilled with their results. The tree displays a myriad of imaginative efforts, and just when it seems that each critter has been identified, suddenly a new ornament is discovered, as if by magic.



Two critters in a boat

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