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Girl Scout creates Contra Costa native plant garden in Lafayette

By Jennifer Wake



Ceanothus Photo provided

Acalanes High School senior Corina McTigue has always been passionate about the environment, and plans to study something that will help her protect or restore natural areas. As part of her Girl Scout Gold Award project, McTigue took out non-native plants and re-vegetated the land at Lafayette Community Park with a selection of local native plants.

McTigue worked with Greg Travers, the park maintenance supervisor in the Public Works Department for the city of Lafayette, to find an area and get the project approved by the city. The park includes a variety of plant species, all of which are native to Contra Costa County. She started the planting aspect of the project over winter break on Dec. 28 with just a few people from her family due to COVID-19 safety concerns.

"Native plants are beneficial to the native wildlife species and insects that depend on the plants for their survival. This native plant area will provide an ideal location for native insects and animals to live and thrive," said McTigue. "Native plants are also beneficial because they are sustainable. They do not require excessive fertilizers or water to grow and are naturally adapted to the area's climate and soils. Another benefit of native plants is that they are drought tolerant. Non native plants often need to be watered frequently and die during droughts, creating fire hazards. The plants that are native to this

area are naturally drought tolerant and can survive these droughts."

The plants do not require as much maintenance as non-native plants, so McTigue will only be watering them every week this summer and once every month next summer. "After about a year or two, the plants that survive should be established enough to not only sustain themselves but to thrive on their own," she said.

The plants will need some slight weeding until they are established. All of the plants in the garden are deer resistant but as they are so small right now, a deer just trying the plant can really hurt it. Since there are so many deer in the area, McTigue constructed and installed plant cages on many of the plants. "These plant cages will be taken off after the plants grow a little bit bigger," she said.

"I hope that people visiting the Lafayette Community Park will enjoy the native plant garden and that some will consider adding some native plants to their own gardens because of the natural beauty that native plants have to offer and because of their many benefits to the environment and wildlife."

McTigue wants to thank Orchard Nursery, which donated to her project.



California Fescue Photo provided

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