

Folks toss seed-filled mud balls for potential springtime bloom at West Commons

By Vera Kochan



Photo Vera Kochan

Volunteers toss mud balls into hoops, for the good of the environment, as "The Fisherman" looks on.

On a soggy Nov. 18, considered optimum weather for the task at hand, approximately 15 individuals answered Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda's call to toss some "mud balls" in West Commons Park in the hopes that predicted rains would dissolve them, and the seeds within would eventually grow into flowers.

"The original idea of West Commons in 2013, was a passive native plant park," explained Onoda. "I believe in that concept even more today as I learn about the critical role butterflies and pollinators play in our ecosystem. I think we were on the right path in 2013, and looking forward we have an obligation to always remember our responsibility. Working together we can grow habitats, not just gardens." Onoda first heard about

the concept of mud balls years ago from Moraga Garden Center's owner Kenny Murakami who "planted the seed" in her head about throwing them around town. Dennis Rein, with the Moraga-Orinda Fire District, told Onoda where she could get native California seeds when she first decided to transform her side yard. The results turned her barren plot of land into a native wildflower meadow.

With regards to last month's West Commons venture, Onoda stated, "I made most of the 400 mud balls with the help of Suzanne Jones of Preserve Lamorinda Open Space. The seeds are all native California seeds: white yarrow, mountain garland, California poppies, globe gilia, blue flax, golden lupine, baby blue-eyes, California bluebells,

and lacy-leaved phacelia. I have had conversations with the environmental groups in town, and it seems that they will make some as well."

Included in the mud ball toss were members of the Boy Scouts, Campolindo High School Environmental Group, Preserve Lamorinda Open Space, Moraga Garden Club, Moraga Town Manager Scott Mitnick and Onoda's husband, John.

Artist Buddy Brodwin participated and watched as everyone tossed the mud balls into strategically placed Hula Hoops that were in the vicinity of his three works: "Double Helix," "LOL," and "Meter Maidens." Artist Tony Zorich's "The Fisherman" had the most Hula Hoop targets in that his piece takes up more space. Prizes were given out to the kids who had the most meat ball-sized clods thrown into a hoop.

When asked if Onoda was worried that the seeds might be consumed by the town's feathered friends, she replied, "No, I don't worry about birds eating the seeds, because they are in a mud ball of compost, clay, and seeds. The birds might get some of the seeds, and I am happy to share."

Onoda has no plans to repeat the process in other locations, but is more than happy to give out the "recipe" to anyone interested in creating a welcoming environment for pollinators and butterflies. Email her at: tonoda@moraga.ca.us.

Moraga Country Club burglary suspect charged by DA's office

By Vera Kochan



Photo courtesy Moraga Police Department

Some of the stolen golf clubs that were recovered by MPD.

In early November, the Moraga Police Department received numerous calls regarding burglaries from homes in the Moraga Country Club involving stolen golf clubs and golf equipment. Following an investigation, MPD was able to identify the suspect and his vehicle in the vicinity of one of the burglaries thanks to video evidence.

Trevor Hudson, 25, a resident of Danville, was arrested on Nov. 18 while in possession of stolen property connected to some of the burglaries, 10 of which occurred in Moraga and an additional two in Danville. Much of the stolen property has been located, and MPD is working to return it to the victims.

"These crimes were solved due to the efforts and tenacity of our officers," said Moraga Police Chief Jon King

in a statement. "It was definitely a team effort ... the different officers who took the reports, connected them together, scoured the area for video evidence, arrested the suspect and recovered the property. I appreciate the hard work of our Moraga Police team who worked to solve these cases, arrest the suspect and recover the property stolen in these crimes."

King revealed that thanks to a neighbor's home surveillance system, along with the town's video system, crucial evidence was obtained in order to make an arrest. He added that "most of these crimes occurred when people either left their garages open or unlocked. Although we live in a safe community, by ensuring that our garages, homes and vehicles are locked and secure, we can

prevent most of these crimes."

As of Nov. 30, according to MPD Det. Craig Walker, the District Attorney has charged Hudson with 12 felony counts of residential burglary and one felony count of possession of stolen property (which involves the property he had when police arrested him). Hudson is currently in custody, and bail has been set at \$590,000.

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