

FOSC Friend of the Month



Native Plant Nursery Crew

This month we spotlight the hard work and dedication of the FOSC Native Plant Nursery crew. All year long, these volunteers have shown up ready to get their hands dirty propagating plants, sowing seeds, sanitizing pots, and keeping invasive weeds at bay. In the warm, dry summer months, the volunteers also collect seeds from plants around the nursery to add to the seed bank. In cool, wet, winter months, they plant seedlings they've grown and nurtured out into the demonstration garden outside the nursery or pot them up to go out to many watershed restoration sites—we're talking about 7,000 plants currently thriving in the nursery as of this writing. They do it all!

The nursery crew draws people of different ages and backgrounds. Laurie Umeh, a regular FOSC Wednesday volunteer, engaging conversationalist, and Friends of Dimond Park member, says, "Some are serious horticulturists. For others, the nursery is an introduction to the world of plants."

Maisie Cook, a first-time volunteer this summer and avid home gardener, began at FOSC because she needed volunteer hours for school. "[My school] had the Friends of Sausal Creek Nursery as an option, and I really like working with plants and being outside, so I started volunteering here." She recently began her sophomore year of high school and is considering a career in biological or botanical science. "This was really the perfect thing to spend my summer doing. I know that I'm doing impactful work here."

FOSC volunteer of around 10 years, Alan Tong, is a friendly, familiar face at the nursery workdays. He says that volunteers who started within the last year "used to come in pretty green and have a lot of questions, but they now know their way around." He is one of many plant enthusiasts around the nursery, bringing knowledge, experience, and some of his own particular interests in grasslands to the workdays. Alan also enjoys the more social aspect of the experience. He says, "I find myself going there more and more just to stay in touch with people and see what's happening."

Not every member of the nursery crew comes in with extensive previous knowledge or experience working with plants. Charlotte Rivka Halloran-Couch, another local volunteer, explains, "I've always loved nature, but a few years ago, I was working in mental health. I was constantly wanting to switch to something that was better for *my* mental health." This prompted Charlotte to explore plants and propagation, including taking a class at Merritt College. "I connected with what I was seeing on walks."

Long-time FOSC volunteer Annette Osenga enjoys the nursery workdays because of the plants and the people too. "I like the camaraderie, hanging out in the fresh air, and being part of a well-managed organization," she says. Annette not only participates in the plant-focused activities but is also responsible for spearheading the FOSC [Gardening with Native Plants Guide](#) and designing creative and effective signage around the nursery—hand-painted signs and graphic guides for best practices.

There are countless others who also make an incredible impact on the nursery workdays including builder and troubleshooter extraordinaire Chris Lutz, who has repaired nursery benches, resolved irrigation issues, and offered his expertise and effort many times over the years. Others in this group include enthusiastic students Zoe Thogersen and Dante Mosier Tidd, long-time FOSC native plant guru Nancy Jones, resident wild orchid aficionado Peter Van der Naillen, and super-organized rockstar seed inventory manager Karen Rath. The list goes on and on. We excitedly add new “players to the roster” throughout the seasons and bear witness to the literal and figurative growth happening every week with the volunteer crew coming together.



The nursery is indeed made better and richer by the volunteers, whose care, contributions, and camaraderie impact the wellbeing of the plants, the biodiversity of the Sausal Creek Watershed, and the larger FOSC community. We are so grateful for their hard work, which helped us surpass this year's planting goals for restoration sites and the upcoming plant sale. That's just one of the many accomplishments of the FOSC Native Plant Nursery crew. We could never have done it without you!

—Amaya Griego and Kate Berlin

