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Jan. 27: A day for West Commons

By Sophie Braccini



Star Thistle

Photos provided



Bristly Oxtongue

What do you do for a park that needs extra care in a town that has barely enough maintenance staff to do the everyday upkeep? If you're the town of Moraga, you call on volunteers.

The new downtown Moraga open space passive park, West Commons, was found riddled with invasive plants when it opened to the public last September. At its November meeting, the Park and Recreation Commission, all volunteer residents, made the unusual decision to volunteer to clean up the park themselves in the coming months. Once the town of Moraga officially accepts the completed project from Summerhill, which is still the official owner of the park, the previously announced Jan. 27 work day will be rescheduled. Once a date is set, commissioners will be calling on other residents to come and help.

When naturalist Malcolm Sproul visited the park last October he was quick to point out the Bristly Oxtongue that covered most of an area that should be grassland in the 2.5-acre park. He recently added that it would be a good idea to start removing the perennial invasive now, and that another cleanup will be needed in the spring. As far as Star Thistle, another invasive plant present in the park, it is not visible now as it is an annual, but the seeds are in the ground. Sproul indicated that July would be the best time to remove these plants, before they spread the next seed generation.

Vice Mayor Teresa Onoda was delighted when resident Bobbie Preston came to the town council at the end of last year and made a case for the maintenance of the park, its grassland and its old pear trees. Onoda has been fighting for the very existence of this park since the project came to the planning commission as part of the Summerhill development of Harvest Court, off Camino Ricardo. She remembers how the vacant space was first scheduled to receive fill from the grading for the new homes,

space passive park instead. The developer finally agreed to take the fill off site; some of it went to the other Summerhill development off Rheem Boulevard.

Onoda will support every effort toward making her dream come true: creating an open space recreational area in the middle of town, not high up in the hills, where school children can go study the natural fauna and flora of our region, and where residents of all ages can enjoy a peaceful and beautiful space.

which would be 8 feet deep. As a planning commissioner at the time, she went onsite and created a visual simulation of what the fill would do to the old pear trees and asked her fellow planning commissioners to recommend the creation of an open

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