

## Volunteering and nature-related events with others, March 2024

Purple text indicates links

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*Talks, classes, conferences, exhibits, contests - mostly indoor or online*

*Garden- and waste-reduction events and resources*

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*More calendars*

*This list is now being updated through the month. Check back!*

### Hands-on volunteering

- **Plant trees on the west edge of Berkeley's Aquatic Park:** [Registration required here](#) to help plant additional 100 trees 9:15 - 11:30 AM. Map and info at the link. This requires a short walk from the south end of the main lagoon to the waterski clubhouse. Wear closed-toed shoes and clothes that can get dirty.
- **Berkeley shoreline cleanups** are held on third Saturdays starting 9 AM at Shorebird Park. [Info here.](#) **Cleanup Meetup** cleanups start same time and place. [Info here.](#)
- **The San Francisco Bay Chapter of the Sierra Club** usually hosts a cleanup monthly at MLK Jr. Regional Shoreline or Pt. Molate in Richmond. [Info here.](#)
- **Baxter Creek volunteers** (under 18 with guardian) enhance El Cerrito's Baxter Creek in Gateway Park, on the Ohlone Greenway at the city's north border, 10 AM - noon most first Sundays. Meet at 10 AM at Conlon and the Ohlone Greenway. [Info, and RSVP appreciated, here.](#)
- **Berkeley Adopt-a-Spot:** By caring for your local storm drain or traffic circle, you can reduce pollution and street flooding, or encourage pollinators, increase neighborhood beauty, and boost traffic safety. The City of Berkeley provides materials. [Info here.](#)
- **Blake Garden** welcomes volunteers to help tend the Kensington garden with spectacular views, run by UC Berkeley's College of Environmental Design. For info contact the garden manager, [meghanray@berkeley.edu](mailto:meghanray@berkeley.edu).
- **Chavez Park Conservancy** on Berkeley's Bay edge works to rescue native shrubs and trees in the 3-acre DAWN project, one of the Bay Area's pioneer native plant installations. For info contact [huttarbob@gmail.com](mailto:huttarbob@gmail.com).
- **The East Bay Regional Park District** sponsors [varied volunteer programs](#), including [habitat restoration -- and invasives removal](#). [List of upcoming events here](#) includes regular events at Redwood and nearby hill parks in Oakland.
- **El Cerrito Green Teams** hosts monthly work parties in different areas. Tools, gloves, and bags supplied. [Info here.](#) RSVP helpful to 510-215-4350 or [green@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us](mailto:green@ci.el-cerrito.ca.us). **El Cerrito Trail Trekkers and Green Teams** welcomes all ages removing fire-prone, invasive French broom in the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area, Sat., Mar. 16 and Apr. 6. [Check here for exact location](#) and hours. Wear long pants, long sleeves, and closed-toed shoes with good traction. [Info here.](#)
- **Garber Park Stewards** has restoration work days on 1st and 3rd Saturdays of most months in the forested 13-acre park off Claremont Avenue on the Berkeley-Oakland border. New web site under construction; contact them at [gpstewards@gmail.com](mailto:gpstewards@gmail.com). Sat., Feb. 3, cancelled due to slippery conditions.
- **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (formerly Golden Gate Audubon)** offers monthly volunteer restoration events including at **Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline March 16 and April 20** and a **cleanup of Richmond's Stege Marsh-Meeker Slough area Mar. 2**. [Information and links to event list and registration here.](#)
- **Love the Bulb** hosts gardening days at its native-plant garden at 2 PM on first and third Saturdays on the Albany Bulb. [Info here.](#)
- **Ohlone Greenway, Berkeley:** Help maintain native plantings along Berkeley's Ohlone Greenway from the Peralta Community Gardens to Gilman, 2nd and 4th Saturdays, 10:30 AM - 12:30 PM. [Info here.](#)
- **Mount Diablo Interpretive Assn.** has opportunities with its trail crew and back-country patrol. [Info here.](#) **Save Mount Diablo** has varied hands-on volunteer events. There also are restoration and trail building opportunities with the Diablo Restoration Team (DiRT) and Trail Dogs. [Info here](#) or contact

[hsutton@savemountdiablo.org](mailto:hsutton@savemountdiablo.org).

- **Mount Tamalpais area** opportunities, from being a wildlife docent to pulling out French broom, are generally described on the [One Tam volunteer page, here](#). Calendar of all events including habitat restoration is [here](#). Training to become a docent for foothill yellow-legged frogs is scheduled Sat., Mar. 9. [Info and signup here](#).
- **Rotary Nature Center Friends** on Oakland's Lake Merritt has third-Saturday work days at the center and a nearby marsh. [Info and registration here](#).
- **Friends of Sausal Creek** has opportunities every week at their native-plant nursery and several Oakland restoration sites. [Info here](#).
- **SPAWNERS (San Pablo Creek)** has volunteer days monthly, usually on third Saturdays, at their Wilkie Creek Outdoor Classroom. [Email here](#) or [here](#).
- **Skyline Gardens Alliance**, restoring beautiful and varied native vegetation along an EBMUD-owned segment of the Skyline Trail, seeks committed volunteers for sessions Thursday afternoons or Sunday mornings. [Contact info here](#).
- **Take to the Hills** weeds and plants in Derby Canyon in the hills above the UC Berkeley Clark Kerr Campus, usually Tuesday and Saturday mornings. Email [Jim@thisintothat.com](mailto:Jim@thisintothat.com).
- **On Albany Hill, Tending the Ancient Shoreline Hill (TASH)** leads volunteers weeding and planting on last Saturdays. [Email here for info](#).
- **Walnut Creek Open Space Foundation** has varied weekend and weekday opportunities in its 2700-acre open space adjoining Mt. Diablo and at its native-plant nursery. [Info here](#).

## Outdoor Fun and Learning

### Walks, field trips, tours, festivals - also gardens to Visit

- **The East Bay Regional Park District's 2024 Trails Challenge**, to hike or bike five of 20 designated trails of all levels of difficulty, is on. [Info and guide to trails here](#).
- Marin spawning-salmon tours in the Lagunitas Creek watershed have resumed. [Sign up here](#) for tours with the Salmon Protection and Watershed Network (SPAWN).
- **Bird walks: Golden Gate Bird Alliance (formerly Golden Gate Audubon)** leads frequent free field trips that often fill quickly, including the Berkeley's Aquatic Park (in Spanish), Lake Merritt and Hilltop Lake, Blake Garden and the Regional Parks Botanic Garden, Reinhardt Redwoods, Sibley Volcanic Park, and more. Required reservations open at 1 PM on third Tuesdays of the prior month. [Info here on registration](#). [Outings list here](#). [Info here on registering for spring birding classes](#).
- **El Cerrito's Recycling Center**, 7501 Schmidt Lane, offers a free public tour 3-4 PM most first Wednesdays. [Info here](#).
- **Greenbelt Alliance** leads varied walks including exploring Mt. Diablo's Rock City Mar. 3, Woodside" Wunderlich Park Mar. 9, and a dog-friendly Sibley Volcanic Preserve in Oakland Mar. 17. [Info and signup here](#).
- **Mount Diablo Interpretive Association** offers walks that often fill quickly, including new monthly Wednesday Bioblitz hikes (recording observations of plants and animals) Mar. 20. Recordings of many past talks on nature also available. [Info and links to signup here](#).
- **Save Mount Diablo** offers varied hikes. [Annual schedule can be downloaded here](#). Registration opens one month before events. [Calendar and signup here](#).
- **Wholly H2O** leads a 1-mile natural and cultural history tour of Lake Temescal, 11 AM-12:30 PM has been **re-scheduled for Sat., Feb. 24**. [Info and registration here](#). This and other watershed tours, designed to be useful for California students and teachers, are available on your cell phone through [Pocketsights](#).

### Gardens to visit, with their events

- The **East Bay Regional Park District's Botanic Garden**, in Tilden Regional Park at Wildcat Canyon Rd. and South Park Dr., lets you enjoy California native plants daily and free. Native plants are on sale 10AM - noon Wednesdays and 10 AM - 2 PM first Saturdays. [Wayne Roderick Lectures](#) have resumed, some as walking tours, 10:30 AM on most Saturdays. [Docents lead free, no-reservation tours](#) at on non-rainy Saturdays (11 AM) and Sundays (11 AM and 2 PM). Garden classes include an extended tour and study of rock gardens Mar. 8 - 11. [Info on Classes here](#).
- The **UC Berkeley Botanical Garden**, Centennial Drive, offers a sick-plant clinic first Saturday mornings and varied programs including an apple-tree-grafting workshop Sun., Mar. 10, a basketry workshop Mar. 20, and morning and afternoon egg-dying workshops Mar. 23. Summer camp registration is open. [Events calendar and links to](#)

[registration here](#).

- **Blake Garden**, 70 Rincon Rd. in Kensington, run by the UC Berkeley Department of Landscape Architecture, is open free weekdays 8 am - 4:30 pm. [Info here](#). Check the calendar monthly bird walk and tours. [Info here](#).
- **Ruth Bancroft Garden** and nursery in Walnut Creek is home to a stunning collection of dry-adapted plants. Informal talks with landscape designers, professional advice on water-wise gardening, plant sales, guided walks, and webinars on types of succulents in the collection, and story times for also offered. [Info here](#).

## *Indoors: Talks, Classes, Meetings, Exhibits, Contests*

Also see Gardening and Waste Reduction below

### Classes, talks

- **The 2024 State of the Estuary Conference reports on recent science in San Francisco Bay and Delta Mar. 11-13** at the newly remodeled Kaiser Center in Oakland. [Info and registration here](#).
- **The annual Bioneers Conference**, supporting visionary and progressive climate, environmental, and other policies scheduled Mar. 28-30 at UC Berkeley's Zellerbach Hall and venues in downtown Berkeley. [Info, schedule, and registration here](#).
- **Bay Nature's** online talks include "**Chantarelles vs. Deathcaps,**" a mushroom talk with expert **Debbie Veiss**, noon - 1 PM Feb. 28, [registration here](#); and **An Astronomer's Guide to the City (no telescope required)**, 5:30 - 6:30 PM Mar. 5. [Registration here](#). [Info and past talks on line here](#).
- **Rotary Nature Center Friends** offers monthly free Lakeside Chats on First Fridays, with "Exploring Lake Merritt Underwater (including video before and after a disastrous die-off)" 7-8 PM Fri., Mar. 1. [Info, registration, and links to past talks here](#).
- **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (formerly Golden Gate Audubon)** online talks are scheduled on third Thursdays in many months, but nothing scheduled currently until July. [Register here](#). [Recordings of some past talks are available here](#).
- **EBMUD's Water Wednesdays online talks** cover a wide range of information on our water and sewage systems, 6 PM Wednesdays most months. [Info and registration here](#).
- **Coastside Land Trust** presents archeologist Mark Hylkema speaking on the **Archeology and History of the Pigeon Point Lighthouse**, 10 AM Sat., Mar. 2. [Info and recordings of past webinars here](#).
- **The Jepson Herbarium** has space in spring workshops: Introduction to Bryophytes, Mar. 9-10, are taught on the UC Berkeley campus with field trips to East Bay Parks. Online classes still available include major changes in the newly revised Jepson e-flora Mar. 2 and using drones and processing remote images, Mar. 23. [Info and registration here](#).
- **UC Berkeley and the Berkeley Lab's Midday Science Café**. [Info and past talks here](#).
- **The California Native Plant Society's 2024 workshops**, beginning Mar. - Aug. and mainly for specialists and professionals, are open for registration [here](#).
- **The Coastal Conservancy's Climate Video Challenge for high-school and middle-school students runs through May 30**. The contest seeks answers to the question, "How is your community responding to the climate challenge." [Info here](#).
- **UC Berkeley Summer River Restoration Short Course**: Registration is open for the 29<sup>th</sup> annual five day course, Geological and Ecological Fundamentals for River and Stream Restoration, Aug. 19-23, at UC Berkeley Sagehen Creek Field Station in the Sierra Nevada. [Info and registration here](#).

## *Gardening, waste reduction*

- **Native Gardening talks**: The [California Native Plant Society](#) offers free first Thursday "Naturehood" online native-gardening chats, usually at 5:30 PM, with "**Introducing the new Calscape**" Mar. 7. [Info, registration, and recordings of past talks here](#).
- **Alameda StopWaste's garden events calendar** lists events and resources for Bay- and climate-friendly gardening. **Alameda StopWaste's** comprehensive guide to [replacing your lawn with drought- tolerant plantings is here](#). A [list of tool and seed libraries is here](#). Information is available for [homes](#), [schools](#), and [businesses](#) on reducing food and other waste, dealing with hazardous waste, and other topics, including a [searchable guide on how to reduce, re-use, or recycle specific products](#).



- **Contra Costa Water District water-efficiency webinars** including rebates and getting rid of lawn are online [here](#).
- **EBMUD** offers online office hours on landscape rebates, alternating with “talkin’ dirt” online chats, Tuesdays noon-1 PM and 5-6PM. [Schedule and info here](#). EB MUD also offers rebates and [extensive information on water saving and low-water gardening here](#), including lists of low-water-use plants, information on mulching and firescaping, lists of plants for specific needs, and information on grey-water systems.
- **Neighbors for a Sustainable Berkeley** seeks to connect neighbors to share knowledge on sustainable gardening, eating, transportation, energy, water use, and more . [Info and signup here](#).
- **ReScape’s winter courses** beginning Jan. - March cover environmentally friendly, nature-based landscaping, mostly for professionals, including integrated pest management, firescaping, choosing and caring for plants in green stormwater infrastructure, and advanced mulching and composting. [Rescape’s directory of professionals trained in environmental practices is here](#).
- **StopFoodWaste.org** has [dozens of tips](#) from keeping food fresh to using leftovers, a [blog](#) with waste-reducing tips from chefs from nonprofit cooking school 18 Reasons, and [resources](#) from deciphering dates on labels to how schools or businesses can donate food. Check out tips for [re-growing vegetables from scraps](#).
- **Berkeley's Ecology Center** offers [a list of places to drop off things not eligible for curbside pickup here](#). [Albany's guides are here](#) and [El Cerrito's guide is here](#). These include pickup of bulky items and where to drop off batteries or other hazardous materials.

### *Materials*

- **The City of Albany offers free indoor pails for compostable waste** to residents of multi-family buildings. [Delivery appointments can be scheduled here](#).
- **Free compost and mulch: El Cerrito** offers local residents and businesses up to 5 cu. ft. of free compost while supplies last, on third Saturdays at the upper Cerrito Vista Park parking lot, Avis Drive south of Moeser. Bring your own containers. [Info here](#). **Berkeley's load-it-yourself free compost** is available while it lasts, starting Fri. AM, Marina Blvd. [Info here](#). **Albany residents** can pick up free mulch at Ocean View Park; [info here](#). **Richmond residents** can get free compost on first 9AM - 4 PM first Wednesdays at 101 Pittsburg Ave., Richmond. This is also the **West Contra Costa Hazardous Waste facility**, where El Cerrito, Richmond, and other West County residents can drop off hazardous waste free.
- **Berkeley residents city-wide can schedule pickups of tree debris and flammable vegetation** through fall - [info and online signup here](#).

### *Reducing greenhouse-gas emissions; climate change*

- **Free webinars and events on EVs and Ebikes** include “Save Money on an EV” 7 PM Feb. 27, Electrify Your Ride 5 PM Mar. 6 and noon Mar. 13, and a New EV Owner Workshop 5-6 PM Mar. 20. from [Ride and Drive Clean](#) [Info here](#).
- **In-person electrified home tours:** Registration is limited for in-person tours of four East Bay electrified homes, sponsored by the Bringing Back the Natives Garden Tour and Green Homes Showcase. [Registration and rules \(important\) here](#).
- **PG&E offers free webinars on electrification and energy saving.** Recorded, on-demand talks are available on induction cooking, heat pumps, and more. [The catalog for on-demand recordings and live events is here](#). PG&E offers rebates for ["smart" thermostats and replacing electric water heaters with heat-pump heaters](#)
- **BayRen** and **Rising Sun Center for Opportunity** offer free house calls on making your home more energy efficient, with kits that include free LED bulbs. [Info here](#).
- **BayRen’s** guide to rebates for heat pumps, induction cookers, electric vehicles and more is [here](#). The organization trains electricians and other professionals and offers a [list of trained professionals here](#).
- East Bay residents who commute across the Richmond-San Rafael Bridge can qualify for rebates of \$500 - \$1000 (depending on income) for new Ebikes. [Info here](#).
- **QuitCarbon** offers free plans for electrifying your home, including info on rebates and estimated costs (they do work with contractors). They also make presentations to groups. [Info here](#).
- **Albany's guide to electrifying your home, including rebates, is on line here.** **The city offers rebates** of \$500 to \$1500 for installation of heat pumps, with rebates doubled for low-income households. [Info and application here](#).
- **East Bay residents can try an induction cooker** and pot for three weeks free, and [rebates of up to \\$750 for exchanging your gas stove for induction cooking are](#)

[available](#) through Bay-Ren, a coalition of utilities. This low-energy, safe cooking plate stays cool while it heats your food with magnetized copper coils. [Info and registration here](#) for AVA (formerly East Bay Community Energy), [here](#) for PG&E, and [here](#) for Albany residents. Borrow an induction wok -- [Info here](#).

- [Solar Rights Alliance](#) offers [consumer info for rooftop and other home solar](#), from finding the right installer to getting repairs.
- [Low-income residents of East Bay ZIP codes deemed to have high pollution levels](#) may qualify for rebates to replace high-emission vehicles with electric ones, through the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. [Info here](#).

### *More calendars, more to explore*

This list focuses on the East Bay, mainly west of the hills. Volunteering and exploring nature are great ways to experience the entire Bay Area!

- For more opportunities check out the [Bay Nature Calendar](#). [Subscribe to the magazine, too.](#)
- The [Green City Calendar](#) has lots on San Francisco.
- For events east of the hills, check out [Sustainable Contra Costa's events list](#).

This list is put together by [Friends of Five Creeks](#). To suggest an event to include, please email [f5creeks@gmail.com](mailto:f5creeks@gmail.com) with basic information, preferably by a few days before the first of the month.