



**NOVATO COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT**  
**Growing a Healthy Community from the Ground Up**

A Project of Novato Live Well Network

**THE MISSION** of the Novato Live Well Network is to: build and support a network of local community gardens that enable people from diverse backgrounds to grow food and foster community in a sustainable manner; work with and educate families, schools, and our community about the positive benefits of choosing sustainable ways of eating, gardening and living by providing programs that support nutrition education, our local food-shed, school and community gardens, and sustainable living practices.

**THE COMMITTEE & \*BOARD MEMBERS**

**Mary Jo Abbott** – Mary Jo and her husband Jim have been Novato residents since 2004. She joined the Novato Community Garden Committee in late 2010. Mary Jo has over 20 years experience in the investments industry but her interest in the community garden is rooted in her family’s agricultural heritage. Her parents were both raised on farms in the Midwest and today she continues to play an active role in managing these farms along with other family members. She was also inspired to get involved with the Novato garden project after touring a successful CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) program in Maine where she saw firsthand the numerous benefits a community garden brings its members as well as the surrounding community.

**Elena Freeman** – text to come.

**Don Foster** – has over 30 years of experience in all phases of residential and commercial construction including architectural design, civil engineering, and structural design. His work experience included conceptual project development, entitlement processing, permit processing, site development design including grading and utilities, bid documents, construction coordination and observation, evaluating and processing change orders, documenting as-built plans and contract administration. Don is also an avid gardener, a member of Peace Novato, and is very active in the community. He and his wife Nancy, a Registered Nurse, have taken several trips to Mexico with Presbyterian Church of Novato to help build houses and provide healthcare services to the underserved.

**Tori Graw** – has been married to Gary for 20 years and is a Novato homeowner (17 years). They have two daughters: one at UC Davis and the other at San Marin High School. Tori is a member of The Quest Church. She is also an organic gardener. In the early 1980’s Tori created a college community garden, that included a geodesic solar greenhouse, to provide fresh herbs and vegetables through the local food co-ops. She owns and operates Marin Landscape Management with her husband, utilizing IPM (Integrated Pest Management) techniques. Tori has a Bachelor of Science Degree in Environmental Science (Stockton State College, N.J.) focusing on toxic waste and water analysis.

**Gisela Le Maitre** – text to come.

**Jeff Le Maitre** – text to come.

**Nichole Marelich\*** – text to come.

**Vicky Meblin\*** – Vicky’s business experience includes marketing and public relations, exhibiting at trade shows/business conferences, coordinating sales seminars & other events, managing client databases, and writing and editing marketing collateral. Vicky has two children in the Novato Unified School District. She has been the Pleasant Valley Elementary Volunteer Coordinator for Marin County School Volunteers. Vicky is a founding board member of the Novato Live Well Network. She played an instrumental role starting the NLWN Lunch Buddy program as a volunteer and food advocate. Vicky currently works at the Novato Youth Center.

**David Selzer\*** – David’s interest in nature started when he was growing up in Santa Cruz along the San Lorenzo River. He studied Limnology (freshwater ecology) at UC Davis and Washington State, served in the Peace Corps in Ghana, and then went on to teach middle-school math and science in the Imperial Valley, San Francisco, and then for 17-years in Mill Valley. David’s passion embraces both healthy ecosystems and human communities, which is what led him to take the SPAWN Naturalist Training Program, just before he retired. He quickly became inspired by fellow volunteers in the program who cared about the salmon and streams but who also took a more holistic, watershed perspective to conservation. In addition to leading Creekwalks for the public and students in the winter he also has acted as the Volunteer Creekwalk Coordinator.

**Charlotte Torgovitsky\*** – is a naturalist, educator, and garden consultant who has lived with her family in Novato for most of the last 27 years. An organic gardener since 1975, she is currently developing her own two acre property; working in a sustainable and resourceful way with native soils and plants to create gardens that provide for the human caretakers as well as sanctuary for wildlife. Working in collaboration with the Marin County Stormwater Pollution Prevention Program and Marin Municipal Water District, Charlotte helped found the Eco-Friendly Garden Tours, now in its fifth year. As Garden Education and Outreach Manager at the Marin Art and Garden Center from 2001 to 2009 she created and developed California native gardens, a plant nursery and composting demonstration site. These facilities were used to teach hands-on courses in Bay-Friendly gardening, home composting and plant propagation. In addition, Charlotte collaborated with numerous other organizations to create curriculum and programs for elementary school field trips, high school community service and college internships. As an educator Charlotte teaches Wildlife Friendly Gardening and Home Composting courses at the College of Marin, Adult Community Education. She also teaches Bay-Friendly gardening classes, and has been invited to lecture on these subjects at Sonoma State Sustainable Landscaping program, San Francisco Botanical Garden, Tilden Regional Parks, and numerous bay area garden clubs.

**Veronica Valero, Garden Chair\*** – Veronica has been a resident of Novato since 1996. Health and wellness issues have always been important to Veronica. But, after her brother's death at age 44 of a rare sarcoma cancer (Ewing's Sarcoma/PNET) that is usually found in children, Veronica became a passionate volunteer health advocate as a way to "do something about it" in hopes that her son and all children and their families would never have to experience cancer or other such life threatening illnesses. Since 2003 she has advocated for healthier food choices for children and their families in the schools and community at large. She founded the Novato Healthy Food Coalition that had successful letter writing campaigns to bring Whole Foods and Trader Joes to Novato. Veronica is a founding member and Executive Director of the Novato Live Well Network, a volunteer based non-profit focusing on sustainable living, eating and gardening. She is a 2006 graduate of Novato Chamber of Commerce's "Leadership Novato" Program and recipient of the "Leadership Novato" Ed Stark Award. She has taken courses at College of Marin on gardening and ecology, including the first class offering of the course, *Principles and Practices of Organic Farming and Gardening*. Veronica initiated the Novato Community Garden Project with Karen Losee. When she is not volunteering, Veronica is "The Computer Tutor of Marin"—a one-on-one computer tutor/consultant. Veronica has an M.A. in Biblical Studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley.

**Donna West\*, RN** - grew up gardening with her Mom and Grandfather and has fond memories of enjoying fresh-picked strawberries, peas, and tomatoes from the family garden. Donna is a Novato resident who has worked as a Public Health Nurse with children, families, and caregivers in Marin for the past 15 years. Increasingly, this work has focused on addressing the childhood obesity epidemic by creating environments which promote healthy behaviors. Supporting the development of early childhood gardens and intergenerational garden experiences has been an important aspect of this effort. Donna's participation in the Novato Community Garden project allows her to blend her lifelong passions for growing food and healthy communities.

**Sandy Wollenberg** – A graduate of Environmental Forum of Marin. As a final project she collaborated with Susan Doyle to create an environmental, bi-lingual book for preschool children on how to grow a garden. She has volunteered for West Coast Green, Bioneers, Sustainable Novato, Novato Live Well Network, Taste of Marin, and Chefs of Marin. She has worked with a grand floral designer arranging floral creations for museums, corporate and private parties. Her passions are gardening, cooking with the bounty from the garden, hiking, and tennis, as well as teaching young children the wonders and nutrition of growing a garden.

#### ADVISORY BOARD:

**Clark Blasdel:** President, Founder, CEO: Northbay Family Homes, [www.nfh.org](http://www.nfh.org).

**Dietrich Stroeh:** Founding Partner, CSW/Stuber-Stroeh Engineering Group, Inc, [www.cswst2.com](http://www.cswst2.com)

**Nancy Boyce, RN, MA:** MarinLink Founder & President, [www.MarinLink.org](http://www.MarinLink.org)

**Annie Spiegelman:** Garden Columnist, author, [www.dirtdiva.com](http://www.dirtdiva.com)

**Marc Friedman:** Public Relations and Marketing Consultant.

**Nancy Niche:** Owner, Green Gage Farm, [www.greengagefarms.com](http://www.greengagefarms.com)

**Fernando Agudelo-Silva, Ph.D.:** Prof. Biology / Environmental Landscaping at College of Marin, <http://www.marin.edu/>

**Miguel Villarreal:** Director: Food And Nutritional Services, Novato Unified School District [www.nusd.org](http://www.nusd.org)

**Rita Widergren, RN, PHN:** Nursing Director, Project Independence with County of Marin, [www.co.marin.ca.us](http://www.co.marin.ca.us)

*\*The Novato Community Garden Project is a Novato Live Well Network project ([www.NovatoLiveWell.org](http://www.NovatoLiveWell.org)) Our fiscal sponsor is **MarinLink** ([www.MarinLink.org](http://www.MarinLink.org)), a California nonprofit corporation, exempt from federal tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, as amended. Mary O'Mara, Executive Director; Nancy Boyce, Founder & President.*