

Volunteering and nature-related events with others, December 2025.  
Purple text indicates links.

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Outdoor fun and learning, including festivals and gardens to visit  
Talks, classes, conferences, exhibits, contests  
- mostly indoor or online  
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Check back for updates mid-month!

## Hands-on volunteering --

- **Baxter Creek volunteers in El Cerrito** (under 18 with guardian) enhance Baxter Creek in Gateway Park, on the Ohlone Greenway at El Cerrito's north border, 10 AM noon most first Sundays, meeting at 10 AM at Conlon and the Ohlone Greenway. [Info, and RSVP appreciated, here](#). Green Teams cleanup set for Sun., Dec. 7. [Info 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 on signing up to adopt a storm drain here](#), including a map of drains. [Info on adopting a traffic circle here](#).
- **Berkeley Parks and Recreation Dept.** offers opportunities to tend the Rose Garden, pollinator gardens in many parks, and native plants in Cesar Chavez Park. You can become a volunteer docent teaching kids about nature at Shorebird Park or help with special events. [Berkeley shoreline cleanups](#) are held on most third Saturdays starting 9 AM at Shorebird Park. [Info here](#).
- **Berkeley Path Wanderers** holds weekend and weekday (usually Fri.) work parties weeding, pruning, and sweeping paths ([email here](#)) and path builders ([email here](#)) [Calendar 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, [scroll down to Volunteering Opportunities to find email contact](#).
- **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 Chapter of the California Native Plant Society** sponsors work parties restoring habitat in Garber Park on most first and third Saturdays and Huckleberry Regional Park on third Sundays. [Info here](#), along with many opportunities at the chapter's Native Here nursery and opportunities with Friends of Hillside Natural Area, listed below.
- **The East Bay Regional Park District** sponsors varied volunteer programs in parks from hills to Bay. [Info here](#).
- **El Cerrito's Adopt-a-Place Program** invites individuals and groups to look out for and help maintain areas up to entire parks, with possible signage. [Info here](#).
- **El Cerrito Trail Trekkers** hold volunteer events in the El Cerrito Hillside Natural Area and elsewhere. [Info here](#).
- **Friends of Five Creeks** usually holds monthly public parties at varied sites, Berkeley to Richmond, but no work party this December. If you are interested in helping observe King Tides or making iNaturalist observations at extreme low tides, email [f5creeks@gmail.com](mailto:f5creeks@gmail.com). [Details on our home page](#). Weekly 10 AM - noon Tues. "Weed Warriors" sessions at varied locations hills to Bay. Email [f5creeks@gmail.com](mailto:f5creeks@gmail.com) to get weekly email notices of locations.
- **Friends of the Hillside Natural Area (El Cerrito)** usually hosts work parties focused on removing broom and other invasives and encouraging varied natives throughout the 100-acre park, for winter usually 3-5 PM Wednesdays and 10:30 - 12:30 PM Sundays, meeting at the end of Regency Court (GPS: 1580 Regency Court, El Cerrito. Email [friendshillsidenaturalarea@gmail.com](mailto:friendshillsidenaturalarea@gmail.com) for details and to check for a specific week.
- **Friends of Pinole Creek Watershed** holds monthly cleanups, [info here](#).
- **Friends of Rotary Nature Center** lead third Saturday work days most months at the center on Lake Merritt and nearby marsh. [Info, registration here](#).
- **Friends of Sausal Creek** have opportunities every week at their native-plant nursery and several Oakland restoration sites. [Info here](#).



- **Garber Park Stewards** has restoration work days on Saturdays of most months in the forested 13-acre park off Claremont Avenue on the Berkeley-Oakland border. For info on first Saturday work parties, email [gpstewards@gmail.com](mailto:gpstewards@gmail.com).
- **Gateway Emergency Preparedness Garden, 2299 Tunnel Road, Oakland**, welcomes volunteers 9-11 AM on second and fourth Saturdays to revitalize and update the educational garden memorializing the 1991 Oakland fire and the nearby Hayward Fault. For info email [fred@geomorph.com](mailto:fred@geomorph.com) or [nancy@berkhills.com](mailto:nancy@berkhills.com).
- **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (formerly Golden Gate Audubon)** offers monthly volunteer restoration event include Martin Luther King Jr. Regional Shoreline. [Info and links to event list and registration here](#). Corporate volunteer opportunities, docenting at Lake Merritt, and leading trips for kids or adults also available.
- **Love the Bulb** hosts gardening days at its native-plant garden at 3 PM on first and third Saturdays on the Albany Bulb. [Info here](#).
- **Mount Diablo Interpretive Assn.** has opportunities with its trail crew and back- country patrol. [Info here](#). **Save Mount Diablo** 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](#).
- **Oakland's historic Peralta Hacienda Park** welcomes volunteers Saturdays at the park at 2465 35<sup>th</sup> Ave., Oakland. Organized by youth group [Frontline Catalyts](#) and the [Peralta Hacienda Park](#). For info email [fellows@frontlinecatalyts.org](mailto:fellows@frontlinecatalyts.org) or [Miguel@peraltahacienda.org](mailto:Miguel@peraltahacienda.org).
- **Shark Stewards hosts Aquatic Park Cleanups monthly**, meeting just beyond the gate at the parking circle, south end of the main lagoon - enter from Emeryville, closest internet-map address 2925 Bolivar Dr.. Next cleanup Sun., Dec. 14, 10 AM - 1 PM. [Info here](#).
- **SPAWNERS (San Pablo Creek)** leads volunteer days monthly, usually on third Saturdays, at their Wilkie Creek Outdoor Classroom. 4805 Santa Rita Rd., Richmond. [Info here](#). [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 Friday afternoons and last Saturdays. [Email here for info](#).
- **Transition Berkeley** and the Berkeley Parks Department welcome volunteers at bird and butterfly-friendly native-plant gardens. [Fill out form with your interests here](#).
- **The Watershed Project** hosts volunteer events mostly in Richmond and North Richmond, with fall planting days scheduled 9:30 AM- noon at their bioswale on the Richmond Greenway, [info and signup here](#), and Dec. 6 at their bioswale on Baxter Creek at Booker T. Anderson Community Center, including optional 8 AM bird walk plus creek cleanup. [Info and signup here](#).
- **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](#).
- **Wildlife Rescue**: Volunteers caring for animals generally must be over 18. Sign up [here](#) for orientation to volunteer with **International Bird Rescue** in Fairfield. **Lindsay Wildlife Museum** in Walnut Creek and accepts volunteers 16+ for caring for some injured animals, with opportunities age 18+ for educators and caring for non-releasable injured wildlife. The **Marine Mammal Center** in Sausalito accepts high-school applicants in fall for a program running Jan. - August. Volunteers over 18 can get on a list to be notified of future trainings. [Info here](#). **Wildcare**, in San Rafael, [lists volunteer opportunities here](#).

## Outdoor fun and learning

### Walks, field trips, tours, festivals

- [The California Native Plant Society's East Bay chapter](#) Meetup group offers walks with registration and group membership required. [Info here](#).
- **The East Bay Regional Park District has a host of nature-related events for all ages, with events on the Park District's Calendar**. The Park District's annual Trails Challenge runs all year, asking visitors to walk, run, ride, or roll five trails or 26.2 miles by Dec. 31. All participants get a month's free membership in All Trails, and there are chances at other prizes. Guidebooks are available free at visitors' centers while they last, and [online, with other info, here](#).



- **El Cerrito Trail Trekkers'** lead frequent walks, many ranging far from the city. [Info here](#). Sat., Dec.6, 9:30 AM -noon, explore the future Bay Trail route between the former Richmond marine terminal 4 and Point San Pablo (north end of Pt. Molate peninsula) with Bruce Beyear, the person most responsible for Richmond's success in completing so much of the Bay Trail. Sat., Dec. 20, a sunset hike with climbing and views takes you to annual lighting of the Sundar Shadi holiday display on Moeser Lane.
- **El Cerrito's Recycling Center**, 7501 Schmidt Lane, offers a free public tour 3-4 PM most first Wednesdays, but check for January. [Info here](#).
- **Golden Gate Bird Alliance (formerly Golden Gate Audubon)** Christmas bird counts are scheduled Dec. 14 for Oakland and Berkeley, Mon., Dec.29, for Oakland and Berkeley, and Jan. 3 for Richmond. (Check other local Audubon societies for their dates.) leads frequent free birding field trips, include Hilltop Lake, Tilden Regional Park, Blake Garden, the Albany mud flats, and many more farther afield, including winter trips to Central Valley Required reservations open at 1 PM on third Tuesdays of the prior month. [Outings list here](#). [Info on registration here](#). [Christmas bird counts](#) are scheduled Sun., Dec. 14 for Oakland and Berkeley, Mon., Dec.29, for Oakland and Berkeley, and Sat., Jan. 3 for Richmond. Check other local Audubon societies for their dates and details. [Registration for winter classes](#) opens Wed., Dec. 3.
- **Greenbelt Alliance** leads walks including Hayward Shoreline at high tide Sat., Dec. 6; Borges Ranch and Shell Ridge near Walnut Creek Sat., Dec. 7; quake-prone Los Trancos Open Space near Palo Alto Dec. 14; and a winter solstice saunter on Mt. Diablo Dec. 21. [Info and signup here](#).
- **Mount Diablo Interpretive Association** offers monthly "Wonder Hikes" and walks that often fill quickly, Recordings of many past talks on nature also available. [Info and links to signup here](#).
- **Save Mount Diablo** offers varied hikes. Registration opens one month before events, which tend to fill up early. [Calendar and signup here](#).
- **Wholly H2O** leads Walking Waterhoods tours including watershed tours are designed to be useful for California students and teachers available on your cell phone through [Pocketsights](#). Varied information on how to enjoy and learn about nature with friends and family or on your own [here](#).

## Gardens to visit, with their events

- **Blake Garden**, 70 Rincon Rd. in Kensington, run by the UC Berkeley Department of Landscape Architecture, is open free Tues. - Fri. 8 am - 4:30 pm. [Info here](#). Check the calendar for monthly bird walk and tours. [Info here](#).
- 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. Lichen Walk with Jepson Herbarium Curator Dr. Klara Scharnagl Sat., Dec. 13, 1-3 PM. [Docents lead free, no-reservation tours](#) on non-rainy Saturdays (11 AM) and Sundays (11 AM and 2 PM). [Wayne Roderick Lectures](#) 10:30 AM - noon Saturdays (arrive early!), check for details online Native-plant sales 10 AM Wednesdays and first Saturdays. [Info here](#). [Info here](#) on a 6-mo. docent class beginning Jan. 7, limited to 15 participants.
- **The UC Berkeley Botanical Garden**, Centennial Drive: Events include a sick-plant clinic on first Saturdays, a tour of winter conifers at the garden or online Sat., Dec. 6; wreath-making workshos Wed., Dec. 10 (or an at-home kit); holiday crafts for adults Sat., Dec. 13, and for families Sun., Dec. 14. [Events calendar and links to registration here](#).
- **Ruth Bancroft Garden** and nursery in Walnut Creek is home to a stunning collection of dry-adapted plants. Garden of D'Lights, with the garden illuminated by colorful lights and lasers, opens continues through Jan. 11. Talks, webinars, and tours available. [Info here](#).



## Talks, Classes, Meetings, Exhibits Contests - mostly indoors or online

Also see Gardening and Waste Reduction below

### Classes, talks, events

- **Albany Film Fest** presents the documentary film "Merchants of Doubt," on how industry manufactures doubt, followed by a discussion by UC climate experts, 7-9 PM Tues., Dec. 9 at the Albany Public Library, 1247 Marin.



- [Bay Nature Institute](#) offers varied online talks, mostly noontime Wednesdays December talks include how spiders “balloon” Dec. 3, Monarch butterflies Dec. 10, and a talk on photographer Dorothea Lange as an “environmental prophet.” [Info and registration here.](#) [Links to many past talks here.](#)
- [EBMUD’s Water Wednesdays online talks:](#) [available online](#) include [emergency preparedness for fire, earthquake, and flood.](#), fire scaping, and much more.
- [Friends of Rotary Nature Center Lakeside Chats](#) present an update on ongoing study of problems of oxygen supply in Lake Merritt, 7 PM Fri., Dec. 5. [Info and registration here.](#) [Many earlier talks available online here.](#)
- [Golden Gate Bird Alliance](#) monthly speaker series has recordings of past talks on line. No December talk listed on their web site as of Dec. 2.
- [Greenbelt Alliance](#) is presenting varied meetings on sea-level rise and housing and transit issues around the Bay.
- [Coastside Land Trust](#) presents [info and recordings of past webinars here.](#)
- [Mount Diablo Interpretive Assn.:](#) Recordings of past webinars [here.](#)
- [Merritt Community College’s Natural History Studies Program](#) offers [varied classes](#) from permaculture design to environmental biology and conservation and management of parks and public lands; professional certificate program.

### Exhibitions, contests:

- [The Brower Center’s](#) Hazel Wolf Gallery, 2150 Allston, presents Salt of the Earth, photographer Barbara Boissevain’s record of transformation of the South Bay Salt Ponds, the largest tidal restoration effort on the West Coast, aiming to restore at least 8,000 acres of salt marsh, 2,000 acres of managed ponds for waterfowl , and dry habitat for snowy plovers. Through Feb. 13. [Info here.](#)
- [The California Coastal Commission’s annual K-12 Coastal Art and Poetry Contest](#) is open through Jan. 29 with donated prizes and opportunities for exhibition. [Info here.](#)

### Gardening, waste reduction

- The [California Native Plant Society](#) offers "Naturehood" quarterly online native-gardening chats. [Info, registration, past talks here.](#)
- [Alameda StopWaste](#) [Bay Friendly Garden guide can be downloaded here](#) [calendar](#) lists events and resources for Bay- and climate-friendly gardening. Informal “talkin’ dirt” online chats first Wednesdays, 7-8 PM. A guide to [reducing waste with drought- tolerant plantings is here.](#) A [list of tool and seed libraries](#) is available for [homes, schools,](#) and [businesses](#) on reducing food and other hazardous waste, and other topics, including a [searchable guide on how to recycle 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 noon-1 PM on first and third Tuesdays. [Info and registration 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, and more . [Info and signup here.](#)
- [ReScape’s courses](#) offer certifications for professionals at all levels in environmentally friendly, nature-based landscaping. [Info here.](#) [Directory 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 tips for [re-growing veggies 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

- Berkeley residents city-wide can schedule free chipping of woody debris and flammable vegetation - [info and online signup here.](#)
- [The City of Albany](#) offers [free indoor pails for compostable waste](#) to residents of multi-family buildings. [Delivery appointments here.](#)



- **Free compost and mulch: El Cerrito** offers local residents and businesses up to 5 cu. ft. of free compost while supplies last, 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** offers free compost for all at the Gill Tract Farm noon-4 PM Sundays; [instructions and map here.](#) Free mulch is available 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.

## Climate change, greenhouse-gas emissions

- **Incentives to make homes more energy efficient, from weatherproofing to new appliances, are still around by changing fast.**
- **BayRen, mainly funded by utility companies from charges** on your utility bill, has info on programs that may help reduce energy use. These include the EASE program for Income-qualified residents of buildings up to four units, e.
- **BayRen's** guide to rebates for heat pumps, induction cookers, electric vehicles and more is [here.](#) This lists incentives that can be combined or "layered," boosting savings.
- **Albany has a new schedule of rebates for heat pumps, now including hot-water heaters, but limited to households qualified by income.** [Info and application here.](#) The city's [Incentives Roundup Page](#) is another quick guide to other programs, many available more widely.
- [Ava Community Energy](#) and other community-energy providers also have lists of incentives as well as distinctive programs of their own.
- For now, with **Rising Sun Center for Opportunity**, get free house calls on making your home more energy efficient, with **kits that include a free smart power strip or single-burner induction cooktop.** [Info here.](#)
- **BayRen** also trains electricians and other professionals and offers a [list of trained professionals here.](#)
- **Ride and Drive Clean** offers free events on EVs and Ebikes and more, including include a webinar fall EV Discounts 6 PM Dec. 9. [Info here.](#)
- **PG&E offers free webinars on electrification and energy saving, mostly for professionals.** [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
- **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, especially farther afield, check out the [Bay Nature Calendar.](#)
- For events east of the hills, check out [Sustainable Contra Costa's events list.](#)
- Alas, the Planet Drum Calendar, focused on San Francisco, is no more, and Nature in the City's calendar is a fragment of what it was, due to financial mismanagement.
- The [North Bay's Grapevine](#), focused on educators, lists many similar events.

**Friends of Five Creeks assembles this list.** To suggest an event to include, please email [f5creeks@gmail.com](mailto:f5creeks@gmail.com) with basic information, if possible before the first of the month.