



# NET ZERO NEWS



## Green team to plant bee-friendly flowers on PHS campus



Connie Herrick (front) of Piedmont Connect with the PHS Green Team.

By Marjorie Blackwell

Piedmont High School (PHS) is about to become a garden oasis for bees and other pollinators. The PHS Green Club recently launched the “Bee-Friendly Flower Project,” an ambitious plan to install bee-friendly plants in concrete-lined boxes that extend along the walls and walkways of the library and the student center.

This landscaping improvement is a much-needed bonus as these boxes are currently occupied by weeds or dead plants.

“The planting will start in mid-Spring. We’re getting advice on what to plant from District Facilities Director Pete Palmer, and my mom, Gillian Atchley, who is a native plant gardener. We’ll put in a mix of native flowers that are low maintenance and low-water use,” said Green Club Co-President Max Rivera.

The school district is providing the project’s infrastructure.

“Possibly starting in the next few weeks, we’ll remove the old landscaping, add new soil amendment and install new irrigation where it’s needed. It’s a great environmental project,” said Palmer.

The Green Club currently consists of 45 students and has 20 active members, who meet every week to discuss projects and potential volunteer activities, both within and outside Piedmont. They are supported by PHS history teacher David Keller, who

has been the Green Club’s faculty advisor for the past decade.

“These students are doing an amazing job for the campus,” he said. “They’re motivated and taking the initiative. I just try to get out of their way.”

In addition to the bee-friendly boxes, the club supports the Climate Literacy Resolution, which advocates teaching California students from K-12 about climate change in every classroom. According to Schools for Climate Action, more than 40 California school districts and county education offices have already adopted the resolution. The club is trying to persuade the Piedmont School District to include it in the curriculum.

Two years ago, Green Club Co-President Elena Blanco worked on the Club’s fundraising effort to install solar panels on the new high school.

“We raised \$60,000,” she said. The funds went toward installing solar panels on the mansard roof of the new classroom building, which Palmer noted, was a very difficult job and was greatly benefited with the club’s contribution.

Club members also volunteer at city events, including recycling trash at the Harvest Festival and helping load compost at the city’s compost giveaways. Outside of Piedmont, Blanco and other club members volunteer at the Friends of Sausal Creek Nursery and seek out other local organizations to help.

Asked what inspired her to get involved, Blanco said, “I wasn’t into hiking and the outdoors until I went backpacking with my aunt in Alaska. That opened my eyes to the beauty and joys of the outdoor world.”

Rivera added, “I’ve been surrounded by nature all my life and (now) spend lots of time outdoors – on the mountain biking team, and rafting, rock climbing and hiking in Colorado. I feel like I should give back to nature.”

As they walked around the front of the new high school building, Rivera and Blanco noted the scraggly, dying vines attached to vertical posts.

“Here’s another opportunity for bee-friendly plants,” they said.

The Green Club has a fundraising effort underway with the goal of raising \$700 for the new pollinator plants, soil and irrigation. Piedmont Connect has issued a \$350 matching grant to the Club to help launch the Bee-Friendly Pollinator Project. Donations may be made at: [Gofundme.com/f/help-to-fund-phs-green-club](https://gofundme.com/f/help-to-fund-phs-green-club).

*Marjorie Blackwell is a Board Member of Piedmont Connect, a collaborative community organization supporting resident initiatives and city efforts to build a sustainable future. For sustainability and climate action resources, visit Connect’s website: [Piedmontconnect.org](https://Piedmontconnect.org).*



Green Club Co-Presidents Max Rivera (left) and Elena Blanco (right), along with Edwin Tang, help identify a plot of land on the high school campus to be planted with pollinator-friendly flowers.



## FIRST MONDAYS READING GROUP

### First Mondays Readers dig into *Prisoners of Geography*

By Dick Carter

The Piedmont Recreation Department’s First Mondays Reading Group met with a record turnout of 22 readers on February 6 at the Community Hall to discuss *Prisoners of Geography*, a 2015 non-fiction book about geopolitics by British author and journalist Tim Marshall.

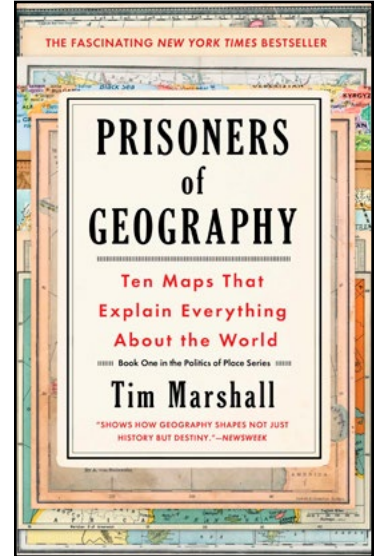
The group included Bob and Mady Hall, Mike and Nancy Henn, Melba Yee, Richard Sigel, Carol Warren, Martin Levy, Gerry and Darby Gragg, Ken Young, Lisa Euphrat, Leigh Sorensen, Marion Lim Yankowitz, Lois Price, Laura Goldman, Adrienne Hamlin, Karin Fetherston, Susan Ode, Bella Almanzan, Dick Carter, and discussion leader Priscilla Waner.

In the book, Marshall uses 10 maps of regions around the world to explain the geopolitical situations and strategies of world powers. Marshall explains that all leaders of nations are constrained by geography. Their choices are limited by mountains, rivers, and seas. Writers often focus on people, ideas, and political movements, but without geography we never fully understand world events.

The author explains that Russia lacks its own warm-water ports. Some of its Arctic ports freeze each winter, and Russian ships must contend with the ice packs to the north of the Arctic coastline. Additionally, the flat plain on Russia’s western border provides an easy route for invaders. Marshall contends these needs and conditions made Russia’s annexation of Crimea inevitable. His chapter on Russia, written in 2015, seems prophetic in the light of its 2022 invasion of Ukraine.

*Prisoners of Geography* was another great book for a discussion. Some loved it while others didn’t care for it, so the book provided a catalyst for related topic conversations.

Those on the positive side felt they learned a lot, but many readers didn’t understand how geography can affect populations and cultures. They learned how mountains and rivers can keep people from interacting. This was as much a book on history as geog-



raphy. Readers said Marshall’s detailed information was helpful, and they would now look at maps differently. They said it helped them better understand Putin’s motivations for invading Ukraine.

They liked Marshall’s easy writing style and occasion humor too.

Those on the negative side they felt the book overpromised and the title was misleading. Ten maps didn’t explain everything about the world, and the book didn’t provide an understanding of different people’s humanity, or how technology will affect the limiting effects of geography.

The book generated some side discussions about the relative strengths of the American and Chinese cultural structures. Members of the group also shared experiences in countries where geographic barriers and language dialects can keep people from understanding one another.

With their discussion complete the group considered their next books. They had previously selected *The Buddha in the Attic*, a 2011 novel by American author Julie Otsuka, for March, and Trevor Noah’s memoir, *Born a Crime*, as the April selection.

The group’s next discussion will be on March 6 at 1:30 p.m. Weather permitting, they will meet outside the Japanese Tea House in Piedmont Park. New readers are welcome to join the group. There is no fee to participate, but registration is required at <https://bit.ly/3R86PP4>.

## READ IT IN THE POST

### Pickleball Courts Schedule

Effective August 8, 2022

**LINDA BEACH Tennis Courts**  
Mon/Tues/Thurs: 10:00am–1:00pm

**HAMPTON Tennis Courts**  
Wed/Fri: 12:00–3:00pm

**PMS Sport Courts**  
Mon–Fri: 5:00–8:00 pm (or sunset)  
Sat/Sun: 9:00 am–3:00 pm



Please make sure to follow basic hygiene, social distancing and face covering requirements while at the courts. Do not play if you have any symptoms of COVID-19 or have been around anyone with symptoms. Check the city website (<https://www.piedmont.ca.gov/cms/one.aspx?portalId=13659823&pageId=15809367>) for the latest information.