

THE ALPINE SUN SHOPPER – September 2, 2010
Tattered Tidbits: Alpine Historical Society

HISTORY OF “SAGE AND SONGBIRDS FESTIVAL”

The first Sage and Songbirds Festival took place on the first weekend in May 1998. It was created and organized by local resident, Maureen Austin, an avid gardener and founder of C.H.I.R.P (Center to Help Instill Respect for Garden Wildlife, Inc). She encourages the community to create wildlife habitats in their home gardens and places of business. All one needs to do is supply water, food, cover and a place for wildlife to raise their young.

One by one, residents started sending in their applications to have their gardens certified by the National Wildlife Federation. In no time at all, Alpine had more certified wildlife habitats than any other city in the country. On May 1, 1999, Alpine was designated America’s First Community Wildlife Habitat by the National Wildlife Federation. The Sage and Songbirds Festival is a celebration of that designation.

Through Ms. Austin’s efforts, there are now more than 200 certified backyard wildlife habitats throughout Alpine. Each property owner does their small part which benefits the entire community.

Each year the Sage and Songbirds Festival draws more and more people from all over the world. The Viejas Outlet Center now hosts the event on the first weekend in May. They have a “Butterfly Release” and a “Butterfly Enclosure.” Visitors can walk through the enclosure and watch the butterflies flutter around in front of their eyes. Butterflies can land on your hands, clothes, and sometimes even on your nose. Throughout the weekend, there are garden tours, educational seminars, specialty vendors, and entertainment.

This year, for the first time ever, there will be a Sage and Songbirds Fall Festival called "Monarch Mania." It will be held on Saturday September 25th at Viejas Outlet Center from 10am to 6pm. There will be a live monarch butterfly release at 2pm. Nancy Conney will be there with her majestic birds-of-prey; there will be caterpillar races, snakes, spiders and all sorts of fun activities for the entire family.

To learn more about this fun festival go to www.chirp.org.

By Carlette Anderson