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Got a special occasion? Sweetness & Light Flowers & Events in Benicia celebrates each season's particular magic.



ow that the chilly days of winter are over, it's time to show your garden some TLC. As flowers start blooming again, hit up these Benicia shops in order to give your grounds new life.

JOYOUS SPACES

For a total (and low hassle) refresh, start with Joyous Spaces. Specializing in flower arrangements for both weddings and individuals, founder Joy Alberts also has a keen eye for garden design. She'll help you craft a brand-new outdoor escape, unique to your home. (707) 334-2288; joyousspaces.com

SUCCULENTS AND MORE

Looking to update your garden with some drought-resistant plants? Mosley over to Succulents and More, where cacti and company cluster inside and outside of the shop. Choose from a selection of potted plants or design your own terrarium at the succulent bar by the entrance. 433 First St., Benicia, (707) 400-3565

THE TEAK MAN

A garden isn't home to just foliage; it should be a welcoming space for you as well. The Teak Man offers high-quality teak furniture, including intricate wine-barrel fountains, to create an oasis

for yourself among the flora and fauna. 718 W H St., Benicia, (707) 208-9650

SWEETNESS & LIGHT FLOWERS & EVENTS

Give your home a little pizzazz with Insta-worthy arrangements by Sweetness & Light Flowers & Events. Opened in January, the newest shop on the gardening block specializes in seasonal, locally sourced floral designs. (Due to the COVID-19 crisis, Sweetness & Light is open by appointment only) 301 First St., Benicia, sweetnessandlightflowers.com

ROMANCING THE HOME

To add that special final touch, stop by Romancing the Home. Packed to the brim with cute home and garden décor, this store is bound to have something that calls to you. Elegant statuary? Iron art? A glittering wind chime? You'll find it here. 617 First St., Benicia, benicia-rth.com

BEYOND BENICIA

Benicia isn't the only city in the region offering gardening essentials. For outdoor equipment, Furber Saw in Martinez and Aloha Saw & Motor in Vallejo provide all the tools you'll need to retool your personal paradise. And Martinez's Knots and Found has a weekly changing selection of house plants, so you can bring the outdoors inside. •

Vallejo native and baseball star CC Sabathia



Sports Hero:

8 QUESTIONS WITH CC SABATHIA
AFTER 19 SEASONS ON THE BASEBALL DIAMOND, THE VALLEJO NATIVE AND FUTURE HALL OF FAMER IS READY FOR A SUMMER VACATION.



o call CC Sabathia a baseball legend would be an understatement. Dividing time between the Cleveland Indians, Milwaukee Brewers, and New York Yankees, the larger-than-life pitcher simply dominated in his 19-year career, earning a Cy Young Award (given every year to the best pitcher in each league) six All-Star appearances, and a World Series title.

Before the Majors, Sabathia was an uber-talented student-athlete at Vallejo High School, but his natural prowess belied a hard childhood—his father left when Sabathia was 12, leaving his mom to raise him by herself. Nevertheless, with the support of his family and community, he thrived on and off the field.

Two decades later, Sabathia is now settling into a new role: supporting inner-city youth. The former pitcher talked with us about his family, his baseball career, and why he gives back.

COURTESY OF SWEETNESS & LIGHT

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How are you enjoying retirement?
It's been good, just hanging out with the kids and family. I had shoulder surgery in November after dislocating his shoulder in his last pitching appearance, so I've been busy rehabbing.

What would you say was the highlight of your career?
Winning the World Series in 2009 [with the New York Yankees]. That whole season—opening the new Yankee Stadium, going to the All-Star game, winning the World Series—it was a really special season for me.

"I have so much family in Vallejo, I'm sure I'll be visiting more and more."

When you first started playing baseball as a kid, your mom, Margie, bought catcher's gear so she could help you practice. What impact did she have on you growing up?

She was everything. She was at every event—and she'd always sign me up for every event. My mom is a tomboy, so she loved sports. I was always with her, playing board games, playing basketball, throwing the baseball. I wouldn't be who I am without her.

How often do you get to visit your hometown?

I have so much family in Vallejo, I'm sure I'll be visiting more and more. I haven't had a summer off since 1997 [the year before he was drafted by the Cleveland Indians], so it'll be good to visit during the summer.

Do you have a go-to restaurant when you're in town?

There's a taco place I love, Tacos Jalisco, but it's really about home cooking. I love my aunt's cooking. I hang out at her house all the time with my cousins.

Where did you and your friends like to spend time when you were growing up?

All over, really. We'd hang out at my friends' houses, hang out in our neighborhoods, maybe go to the movies on Friday night.

We have to ask: As a Giant?

I grew up an A's fan. I went to a lot of Giants games with my dad—he used to get tickets through his work—but I was a huge A's fan. Rickey Henderson, Dave Stewart, Dave Henderson—they were my heroes as a kid.

In 2008, you started the Pitch In Foundation, which offers baseball camps for inner-city kids, including one here in Vallejo. Why is giving back so important for you?

Being part of the Vallejo Boys & Girls Club, I wouldn't be here without that program. I wanted to make one of those programs for inner-city kids like me. I know these kids' situations, what they struggle with, and I know I can help.

The best part is seeing the kids throughout the years. A lot of them started out in the baseball camps, and now they're leading them. One of the kids, Rowdy Tellez, he now plays for the Blue Jays. That's the gratifying part, watching these kids grow up and become something special.

Learn more about Pitch In Foundation and sign up your kids for baseball camps at pitch.org. •