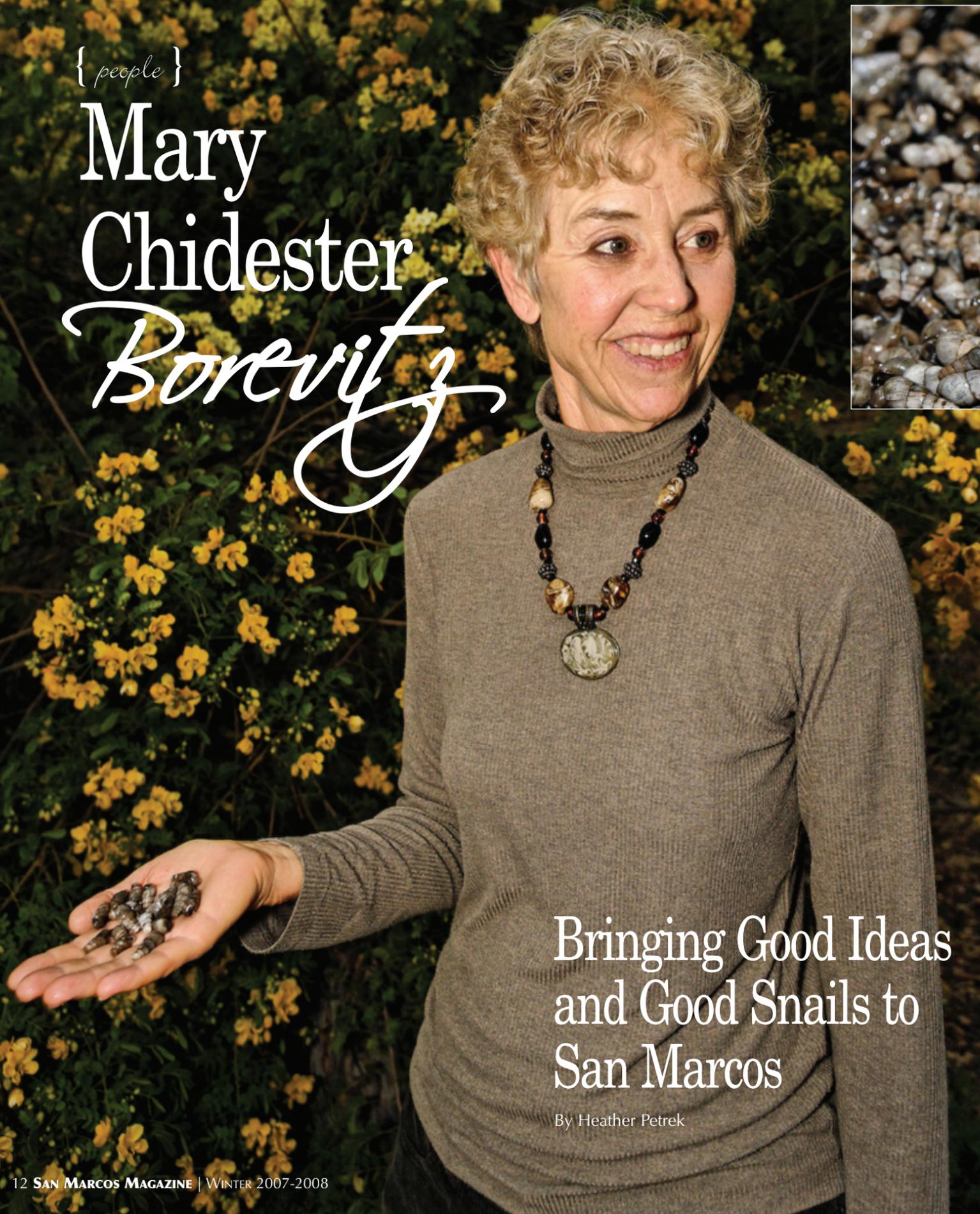


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# Mary Chidester Borevitz



## Bringing Good Ideas and Good Snails to San Marcos

By Heather Petrek



Mary's GoodSnails  
Photography by Dan Clement

**S**HE'S INTELLIGENT, HAS A commitment to education and to the future health of our environment, and is a leading supplier of beneficial, carnivorous snails in our area. Mary Chidester Borevitz' decollate snails, nocturnal predators of the harmful brown snails that like to destroy gardens, are hand raised on her property and then shipped through Mary's GoodSnails ([www.goodsnails.com](http://www.goodsnails.com)).

Borevitz first brought the snails to her property in 1983. Over the next ten years, she allowed them to roam and eat and populate her land. Since the snails are asexual, any two snails can get together to create offspring, each with the ability to lay 1000 eggs per year, making them very prolific.

By 1992, Mary had so many snails that she began to give them to other people who wanted their gardens to thrive and not be threatened by brown snails. Soon people began to offer to pay for the snails. She developed a way to package and ship them, and went into business. Since first beginning, she has sold over 1 million snails to gardeners and commercial citrus growers.

Nine-tenths of her orders are online. "Customers email me," she says. "I package the snails, I go online, print my own packing labels from USPS, then the mailman comes and ships them out."

Borevitz explains the snails came from North Africa originally and also other areas around the Mediterranean Ocean. "When the settlers came over, they brought the

until customers order them. "They come out when it is overcast and wet. I get down on my hands and knees and hand pick them," says Borevitz. "Then I put soil in the bottom of the holding bins and the snails on top and some oranges and lettuce, any cut vegetables that are dead, they'll eat. When plants decay they release an ethylene gas that they can smell and that is what they go for. If a plant is alive and healthy, they don't touch it." When customers order the snails, out to the holding bin Mary goes. She packs them up and they are off to help another gardener in need. Mary also attends garden shows throughout southern California, and gives speeches and presentations.

Farming has been a big part of Mary's life for a long time. She and her husband, Richard, have lived in San Marcos since 1978. They presently grow and care for eight acres of organically certified Valencia oranges on their Oak-Ray family farm.

Between 1984 and 1999, the Borevitz family owned eighteen acres of land on which they grew gourmet vegetables and sold them at a roadside stand in Twin Oaks Valley. The business was called Gourmet Gardens and Richard and Mary's three children helped with the venture. When the City of San Marcos purchased the land the gardens became soccer fields that now stand adjacent to Walnut Grove Park

Besides being sole proprietor of her very successful snail business, Borevitz is also the current president of the San Marcos Unified School District Board of Trustees. She has been a trustee on the board since 1991. She

snails. When they finally arrived, they gave them water and old leaves, they came out and made babies. They were a great traveling food. It was an incredible protein rich food source."

Mary's snails are a biological, non-toxic, natural way to eradicate brown snails. Mary's good snails prey on brown snails, but not on slugs. "Don't put the decollate snails in a garden situation, put them out in the areas around the garden, so they can hide," she says. "They will roam around in the night and go back during the day."

Mary collects her snails early in the morning and places them in holding bins

also serves on the Executive Committee of the President's Associates for Palomar College, the President's Associates (Cougars) for California State University San Marcos, has been elected delegate to the California School Boards Association (CSBA) by San Diego County School Board members, is the legislative co-chair of the San Diego School Boards Association, and the Federal Government Relations Chair to Congressman Darrell Issa for CSBA. Borevitz is also a member of the Government Affairs Committee of the San Marcos Chamber of Commerce, a member of the San Diego Horticultural Society, and a benefactor of Quail Botanical Gardens.

Borevitz is involved with the committee who created the San Marcos School District's Health Policy. She serves on this committee as the representative of the San Marcos School Board, meeting with physical education teachers and administrators. The goal is to educate children and their families about nutrition and exercise. The district recently established new guidelines to help school sites improve the school menus, and to reduce the sugar from the students' school day. Birthday cupcakes brought to the classroom from home and sweets used as rewards for San Marcos's school children are now a thing of the past. "I want kids to know the importance of fresh veggies," Mary said. "I want them to have the opportunity to get to know farming, to get their hands dirty, and to see where good food comes from."

Borevitz's work politically allows her to advance the successful partnership of the city and the school district working together. She also has a passionate interest in making things "green." Her ideas for promoting agriculture and the healthy state of our lands and ecosystems include utilizing an area near the new Joli Ann Leichtag Elementary School site as an outside classroom, teaching students the importance of endangered species. The proposed school site is near a preserve for the thread-leaved brodiaea, a federally protected plant. "It would be great to use this land as a learning opportunity for our students," said Borevitz. "If we can't build on it, let's do something with it to help educate the kids about the environment they live in."

*Mary Chidester Borevitz loves gardening, has an altruistic concern for the environment, and does her best to bring her ideas and ideals to the community and local legislation in the best interest of the education of our students. This "good snail lady" is absolutely one of San Marcos's greatest assets. SMM*