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Coordinator Corner

Marcy Sousa, Master Gardener Coordinator

Happy New Year! January is a good time of year for planning. Assessing what you have for seed starting supplies, potting soil and seed varieties is always a fun way to start the excitement for the spring ahead. Like many people, the new year brings renewed energy and hope, plans for self improvement and of course resolutions. As a program, we have several resolutions this year. We want to help plant as many gardens as possible, to teach old and young alike how to care for their soil and their plants, be a resource to our community and to encourage the residents of San Joaquin County to conserve resources, reduce green waste and practice sustainable gardening practices.

January marks eight years since we sent out our first newsletter issue. We started off with a few hundred emails are now over to 5,000 recipients. This year also marks the 11th anniversary of the Master Gardener Program in our county. Our amazing volunteers have contributed over 50,000 hours of volunteer time in our county on many different projects.

We have added some new workshop locations this year so make sure you check out our calendar on [page 14](#). We will be hosting our Smart Gardening Conference on March 3rd. Stay tuned for a separate email with information on registration and class topics. We have some exciting things planned and we can't wait to see you there!

Master Gardeners are eager and available to answer your gardening questions. The office is open Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday from 9:00 am—Noon. You can contact us at 953-6112.

I hope you enjoy this edition of our newsletter. Happy Gardening!

Seniors and Winter Gardens

Regina Brennan, Master Gardener

Who are senior gardeners, and why should we address senior gardening advice any differently than that given to the public in general? There are a few good reasons why general advice is often inadequate. The mind may have the best of intentions, but the aging body may no longer be able to accomplish tasks according to what is written in a book. In general, a senior gardener is one who is retirement age or better, often still active gardening into their 80's and 90's. The often used expression, "I just can't keep up with it" doesn't mean that one has to stop gardening. We can recognize that with age, compromises and adjustments need to be made if one wants to continue tending to the seasonal



demands of a garden and doing the things one loves to do, despite the challenges of an ever changing energy level and loss of strength.

For some gardeners, normal aging concerns are intensified with the arrival of arthritis, decreased vision, and reduced balance. Regardless of one's current level of strength, mobility, and energy, there is a need to constantly assess and adapt one's garden to make maintenance easier and to plan ahead for future activities. Being unable to keep up one's garden to meet our personal standards may well mean that we must reduce our difficult physical and energy draining chores and get outside help from professionals. [Continued on pg. 16](#)

Winter Garden Chores

Sue Davis, Master Gardener

January, February, and March

Take care of a few maintenance issues and then stay inside where it is warm. Thumbing through a variety of gardening catalogs while planning a spring or summer garden is a great way to spend these cold months.

January ideas:

Plant—

Bare root roses and **fruit trees** are available in your local nursery now. Bare root plants are less expensive now than they will be in a couple of months when they have been potted.

It's not too late to plant spring bulbs if your local nursery still has some in stock. For production of good blooms, bulbs should feel heavy and dense.

Camellias in nurseries are in bloom now.

Choose one that catches your eye. Before purchasing a plant, make sure it's healthy and its leaves are lush and green. Avoid plants that have pale leaves, overly leggy growth, or roots protruding through drain holes.

Japanese maples (*A. palmatum*) are available in nurseries now. These trees come in many varieties, including ones with deeply cut leaves or variegated foliage. They can range in height from 3 to 20 feet and should be protected from the wind. Sun tolerance varies by species.

Determine the mature size of plants you are adding to your landscape so that you allow sufficient space when placing it in your garden. If the area looks sparse now, fill it in with some annuals or small perennials that can be relocated later.

Maintenance—

Pruning tips and tools. Vines, fruit and shade trees, grapes, and roses all benefit from pruning with sharp tools to remove dead, diseased, and broken branches, opening their framework to the sun and improve air circulation. As you work, disinfect your pruning tools with a ten percent bleach-to-water solution to prevent the spread of disease. You can also wipe your tools with rubbing alcohol as you go, and/or submerge and soak them for 1 minute between uses. Be sure to dry them with a clean rag and oil them after use to prevent rust. Keeping Lysol spray in your garden tote and spraying your tools each time you move to a new plant or tree will also work to keep your pruning tools disinfected.

Rake and discard all the fallen leaves around your rose bushes which may be harboring next season's pests.

Remove all mummified fruit from your fruit trees, as well as

any fruit or leaves still on the ground to discourage pests and diseases. Apply dormant oil sprays to control pests, disease and infection. Dormant sprays are labeled for specific diseases or pests as well as for the recommended amount and frequency of spraying. **Please read labels carefully.** You'll get the best results from spraying after rain or foggy weather and not during or just prior to freezing weather.

Mulch around your plants at least as far as the drip line (but not near the trunks) to discourage weeds, prevent soil erosion, and help regulate soil temperature.

Work compost into the soil around your plants and continue or start a composting pile for your spring and summer gardens.

Use a balanced fertilizer for winter-flowering plants to keep them blooming in these cold months. Among those that should be fed are primroses, stock, calendula, snapdragons, poppies, pansies, and violas. Potting a few of these will add a splash of color to your porch or patio.

Snails and slugs hide under pots, wood, benches and pavers. Dispose of any you find in a pail of soapy water.

In February:

Plant—

Start seeds indoors (see Lee Miller's Winter 2012 and Trish Tremayne's Winter 2015 articles on starting seeds). Peas can be planted outside; however, it is best to pre-germinate the pea seeds on moist paper towels in a warm room for a few days before you sow them.

Winter blooming annuals such as pansies and snapdragons can still be planted this month.

Dahlia tubers are available in area nurseries. For the best selection and a rich array of color and different flower forms, choose them now. Wait to plant them in the garden until mid to late April (when the soil reaches 60 degrees) for the most successful growth.

Tuberous begonia bulbs should be available at your nursery. Choose the largest and healthiest looking bulbs to start indoors now. Move them outside in late March.

Azaleas in bloom are arriving now. Your favorite garden center should have the best selection of these shade-loving plants early this month.

Evergreen vines that reach 15 to 20 feet and grow well in our area include fragrant yellow-flowered Carolina jessamine (*Gelsemium sempervirens*); white-flowered evergreen clematis (*C. armandii*); purple Hardenbergia violacea 'Happy Wanderer'; pink H. v.

[Continued on pg. 17](#)



Community Connections—The Ted & Chris Robb Garden at UOP

Patty A. Gray, Master Gardener

The University of the Pacific in Stockton has no agriculture department or horticulture program. Its focus is a core liberal arts college and professional degree programs like business and pharmacy. You might not expect to find an organic fruit and vegetable garden at a place like Pacific – which makes it exactly the right place to have one.

The Ted & Chris Robb Garden at the University of Pacific provides the whole campus community with much needed exposure to fresh garden produce grown using sustainable practices. University students never get enough healthy food and outdoor recreation, so the Robb Garden offers them a place to come outside, get their hands in the dirt, and absorb some fresh air and sunshine, all while learning valuable lessons about how food is grown. If they help out in the garden, they also get to walk away with freshly harvested fruits and vegetables to enjoy.



The Robb Garden serves as a commons for the members of the campus community and their neighbors. The gates are open 9am-5pm each day so that anyone can stroll through the garden and enjoy some

natural beauty. Part of the Robb Garden serves as a community garden, where a few faculty, staff, and community members can tend individual plots of their own. The remaining garden beds are designed and planted by students under the supervision of Garden Program Director Patty Gray. And everyone can purchase garden produce at weekly student-run farmer's markets on campus.



Experiential learning is the main focus of the garden. Faculty members bring students into the garden to do class projects ranging from making insect collections to conducting experiments to measure water infiltration rates in different soil types. Music conservatory students come to practice their instruments in a quiet corner of the garden, and art students come to sketch or practice photography.

The Robb Garden was a student-driven initiative from the start. In 2010, a pair of students proposed the idea of having a campus organic garden, and it was taken up by the university administration. In a stroke of good fortune, one of the university Regents at that time was Walter Robb, then a co-CEO of Whole Foods, whose sons Ted & Chris had recently graduated from Pacific. Walter Robb saw an ideal opportunity to make a gift to the university that would promote his own passion for biointensive gardening and fresh, organic food.

The garden was built in two phases. The first, in 2012, was managed for two years by an army of biology research students under the supervision of UOP Prof. Mark Brunell, a plant geneticist and a trained Master Gardener. In 2015, the garden was doubled in size, which coincided with a moment when Dr. Brunell had to refocus attention on his teaching and research. The new portion of the garden was designed and planted by two contract gardeners: Eric Firpo of Stockton Harvest (and formerly the CSA manager at Boggs Tract Community Farm), and Julie Morehouse, a garden and landscape designer and SJC Master Gardener. The pair worked so well together on the project that they decided to go into business together, and they now run the popular In Season Garden & Nursery on Alpine Avenue (see Garden Notes Jan.-Mar. 2017).



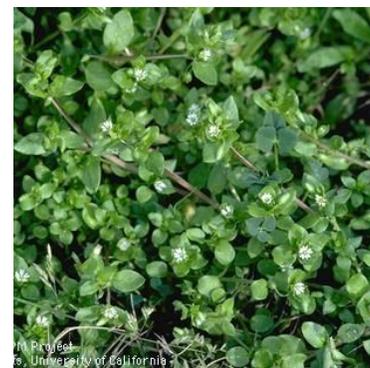
You can follow Robb Garden activities, and find out when and where farmer's markets are happening, on their Facebook page, <http://www.facebook.com/PacificGardenProgram>

Pests of the Season

Jocelyn Hillyard, Master Gardener

Weed: Chickweeds – *Stellaria media*

Chickweeds (*Stellaria media*) are broadleaf winter annuals that grow rampant in agricultural areas and gardens with low maintenance lawns. Common chickweed can grow up to 6 inches with multiple branch stems, opposing pointed leaves, and small white flowers. Their invasive life cycle starts in the Fall through Winter and typically ends the following Spring or Summer. Chickweed is the preferred food for many birds but is also a common host to tomato spotted wilt and cucumber mosaic virus, and insect pests. The short germination period makes chickweed particularly challenging to control.



Chickweed

Regularly turning the soil reduces germination by bringing the seeds closer to the surface. Remove the seedlings during the cold season by monitoring the soil and hand-pulling. Mulching, hand-weeding, and solarization are other ways to prevent the seeds from spreading. Solarization; a method in which clear polyethylene plastic from 1 to 4 mil in thickness is placed over the affected area and weighted down around the edges to heat the temperature of the soil and prevent the seeds from germinating. Chickweed found in turf can be prevented by mowing at proper height which encourages healthy grass growth. More detailed information on chickweeds can be found at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74129.html>

Pest: Scale

Most scale species lack recognizable body parts, save for their oval and wingless shape and tiny tube-like mouth which they insert into a variety of perennial plants. Small yellow-orange crawlers typically begin feeding within a day or two after emergence from eggs. Crawlers typically develop through two growth stages, and nymphs commonly spend their entire life in the same spot without moving as they mature into adults. All scale life stages may be present throughout the year in our area. Infested plants could have yellow leaves that may drop prematurely and can appear water stressed. Heavily infested plants may die with dead brownish leaves remaining. Horticultural oil can provide good control of most species of scale during the dormant season and after scale crawlers are active in late winter. Inspect plants for nymphs, honeydew, sooty mold, or ants before treatment decisions are considered prior to applying pesticide. Tape traps for crawlers and honeydew monitoring are useful in certain situations for determining the need for pesticide application. Label the tapes with the date, location, and host plant. Visually compare the tapes collected on each sample date. Spray after crawler production has peaked and definitely begun to decline, which is



Black Scale

soon after most crawlers have settled. More information on Scale can be found at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7408.html>

Disease: Broadleaf Mistletoe - *Phoradendron macrophyllum*

Broadleaf mistletoe (*Phoradendron macrophyllum*) is the most common parasitic perennial to grow on woody plants. Mistletoe extracts moisture and nutrients from their host plants with most of the damage occurring during the dormant season. Healthy, deciduous trees can usually tolerate some mistletoe, but severe cases will cause the host plant to lose its vitality. Visible signs of infestation are roundish clumps of mistletoe with the bark of the tree swollen around the form creating an excessively woody base. Broadleaf mistletoe seeds are commonly spread by birds. The most effective way to control infestation is to prune infected limbs at least 1 foot below the point of mistletoe attachment leaving the branch bark ridge intact. If mistletoe is on a main branch or trunk where it cannot be pruned-out, it may be controlled by cutting the mistletoe flush with the limb then covering the attachment point by wrapping several layers of landscape fabric or black polyethylene. Plant growth regulator ethephone could also be used to treat the infection during the dormant season, but may only provide temporary control. Severely infested hosts should be removed entirely to prevent the parasite from spreading to other nearby woody plants. More information at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7437.html>



Mistletoe

Plants of the Season

Sue Davis, Master Gardener



Tree: Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*)

Flowering with masses of white flowers in the late fall and fruiting with bright red, round, edible fruit throughout the winter months, a strawberry tree is perfect in the San Joaquin County area. The fruits tend to be an acquired taste, but if eating them is not appealing, they can add dramatic flair to holiday wreaths and bouquets, or just left on the tree to attract beneficials to your garden during the winter months.

Strawberry trees are evergreen and come in both a full-size tree which grows from 20 to 25 feet and in a dwarf variety (*Arbutus unedo* 'Compacta') which grows from 6 to 8 feet. Both types are slow growing, grow in all soil types, and enjoy a spot with full sun exposure. Once established and with regular watering, the trees tolerate drought conditions, although deep soaking every 7 to 10 days in extreme heat will keep them vibrant.

The larger specimen works well as a focal point in the landscape while the dwarf version can be used to anchor a border, linked with others to provide a privacy hedge, or stand alone as a focal point in a small garden or a wildlife area.

Shrub: Dwarf Heavenly Bamboo (*Nandina domestica* 'Compacta')

Another drought resistant and heat tolerant plant, once established, Dwarf Heavenly Bamboo has numerous leaflets that tend to give the plant a lacy look that can add a feeling of openness to your landscape. This little plant grows at a moderate rate up to 5 feet tall and 4 feet wide. Both disease and pest resistant, this evergreen shrub provides year-round interest, while in winter the bright display and scarlet berries are a beautiful contrast to those trees and plants in the landscape that are resting over the winter.

Dwarf Heavenly Bamboo is often found planted in clusters, as informal borders, near entryways, in containers, as specimens, or as foundation plants. To show off the variety of color in this plant, choose a neutral colored pot for container gardening. Yearly pruning in spring before the new growth starts, some fertilizer as the new, bronze shoots start to show and weekly watering will keep Dwarf Heavenly Bamboo in beautiful condition.



Groundcover: Marge Miller Camellia (*Camellia sasanqua* "Marge Miller")

This prostrate camellia is a natural ground cover, rockery or retaining wall specimen, or a stunning hanging basket or container plant. Full, soft pink blooms are accented by glossy, dark green, evergreen leaves in a plant that grows at a moderate pace to 12 inches high by 3 or 4 feet in width. Full, soft pink blooms throughout the winter make striking cut flowers to float in bowls.

The Marge Miller Camellia prefers filtered sun in well-drained soil that is rich in organic material. Mulching around the plant will help keep the roots cool. Once flowering is completed, prune the plant for shape and give it a bit of acid fertilizer to help the plant stay healthy and produce numerous blooms the following season. Like all plants, this Camellia will need regular watering until established, but then is a water-wise choice that only needs water when the first 3 inches of soil around the plant are dry.

Controlling Pests Through IPM

Norena Norton Badway, Master Gardener

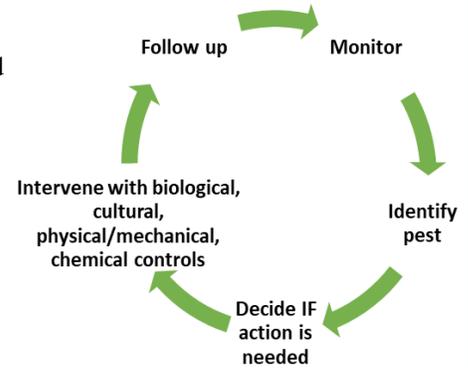
For the past sixty years, home and professional gardeners have embraced an integrated approach to managing harmful pests. IPM is the nationally and internationally accepted approach to growing healthy plants with the least possible disruption to agricultural and ecological systems by encouraging natural pest control mechanisms.

What is IPM?

Integrated pest management (IPM) is a process for making decisions about if, when, and how to control pests that damage landscapes, orchards, wildlands, nurseries, or agriculture. Prevention, altering gardening practices, or applying chemicals can assure short- and long-term advantages. IPM addresses all pests that damage desirable plants or that impact human or animal health. A pest can be a plant (weed), vertebrate (bird, rodent, mammal), invertebrate (insect, tick, snail), nematode (microscopic roundworms), or pathogen that causes disease (bacteria, virus, fungus), or any other unwanted organism that harms water quality, animal life, or a part of the ecosystem.

Doing IPM

IPM is a progressive system of decisions and actions for controlling damaging pests. The five stages of IPM are monitoring; identifying pests; deciding if action is needed and if so, which action(s) are appropriate; and then assessing the impact of any intervention as the gardener continues monitoring for other problems. (Figure 1)



(Figure 1)

Monitor. The first stage of IPM is monitoring — the gardener "scouts" the environment to determine which pests are active, which life stage the pests are in, whether biological controls are already acting, and what damage is being done. Monitoring requires a regular focused observation of the site, paying special attention to key plants that are highly prone to infestation. During monitoring, the gardener should remember that not every insect is a key pest; many insects are beneficial and others are of little concern unless the population reaches a damaging threshold.

Identify. After the gardener has noticed an infestation (plant or pathogen), it is important to identify the pest promptly and accurately to assure the right management method is selected. When it is difficult to diagnose the offending pathogen, pest (good bug or bad bug?) or abiotic injury, we advise seeking help from reliable resources or experts such as San Joaquin Master Gardeners who can share books, pamphlets, and online resources for identifying organisms.ⁱⁱ For monitoring and identification, it is helpful to carry a clipboard painted white on the back for thrip and mite taps, as well as paper and pencil to record your findings. A good hand lens (at least 10x) secured on a neck chain can help identify tiny insects, and a small container of alcohol is used to sterilize shears or clippers and to preserve insect or plant specimens within plastic bags or vials. Tapping branches or leaves for pests, cutting sections of turf, or digging up dead plants allow accurate monitoring and identification. Trapping, such as pheromone, black light, or sticky tape can help locate pests. Recording the incidence of pests is preferable to relying on memory.ⁱⁱⁱ

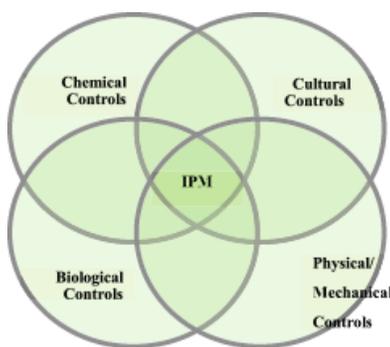
Decide. Even if you identify a pest, isn't always necessary or advisable to take action. Approximately 95% of garden visitors are either helpful or harmless. Most bugs are good bugs — they eat pests, break down organic matter, or pollinate.^{iv} In general, IPM urges gardeners to not take any control measures until pest damage has reached a point of significant damage. The threshold for intervention varies by setting, and for relatively minor problems, the threshold may never be reached. However, for some particularly aggressive pests, the threshold may be zero. For example, you may decide the threshold for mice or carpenter bees is zero, whereas the threshold for aphids is high because infestations are seasonal.

Intervene. (See next section on "Methods of Control"). Once a gardener has determined the magnitude of pests is so great that action is needed, the next decision is the mode and timing of action. For some pests like aphids, simply spraying with soapy water may be sufficient. Removing yard waste or setting traps may control certain pests, whereas in other cases, it is necessary to use chemical insecticides. Timing is important with pesticide applications. It's wasteful to apply pesticides too early or to apply "revenge" treatments when pest populations are already in decline. The cost in time and materials to apply chemicals or may exceed the cost of doing nothing.

Follow up. Any treatment, or choosing not to do a treatment, requires follow up. If the gardener has implemented cultural, biological, physical/mechanical, or chemical interventions, following up on the impact allows the gardener to learn for the future what works — or what isn't effective — in various situations.

Methods for Controlling Pests

Research has demonstrated that the most effective, long-term approach to managing pests is to combine four methods of control: cultural, physical/mechanical, biological, and chemical. (Figure 2)



(Figure 2)

Figure 2: Four methods of controlling pests. Adapted from Landis and Dumroese (2014) by Badway and Miceli (2017)

[Continued on pg. 11](#)

Beneficials — Lacewings

Kathy Ikeda, Master Gardener

Lacewings are only one of many types of beneficial insects, but they are (in my opinion) one of the prettiest. As their name implies, adult lacewings are strikingly attractive when viewed up close because their wings are delicately veined and nearly transparent. Each small insect has two long, thin antennae and two pairs of diaphanous wings that are much larger than the soft, slender body to which they're attached. When in flight, adult lacewings flutter about quietly but erratically in a manner similar to that of butterflies.

Green lacewings (*Chrysopa* spp. and *Chrysoperla* spp.) are the kind most commonly seen in our area. Their bright green coloration is distinctive, as are their eggs, which are tiny, oblong, and attached individually to plants by long, flexible strands of "silk." Brown lacewings (*Hemerobius* spp.) are less common but are also present in our area; their eggs are stalk-less and are laid directly onto plant leaves and stems or under bark.

The eggs of both green and brown lacewings take only a few days to hatch. The larvae that emerge are tiny but fearsome looking, with little resemblance to their more attractive parents. Lacewing larvae have large mandibles (jaws) and segmented, flattened bodies with bristled sides and tapered tails; some people think they resemble miniature alligators. The bodies of most lacewing larvae are cream or tan-colored with reddish brown markings. They feed and grow in several stages until they're ready to spin loosely woven cocoons. Once the cocoons are complete, the larvae transform into motionless pupae, which transform yet again into the adult insects that emerge from the cocoons in spring and summer.



Photo by Kathy Keatley Garvey

Lacewings are known as beneficial insects or "biological control agents" because they are living organisms that help control populations of harmful pests. Adults of some green lacewing species feed on honeydew, nectar, and pollen; others are predaceous, feeding on various small insects. It is the lacewing larvae, however, that are the true pest control heroes. Commonly known as "aphid lions" or "aphid wolves," they are voracious predators and are the most effective lacewing life stage in terms of biological pest control. They walk along swinging their head from side to side until they come into contact with potential prey. They then use their powerful, hollow mandibles to seize their hapless victims, inject them with digestive fluids, then suck out the liquefied contents. In this way, lacewing larvae devour large numbers of soft-bodied pest insects such as aphids, leafhoppers, mealybugs, mites, psyllids, thrips, whiteflies, and the eggs or small caterpillars of other insects.



Photo by Jack Kelley Clark

Lacewings aren't often seen since they're either crepuscular (active at dawn and dusk) or nocturnal (active at night). Like moths, they're attracted to and disoriented by bright sources of light such as patio/porch lighting and security lights. They might also find their way into your home if drawn to well-lit windows or interior lighting; I occasionally rescue hapless lacewings by gently cupping them in my hands then taking them back outside.

Unfortunately, lacewing adults are also lured in and killed by electronic bug zappers, those unnecessary and annoying devices that indiscriminately destroy beneficial insects along with mosquitos and other less desirable insects.

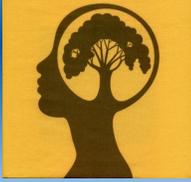
Fortunately, lacewings have some ingenious methods of self-defense. To avoid being eaten by birds, lacewing larvae often camouflage themselves by sticking plant material and/or the empty exoskeletons of their victims to their bristly bodies. (Google "lacewing larvae camouflage" to access many fascinating—and sometimes humorous—photos and video clips.) Lacewing adults can detect the ultrasound calls of bats, and when threatened they will fold their wings together and fall to the ground. Some species of lacewings also have glands from which they can exude a vile-smelling compound.

- Angelica (*Angelica gigas*)
- Caraway (*Carum carvi*)
- Coriander (*Coriandrum sativum*)
- Cosmos (*Cosmos bipinnatus*)
- Dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*)
- Dill (*Anethum graveolens*)
- Fennel (*Foeniculum vulgare*)
- Fern-leaf yarrow (*Achillea filipendulina*)
- Four-wing saltbush (*Atriplex canescens*)
- Golden marguerite (*Anthemis tinctoria*)
- Prairie sunflower (*Helianthus maximiliani*)
- Purple poppy mallow (*Callirhoe involucrata*)
- Queen Anne' lace (*Daucus carota*)
- Tansy (*Tanacetum vulgare*)

To encourage adult lacewings to visit your garden, try planting some of the herbs and flowering plants listed below.* (Or, in the case of one plant, neglect lawn-weeding chores!) These plants are hosts for aphids—a favorite food source—or they provide other food and shelter for lacewings during their different stages of development.

Green lacewing eggs can be purchased for use in agricultural settings or gardens. (Lacewing larvae are too aggressive and cannibalistic to be packaged for sale; adult lacewings would too easily fly away from the area where they're released.)

Lacewings in all of their life stages (adults, larvae, pupae, and eggs) can survive through the winter in mild climates such as ours. If you're fortunate enough to glimpse an amazing lacewing, take time to appreciate the vital role it plays in a healthy, natural ecosystem! If you'd like to learn more about them, take time to read all or part of the [Natural Enemies Handbook](#) by Mary Louise Flint and Steve H. Dreistadt (University of California Press). * Acknowledgement and thanks to [Farmer Fred](#) for this list.



Growing Knowledge

Susan Mora Loyko, Master Gardener

We've all heard "you are what you eat." In Barbara Kingsolver's book, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* (2007), she shares the joys and importance of home-grown food while teaching us the importance of understanding how food is grown and why that information is vital to good health.

Ms. Kingsolver takes us along on a yearlong family adventure in their move from their suburban desert home in Tucson to a rural family farm in Appalachia. With farming in her roots, she helps us understand the importance of our country's agrarian history, lost to most Americans more accustomed to industrial food production, rather than growing and eating what's grown in their backyards. She, along with her husband, Steven L. Hopp and daughter, Camille Kingsolver, share their accounts of running their small Virginia farm. During their first year, they're committed to learning to live off the land, eating only what animals and vegetables grow on their farm and in their immediate area.

She ponders what life would be like if teaching agriculture were mandatory to all school children to help them understand the importance of food. With that education, she asserts, we'd gain an appreciation of what it takes to grow food and help us to make better choices about what we eat.

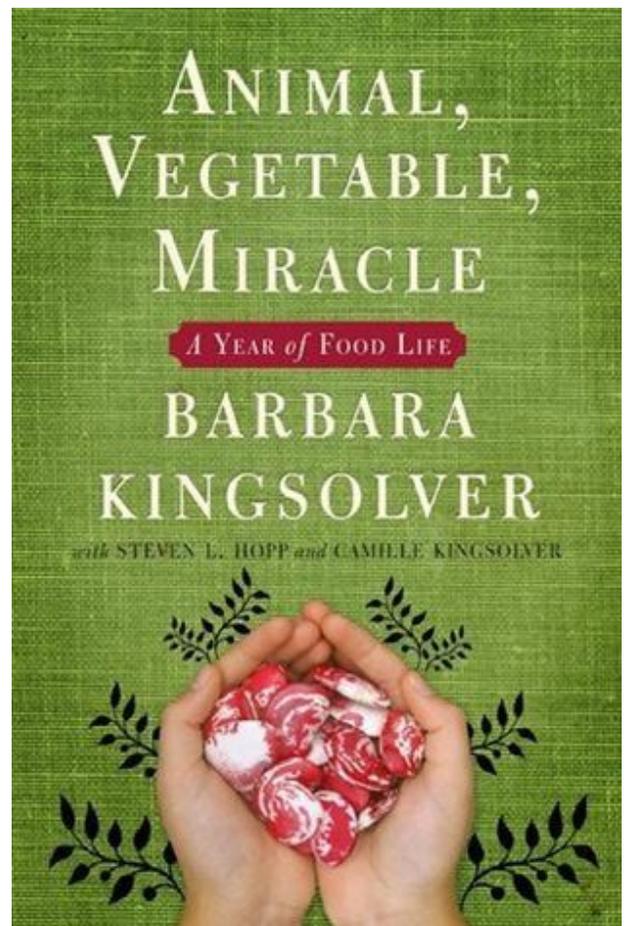
She proclaims knowing how food grows gives us all an appreciation that good food comes from soil and the earth, not a well-lit grocery store. During that first year, all the family members learn to farm year-round, enrich the soil with compost and cover crops, and plant seasonal fruits and vegetables. They see themselves as "overseers" of the land "that exhales oxygen and filters water for the common good on tillable land meant to feed their family." The family respectfully raises the animals that provide meat and poultry for their meals and gives gratitude for their existence.

Readers get a close look at how farming has changed. She draws our attention to how we've become a super-sized nation with our growing devotion to fats and sugars. She also gives hope as nationally we have seen the rise in sustainable healthy eating with an emphasis on more veggies and organic produce.

The family experiences a year of seasonal changes that determines what's planted, grown, harvested, stored, preserved, and cooked. Of particular interest to Stockton, once the hub for growing asparagus, Ms. Kingsolver writes about growing asparagus in such a way that makes the reader appreciate why Stockton farmers mourn the loss of the crop to our area.

The book is filled with the joys and hardships of family farming. But what would a book about gardening be without the ongoing battle with bugs and weeds? Readers will feel the angst of the author who finds weeds more difficult to deal with in their organic farming operation than the bugs. Like any gardener worth her compost, Ms. Kingsolver declares war on the weeds. She battles with a strong desire to learn more about weeds rather than just how to get rid of them. This is a continuing theme throughout the book for the writer and her family: to better understand how to co-exist with the soil, the bugs, the weather, etc., to be good farmers, and respect the land.

It would be impossible to share all the rich family experiences and lessons learned in this short article. This is a wonderful and insightful book that is both a memoir and a historical perspective of food and farming in our country. In addition to a heartfelt story, the book has a bounty of tasty recipes, a seemingly endless list of references to other books about food, gardening, and recipes, as well as a comprehensive list of websites still relevant today. The knowledge the family gains over the year and shares in this book will surely help the gardener and non-gardener alike, as well as anyone who appreciates the bounty the earth provides.



From the Garden

Betty Liske, Master Gardener

There is plenty to do in your garden in the spring as most gardeners know: preparing garden beds, planning for planting, buying vegetable seeds or starts, and plants for other garden areas, (remember, “right plant, right place”). There is also cleaning up and repairing garden tools, fixtures, and furniture, etc. Information on these topics can be found in garden books, websites, classes, and the extensive source for all things garden, the UC Davis website:

<http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/gardening.aspx>. And don't forget the Master Gardener of San Joaquin Co. website: sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu. When you're done with your preparations but feel the need for a bit more creativity,

check out some of the sites listed here to stir your imagination.



Umbrella Stand Planter:

Using a five-gallon bucket with a pipe in the middle, fill

with concrete. Insert into a larger planter and fill planter with potting soil and plant some favorite spring flowers or seeds. Herbs would be a good choice too. Insert garden umbrella and you have a functional and attractive garden piece.

[gardenclub@homedepot.com/project](mailto:gardenclub@homedepot.com)

Herb Drying Racks: use (old) picture frames, screen and chain to make hanging drying racks for use indoors or outside.

[gardenclub@homedepot.com/project](mailto:gardenclub@homedepot.com)



Fence Art Shadow Boxes:

construct shadow boxes from new or recycled wood to make shadow boxes deep enough for plants to sit in. Another thought: enclose the bottom back, line with plastic, and plant directly. This is excellent for garden interest and saving

planting space. You can also make them moveable for more sun or shade as needed.

[gardenclub@homedepot.com/projects](mailto:gardenclub@homedepot.com)

Flower Tower: use galvanized wire wrapped with landscape fabric and inserted upright into a planter. Plant flowers and train upright on the wire.

countryliving.com/springcrafts



Colorful Colander Planter for Spring: using twine for wrapping handles and for hanging, convert colorful colanders or interesting repurposed old ones into eye-catching hanging planters.

countryliving.com/springcrafts

Garden Beds from Pallets: construct a series of raised garden beds from pallets. Think beyond the box for this one: install an irrigation system; design for disabled access for sitting, walking, and working, with canes, walkers, and wheelchairs; elevated access is easier for everyone; plan a place for appropriate/ergonomic garden tools and supplies closely at hand.

1001Pallets.com



Seasonal Front Door Flower Decoration: make a welcoming greeting for visitors, sure to bring a smile! For spring, make a hanger for an umbrella and fill with spring



flowers. Change out the flowers, branches, leaves, and berries to celebrate each season. Use inside or outside, wherever you think it adds a decorative touch. Switch (repurpose) other fun items as containers: colorful rain boots, old or new shoes... whatever looks interesting. Provide water for fresh flowers or greens using florist water caps on the end of stems, or use a container which will

hold water, depending on what the 'vase' item will accommodate. ThisGrandmaisfun.com/umbrellawreath

There is no end to the interesting items you can make for and from the garden. The sites above will lead you to many other items for those with minimal or advanced skills. The only limit is your imagination! **Happy Spring!**

Demo Garden

Cherie Sivell, Master Gardener

Stop by for a visit anytime. It is located at **2101 E Earhart Ave., Stockton**, and is open to the public at no charge.



Our cover crop is coming in nicely



Rudbeckia h. 'Prairie Sun'



Berberis thunbergii 'Orange Rocket'



The demo garden is full of color and texture...even in the winter.



[UC IPM website](#)

Integrated pest management, or "IPM," is a process you can use to solve pest problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment. IPM can be used to manage all kinds of pests anywhere. [Click here for more info.](#)

Controlling Pests Through IPM (cont. from page 6)

Norena Norton Badway, Master Gardener

Cultural controls modify normal gardening practices to prevent or reduce pest problems, such as selecting disease- and pest-resistant cultivars, planting at appropriate times and sites, monitoring amount and timing of irrigation, and keeping lawn tools sharp and sterile.

Mechanical or physical controls kill pests directly or excludes them. Curative controls include traps for rodents or steam sterilization of the soil for disease or weed management. Preventative controls include netting over berry bushes, mulches, and screens to keep out birds or insects.

Biological control uses natural enemies (predators, parasites, pathogens and competitors) to control pests, and can be purchased from garden suppliers. It's fun to release packages of lady beetles onto aphid-infested rose bushes, even if they fly away. *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Bt) is a soil-borne bacterium that fights mosquitoes and insects in the larval, caterpillar stage.

Chemical controls may be botanical-based pesticides with short residual activity. These can be used on garden crops until the day before harvest. Synthetic, toxic pesticides (e.g. Sevin) treat active infestations of particular pests and should be narrowly targeted to avoid harm to people, beneficial organisms, and air, soil and water quality.

Conclusion

Integrated pest management is dynamic, adapted to location and pest populations, and guided by setting acceptable thresholds for pest invasions. We can expect the next hundred years to witness further advances in genetic modification, gene transfer, and use of pheromones. It is neither possible nor desirable to eliminate all pests, but we can decide if, how, and when to manage to tolerable levels. IPM is good science and good sense.

[1] What is IPM? www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/WhatIsIPM/

[1] Two resources available at the San Joaquin Master Gardener office: *Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs: An Integrated Pest Management Guide (2014)* and *Don't Plant a Pest*. California Invasive Plant Council. info@cal-ipc.org

[1] Bromley, B. J. (2007). *Monitoring: The backbone of IPM*. <http://mgofmc.org/docs/monitoring.pdf>

[1] Most Bugs are Good Bugs. <https://www.gardeners.com/how-to/beneficial-bugs/7326.html>

[1] Landis, T.D. & Dumroese, R.K. (2014, Summer) Forest Nursery Notes.

Horticultural Terms - Taking a Look at Soil pH

Julie Schardt, Master Gardener

Soil is the dynamic setting for the success of the growing season. Ideal soil contains sufficient quantities of many essential plant nutrients. Whether plants can successfully access those nutrients, or avoid the adverse effects of toxic mineral elements is largely determined by the acidity or alkalinity (pH) of the soil.

Soil pH is determined by a number of natural factors: parent material (rocks from which the soil was formed); precipitation; native vegetation. Adding fertilizers or amendments can also affect soil pH. A scale with values from 0-14 is used to measure pH. A pH of 7 is considered neutral. More acidic soil has a lower pH value (less than 7), and alkaline soil has a higher pH value (greater than 7). Soils in California typically range from pH 5 to 8.5.

Most plants do best in soil with slight acidity (5.5 - 7.5) but there are times when soil pH can be problematic. Low acidity can result in stunted growth, foliage chlorosis, or distorted new growth. High alkalinity can cause leaf burn, interveinal chlorosis, or bleaching of new growth.

A soil test kit, available at most home and garden stores, is a relatively easy and inexpensive way to test soil pH. Soil amendments, fertilizers or compost can mitigate pH problems.

Rather than alter soil pH, it might be preferable to work with the existing soil condition. Research acid loving plants or alkaline loving plants online for a wealth of information about plant choices.

For more information about soil testing: <http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/garden-help/soil-testing/>

An excellent source for pH tolerance of plants: Costello, Laurence R., et al. *Abiotic Disorders of Landscape Plants*. University of California Agriculture and National Resources. Publication 3420, pp. 123-132.



The Help Desk

Lee Miller, Master Gardener

Why is bare-root season a good time to buy plants?

Bare-root season is relatively short, usually from about December to mid-February, but is even longer when ordering from nurseries in colder climates. It is called “bare root” because the plants are dormant and can be dug at the nurseries where they were grown and then heeled into sand at a retail nursery or the roots may be wrapped in a plastic bag packed with moisture-retaining materials such as shredded paper, wood shavings, or sphagnum moss.

Common bare-root plants include ornamental and shade trees, fruit trees, shrubs, and vines such as grapes or kiwi. You can also find bare-root artichoke, asparagus, rhubarb, bramble fruits, and strawberries. Many roses and perennials are also sold as bare-root plants. Later, those plants not sold by the time dormancy is coming to an end may be potted up and sold as potted plants. This increases their cost because of the labor and materials involved. Hence bare-root plants are a bargain, there is a wider selection, and they won't suffer being root bound.

Although a bargain, make sure that you buy quality plants. For example, examine packaging closely to make sure that the root material is well sealed from air so that it has not dried out. For roses, examine the canes for abrasions, shriveling or other defects, and look for at least 3 or more healthy canes.

However, the best reason to purchase bare-root plants is that they establish better when planted in the winter. Although dormant, the roots start to grow first, often in January, so it is a good time for them to be planted in their permanent spot.

Last year I missed the bare root season and had to purchase some potted fruit trees for my new home; which brings me to another reason why bare root trees are best. When they pot the plants, they do not prune them as they should be pruned when planted. Fruit trees need to be headed back to 25 to 35 inches to develop scaffold branches and an open centered vase shape. Heading removes the apical meristem tissue that produced auxins that repress lower buds from growing. You can head prune them in June, but you have lost that initial growth period and can't be sure that the lower buds will develop to produce scaffold branches.

One of the trees I purchased was a Red Haven peach and I used a technique called notching to develop lower scaffold branches. Notching the bark on the trunk through the phloem above a lower bud will divert the auxins around that bud and hence release its repression of the bud allowing it to grow. After these notched buds started growing lower scaffold branches, I headed the trunk back and may head it more this winter. This technique is described in *Home Orchard*, UCANR publication 3485. This book is great resource for the home orchardist. Best wishes for a good bare-root season.



Red Haven peach headed back following the growth of new lower branches after notching above buds.

A Taste of the Season

Julie Hyske, Master Gardener

It's the new year and some of you may have those "resolutions" to eat healthy!! I don't really like the term "resolution," but would rather use the term "goal"!! So let's make it a goal to eat healthy and stay healthy!! This selection of recipes is super easy, so there is no excuse not to give each a try. Eating healthy is a goal that can become a lifestyle. Happy New Year!

Homemade Pico

This is perfect for adding to scrambled eggs, topping fish, chicken, or burgers, your salad, almost any food really! Get creative! You will be making this weekly; it really is that tasty!

Ingredients:

1/2 can black beans rinsed and drained
1/2 can corn rinsed and drained
The juice from a whole lime
1 can Rotel, half drained
2 jalapenos chopped (you can remove the seeds but you certainly do not have to)
Handful of chopped fresh cilantro
Pepper to taste

Mix all ingredients and store in an air-tight container, this will last for a couple weeks in the fridge! And the longer it sets, the better it tastes!!



Greens with Cannellini Beans and Pancetta

This is a forgiving recipe and a great way to get your greens! You can eat it as a main dish, but this could easily be four to six sides. Feel free to substitute different kinds of greens depending on what's in season, and use regular diced bacon instead of pancetta if desired.

Ingredients:

2 slices pancetta or bacon, chopped
1 1/2 Tbsp olive oil
1 small red onion, chopped
3 medium cloves garlic, crushed
1 bunch kale, roughly chopped
1 bunch beet greens, roughly chopped
Salt to taste
1 15 ounce can cannellini beans, drained



Microwave the chopped pancetta or bacon on high for 3 minutes. Drain the drippings, and set the crispy pancetta aside. In a large frying pan, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Cook onion in oil until soft. Add the crushed garlic cloves, and cook a minute more. Stir in chopped greens, and season with salt to taste (be conservative at this point - you can always add more). Partially cover the pan, and cook until the greens begin to wilt. Stir in crispy pancetta and cannellini beans. Cook, partially covered, for 5 more minutes until the flavors have combined and the greens are tender.

Serves: 4 sides

Orange and Red Onion Salad with Red Pepper

The beauty of this salad is its simplicity and freshness. What else needs to be said?

Ingredients:

18 (1/4-inch-thick) orange slices (about 4 oranges)
1/2 cup vertically sliced red onion
1/2 tsp sea salt
1/4 tsp freshly ground black pepper
1/4 tsp ground red pepper
2 Tbsp extra virgin olive oil



Arrange orange slices in a single layer on a platter. Top evenly with onion. Sprinkle with salt, black pepper, and red pepper. Drizzle with oil. Serve immediately.

Serves: 6

Coming Events

Corinne Bachle, Master Gardener

JANUARY 2018

Friday-Sunday, January 5-7,
California State Home & Garden Show
McClellan Business Park, Jackson Sports Academy, 5209-A Luce Ave., McClellan.
General Admission: \$6. Seniors Friday only: \$2.
Free Parking
sachomeandgardenshow.com

Saturday, January 6, 11am-12noon
Back to Eden
In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. Learn about gardening with wood chips in a whole new way
209-949-2499

January 8th 10:00 am— 11:30 am
Roses- Planting, pruning and common pests.
Lodi Library, 201 W Locust St, Lodi
We will discuss planting, dormant season pruning and care of your roses. Learn basic rose pruning techniques that encourage robust spring blooming and healthy growth. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free

Saturday, January 13, 10:30 am –noon
Backyard Orchard- San Joaquin Master Gardeners
Manteca Library, 320 W. Center, Manteca
Winter is a great time to plant bare root fruit trees. Learn the basics of choosing, planting and caring for fruit trees in your backyard. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, January 13, 10:30 am—noon
Backyard Orchard - San Joaquin Master Gardeners
City of Stockton Delta Water Supply Project, 11373 N. Lower Sacramento Road-Stockton.
Winter is a great time to plant bare root fruit trees. Learn the basics of choosing, planting and caring for fruit trees in your backyard. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, January 13, 2018, 11am-12noon

Grape Pruning

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. Hands-on pruning and training grapes for higher fruit yield and appearance. Bring your pruners or loppers. 209-949-2499

Saturday, January 13, 10am-12noon
Grow a Little Fruit Tree
Delta Tree Farm, 12900 N Lower Sacramento Rd., Lodi. Ann Ralph will discuss how to keep your fruit trees to a manageable size without compromising fruit production and the health of your plants.

Saturday, January 13, 10-11:30 am
Rose Care & Pruning Seminar
Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Ln., Livermore. This very informative seminar will be led by the Mt. Diablo Rose Society and will cover proper pruning techniques, feeding, and general care. Call 925-447-0280 for information and reservations.

Saturday, January 20, 11am-12noon
Creating a Natural Border Fence
In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. Learn how to repurpose your prunings to create garden art, trellises, wreaths, or a natural fence to border flower beds.
209-949-2499

Saturday, January 20, 10-11am
Rose Care & Pruning Seminar
Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Ln., Livermore. This very informative seminar will be led by Gerry, Alden Lane staff member, and will cover proper pruning techniques, feeding, and general care. Call 925-447-0280 for more information and reservations.

Tuesday, January 23
Planting Bare Root Roses and Fruit Trees—San Joaquin Master Gardeners
San Joaquin County Agricultural Center, 2101 East Earhart Avenue Stockton
Join us as we discuss how to plant and prune bare root fruit trees and roses. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, January 27, 11am-12noon
Fruit Tree Pruning
In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. This is a hands-on workshop covering pruning techniques for all types of fruits (apples, cherries, peaches, citrus, etc.). 209-949-2499

Saturday, January 27, 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.
Backyard Orchard—San Joaquin Master Gardeners
Tracy Library 20 E. Eaton Ave., Tracy
Winter is a great time to plant bare root fruit trees. Learn the basics of choosing, planting and caring for fruit trees in your backyard. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Sunday, January 28, 1-2:30pm
Pruning Basics Class
Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Ln., Livermore. Learn the basics to shape deciduous trees and shrubs, prune fruit trees properly, or get any of your own pruning questions answered.

FEBRUARY 2018

February 3, 11am-12noon
Make Your Own Greenhouse
In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. Using materials you have on hand, we show you how to create a warm space to start your early spring seedlings. 209-949-2499

Saturday, February 10, 10:30 am—noon
Spring and Summer Vegetables - San Joaquin Master Gardeners
City of Stockton Delta Water Supply Project, 11373 N. Lower Sacramento Road-Stockton.
Now is the time to start thinking about that spring and summer vegetable garden. This is a great class for newbies or veteran vegetable growers. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Coming Events

Corinne Bachle, Master Gardener

February 10, 11am-12noon

Seed Starting Class

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. We supply all the materials and directions for you to get a head start on your spring vegetable growing season. 209-949-2499

February 10, 9am-1pm

Passport to Spring

Alden Lane Nursery, 981 Alden Ln., Livermore. Come celebrate the emerging Spring Season. Re-energize your weary garden spaces by attending a morning of super seminars designed to help you see your garden in a fresh new light. We will start your day with a “wake up coffee” followed by three seminars and a scrumptious lunch to help you digest all the great information you have received. There will also be fun door prizes, free garden demos, and a 20% OFF coupon to use that day for each paid ticket. Specific speakers will be announced in coming weeks at aldenlane.com

Saturday, February 10, 10am-12noon

Sacramento Master Gardeners' Basics of Backyard Composting Workshop

UC Cooperative Extension Auditorium, 4145 Branch Center Rd., Sacramento. UCCE Master Gardeners of Sacramento County will teach how the ecosystem of the compost pile works, how to select a bin system perfect for your needs tips for success. Class participants will receive a free compost bin. \$10 per person. Class fee includes resource materials and facility use [Register here](#).

Friday, February 16, 10:30 am –noon

Roses- Planting, pruning and common pests—San Joaquin Master Gardeners

Manteca Library, 320 W. Center, Manteca We will discuss planting, dormant season pruning and care of your roses. Learn basic rose pruning techniques that encourage robust spring blooming and healthy growth. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

February 17, 2018, 11am-12noon

Fertilizers

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Al-

pine Ave., Stockton. Class is free. No registration necessary. Learn which one to choose, how much to use, and when to use it. 209-949-2499

Saturday, February 17, 2018, 11am-noon
Grape Cultivation at Home

Delta Tree Farm, 12900 N Lower Sacramento Rd., Lodi. Grapes have put Lodi on the map! Learn how to grow and nurture your own vines.

Saturday, February 24, 10:30 a.m.- noon
Roses- Planting, pruning and common pests—San Joaquin Master Gardeners

Tracy Library 20 E. Eaton Ave., Tracy We will discuss planting, dormant season pruning and care of your roses. Learn basic rose pruning techniques that encourage robust spring blooming and healthy growth. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Tuesday, February 27

All About Tomatoes—San Joaquin Master Gardeners

San Joaquin County Agricultural Center, 2101 East Earhart Avenue, Stockton We'll share successful growing practices, how to deal with pests and diseases, and some of the best for our area. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

MARCH 2018

The Original Sacramento Home and Garden Show

Friday-Sunday, March 2-4, 2018

Friday Noon-6pm, Saturday 10am-6pm, Sunday 10am-5pm. Cal Expo Buildings A, B, and C, 1600 Exposition Blvd., Sacramento. General Admission: \$7 (\$6 w/ can of food for local food banks) Fun Friday Special: Just \$3 for ages 62 years and older! 12 and under with Adult: Free!

The Original Sacramento Home & Garden Show offers a convenient home shopping marketplace with quality products and friendly, personal service. At the show, you'll discover hundreds of exhibits, including many new, unique and fun products. See trends, test products, ask questions, shop, and save!

Saturday, March 3, 9:00 am—4:30 pm

San Joaquin Master Gardeners Smart Gardening Conference

2101 E Earhart Ave., Stockton.

Do you love gardening? Do you want to learn more? Join us for our 2018 Smart Gardening Conference. The 16 breakout sessions will be taught by UC Master Gardeners and Master Food Preservers.

Lunch is included as well as a hands on session. Registration will open in early January.

\$25.00

Stay tuned for registration info

Saturday, March 3, 2018, 11am-12noon
Tomatoes and Summer Vegetables

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton - Class is free. No registration necessary. We will teach you the highs and lows of growing your own summer vegetables, including soil information, problem solving, and how to get a bumper crop. 209-949-2499

Saturday, March 3, 2018, 10am-12noon
Sacramento Master Gardeners' Work Composting Workshop: Do Worms have Teeth?

UC Cooperative Extension Auditorium, 4145 Branch Center Rd., Sacramento Discover the benefits of being a Worm Wrangler! Learn how this neat, easy and odorless method of composting is ideal for indoor or outdoor locations. The UCCE Master Gardeners of Sacramento County will teach bin construction, bedding and food needs for your worms, and how to harvest castings. \$25 per person. Educational materials, a worm bin, and worms will be provided. [Register here](#).

March 5th 10:00 am—11:30 am

All About Tomatoes

Lodi Library, 201 W Locust St, Lodi We'll share successful growing practices, how to deal with pests and diseases, and some of the best for our area. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

[Continued on page 18](#)

Seniors and Winter Gardens

(cont. from page 1)

Regina Brennan, Master Gardener

Another energy saving plan would be to re-design one's gardening space by planting low maintenance and low water use plants. We have good days and not-so-good days, but there is nothing like wandering in our garden to bring life into perspective, joy to our heart, and delight to others if we are not so grumpy ourselves.

One of the realities facing senior gardeners is a lack of material specifically addressed with seniors in mind. Organizations such as the Arthritis Foundation frequently publish good information on how to adapt and accommodate gardening activities which are very helpful. It is useful to maintain a file of such information that can be drawn upon or shared with other senior gardeners.



Fortunately, there is a wealth of good general material on what to do in the garden which we can adapt to our personal needs. Sources such as the Master Gardeners' web site: sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu, or the Master Gardener's help line, (209) 953-6112 are available with helpful information whenever a gardening question arises. Another good source of sound scientific gardening advice is the Sunset Western Garden Book. A good rule of thumb for the senior gardener is to choose the garden tasks that you like to do and that don't deplete your energy or endanger your health and safety, and either get outside help or figure out a creative way to adapt the circumstances to achieve desired results.

As the population of baby boomers ages, more and more helpful ergonomically designed garden tools are becoming available. Make sure part of your retail therapy includes frequent wandering in your local garden centers to see what is new. Another good piece of news is that most senior gardeners are more than happy to share their experiences in overcoming the challenges of aging in the garden. The following are some of these areas.

- One of the most important winter tasks is to clean up and clear your garden pathways of barriers to your safety such as wet leaves, hoses, or intruding shrubs or vines that pose a tripping hazard. Work at an easy pace and don't be bashful about taking a break or even a nap. Clean up is a lot more labor intensive than it sounds.
- Pruning and spraying of fruit trees should be left to a professional. Ladders are not a senior's friend.
- Bags of compost and a layer of organic fertilizer such as chicken manure should be applied to beds in preparation for spring planting. Sounds good, but not every senior can or should tackle this without some real thought and preparation. This is physically demanding and a great opportunity to lose your balance and take a nasty fall. Don't hesitate to ask for help.
- Applying mulch to beds to prevent run off and protection from winter cold can be handled similar to compost bags. A thick layer of bark applied to dirt paths provides a safe walkway over winter mud.
- Make sure you have frost cover blankets or other material available to cover plants when a hard freeze is forecast. Make it easy on yourself to plan ahead rather than wait until it is bitter cold to rummage around for your supplies.
- Take a critical survey of your garden area and see what changes need to be made to make future planting seasons easier on yourself.



There are a number of changes that can be made in any garden that will help your back and knees get relief while you work. One of the most practical is to incorporate raised beds to accommodate vegetable growing, herb gardens or annual plantings. Any activity that needs frequent tending should be accessible without a lot of bending over, or even worse, requiring getting on your knees without a way to get back up.

One of the best ways to ensure that you can get down and back up is to use a kneeler bench. One side of the bench is low for kneeling, with a foam pad, and the four legs with a connecting piece help you get back up, not unlike a walker. When sitting is a more desired position, turning the bench upside down and straddling the bench, with both feet on the ground, provides support without the danger of losing balance and falling off. You can easily pull the bench out from under you by standing up, without having to lift your legs and risk getting off balance. They are fairly inexpensive, but definitely worth the money.

Another helpful accommodation for cranky knees is to always have a long-handled shovel within reach. You can pull yourself up without looking like a new born giraffe struggling to get up for the first time. We really don't need any more reminders that our knees aren't what they used to be.

Yet another helpful feature that aids with preventing falls in the garden is to pound a four-foot T-bar into the ground on the borders where you may be on uneven ground or working in raised beds that don't have a lot of foot space. There are also plastic caps available at most home and garden supply stores made to fit over the T-bars. They provide an easy and comfortable place to hold onto when maneuvering around in tight spaces. The T-bars are fairly inexpensive. I have been toying with the idea of spray painting mine and painting designs down the shaft so they look more like garden art and less like an adaptive safety structure, which they really are.

So, bundle up, put on those sturdy shoes and make sure you tour your garden daily, checking on areas that may need attention. Bring a notebook with you and assure your landscape shrubs and trees that spring is just around the corner.

Winter Garden Chores (cont. from page 2)

Sue Davis, Master Gardener

'Rosea'; fragrant pinkish white *Jasminum polyanthum*; pink or white *Pandorea jasminoides*; and violet trumpet vine (*Clytostoma callistegioides*).

Maintenance –

Empty any rain-filled containers around the yard to eliminate mosquito breeding areas.

Remove old flowers on [camellias](#) to reduce the chance of petal blight.

Citrus trees will appreciate a feeding of a nitrogen-rich fertilizer 6 to 8 weeks before their spring bloom time. Citrus requires micronutrients not found in turf fertilizers. A good citrus fertilizer will include additional nutrients like Magnesium, Boron, Copper, and Zinc.

Apply dormant spray for the final time mid-month to prevent peach leaf curl, brown rot and scale on your stone fruit trees.

Asparagus shoots are starting to pop up now and will appreciate a balanced fertilizer.

Finish pruning your roses by mid-February.

Cut back woody stems to within a few inches of the ground on butterfly bush, fuchsia, and Mexican bush sage to stimulate new growth. If left unpruned, plants become leggy and scraggly-looking.

If your cymbidium orchids are bulging out of their containers or the bark has decomposed, it's time to repot them. Do this between mid-February and early July to assure bloom next season. Remove old bark, cut off dead roots, and discard soft or rotted bulbs. Repot the plant into a larger container, or divide plants into groups of three to five pseudobulbs (bulbs with leaves). Replant in medium-size bark or purchase a cymbidium mix.

Mix compost into your flower and vegetable beds to help condition the soil and make them ready for a great crop.

Leave freeze-damaged leaves on plants for a few more weeks to protect and insulate any new growth from a March cold snap.

Sharpen lawn mower blades and change the mower's oil before lawn cutting becomes a weekly job.

March Notes:

Plant –

Beets, carrots, leeks, potatoes, and radishes can be planted from seed now. Wait until after frost no longer threatens and the soil is easy to work so that your seeds don't rot in very cold or soggy soil. Soil temperature should be 60 degrees for the best results from seed.

Potatoes can carry soil-borne diseases which are harmless to

humans but devastating for a potato plant. Buy seed potatoes from a nursery or a mail-order company that certifies the seed potatoes are disease free. Whole potatoes can be divided to give you a bigger crop by cutting the potatoes into chunks that each contain one or two eyes (the small depression where sprouts will form). To prevent rotting, store the freshly cut pieces at room temperature for three days before planting to allow the cut surfaces to dry and form a callus. Potatoes are heavy feeders, so planting with a good amount of compost will help the plant and your harvest.

Maintenance –

Prune suckers from trees and shrubs.

Check your drip irrigation for leaks in the lines and make repairs as needed. Flush out sediment from filters, check screens for algae and clean with a small brush if necessary.

Make sure all emitters are dripping water. If some are clogged, replace them (if you can't remove one, install a new emitter next to it). Add emitters to lines if plants have grown significantly since the system was installed. Put new batteries in your electronic drip controllers and check the settings.

Install new drip irrigation systems in new landscaping.

Loosen moist, not wet, vegetable garden soil to a depth of 6-10 inches and lightly work in compost and fertilizer. Rake and water the beds to be ready for planting in April.

Pre-emergents applied now to your lawn can help stop the summertime onslaught of crabgrass. A little fertilizer at the same time will help the rest of your lawn be green and healthy as spring begins.

Prune and clean up beneath flowering shrubs such as camellias, quince, and forsythia.

Add mulch around shrubs and trees to the drip line. Leave a six-inch area adjacent to the trunk clear to prevent rot.

Woody species in landscapes should not be routinely fertilized - with the possible exception of young plants and fruit and nut trees. If woody plants exhibit normal leaf size and color and desired growth, nutrients currently in your soil are probably adequate. For more information on recognizing when your landscape trees and shrubs might need nutrients, check the following [web-site](#).



Have a gardening question? Call our hotline!

San Joaquin County Master Gardeners

Phone: 209-953-6112

2101 E. Earhart Ave.

Suite 200, Stockton, 95206



E-mail: anrmgsanjoaquin@ucanr.edu

Web-site: <http://sjmastergardeners.ucdavis.edu>

Program Coordinator: Marcy Sousa 953-6100

Find us on Social Media

Twitter: twitter.com/ucsanjoaquinmgs

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For nondiscrimination policy, [click here](#)

Coming Events

Corinne Bachle, Master Gardener

Saturday, March 10, 2018, 11am-12:30pm **Drip Irrigation**

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Avenue, Stockton - Class is free. No registration necessary. In this hands-on workshop, we will be laying drip lines in our veggie beds and show you how it's done from start to finish. We will have drip accessories and kits for sale as well. 209-949-2499

Friday, March 16, 10:30 am –noon **Compost and Vermicomposting- San Joaquin Master Gardeners**

Manteca Library, 320 W. Center, Manteca
Did you know worms eat your garbage and produce castings that are fantastic for your garden. Join us as we cover worm composting and the "pile method of composting. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, March 17, 2018, 11am-12noon **Herb Gardening**

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Avenue, Stockton - \$20.00 fee. No registration necessary. Create a potted kitchen herb garden. We supply assorted herb plants, plant markers, soil, and pots for you to customize your kitchen herb garden. Makes a great gift, too. 209-949-2499

Saturday, March 20, 10:30 am—noon

All About Tomatoes– San Joaquin Master Gardeners

City of Stockton Delta Water Supply Project, 11373 N. Lower Sacramento Road-Stockton

We'll share successful growing practices, how to deal with pests and diseases, and some of the best for our area. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, March 24, 10:30 a.m. – noon **Warm Season Vegetable Gardens - San Joaquin Master Gardeners**

Tracy Library, 20 E. Eaton Ave., Tracy
Now is the time to start thinking about those summer vegetable gardens. This is a great class for new or veteran vegetable growers. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, March 24, 2018, 11am-12 noon **Composting with Eric**

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton - Class is free. No registration necessary. Come learn how to compost in your home garden. Eric has been doing this for years and can answer all your questions 209-949-2499

Tuesday, March 27, 10:30 am—noon **Raised Beds and Container Gardening- San Joaquin Master Gardeners**

San Joaquin County Agricultural Center, 2101 East Earhart Avenue, Stockton
Gardening can be done in any size garden. Join us as we discuss how to have a beautiful landscape using raised beds and containers. Please call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat. Class is free.

Saturday, March 31, 2018 11am-12noon **Succulent Gardens**

In Season Market & Nursery, 215 E Alpine Ave., Stockton - \$20 fee. No registration necessary. Design and create a succulent garden to take home. We supply all the materials. 209-949-2499