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Coordinator Corner

Marcy Sousa, Master Gardener Coordinator



Leaves are falling and the weather is finally cooling... it must be fall! Things will begin slowing down in the garden soon but our Master Gardeners are still busy in our helpline office. We are wrapping up our year with a few more community outreach events like the last of our Lodi public workshops, AgVenture in Manteca, the Sandhill Crane Festival in Lodi and Festival Trees at the San Joaquin County Historical Museum. We are busy finalizing our public workshops for 2020 and will be adding new locations and weekday classes, so stay tuned for more info on the new times and locations. We are busy planning our spring plant sale and Open Garden Day, Smart Gardening Conference and other events that will take place next year. We hope you enjoy this issue of *Garden Notes*!

Senior Gardeners: Tools, Tricks, and Tips

Regina Brennan, Master Gardener

Fall, one of the busiest times in the garden, is upon us. Are you ready for yet another article on senior gardening? I hope so, because we can never get too many reminders on what we need to do to protect ourselves from harm so we can continue to do as much as we can for as long as we can.

As I am writing this we are experiencing yet another triple digit day. Just like ladders, extreme heat is not a senior's friend. Each person has their own tolerance level for heat, but statistics tell us that seniors are particularly susceptible to dehydration in the



heat, especially those of us who get carried away with the feeling of having so much to do and so little time to do it. Be sure you know the signs of possible heat exhaustion, keep yourself hydrated, wear a good sunhat and sun block on

your skin. Quite often the maximum time safely spent in the garden ends in late morning. Being in heavy shade can extend our time outdoors, but a key factor to keep in mind is how you feel. Headache, dizziness and nausea are clear signs that it is time to go inside, have a cool drink and relax. Early fall can be just as hot as late summer.

We all have our own tricks and tips for working in our gardens as we continue to age, often learned the hard way. Being aware of our body and our environment are essential tools to keep us going and to keep us safe, especially in the heat. Our body is our most valuable tool, so it is important to know how to take care and protect it. Just as we take care of favorite tools, we need to maintain our own body. As our reflexes

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Fall Garden Chores

Sue Davis, Master Gardener

Sometimes these lists of season-specific chores seem so daunting that starting anything feels like more than a person can do. With busy lives but wanting to garden for the peace, exercise, produce, or beauty it brings into our lives, this quarter's chores will concentrate on just four chores per month – one per week. That's a number anyone can accomplish and if there's time for more, past issues of Garden Chores will be able to round out suggestions for the season.



October – Garlic

Fall soil remains warm for planting trees, shrubs, most ornamentals, and cool season edibles. If we are fortunate, rain will provide all the water gardens need over the next few months.

October Ideas

If you have time for nothing else, consider these four things to enhance your garden:

Add to your landscape: Trees, perennial bushes and shrubs, bulbs, vegetables, or cold-weather annuals will all benefit from being planted this month. Check to see that there will be room for the mature plant in the area selected and that the plant is native to California and/or grows well in Sunset Region 14 and USDA Region 9.

Increase your bounty: Vegetable transplants do well for most varieties. If garlic is a favorite ingredient for cooking, fall planting leads to a bountiful summer supply.

Invigorate growth: Daylilies, iris, Shasta daisies, and agapanthus get crowded and worn looking after a few



October - Iris

years. Use a spading fork to lift the root ball from the soil intact and then use a spade or a sharp knife to divide the ball into several pieces – each with plenty of leaves and roots. Replant the divisions immediately or gift them to friends who have admired your garden.

Talking about growth:

Lawns need a nice serving of fertilizer to help them though the fall growth spurt and let them store energy to sustain them over the winter. Be sure to mow often during the fall months so that you are never removing more than a third of the total height of the grass blade.



November – dormant fruit trees

In November

Holidays are approaching, but our gardens will still profit from some attention. Here are four for November:

Learn to love rain: Plant seeds on the day before a light rain, or bulbs or transplants the day after. The rain does the watering for you, and the ground is easier to dig after a rain.



November – rain

Fill some containers: A few containers filled with water and placed around young vegetable seedlings will offer a warmer nighttime environment.

Protect from freezing: Fix any dripping outdoor faucets, turn off your irrigation system, and wrap the exposed portion of water pipes to protect them during freezing weather. Big box stores sell foam tubes expressly for this purpose. Installation is quick and easy.

Get out a sprayer: To lessen trouble with diseases, fungus, and insects and to promote fruit production in the spring and summer, spray fruit trees with dormant spray after pruning. Call the Master Gardener hotline at 209- 953-6112 for information on which trees need what type of spray, and be sure to carefully follow the directions for spraying.



December – Citrus tree

[Continued on pg. 15](#)

Community Connections: Lodi Trees

Robin Fuller, Master Gardener

It is inarguable that trees provide multiple benefits. Trees produce life-sustaining oxygen, absorb pollutants, mitigate runoff, decrease the urban heat island, and provide shelter and habitat for wildlife. At a socio-economic level, trees help reduce stress; add to property value; and depending on their location, provide cooling in hot summers and add privacy.

Tree Lodi Inc, a non-profit community organization, was the brain-child of Joyce Harmon, now 94 years old. Seventeen years ago, Harmon was a solitary voice at City Council meetings, sharing her concerns about the mistletoe growing in trees. To increase her effectiveness, she enlisted the help of similarly minded citizens and co-founded Tree Lodi. The organization's goals are to advocate on behalf of Lodi's urban forest through citizen involvement, education, and planting and maintenance of public-space trees.

Since its inception, Tree Lodi has had a strong working relationship with the City of Lodi vis-à-vis Steve Dutra. Then Superintendent of Parks and current Tree Lodi President, Dutra submitted the first application for the Tree City USA designation and continues to do so every year. He planned and chose the trees in the DeBenedetti Park Tree Laboratory, monitors the health of trees, and tirelessly advocates and works on behalf of Lodi's urban forest.

The City of Lodi is a designated Tree City by Tree City USA, a distinction it has received for 17 consecutive years. Evidence of the City of Lodi's and Tree Lodi's continuing commitment to its urban forest, a city must annually apply for and meet four standards: Tree Board or Department, Tree Care Ordinance, Community Forestry Program with Annual Budget of \$2 per Capita, and Arbor Day Observance Program.

Often disadvantaged urban areas have less trees than richer areas. With proceeds from a Cal-Fire State of California grant, Tree Lodi partnered with the City to plant trees in Lodi's Heritage District. Property owners and residents agreed to water the trees during the first year and were provided five-gallon watering buckets and reminder magnets. Tree Lodi planted the trees and monitored their health the first year.

In late 2017, Tree Lodi partnered with the City of Lodi and now maintains the City's Memorial Tree Program. A 15-gallon memorial tree can be planted in a City park for \$100. Larger 24" boxed trees may be purchased for \$300. Tree Lodi works with the City and client to identify an appropriate tree and location and waters and maintains the tree until it is established. Adding a bronze plaque approved by the City is an additional \$400 option.



Tree planting at The One-Eighty Youth Center, Lodi, July 2019



Lodi Boys and Girls Club help plant a Bur Oak at Blakely Park.

June 2019

The largest undertaking was planning and planting 213 trees of 26 different species of California native and non-native trees at the Ed DeBenedetti Park Tree Laboratory. Planning began in 2010-2011 with fundraising and outreach efforts. Spearheaded by then Tree Lodi President Gordon Schmierer (UC Master Gardener), the trees surrounding the soccer fields are an outdoor laboratory. Selected by Dutra and in anticipation of global warming, the laboratory includes trees that fare well in the hotter climates of California's southern central valley. The organization maintained the trees during the first three years after planting and continues to monitor the trees' growth and health. A map of the trees is in a kiosk at the parking lot entrance.

Contact: TreeLodi@outlook.com

Pests of the Season

Sue Davis, Master Gardener



Weed: Bermuda buttercup (Buttercup oxalis) (*Oxalis pes-caprae*)

Bermuda buttercup is a low growing perennial broadleaf plant with shamrock like leaves. It is found throughout California from coast-side to elevations up to 8200 feet. It inhabits yards, gardens, landscaped areas, agricultural land and other disturbed areas. Closely related to and resembling creeping woodsorrel, Bermuda buttercup is attractive, even sometimes grow as an ornamental, but is a nuisance when it spreads into gardens or infests shrubs.

Bermuda buttercup is easily recognizable as a loose basal rosette of leaves up to about 14 inches tall. It has compound leaves (fully subdivided) with each leaf consisting of three heart-shaped leaflets that resemble clover leaves. Stems are

located mostly below ground. Clusters of bright yellow flowers bloom on the ends of sender leafless stalks from November through April.

Reproduction occurs through blubs and bulbets. Soil movement, planting, cultivation, and the disposal of nursery soil or garden waste disperses the bulbs and bulbets.

Pest: Turfgrass Masked Chafers (White Grubs) (*Cyclocephala hirta*)

Masked chafers are large c-shaped beetle larvae that feed on roots of turfgrass plants. All turfgrass species are susceptible to masked chafer damage, but warm season grasses seem to tolerate grub feeding. The grubs are white, up to 1 inch (2.5 cm) in length, with dark translucent dorsal stripes, and brown heads and legs. The adult beetles are golden brown, hairy on the underside of the thorax, and have a darker brown head. The species completes one generation per year overwintering as mature larvae, which form earthen cells in soil where they pupate.



Masked chafer grubs feed on grass roots, resulting in irregular dead patches. Symptoms resemble drought stress and persist even where there is sufficient irrigation. Grub activity can cause the ground to feel spongy; extensive root feeding sometimes allows the turf to be rolled back like a carpet. Damage becomes most apparent in late summer or fall.

If monitoring indicates a need, treatment may be warranted. *Heterorhabditis bacteriophora* are commercially available pathogenic nematodes that can effectively control masked chafers. *Steinernema carpocapsae* nematodes are not effective.



Disease: Downy Mildew (*Pseudoperonospora cubensis*)

Downy mildew is a disease affecting plants from the cucurbit family. Cucurbits encompass gourds, pumpkins, melons, winter squash, cucumber, and zucchini. This disease occurs in the Sacramento and Imperial valleys, and in coastal areas in addition to the San Joaquin Valley. Although cucumber plants are most commonly affected, this disease is troublesome for the whole cucurbit family. It is most common during the late growing season when pumpkin and winter squash are being harvested.

Downy mildew first appears as small, pale green to yellow, angular spots delimited by leaf veins that give the foliage a mottled appearance. Eventually, the spots coalesce, and the leaf turns brown. During moist weather, the lower surface of the leaf may be covered with a white to purple growth. Older leaves become infected first. Spores of the fungus are carried by air currents or by rain splash or sprinklers. Rain, dew, cool weather and sprinkler irrigation favor this disease.

To manage this disease, use resistant cucumber varieties. Some varieties of melons and watermelons have low levels of resistance. Planting early may help to avoid conditions conducive to the disease later in the season. Avoid overhead irrigation. Start monitoring for downy mildew during the vegetative growth stage and continue through fruit development. Apply a treatment when disease symptoms first occur and repeat if symptoms worsen. When choosing a pesticide, review the pesticide's properties, efficacy, application timing and information relating to resistance management, honeybees, and environmental impact. Always read the label of the product being used and follow directions carefully. Information gathered from: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu>

Plants of the Season

Lee Miller, Master Gardener



Perennial- *Monarda didyma* goes by several common names such as: crimson bee balm, scarlet bee balm, scarlet monarda, Oswego tea, or bergamot. However, it is not the bergamot used in Earl Gray tea. It was called bee balm as the leaves were used as a balm for bee stings. An American native herbaceous perennial, it was extensively used by Native Americans. Poultices of the plant were used for skin infections and minor wounds. An herbal tea made from the plant was also used to treat mouth and throat infections caused by dental caries and gingivitis. It contains antiseptic thymol which is the primary active ingredient in modern commercial mouthwash formulas. There are lots of cultivars and one that is well-advertised is: Monarda 'Fireball' which is a more compact-growing hybrid that will attract hummingbirds, butterflies, and other pollinators to your garden as it blooms with bright scarlet-red flowers in mid-summer. It is easy to grow and can handle full sun and part shade with well-drained but moist soil of all types. It grows to 18-24 inches high and 18 inches wide.

It can be divided every 3-4 years in spring or fall. Foliage can be cut back after flowering to encourage new growth and possible late fall re-blooming.

Bulbs-Narcissus covers a host of bulbs and they are all mostly planted in the fall, so now is the time to buy and plant these bulbs. As the Van Engelen bulb company puts it: 'Narcissi are the art and soul of spring' and I have to agree. For tips on growing Narcissi see: <https://www.vanengelen.com/flower-bulbs-index/narcissi.html>. Daffodils are a common name for these bulbs. They are ideal for our California climate. They grow well with fall and winter rains, bloom starting in early spring to brighten our gardens and then go dormant for our summer dry season. Hence, they can be planted in areas that are not irrigated. There are 13 divisions of the genus *Narcissus*. Some are large cupped, i.e., has a corolla that is large compared to the perianth, (the petals back of the corolla). Some have long trumpets, and some have multiple flowers per stem such as a paperwhites, jonquils and Tezettas, which are also fragrant. If you want to prolong the art and soul of spring, buy varieties that are early, middle and late season. There are not a lot of choices in color, but all are bright: white, pink, orange and yellow components that stand out. They also vary in size from miniatures 6-8 inches to large 18-20 inches.



Bulbs-Chinese Ground Orchid (*Bletilla striata*) is a beautiful spring bloomer with dozens of pink-purple blue or pink blooms depending on the cultivar. Bloom period lasts about six weeks. The flowers, which are cattleya-like, are about 1-1/2 to 2 inches long and grow in clusters of three to five flowers per stem. It is a true orchid with a long vase-life. Harvest stems when one or two blooms are open. Replace the vase water daily, and the other blooms will open in following days. They reach about 18-30 inches in height and 12 inches in width depending on the cultivar. The leaves are pleated with some ridges running thorough their length. They remain attractive though the fall after blooming is finished. They are grown from corm-like pseudobulbs planted about two to four inches deep. The bulbs are best planted when dormant in the fall or early spring and should have afternoon shade or total shade in the Central Valley. The Chinese ground orchid thrives in organically rich soil that is moist and drains well. Adding 4-6 inches of compost will enhance the soil for this plant and mulching is good too.



Preserving Herbs

Betty Liske, Master Gardener

Here it is, fall already! Recipes with the enticing magical flavor enhancers – herbs – are enjoyable throughout the fall and winter if summer's bounty is preserved. There are many ways to preserve the abundance of herbs from your garden, a neighbor's bounty, or the farmers market.

Herbs can be preserved individually or combined to create seasoning mixes, especially handy for certain dishes. In addition, dried herbs can be mixed with sugar/ other sweetener to use directly in drinks or food or with flour or sugar to be added to baked goods. Be sure to subtract the amount of the sugar or flour from the recipe.

To preserve the best flavor in herbs, remember it is the oils in the herb leaves that hold the robust flavor of that herb. Harvest herbs by clipping the fresh tops early in the morning when they are freshest and the dew has evaporated. At the end of the season, for annuals, you can pull the whole plant. If needed, rinse and pat dry with a towel or let air dry. There are several methods of preservation. It is important to



Basil Salt

think about the use for that herb to choose which method is most expeditious and helpful.

Air dried as individual herbs: Using paper bags with holes punched into them, tie herbs together in bunches, put in the bag and close the bag around the banded end of the herbs. Use another rubber band to close the bag around the herbs. Hang in a warm dry place with good air circulation. Herbs should be dry when they crumble to the touch, about 10-14 days. Shake bag to separate leaves from stems or hand strip them. Alternatively, strip fresh leaves from the stems, spread on butcher paper or paper plates and stir every few days. Store the dried product in jars or in plastic bags and label. Leaving herb leaves whole and storing in a dark cool place will preserve the flavorful oils much longer.



Drying in Bags

liquid to subtract from the recipe. Freeze, pop out of trays, and store in labeled freezer bags.

Frozen in bulk pastes: Mix fresh herbs (along with other recipe ingredients) with oils (i.e., pesto) or butter (i.e., garlic/herb butter). Label and store in freezer containers. A handy way to do herb/garlic butters is to shape mix into a roll and wrap in freezer paper or plastic wrap. Store in the freezer and just slice a piece off of the roll when needed.

Preserve in salt or sugar: Make a mix of an appropriate dried herb and sugar for direct use in drinks or on food (i.e., tea, pancakes). Mix dried herbs and salt to be used as a flavored salt on foods.

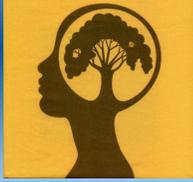
In addition to the basic methods for preserving herbs themselves, herbs can also be "preserved" by making them into flavored vinegars and oils to be used as additional culinary sparks. As a bonus, herbs make easy homemade, tasty, gifts for the coming holidays.

For more information on drying herbs, [click here](#)

For more info on making garlic and herb infused oils at home, [click here](#).



Herb Paste with oil or butter to freeze



Growing Knowledge

Lynne and Bill Gowdy, Master Gardener

The Illustrated Practical Guide to Gardening for Seniors, How to Maintain a Beautiful Outside Space with Ease and Safety in Later Years, Patty Cassidy, Lorenz Books, 2011.

The Illustrated Practical Guide to Gardening for Seniors is an inspiring book that describes the basics of adaptive gardening. Patty Cassidy begins by explaining that there are many intangible benefits of gardening that one does not need to give up because of age. Gardeners need to assess spaces, prioritize tasks, implement labor saving strategies and use low maintenance plants. She wrote this book with the hope of providing a positive view of the ageing process and encouraging seniors to be involved with the gratifying and healthy activity of gardening.

Cassidy skillfully lays out her book in six well-planned and beautifully illustrated sections that provide gardeners with a practical guide to success. First she discusses environments and how to define physical space. This space may be a backyard, an apartment patio, a senior community garden or a receptive garden. Receptive gardens exist in care facilities to promote physical and mental health. They provide patients with attractive, comfortable and serene settings.

Next, Cassidy addresses practical considerations and decision-making. She provides site analysis taking into consideration space, climate, exposure, soil, and watering options. Health issues such as arthritis, hypertension, visual impairment and balance are covered with safety suggestions for each issue. Planting options covered include flowers, vegetables, trees and shrubs. She offers additional advice, such as how to attract wildlife to the garden. Cassidy speaks to the necessity for an adjustable design that can meet changing preferences or health demands. She offers suggestions for simplifying the garden “without detracting from its aesthetic appeal.” One should consider low maintenance, sustainable plants and elimination of lawn areas. Patios, decks, balconies and front porches are areas of low maintenance where drip irrigation can effectively be used with attractive containers. Containers are movable, easily changed and take minimal care.

Cassidy invites readers to explore the garden through their senses. These creative spaces should be a pleasurable place to spend time. Color and contrast, beautiful foliage, interesting textures and intriguing smells make the garden a delight. The sounds of wildlife and water features relax visitors. Fruits, vegetables, herbs and edible flowers entice gardeners to keep their sense of taste alive. The sense of touch, such as the ability to feel velvety plants or the mud between your toes, is retained throughout life and provides contact to the world.



Patty Cassidy is a registered horticultural therapist and master gardener. She oversees therapeutic gardening programs for senior gardeners.

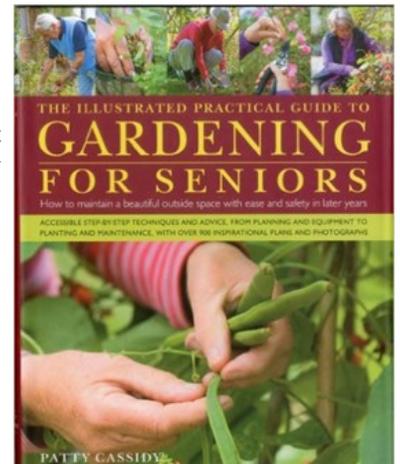
The author covers the practical topics of safety and equipment. Safety includes suggestions for warm-up exercises and pacing activity strategies. A safe environment avoids accidents such as falls or injuries from lifting. Fatigue and weariness are responsible for many accidents. Maximizing comfort is about choices for appropriate clothing and the selection of the right tools and equipment to support activities. Cassidy features numerous adaptive tools that make gardening tasks easier. Ideas for tool care and storage are included.

In “Types of Gardens,” Cassidy includes ideas and projects that ease some of the more mundane tasks. Flower, fruit, vegetable, herb, raised beds, patio, vertical, indoor and container gardens are covered. Projects, techniques and photographs help the reader adapt each type of garden to their unique needs.

Cassidy includes helpful reference sections and resources at the end of the book. The “Plant Directory” is a comprehensive list of plant choices selected for their appeal and ease of maintenance. It’s packed with garden plans, projects and step-by-step instructions. Readers may likewise value the “Useful Addresses” and “Hardiness Zones” sections.

The Illustrated Practical Guide to Gardening for Seniors reminds us that gardens are magical places that stimulate creativity, keep us physically fit, fill our lives with pleasure and keep us young at heart.

Enjoy!



Senior Gardeners: Tools, Tricks, and Tips

(cont. from page 1)

Regina Brennan, Master Gardener

slow down and our strength and energy change, we need to relearn how to use our bodies in order to stay healthy and safe in the garden. How many of us spend most of our energy keeping up with pruning and deadheading, yet almost no time sitting in a shady spot in our garden to relax and enjoy the beauty and serenity we worked so hard to achieve?

Working in our garden should be an enjoyable leisure activity as well as a therapeutic one. It not only relaxes our mind and nourishes our spirit, but it also is a pretty good workout for all of us who are not gym rats. It is not necessary to work up a sweat and go until you know you are going to be unable to get out of bed the next morning because your body is out on strike for all the abuse you gave it the previous day. Learning how to pace yourself is essential. You would not think of running an electric garden tool until the motor started smoking, so remember our motors are far more important and worthy of the best care.

Gardening is a physical activity and for many, is the primary form of exercise. Gentle warm-up exercises often keep us from injury caused by asking more of our bodies than they are ready to give. There is a wealth of information on gentle exercises to reduce muscle aches and the risk of injury. Gentle head tilts, shoulder shrugs, upper body twists and wrist circles are all easy to do and help loosen up stiff muscles. There are also several stretching and strengthening exercises that are highly recommended for seniors. Remember, if you are not feeling well, it is advisable to postpone your exercise routine until you feel better.

To assist us in our gardening activities, there are numerous new tools and other supportive equipment constantly being developed. These innovations are being driven by the boomer market, and those of us that predate the boomers are benefiting from the advances.

One of the essential pieces of equipment for gardening is a good kneeler. For those who are still able to get up on their own from a kneeling position, there are molded kneelers to cradle your knees and are convenient to carry around the garden. For those who would rather not have to sing the annoying little jingle, “Help, I’ve fallen and I can’t get up,” there are combination kneelers and seats. Used in the kneeler position, the side grips are a great support to help getting back on our feet. With the kneeling position on top, it becomes a mobile seat to straddle and therefore keep your balance while seated because you have both feet on the ground.



Using a simple walker can provide the stability you need to stand on your own two legs, especially if you are at risk for falling. Don’t let balance issues keep you from putting around in your garden.

For seniors to be efficient in conserving their energy and health, using the right tool for every job is critical. Take a good look at your tools and honestly assess if they are still right for you. Many of yesterday’s tools were made for men’s hands and strength and are not at all suitable for smaller hands, weakened by arthritis. If the tool that used to belong to your grandfather is sentimental, put it in a special place of honor in a frame and get yourself over to a garden supply shop and treat yourself to a new lightweight ergonomically designed tool that will bring a smile to your face and a joy to your hands. If you have a lightweight tool that is no longer easy to use, you can add padded grips to the handles for increased comfort.

By all means, be extremely careful using heavy power tools. It is best to ask for help when it is likely that you will lose your grip because arthritis in the hands is unpredictable. Again, check out garden supply stores to see what is new in the way of smaller, lightweight power tools that are more senior friendly.

Fall is the perfect time to tidy up our garden in preparation for hopefully rainy winters, where wet and slick conditions pose a danger. Tools for clearing debris and falling leaves are abundant. Be sure to pick rakes, blowers and brooms that fit your strength. As always, pace yourself, and be vigilant of your energy level and surroundings. Get help if you need to level any part of your garden that is posing a tripping hazard. When things look good and ready to be put to bed for the winter, get out your garden journal to see what worked and what didn’t so you can adjust for next season. Keeping a garden journal keeps us honest and on our toes. If we are having difficulty maintaining a high maintenance shrub or flower bed, feel free to “shovel prune”, which is a term for getting rid of the problem to save your back for other chores. After you have finished, sit down and clean and sharpen those hand tools you used last summer and see if you still love them. If you don’t, you know what to do.

How to Use the Master Gardener Help Desk

Kathy Ikeda, Master Gardener

Has your garden been invaded by an insect pest, and you have no idea what it is or how to safely banish it from your yard? Is one of your beloved and formerly thriving plants suddenly looking stressed and unhealthy, and you have no clue what's wrong? Is your garden suddenly plagued by unfamiliar and tenacious weeds, and you want to learn what they are and the best way to remove and prevent them?

The San Joaquin Master Gardener Program, administered by the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), has a Help Desk service specifically intended to help answer these types of questions. Here's a brief summary of our contact information:

Master Gardener Help Desk

Hours: 9:00 a.m. to noon, Monday through Thursday

Address: Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center

2101 E. Earhart Blvd., Suite 200

Stockton, CA 95206

Phone: (209) 953-6112

Email: anrmgsanjoaquin@ucanr.edu

Website: http://sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu/Hotline_Office/

When you contact the Help Desk, remember that it might take a few days or even weeks to properly diagnose your particular plant and/or pest problem. Sometimes the cause, effect, and solution can be fairly easy to determine; at other times, Master Gardener volunteers might need to enlist the help of trained scientists (plant pathologists, entomologists, etc.) to correctly diagnose a condition or identify a pest. Remember that accurately determining the problem is the key to finding the appropriate and effective solution.

Plant damage and disorders have either biotic or abiotic origins. Biotic problems are those caused by living organisms: small mammals; chewing or sucking insects; snails and slugs; harmful fungi, bacteria, or viruses; and more. Abiotic problems arise from environmental factors such as pesticide toxicity, nutrient deficiencies, drought stress, overwatering, air pollution, mineral imbalances, excess or insufficient sun exposure, and so on.

It's most helpful for Help Desk volunteers if our "customers" initially visit in person and deliver actual plant and/or insect specimens. Diseases, disorders, and pests are often specific to particular plant species, so the first step in solving your garden-related problem is to accurately identify the affected plant. Having an actual sample or two in hand makes that process, and the eventual diagnosis, much easier. Later follow-up can be by email or phone.

How to submit plant samples:

- Use sharp, sterile pruning tools to avoid spreading any potential diseases.
- If possible, trim off an affected piece of plant large enough to include leaves, stems, flowers, fruit, and even roots, if that could be where problems are occurring. This aids in plant identification and diagnosis.
- For comparison's sake, also trim and bring in a healthy portion of the plant.
- Bring plant samples to the office as soon as possible after collecting them. Fresh samples are absolutely necessary for accurate diagnosis; old, dried, or rotten material can't be used.
- Place plant samples in sealable plastic bags large enough to accommodate them without damage. (This not only protects the sample, it also prevents accidental spread of potential plant pathogens.)
- Write your name, contact information, and date and location of collection on each bag.
- Refrigerate plant samples for a short time if immediate delivery to the Help Desk isn't possible.
- If it's not physically possible to bring a sample—for instance, if the specimen is too large—please [Continued on pg. 12](#)



Master Gardener Win Rogers at the Help Desk window in the Robert J. Cabral Agricultural Center (Photo courtesy of Candy Walker).

From the Garden

Sandi Larson, Master Gardener

As we approach the holiday season, your thoughts might turn to wondering what to buy for your favorite gardener. There are so many items that would make great gifts that it's hard to know where to begin!!

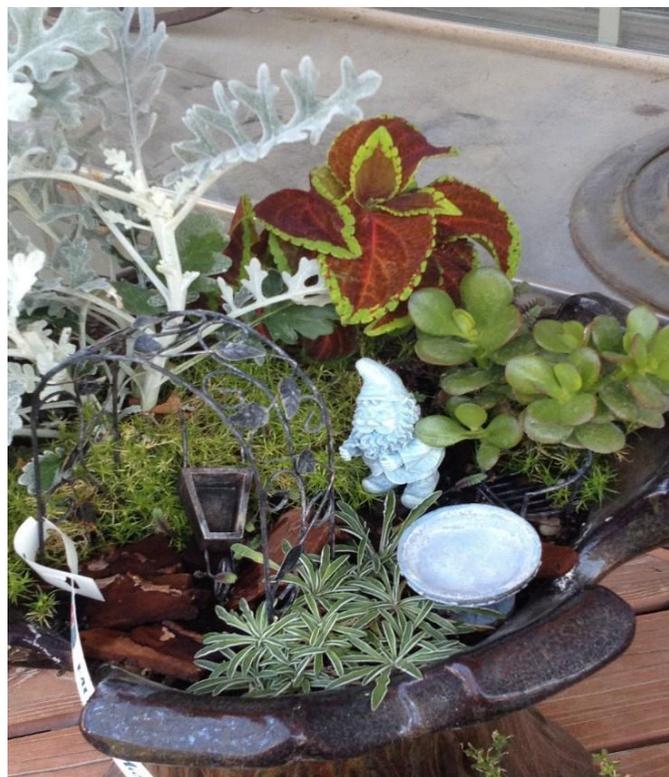
It seems like in the winter we are all thinking about the spring planting season so coming up with something for your favorite gardener could mean finding a seed starter kit to give him or her the inspiration needed to plan a spring garden.

If your gardener enjoys indoor plants, consider going to your local nursery and purchasing a few Amaryllis bulbs. If you gift your gardener early in December with the bulb(s) there may be blooms in time for the holidays. The same is true with paper whites and hyacinths which can be forced in water or soil. A blooming orchid is another dependable plant that will delight your gardener for weeks!

Maybe your gardener is enthusiastic about starting a new project like bee-keeping, composting, or worm farming. There are several sites online that carry all the supplies you will need to gift any of these projects.

One item almost all gardeners can use is a new pruner. The three choices are anvil, bypass and ratchet pruners. Pruners have come a long way through the years and some brands are better than others. Higher price doesn't necessarily mean better quality. A little research will reveal test results for which brands perform best.

If your gardener has limited space, consider giving the components for a fairy garden. Most nurseries and even craft stores carry figurines and other components to put in a fairy garden. There are also several books describing how to put a fairy garden together. They can be portable and fit in a container as small as 10" around or square.



There are good books for children to learn gardening through illustrations and pictures. Young children will more readily eat things they love grow, like peas, carrots or tomatoes. Children's gardening tools are also available.

Have a gardener that travels a lot? Try purchasing some adjustable flow drip spikes. They are spikes that stick in the soil of your house-plant and you attach a bottle of water up to 2 liters to slowly drip into the potted plant; lasts for up to 2 weeks and you can adjust the flow of water!

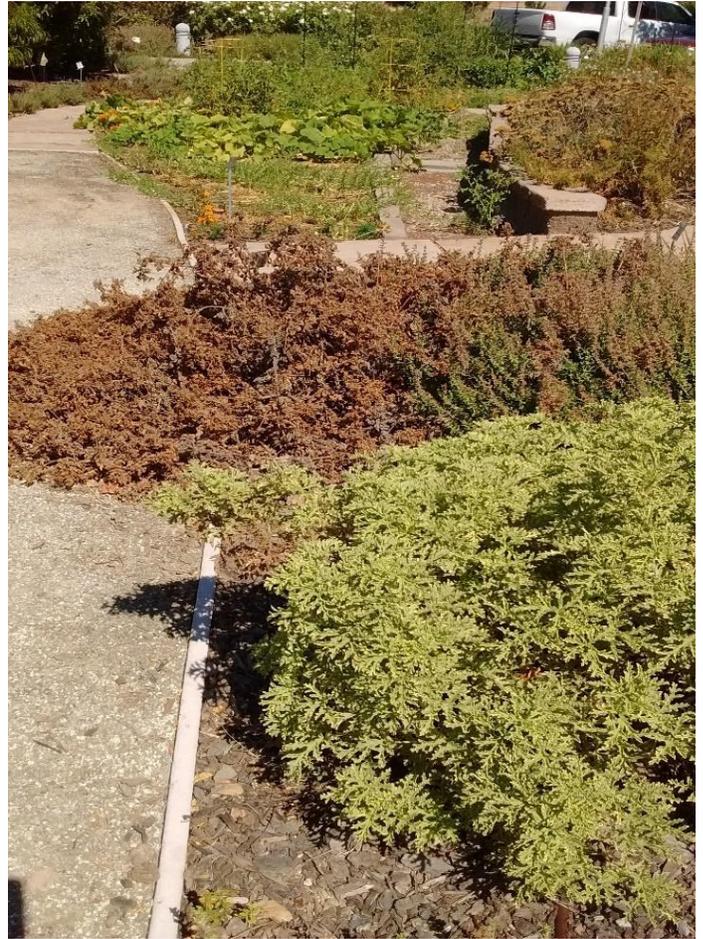
For gardeners with mobility issues, there is a root and weed remover that is 40" long and allows the gardener to remove weeds, roots and all, and then has a tool that easily allows the weed to drop off while you're still standing. A garden kneeler is also a good aid for someone having a hard time getting down and up from gardening.

Something you make or put together yourself is always something special. A packet of information to compliment your gift or as a gift itself (making sure it is from a reliable source such as the UC Master Gardeners website: sjmastergardeners.ucanr.edu) would be welcomed by many.

Demo Garden

Regina Brennan, Master Gardener

One of the most colorful and easy-to-care-for-landscape plants is lantana which is showcased in the pollinator and Mediterranean gardens. It has been enjoyed by many who discover it while walking along the path and will continue to provide for the many pollinators who are drawn to its flowers well into fall and the first hard frost. It requires little water and no deadheading, which makes it attractive to



Watch for a new addition coming to our edible landscape. Plans are being made to expand our herb plantings. Herbs are growing in popularity and in addition to pleasing humans, pollinators are especially looking forward to this welcome addition to the learning landscape.



[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.](#)

Horticultural Terms

Corinne Bachle, Master Gardener

As you probably already know, horticulture and gardening have their own unique terms. Here are some that may help you find your way through the fall gardening season.

- **Cool season crop.** Annual crops that thrive in cool conditions. For vegetables, this would include broccoli, kale, cabbage, cauliflower, beets, carrots, lettuce, or potatoes. In the flower world, it would include calendula, pansies and violas, snapdragons, ornamental kale, or dianthus. There are others of course, but this will give you an idea of where to start when planning your fall and winter gardens.
- **Cover crop.** Cover crops or green manures, such as rye, oats, and wheat, can improve the condition of soil when sown in early fall, allowed to grow through winter, and then tilled into the soil in spring.
- **Deciduous.** Plants that naturally lose their leaves at the end of each growing season, as opposed to evergreens which retain their foliage throughout the year.



How to Use the Master Gardener Help Desk

(continued from page 9)

Master Gardener

take a series of clear photos of the plant from different angles, ranging from a picture of the entire plant/tree to close-ups of the problem area.

How to submit insect samples:

- Collect one or more insects using a method that won't damage them. Squashed specimens or insects with missing body parts can't be identified.
- Place the insect(s) in a tightly sealable clear jar or container. (Plastic bags aren't suitable, and a tight seal is necessary to prevent unintentional release of pests into new areas.)
- If possible, preserve the insect by covering it with clear rubbing alcohol.
- Write your name, contact information, and date and location of collection on the outside of each container.
- Deliver your insect specimen(s) to the Help Desk as soon as possible; they can be refrigerated for a few days if necessary.

We recognize that busy lives and work schedules prevent many people from visiting the Help Desk in person, which is why there are also options for emailing or calling our office. Email is by far the more effective of these two, because plant/pest photographs can be submitted electronically and because it gives both our office and our patrons a written record of the diagnosis process. If you call the Help Desk after hours, please leave a voicemail with your name, the date and time of your call, the city where you live, and your phone number and email address.

No matter what method you use to contact the Help Desk—in person visit, email, or phone call—be prepared to answer a long list of questions from our volunteers. Plant problems are often caused by a combination of factors, so our investigative work must necessarily cover a whole spectrum of issues. If you already know the exact ID of your plant, that's a good start. We'll also ask you to tell us, to the best of your abilities, what cultural care your plant has been receiving: timing and frequency of watering, fertilizer use, pesticide/herbicide exposure, daily sun/shade, pruning, etc. Environmental factors can lead to stressed plants, and stressed plants are more susceptible to diseases and pests, so this is all relevant data collection.

The Help Desk is staffed entirely by Master Gardener volunteers, with either one or two people present in the office during each weekday shift. Every attempt is made to keep the office staffed on a regular basis; however, it's best to call ahead to ensure that someone will be available if you intend to visit the office in person.

Why and How to Deadhead Flowers

Help Desk Question

Flo Pucci, Master Gardener

QUESTION: My summer garden is beginning to look a bit dreary. Is there something I can do to bring it back to its former beauty for a while longer?

An enchanted garden full of amazing blooms needs time devoted to taking proper care of flowers. The foremost activity needed to achieve this state of healthy, beautiful flowers is deadheading.

What does it mean to deadhead flowers?

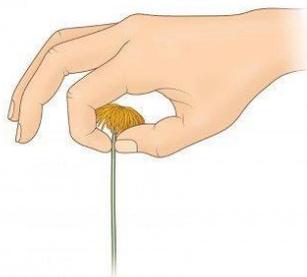
Deadheading is the process that involves removing those dead and stale flowers from a plant. Dead flowers stifle the plant as they still consume nutrients and don't let the plant grow. Therefore, the plant will not produce new flowers if the dead ones are still hanging around. Consequently, deadheading is essential for flowers to continue blooming throughout the season.

Why must you deadhead flowers?

The first reason is solely aesthetic. Once flowers die, they lose their beauty. Removing dead blossoms facilitates the growth of abundant blooms that will continue throughout the season. This action redirects the plant's energy into the stem, leaves, and roots, which makes the plants and flowers healthier.



This technique is useful for plants with single or multiple flowers and applies to both annuals and perennials such as Lavender, Salvia, Roses, Coneflower, or Cosmos.



In the end, the last benefit is the fact that deadheading averts self-sowing. Indeed, deadheading can avoid the formation of seeds, as most plants unfurl their seed aggressively, and can effortlessly turn invasive. In the end, deadheading is crucial for a nice-looking and healthy garden.

How to Deadhead Flowers.

There are three techniques for deadheading; which one to use should be based on the plant to be deadheaded.

Pruning.

Pruning means cutting a part of the plant with the aid of special gardening tools, such as scissors or snips.

Roses are the superstars of all gardens. They require plenty of energy to grow robust flowers; thus, this operation is vital for their health. Hence, you must be a master of their deadheading. As quickly as you notice a dead flower on a stem, proceed to prune that flower. Before doing the procedure, carefully examine the leaves. Cut at the first five-leaf grouping under the flower and at a 45-degree angle.

Pinching.

Other plants have fewer durable flowers. Therefore, special tools aren't required. Merely pinching off the blooms is quite enough. The procedure is fast and can be accomplished without any special preparation. Zinnias and cosmos are exceptionally generous bloomers if pinched.

Shearing.

Shearing is a bit more drastic and is ideal for those plants jam-packed with flowers. Since it's harder to remove one single bloom, first wait until more of the plant starts wilting. Then shear about one-third of the full bloom. Shearing catmint to a few inches promotes it to set out new growth and new buds. **Summing up**

To grow a gorgeous flower garden, deadheading is quite vital. The procedure keeps the flowers lovely and scented for an extended period and assures their healthy growth during the next season. Additionally, it stops many species from self-sowing and becoming invasive. Therefore, deadheading keeps a garden orderly and pretty. Deadhead to your heart's content!



A Taste of the Season

Julie Hyske, Master Gardener

Warm up on a crisp autumn day with fall favorites. There is no better time to enjoy comfort foods. The highlighted recipes in this section are perfect examples of seasonal favorites. The first is an appetizer of sweet potato bites smothered in marshmallow crème with a pecan on top, so easy! Next a creamy pumpkin alfredo fettuccini screams comfort. Finally, a favorite taco skillet casserole. This casserole requires no oven time and is a meal in a pan. Ole!

Sweet Potato Casserole Bites

Ingredients

2 medium sweet potatoes
5-6 large marshmallows
15-20 pecan halves
2 tbsp pure maple syrup
olive oil
non-stick spray



Preheat oven to 400°. Scrub sweet potatoes and slice between ¼ - inch thick. Slice each marshmallow into 3 pieces. (it's easier to refrigerate marshmallows first and use a serrated knife). Lightly drizzle sweet potatoes with olive oil and toss to coat evenly.



Transfer the potato slices to a foil-lined pan that has been prepared with non stick spray. Bake for 10 minutes. Flip and bake for 10 more minutes. Remove and top sweet potatoes with a drizzle of maple syrup, followed by marshmallow slices and broil on high for a few seconds or until lightly browned. Remove from oven and immediately top with a pecan half. Serve.

Makes 15-20 sweet potato bite

Pumpkin Alfredo

Ingredients

1 lb. fettuccine, reserve 1 cup pasta water
6 tbsp butter
2 cloves garlic minced
1 cup pumpkin puree (not pie filling)
¼ tsp nutmeg
2/3 cup half & half
½ cup freshly grated parmesan cheese
2 tbsp fresh chopped parsley



Bring a stockpot of water to a boil over high heat. Add a teaspoon of salt to the boiling water, then add fettuccine. Cook until al dente. Meanwhile, melt butter over medium- low heat in a large size skillet. Stir in garlic and cook for a minute, careful not to burn. Stir in half & half, parmesan, pumpkin and nutmeg. Stir until sauce is heated through and cheese is melted. Stir in pasta water, about ¼ cup at a time, until the sauce is a desired consistency. Add pasta and cook over medium-high heat until sauce is smooth and pasta is well coated, about 1-2 minutes. Divide into bowls and garnish with fresh parsley and fresh grated parmesan cheese. Serves 4

Skillet Taco Pie

Ingredients

1lb ground turkey breast or extra-lean ground beef
1 chopped medium bell pepper
1 small onion chopped
1 15 oz can black beans drained and rinsed
1 8 oz tomato sauce
½ cup salsa
1 tsp chili power
½ tsp cumin
2 cups broken tortilla chips
¼ cup sliced green onions
1 ½ cups shredded Mexican-style cheese
shredded lettuce
chopped fresh tomatoes

In a large skillet cook ground turkey/beef, chopped onion and bell pepper over medium-high heat until meat is browned. Stir in beans, tomato sauce, salsa, chili powder and cumin. Bring to boiling and then reduce heat to medium. Simmer covered until slightly thickened. Stir in half the broken tortilla chips and the green onions. Top the meat mixture with the cheese, lettuce, tomatoes and remaining broken chips. If desired serve with extra salsa and a dollop of sour cream.

Serves 6



Fall Garden Chores (cont. from page 2)

Sue Davis, Master Gardener

December Notes

Such a busy month for everyone, so just a quick four for December:

Decorate your yard: String little solar powered blinking lights in your citrus trees. It will make the yard look festive and help keep your trees warm when the temperature drops to freezing or below.

A gift for yourself: Winter Daphne has beautiful, variegated



December –

leaves and highly aromatic little pink flowers. It can be planted in your yard this month. However, it doesn't agree with dogs, so be sure it is protected from curious pets.

Plan something: Take 10 -15 minutes with your feet up and a favorite beverage by your side to look through seed catalogs and garden books and dream about what you want to accomplish in your landscape as the new year rolls in.

Well, that worked well: Repeat as often as is practical to enjoy the season and to plan for Spring renewal.

Coming Events—Fall 2019

Corinne Bachle, Master Gardener

OCTOBER

Friday, October 11 – Sunday, October 13
Sacramento Home & Garden Show
Cal Expo Lot C, 1600 Exposition Blvd
Sacramento, CA
Sacramento Home & Garden Show at Cal Expo features landscaping, gardening,



patios, decks, etc.

Monday, October 14, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
San Joaquin Master Gardener Workshop: Growing Succulents
Lodi Library, 201 W. Locust Street, Lodi
Class is free. Call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat.

NOVEMBER

Monday, November 11, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
San Joaquin Master Gardener Workshop: Soil Health, Composting, Fertilizing
Lodi Library, 201 W. Locust Street, Lodi

Class is free. Call 209-953-6100 to reserve your seat.

DECEMBER

Monday, December 9, 10:00 – 11:30 a.m.
San Joaquin Master Gardener Workshop: Success with Houseplants
Lodi Library, 201 W. Locust Street, Lodi
Class is free.



Have a gardening question? Call our helpline!

San Joaquin County Master Gardeners

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