HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS • HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS • HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • HEALTHY CALIFORNIANS

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
Making a Difference for California

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Whether it's a vegetable garden, house plants or a landscape...

A Garden Runs Through It

This newsletter is produced by:

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Melodie Johnson
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County Director

OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday,
9am—12pm
1pm –4pm
UCCE office,
100 Sunrise Blvd,
Colusa
458-0570

This month's links:

February 2012

- Winter Pest Management in Backyard Deciduous Fruit Trees
- Apples and Pears
- Apricots
- Cherries
- Peaches and Nectarines
- Plums

Information Booth Locations:

Colusa Farm Show
February 7-8-9
9am-5pm
Main Exhibit Building

Have a question? Email us at mgcolusa@ucdavis.edu

Colusa County Farm Bureau

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTION

Dear Master Gardeners,

Should I water my lawn? I see my neighbors watering, and I feel like I should also water my lawn. What is the proper watering procedure for winter time?

The Neighbor

Dear Neighbor,

During winter your lawn needs very little water, even during a very dry year. The reason is evapotranspiration (ET). ET is the "loss of water from soil by evaporation from the soil surface and plant transpiration". So, what do all the big words mean? ET is the measurement of water loss.

During the winter plants lose very little water. Even during this very dry winter, your grass is losing very little moisture. Remember in the winter we have short days with less sunlight than summer, cooler temperatures than summer and fog.

An easy way to see if your lawn needs water is to walk across the lawn, turn around and look for your footprints (not on a dewy morning). If you can see them then you can water. If you cannot see your footprints then your lawn does not need water.

If you need to water your lawn, it only needs to be 5 to 10 minutes once a week. You can check your watering needs by using the "can" test and a chart. The can kits are available in our office at 100 Sunrise Blvd., Colusa. You can read the instructions on our website at cecolusa.ucdavis.edu

Your other plants may need to be watered during this very dry winter, especially your potted plants.

Thanks for your question,

The Master Gardeners

Plants in the Getty's Central Garden
By Jim Duggan

Penny bought this delightful little book a few years back on our second trip to the J. Paul Getty Center. We have been to the Center twice and have not had the time to walk down to the Central Garden, but you can bet on the next visit we will go there first, even though we will have to walk pass the Galleries with their tempting works of art.

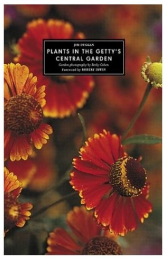
Robert Irwin was selected as the designer of the Central Garden of the J. Paul Getty Center in Los Angeles, not because of his horticultural expertise, but for his painting and art work in dealing with "installations" which can be defined as art work in rooms, gardens, parks, museums, and urban locales. (1)

The book touches lightly on the conflicting points of view of Irwin the artist and the horticulturalists that had to bring his dream of a living pallet to life. Jim Duggan was one of those horticulturalists and seemingly the first to realize that Irwin was on the right track emphasizing colors and textures as the first criteria in choosing a plant for a particular place. Duggan then had to find a suitable substitute when Irwin's ideas called for an impossible choice of plant. The Artist and the Gardener began to work together and the beautiful Central Garden is the result. A foreword by Robert Irwin and three short essays by Jim Duggan cover all this and more.

Becky Cohen's photographs are outstanding. She has captured the plants showing the look that Irwin had to be trying to achieve, and it is fun just to leaf through the pages of plants that are in the garden enjoying her work.

Along with the photographs is a short description of the plant and its characteristics. A number at the end designates the location on the included fold out map of the Garden. Not all these plants will be suitable for our location but if the book's description is not enough you can always look it up in Sunset's Western Garden Book.

"Plants In The Getty's Central Garden" is priced at $19.95 at shop.getty.edu and at amazon.com



(1) Wikipedia- Robert Irwin (artist)

Dave and Penny Dennis

Science word of the Month….

Endosperm

The tissue in seeds that serves as a food reserve used by the embryo at germination; a large part of a mature see may be endosperm tissue.

Ornamental Plant of the Month

Cynthia White

Amaryllis – lovely last month and now what?

Everyone enjoys having the lovely Amaryllis blooming in the living room for the holidays and they make wonderful gifts. Now they are a bleak creature, but may still hold years of enjoyment if you treat them right.
The story begins with a timid nymph named Amaryllis who sought the love of a handsome Greek shepherd named Alteo who was blind to her infatuation. The oracle of Delphi advised Amaryllis to show up at Alteo's door and then pierce her heart with a golden arrow. (Talk about sacrificing it all for love!) When Amaryllis followed the oracle's orders and as the blood dripped from her wound, a lovely scarlet flower burst forth in its place. Now I'm not suggesting that we must go this far to have another year of color from the lovely Amaryllis, but there are a few things to be done.

Amaryllis, known scientifically as *Hippeastrum* didn't show up in Europe until the 1800's after making its way there from South Africa and is a first cousin of the *Hippeastrum belladonna* that comes from South America. This is the plant we know and grow locally as naked lady.

You can save the bulbs for forcing next year or put them in their natural habitat by planting them in your garden in our weather zone. They can grow for as long as 75 years in well-drained organically enriched soil that has some light shade in the afternoon. They will rot if the soil doesn't drain properly. However they will look great in an elevated container that can be shown off when the bulb begins to bloom in the spring.
To force the blooms for indoor viewing there are a few tips to success:

1. Stop watering your potted bulb in early autumn and bring it inside before frost. Cut the foliage and store the bulb in a cool, dry, dark place for 8-10 weeks.

2. Mix <u>new</u> potting soil with lukewarm water until moist but not soggy. Use a snug pot just barely larger than the bulb (six inches is plenty). If you want to plant three or more bulbs in the same container you can have them touching "shoulders" in a 10 to 12 inch pot that has a drainage hole. If the bulb sits in water it will rot.

3. Fill the pot half-way with the damp soil and nestle the bulb into the center. The bulbs should be firm with healthy roots at the bases. Fill in with more potting mix so the bulb's shoulders remain uncovered. Tamp soil firmly around the bulb, water well being careful not to wet the exposed top of the bulb. You will be on your way to a new year of color with your flower factory.

There are dozens of colors to play with and the flowers can even be cut for arrangements. Be sure to have some pebbles or other weight in the pot so there is no tipping when the heavy blooms burst forth.

Edible Garden of the Month

John and Diane Vafis

In January the garden catalogs arrive, and we no longer have visions of sugarplums, but dreams of summer produce from the garden entice us. Imagine those juicy flavorful tomatoes that are truly red and basil bursting with aroma to accompany them. Visit web sites or flip seed catalog pages, and the possibility of a summer garden erupting brilliant color, providing good nutrition for your family (and friends) and satisfying your taste buds will lure you into ordering now.

But first a little planning will help make those dreams a reality. Consider what vegetables your family will eat and enjoy. If you are the only one who likes acorn squash, you may be eating it morning, noon and night. Gardens need water and will take at least a little attention daily. Someone new to vegetable gardening would be advised to start small; an area of 100 – 130 square feet can provide a substantial harvest. Another part of the decision-making on which vegetables to plant is the room required for each type. Tomatoes, beans and herbs are big producers in a small space, as compared to some squashes and melons whose vines cover a big territory. Sweet corn may be a summer favorite, but corn requires room to produce enough for a family's needs.

Luckily for us, we live in the Sacramento Valley with its abundant summer sunshine. Most vegetables need a good six hours of sun daily. Consider the shade patterns made by trees or structures when you decide on planting locations. Tomatoes and corn grow tall and can end up shading next-door plants. Peppers can develop sun-scald and may appreciate some of that shade in the hot afternoons that the tomatoes would prefer to do without.

The location of a water supply can be critical. Hauling water to your back forty can be a muscle builder, but kids may revolt after a few days on the bucket brigade. A drip irrigation system on a timer may be worth it to you or you may enjoy going out with the hose. Whatever your choice, keep the garden and the water source in close proximity.

Happy dreams and planning in the next few weeks! The next newsletter will talk about soil preparation and planting beds – getting down and dirty.

Recipe of the Month

Seven Ingredient Tomato-Kale Soup

Barbara Scheimer and Cynthia Peterson

Reprinted from the Feb. 2012 issue of *Cuisine at Home*

Makes 9 cups and requires 30 minutes to prepare.

SWEAT:
½ cup diced onion
1 Tbsp. minced garlic
¼ tsp. red pepper flakes
1 Tbsp. olive oil
ADD:
2 cans fire-roasted diced tomatoes in juice (28 oz. each)
4 cups low-sodium vegetable broth
8 cups baby kale
1 Tbsp. balsamic vinegar
½ tsp. kosher salt
Black pepper to taste

Sweat onion, garlic, and pepper flakes in oil in large pot over medium-low heat until softened, about 5 minutes.
Add tomatoes and broth, increase heat to high, and bring soup to a boil. Stir in kale, vinegar, and salt; simmer 15 minutes. Season soup with black pepper and serve with your favorite crusty bread. Add a 15oz. can of cannellini beans for more protein and fiber.

Weed of the Month

Catchweed bedstraw, Galium aparine an annual weed belonging to the Madder (Rubiaceae) family, can be found throughout most of the world. The species name "aparine" comes from a Latin word meaning "to seize," which is very appropriate considering the clinging nature of this weed. Catchweed bedstraw is known by many names around the world including cleavers, bedstraw, stickywilly, and "velcro plant." Bedstraw is native to North America and can be found throughout California, particularly in moist, shady areas. Bedstraw is often an early colonizer of waste places, roadsides, and other disturbed sites; however, it also can be a major weed of crops such as cereals, hay, rapeseed, and sugarbeet as well as home landscapes and vegetable gardens.

Less Toxic Insecticides

Insecticides are substances applied to control, prevent, or repel insects. Insecticides can be an important part of integrated pest management programs; however, some products can worsen pest problems or harm people or wildlife. Other products—often called "less toxic pesticides"—cause few injuries to people and organisms other than the target pest. The less toxic insecticides listed below should be a first choice when you need pesticides to control insects. Always check product labels to be sure they are registered for your plant or pest situation.

Soaps (potassium salts of fatty acids).

Insecticidal soaps control aphids, whiteflies, and mites; come in easy-to-use squirt bottles for small jobs; and require complete coverage of pests and sometimes a repeat application.

Insecticidal oils.

Oils control aphids, whiteflies, mealybugs, scale insects, spider mites, lacebugs, psyllids, and thrips. Good coverage of plants is required. Don't apply to water-stressed plants or when temperatures are above 90°F. Petroleum-based oil products include superior, supreme, narrow range, and horticultural oils. Plant-based oil products include jojoba, neem, and canola oils.

Microbial insecticides.

Microbials are derived from microorganisms that cause disease only in specific insects:
Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies *kurstaki* (Bt) controls leaf-feeding caterpillars.
Bacillus thuringiensis subspecies *israelensis* (Bti), sold as mosquito dunks, controls mosquitoes.
Spinosad is a microbial-based insecticide that controls caterpillars, leafminers, and thrips, but it also can harm some beneficial insects.

Insect-feeding nematodes.

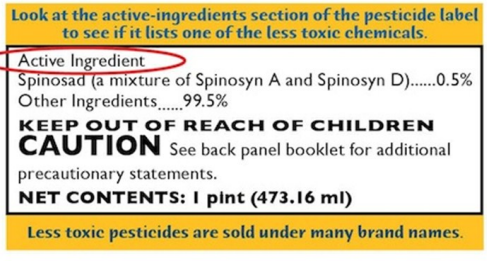
Entomophagous nematodes are microscopic worms, mostly *Steinernema* and *Heterorhabitis* species, that attack insects. Use them against lawn insects, clearwinged moths, and carpenterworm. Because they are living organisms rather than a pesticide, they are very perishable, so order through the mail to assure freshness.

Botanical insecticides.

Derived directly from plant materials, botanicals vary greatly in their chemical composition and toxicity but usually break down in the environment rapidly.
Pyrethrins (pyrethrum) are used against a range of insects but toxic to fish and aquatic organisms.
Azadirachtin, from the neem tree, has limited effectiveness against pests but low toxicity to nontargets. Don't confuse with neem oil.
Garlic, hot pepper, peppermint oil, and clove oil are sold as insect repellents that protect plants. Little data is available on effectiveness.

Avoid these more toxic pesticides:

Pyrethroids such as permethrin, cyfluthrin, cypermethrin, and bifenthrin move into waterways and kill aquatic organisms.
Organophosphates such as malathion, disulfoton, and acephate are toxic to natural enemies.
Carbaryl harms bees, natural enemies, and earthworms.
Imidacloprid is a systemic insecticide that can be very toxic to bees and parasitic wasps, especially when applied to flowering plants.
Metaldehyde, a common snail bait, is toxic to dogs and wildlife. Use iron phosphate baits instead.



Minimize the use of pesticides that pollute our waterways. Use nonchemical alternatives or less toxic pesticide products whenever possible. Read product labels carefully and follow instructions on proper use, storage, and disposal.
For more info see www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

February in the garden:

- Finish pruning roses.
- Around Valentine's Day apply dormant copper spray to peach and nectarine trees no later than bud swell.
- Fertilize mature trees and shrubs after spring growth starts.
- Be sure to remove and discard (do not compost) fallen camellia blossoms to reduce petal blight.
- Watch for aphids on spring blooming bulbs; remove with a strong spray of water.
- Fertilize spring blooming and fall-planted perennials.
- Mulch 3 inches deep around plants (without touching stems) to conserve soil moisture.
- As the weather warms prepare to battle slugs and snails with traps or pet-friendly baits.
- Plant in vegetable garden by direct seeding: radishes, beets, chard, and peas.
- Start tomato, pepper and eggplant seeds indoors.
- Flowers to transplant or direct seed: snapdragon, candytuft, larkspur, coral bells, and stock.

Additional Links

Integrated Pest Management www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

UC Davis Arboretum www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu

The Colusa County Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a partnership among the University of California, USDA, Colusa County and the Colusa County Farm Bureau. Master Gardener volunteers extend horticultural information and offer educational programs and garden-related demonstrations in Colusa County.