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

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Email us at
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In This Issue:

May 2013

Find us on Facebook

Information Booth Locations:

May Surprise

Saturday May 4, 9am—4pm
10th & Parkhill
Colusa

Colusa County Fair

June 6,7,8,9
Colusa County Fairgrounds
Etchepare Hall

Colusa County Farm Bureau

Book of the Month

David and Penny Dennis

Designing California Native Gardens

Inspirational, practical, and easy to use, this book was created with the aim of conveying the awesome diversity and beauty of California's native plants and demonstrating how they can be brought into ecologically sound, attractive, workable, and artful gardens. Structured around major California plant communities--bluffs, redwoods, the Channel Islands, coastal scrub, grasslands, deserts, oak woodlands, mixed evergreen woodlands, riparian, chaparral, mountain meadows, and wetlands--the book's twelve chapters each include sample plans for a native garden design accompanied by original drawings, color photographs, a plant list, tips on successful gardening with individual species, and more. Both residential and professional gardeners will learn the benefits of going native with gardens that require less water and fewer fertilizers, attract wildlife, engage the senses, create a sense of place, and, at the same time, preserve our rich natural heritage.
Designing Native California Gardens includes:
* More than 600 selected native species recommended for the garden
* More than 300 photographs of native plants, natural plant communities, and residential native gardens
* Recommended places to visit for viewing each plant community

There is coverage of our local area in this book: Loafer Creek on Lake Oroville, Bear Valley, Table Mountain, and Feather Falls.

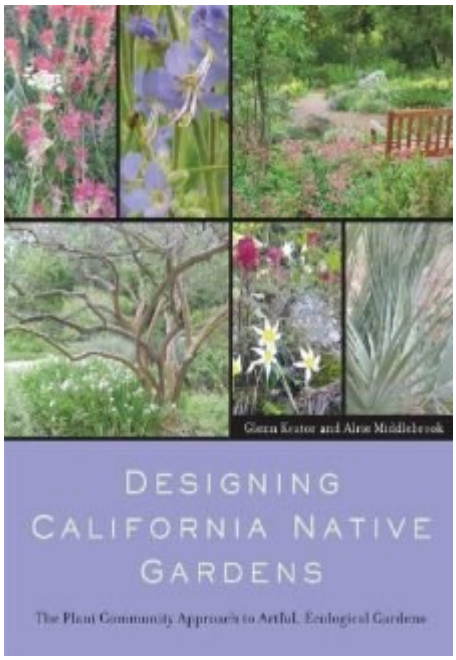
Hardcover $70.00

Paperback $25.38

From Amazon.com

ISBN 10:0520251105

ISBN 13:978-0520251106



Ornamental Plant of the Month

Fertilize fruit trees for best production, Cynthia White

Fertilize ideally before the buds start to open but it's still o.k. to add nitrogen through June.

Too much fertilizer means lots of leaves and shoots, and not a lot of fruit. Luckily, fruit trees are pretty good at telling you what they need.

You should evaluate your tree's growth. Here is a general chart:

*Non-bearing peaches and nectarines should grow 18"-24".
* Bearing peaches and nectarines should grow 12"-18".
* Non-bearing apples and pears should grow 18"-30".
* Bearing pears and bearing non-spur type apples should grow 12"-18".
* Bearing spur apples should grow 6"-10".
* Non-bearing plums and sweet cherries should grow 22"-36".
* Bearing plums and sweet cherries should grow 8".
* Non-bearing, tart cherries should grow 12"-24".
* Bearing tart cherries should grow 8".
If your tree's growth is satisfactory then you might not want to fertilize each year.

Use an organic, high nitrogen fertilizer. Blood meal, soybean meal, composted chicken manure, cottonseed meal, and feather meal are good, organic nitrogen sources.

In general – follow the instructions on your fertilizer bag to gauge how much to apply. If the soil is fairly compacted you may want to use an aerator to loosen things up and allow the nutrients to reach the roots of the plant. The NPK numbers on fertilizer show the percentage of nutrients per pound of fertilizer. N, P and K refer to actual nitrogen, phosphorus, and potassium.

Trees need 1/10th of a pound of actual nitrogen per year of age, or per inch of trunk diameter (measured 1 foot above the ground). The maximum you should give a fruit tree in a year is 1 lb. of actual nitrogen.

There are two ways to apply fertilizer to your trees.

- The easiest way is just to spread the fertilizer on the ground, rake it in, and then water.
- Don't start fertilizing next to the trunk. Start a foot from the trunk and spread fertilizer evenly all the way out to the drip line.
- The drip line is at the perimeter of the tree's furthest reaching branches.
- Digging a series of small holes is another method of applying fertilizer. It is a bit more work, but it ensures the fertilizer is getting to the tree roots.
- To make the digging job easy you can use an auger attachment with a cordless drill.
- Dig the holes six inches down and 12"-18" apart. Start drilling the holes a foot outward from the trunk and continue on to the drip line.
- Take the fertilizer you've measured out according to the recommended rates and sprinkle a little in each hole until it is used up.

This is great for making sure less water soluble nutrients like phosphorus or beneficial mychorhizae in the fertilizer make it to the tree roots.

Once you have finished fertilizing, spread an inch of compost over the top and water well. This will prevent your nitrogen from escaping to the air and not helping the plant it was intended for!!

Edible Garden of the Month

The Glorious Month of May

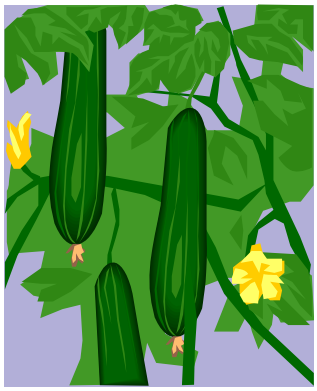
Ah, this is the month when the magnetic pull of sunshine and warmth tugs us out into the garden. And what a lot there is to do and enjoy out there.

The soil is warm enough to dig in your tomato plants, but wait until later in the month for peppers and eggplant. Consider planting veggies in your garden that are better when eaten young; you won't have to wait as long to enjoy the produce. Radishes, carrots, zucchini, miniature cucumbers, peas, and beets are all better when picked and eaten young. You don't want them to mature unless you are collecting seeds for future crops.

As supposedly trouble-free and reliable as drip irrigation and time watering clocks and devices are advertised to be, you still need to monitor to be sure they are working correctly. Even if you are hand-watering, check soil moisture by probing with a narrow tool down a couple inches and feel for dampness. A dry surface does not necessarily mean water is needed. Soggy, boggy soil around roots has probably killed more plants than any combination of pests or diseases!

Your vegetables and fruit trees happily go into bursts of growth this month, and so do the weeds. Go after them often, hoeing or digging while they are small and before they bloom and set seeds. Our most common weeds (except bindweed, oxalis, and Bermuda grass) are annuals, so they come from seed produced the previous season at this time of year. You do not want to let them set seeds for future infestation! Spotted spurge and horseweed are very successful at perpetuating themselves; get them while they're small. A thick layer of mulch keeps your vegetables and flowers happy with cool roots and discourages weeds.

Take time as well to appreciate your garden efforts. Find a seat and enjoy the fresh green of new leaves, the buzzing of the bees and the lilting songs of the birds. Happy celebration of spring!



Pest of the Month

Leafhoppers

Leafhoppers are sucking insects in the family Cicadellidae. A few species of leafhoppers suck the juice from many landscape plants, but most kinds feed on only one or several closely related plant species. Most leafhoppers are slender, wedge-shaped, less than 0.25 inch long as adults, and generally are varying shades of green, yellow, or brown and often mottled. They walk rapidly sideways or readily jump when disturbed. Adults and nymphs and their pale cast skins are usually found on the underside of leaves.

Damage

Leaves appear stippled, pale, or brown, and shoots may curl and die. Some leafhopper species transmit plant diseases, but this is troublesome mostly among herbaceous crop plants. A few species secrete honeydew on which foliage-blackening sooty mold grows.

Solutions

Ignore these insects as they rarely if ever cause serious harm to woody plants. Insecticidal soap or narrow-range oil can be applied to infested foliage to reduce high populations of leafhopper nymphs; thorough coverage of leaf undersides is important. It is very difficult to control adults effectively and no control is recommended.

Recipe of the Month

Barbara Scheimer and Cynthia Peterson

Spinach, Strawberry and Almond Salad with Balsamic Honey Vinaigrette

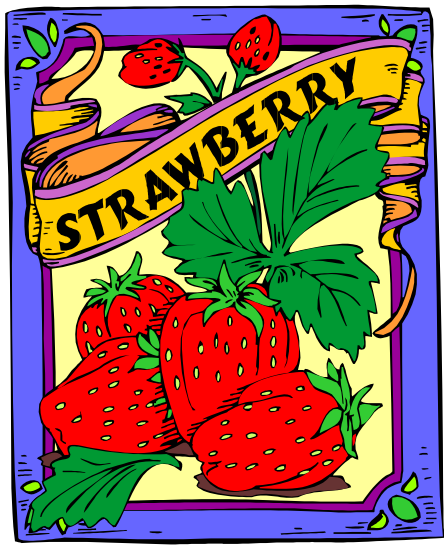
Inspired by: Almond Board of California

Ingredients:

4 cups baby spinach or your favorite greens
1 cup sliced strawberries
1/2 cup sliced almonds, roasted
2 shallots, sliced thinly

1 tablespoon plus 1 teaspoon balsamic vinegar
1 tablespoon honey
1/4 teaspoon salt
1/3 cup olive oil
Preparation:

Place spinach, strawberries, almonds and shallots in a large salad bowl. In a small bowl, whisk together vinegar, honey and salt; whisk in olive oil until smooth and uniform. Pour vinaigrette over salad and toss gently. Serve immediately. For additional protein, add cubed cooked chicken or shrimp.



Disease of the Month

Fireblight

Fire blight, caused by the bacterium Erwinia amylovora, is a common and frequently destructive disease of pome fruit trees and related plants. Pear (Pyrus species) and quince (Cydonia) are extremely susceptible. Apple, crabapple (Malus species), and firethorns (Pyracantha species) also are frequently damaged. Fire blight is less common on hawthorn (Crataegus species), Spiraea, Cotoneaster, toyon (Photinia species), juneberry or serviceberry (Amelanchier species), loquat (Eriobotria), mountain ash (Sorbus species), and other related plants. The disease can destroy limbs and even entire shrubs or trees.

IDENTIFICATION AND DAMAGE

In spring, branch and trunk canker symptoms can appear as soon as trees begin active growth. The first sign is a watery, light tan bacterial ooze that exudes from cankers (small to large areas of dead bark that the pathogen killed during previous seasons) on branches, twigs, or trunks. The ooze turns dark after exposure to air, leaving streaks on branches or trunks. However, most cankers are small and inconspicuous; thus infections might not be noticed until later in spring when flowers, shoots, and/or young fruit shrivel and blacken. The amount of fruit loss depends upon the extent and severity of the disease.

MANAGEMENT

Fire blight development is influenced primarily by seasonal weather. When temperatures of 75° to 85°F are accompanied by intermittent rain or hail, conditions are ideal for disease development. The succulent tissue of rapidly growing trees is especially vulnerable; thus excess nitrogen fertilization and heavy pruning, which promote such growth, should be avoided. Trees shouldn't be irrigated during bloom. Monitor trees regularly, and remove and destroy fire blight infections. (See Removing Diseased Wood.) If fire blight has been a problem in the past, apply blossom sprays. Sprays prevent new infections but won't eliminate wood infections; these must be pruned out. In years when weather conditions are very conducive to fire blight development, it can be difficult if not impossible to control the disease.

This is a lengthy article and can be read in full, click here.

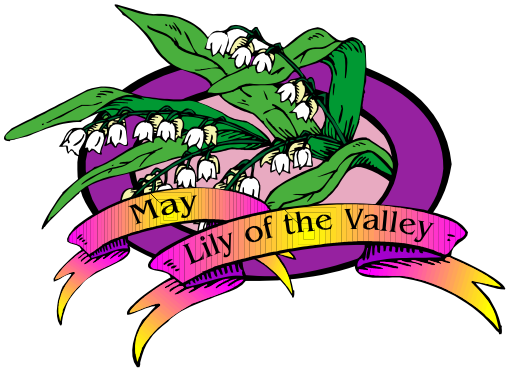
May in the Garden:

Things to plant:

- Direct seed in the garden cucumbers, melons, summer squash, pumpkins, beans, corn, and annual herbs.
- Plant sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, marigolds and aster in the flower garden.

Things to do:

- Fertilize summer blooming flowers early in the month.
- Apply (or re-apply as needed) organic mulch to all beds to keep the soil cool and enrich the soil. Be sure to leave space around the base of the plants.
- Trim the dead flowers but not the leaves from spring bulbs. The leaves restore the bulb; so wait to remove them until they turn yellow. Fertilize the bulbs after the bloom is finished with bone meal.
- Prune spring flowering shrubs to shape, removing old and dead wood. The plants flower on the growth that happens during the summer; do not prune in the fall or winter or you will have no flowers on the shrub.
- Continue the battle against slugs and snails.
- Deadhead (cut off spent flowers) to get continuing bloom on annuals and perennials.
- Thin peaches, plums and nectarines so there is 6" between fruits.



Science word of the Month….

Bacteria—Microscopic, one celled organisms that lack chlorophyll and may be parasites on plants or animals, causing disease; most are beneficial agents of fermentation and decay of organic matter.

Rose Day at UC Davis, May 4-5, Free

For more information click here

Additional Links

Integrated Pest Management www.ipm.ucdavis.edu

UC Davis Arboretum www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu

McConnell Arboretum and Botanical Gardens turtlebay.org

Invasive Plants www.cal-ipc.org

Plant Right www.plantright.org

PG&E www.pge.com

Save Our Water www.water.ca.gov

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.

University of California, United States Department of Agriculture, Colusa County Cooperating.
For special assistance regarding our programs, please contact us.

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