Colusa County

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources | Cooperative Extension

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

A Garden Runs Through It

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OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday,
9am—12pm
1pm –4pm
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Have a question?
Email us at
glhernandez@ucanr.edu

In This Issue:

May 2014

Find us on Facebook

Information Booth Locations:

Fruit Tree Workshops & Garden Irrigation
July 19
November 1

May Surprise
May 3, 8am-4pm, Colusa
10th and Parkhill, Colusa

Colusa County Fair
June 5-8
Colusa County Fairgrounds

Colusa County Farm Bureau

Frequently Asked Question

Dear Master Gardener,

I want to plant a tree. What tree is best for our area?

Your neighbor

Dear Neighbor,

We have had many calls on that subject lately. Warren Roberts, Superintendent of the UC Davis Arboretum, Emeritus came to Colusa and talked about what trees are best for our area. The list is on our website, click here.

Each tree is linked to it's full description on Selectree. There are many considerations when planting a tree. What is best for your neighbor may not be best for you.

For selection, quality and planting, click here.

Your UCCE Master Gardener of Colusa County

May 8, 2014

Everyone is a scientist

Visit:
Beascientist.ucanr.edu

On May 8, 2014, be a scientist for a day.

Pollinators

Food depends on pollinators. For three minutes count how many you see.

Food

Where is food grown in your community? Fill out our California food map.

Water

In this record drought, UC has committed to reducing its water consumption by 20%. How are you conserving?

Beascientist.ucanr.edu

UC Cooperative Extension
University of California
Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources

University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources

Need gardening information?

Need advice on how to water your garden during a drought?

Do you have questions like?

- How do I keep my trees alive?
- What about my roses and perennials?
- How much should I water my lawn?
- What vegetables are best to grow during a drought?

The UC Master Gardeners of Colusa County are here to help you answer those questions. Many of your questions can be answered on our website. *Check us out!*

- **Our website is –** cecolusa.ucanr.edu
- Like us on Facebook - UCCE Master Gardeners of Colusa County

Don't live in Colusa County?

- Sutter/Yuba County – cesutter.ucanr.edu
- Butte County – cebutte.ucanr.edu
- Glenn County – ceglenn.ucanr.edu
- Yolo County – ceyolo.ucanr.edu
- Lake County – celake.ucanr.edu

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What to Read this Month

Diane Vafis

THE GARDEN SUCCULENTS PRIMER

Many of us have had a jade plant on a porch or patio or, perhaps, a Christmas cactus in the house at holiday time. Now other succulents are becoming popular with many gardeners for their ease of growing and low water needs, as drought has made us look to water-wise gardening.

Succulents are also very attractive, and many are even striking, in their varied forms and flowers. No wonder at the last two Colusa County Fairs there were more entries for succulents and cactuses than the usual container plants, such as ferns and geraniums.

For those just starting and for those who have succumbed to the lure of these plants at nurseries and from the gardens of friends, *The Garden Succulents Primer or How to Identify and Grow the Most Popular and Drought-Tolerant Plants* is an excellent resource. Cultivation and propagation are covered briefly because there is not much that needs to be known to be successful! The main aim of the book is to introduce the various families of succulent plants and their members, which can be easily recognized by their descriptions with one page of text and facing page of color photos, which are invaluable in identifying your plants.

You may have only a common name, such as “pork and beans” or “Spanish dagger,” but the “Quick guide to garden succulents of the world” at the rear of the book lists the plants with their botanical and common names. Did you know that an ivy geranium is a succulent, a pelargonium peltatum?

To obtain this useful and interesting book, here is the full info:

The Garden Succulents Primer by Gideon Smith & Ben-Erik Van Wyk, Timber Press Inc. ISBN 13:978-0-88912-954-6

www.timberpress.com and also available on Amazon.

Ornamental Plant of the Month

Grevilleas – the beauties from down under

We just returned from a wonderful day at Maple Rock Gardens and were amazed at the varieties of plants – many from Australia – that we can enjoy in our zone 9 planting area. Maple Rock Gardens is the test garden for zone 9 plants for Sunset!! One of the most spectacular plants we saw today was the grevillea. The newest for me was a prostrate variety called Grevillea Australia Fanfare – needs little water and great drainage and even after a really hard winter freeze it came bouncing back this spring.

The grevilleas are a remarkable and beautiful group of plants. The variability between species is incredible but characteristic to the Protea family (Proteaceae) of which they belong; the namesake of the family, the god Proteus was noted for his ability to change his appearance and form at will. Among the 270 or more species, almost entirely from Australia, the habit can be that of a large forest tree or a diminutive crevice plant. The color and structure of the flowers and leaf size and shape are so different in the many species that their relationship is often lost to the casual observer. Shared attributes that might be noted as common to the genus are that they are woody evergreen plants that usually have interestingly intricate and beautiful flowers. Grevilleas are planted for their floral and foliage display as well as their ability to attract nectar-feeding birds to the garden.

As the plants are a diverse group, there are a wide range of conditions that they will grow under. The following generalized statements regarding the cultivation of grevilleas would apply to a majority of the plants in cultivation. Grevilleas flower best in sunny, dry locations although they will also grow in light shade. Plant in well-draining soil and be very careful of any fertilizers applied to these plants; many Grevillea, especially Western Australian species, are highly sensitive to phosphorus and the use of fertilizers high in this element can be fatal to these plants. They also do not like excessive watering and garden water tolerance or ability to grow near lawns will be exceptions rather than the rule. Regular pruning after flowering is recommended to enhance and rejuvenate flowering and plant growth. Most varieties are drought tolerant, as well as frost hardy down to 20 º F.

Google this wonderful group of plants and see which one suits your garden needs – it's time to spice things up!!

Cynthia White

Edible Garden of the Month

What kind of dirt do I have?

Roughly half of the soil in your garden consists of small bits of weathered rock that has gradually been broken down by the forces of wind, rain, freezing and thawing and other chemical and biological processes.

Soil type is generally classified by the size of these inorganic soil particles: sand (large particles), silt (medium-sized particles) or clay (very small particles). The proportion of sand, silt and clay particles determines the texture of your soil and affects drainage and nutrient availability, which in turn influence how well your plants will grow.

Organic matter is the partially decomposed remains of soil organisms and plant life and we will cover this essential component in a future article.

Soil texture can range from very fine particles to coarse and gravelly. You don't have to be a scientist to determine the texture of the soil in your garden. To get a rough idea, simply place some soil in the palm of your hand and wet it slightly, then run the mixture between your fingers. If it feels gritty, your soil is sandy; if it feels smooth, like moist talcum powder, your soil is silty; if it feels harsh when dry, sticky or slippery when wet, or rubbery when moist, it is high in clay.

To identify your soil type you can conduct this simple soil test from several locations within your garden:

1. Fill a quart jar about 1/3 full with topsoil and add water until the jar is almost full.
2. Screw on the lid and shake the mixture vigorously, until all the clumps of soil have dissolved.
3. Now set the jar on a window sill and watch as the larger particles begin to sink to the bottom.
4. In a minute or two the sand portion of the soil will have settled to the bottom of the jar. Mark the level of sand on the side of the jar.
5. Leave the jar undisturbed for several hours. The finer silt particles will gradually settle onto the sand. Your will find the layers are slightly different colors, indication various types of particles.
6. Leave the jar overnight. The next layer above the silt will be clay. Mark the thickness of that layer. On top of the clay will be a thin layer of organic matter. In fact, the jar should be murky and full of floating organic sediments. If not, you probably need to add organic matter to improve the soil's fertility and structure.
7. Measure and calculate the percentages of the three layers (sand, silt and clay) and compare to these descriptions:

Sandy Soil	Silty Soil	Clay Soil
0-10% Clay	7-27% Clay	40-100% Clay
0-15% Silt	28-50% Silt	0-40% Silt
90-100% Sand	23-52% Sand	0-45% Sand

Now that you have identified your soil type we will cover what you can do to improve your soil structure in next month's article.

David Dennis

Smart Gardening Practices

CONSERVE ENERGY

1. Plant Trees
   A. Plant trees to the west of your home.
   B. Select evergreen trees for a windbreak. Especially if you live in the countryside.
   C. Plant large trees at least 20 feet from the foundation.
   D. For more information: www.pge.com.

Benefit:

When properly placed mature trees can reduce your inside temperature by 20 degrees.

2. Shade paved areas
   A. Driveways and paved areas are huge sources of heat.
   B. Choose trees with root systems that do not sucker or damage the surface.

Benefit: Patios and cars are more comfortable, cooling cost may be lowered.

3. Shade the air conditioner

Benefit: Reduced utility cost.

Recipe of the Month

Polenta Wedges with Asparagus and Mushrooms

Ingredients

1 tbl plus 2 tsp vegetable oil
1 pound cremini mushrooms, trimmed and sliced 1/4 inch thick
Course salt and ground pepper
3/4 cup low-sodium chicken broth
2 tbl heavy cream
Polenta, use prepared kind, cut into 8 wedges
1 pound asparagus, trimmed

Directions

1. Heat broiler with rack 5 inches from heat. In a large skillet, heat 1 tbl oil over medium-high. Add mushrooms and cook, stirring occasionally, until golden brown, about 5 minutes. Season with salt and pepper. Add broth and cook until reduced by half, about 4 minutes. Stir in cream and cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat.

2. Place a rimmed baking sheet in oven to heat, 5 minutes. Pat polenta wedges dry with a paper towel and lightly brush both sides with 1 1/2 tsp oil. Toss asparagus with 1/2 tsp oil.

3. Carefully place asparagus on one half of hot sheet and season with salt and pepper; place polenta on other half of sheet.

4. Broil until polenta is golden brown and asparagus is crisp-tender, about 6 minutes, rotating sheet and tossing asparagus halfway through. Serve polenta wedges with asparagus and creamy mushrooms.

Barbara Scheimer
Cynthia Peterson

Problem of the Month

Spotted Spurge

While strolling through my garden this week, I found lots of Spotted Spurge coming up. Hope these tips help.

Spotted spurge (Euphorbia maculata) is an annual plant native to the eastern United States. In California, it is the most common species of the spurge family, which also includes creeping spurge (E. serpens) and petty spurge (E. peplus). These weeds invade many of the state's crops, affecting vegetables, trees, citrus, turf, ornamental beds, and container ornamentals. Management of all the spurges is similar.

MANAGEMENT

The primary method of managing spurges is prevention, since controlling these weeds is very difficult once plants have established themselves. Avoid bringing seeds into uninfested areas by using weed -free planting seed and uncontaminated planting stock. Clean work clothing and machinery such as lawn mowers to remove any seeds that might be present, and remove spurge plants as soon as you discover them.

Cultural Control

Weeding or cultivating

Solarization

Mulch

Chemical Control

Preemergent herbicides

Postemergent herbicides

To see the entire article, click here

May in the Garden:

What to plant?

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

Chores:

- 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.
- Later in the month 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….

Soil—The natural medium on the surface of the earth composed of minerals, organic matter, water, air and various organisms, in which plants typically grow.

Garden Club of Colusa County activities

- Next meeting Monday, May 19, 6:30pm
- 642 Fifth St. (St. Stephen's Episcopal Church)
- Butte Rose Society

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 UCCE Colusa County Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a partnership among the University of California Cooperative Extension, 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.