



Photo by Melinda Nestlerode

# Seeds For Thought

UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano

Fall 2018 Vol. 13 Issue 4

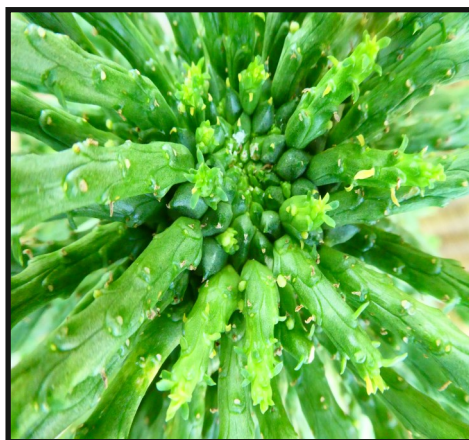
## CREEPY PLANTS FOR A GOBLIN'S GARDEN

Launa Herrmann, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

With autumn underway and trick-or-treat goblins on the horizon, keep your eyes peeled for monster figures. I found three in my own backyard. All are unusual succulents. Each plant is a bit creepy-crawling in appearance, so fitting for a goblin's garden.

### Medusa's Head

The most famous of the Gorgon monster figures is Medusa. *Euphorbia flavanagii* is the exotic succulent that bears her name. Commonly called Medusa's Head, this plant is almost Reptilian in appearance and certainly a head-turner.



Medusa's Head—Closeup  
All Photos in This Article by Launa Herrmann

In Greek mythology, Medusa was a beautiful priestess in the Temple of Athena — until Poseidon raped her and defiled the temple. In the aftermath, Athena transformed her gorgeous locks of hair into venomous snakes so any onlooker who gazed upon Medusa was turned into stone. Eventually, when Zeus' son (Perseus) decapitated Medusa, her blood poured onto the African soil and produced serpents. That's why the medusoid euphorbias native to Africa are commonly called Medusa's Head.

When you look past Medusa's bizarre appearance, including the flat top of this plant that's inhabited my garden for 14 years, you notice the creepy snake-like arms resembling curling locks of hair. Over time, the swollen stem, which is a storage organ also

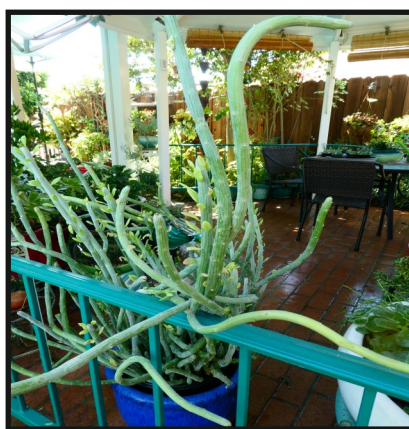
called the central caudex, lived up to its medusoid habit of thickening to look like a neck — then eventually, a head. This succulent belongs to the subgenus *Athymalus*, the only subgenus in that family confined to the arid regions of the Old World. In other words, this plant is not native to any regions in Asia or the New World. Presently researchers estimate its age at about 3-10 million years.



Medusa's Head

### Swizzle Stick

The next creepy plant struts a striking pose with its long arching stems. Some gardeners characterize its appearance as "sea coral-like." When I look at *Senecio anteuphorbium*, also known as a



Swizzle Stick

Cigar Plant, I don't think tobacco or swizzle sticks. I imagine snakes — especially if a thick rounded stem slides up my arm as I water the wiggly creation.

*Senecio*, which is Latin for "old man," is a genus of the *Asteraceae* family that also includes sunflowers and daisies. A native of North and Northeast Africa, stretching from

(Continued on Page 2)

Creepy Plants for a Goblin's Garden .....	1
Preservation Pointers: Preserving the Pretty	
Persimmons .....	3
Meet This Master Gardener Coordinator .....	4
Got Weeds? Beautiful Weeds .....	5
A Gentle Plea for Chaos: Book Review .....	6
Composting Leaves .....	7

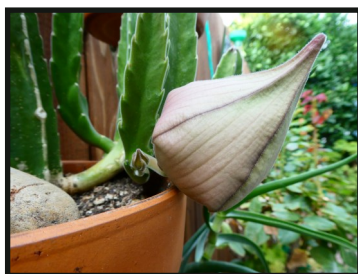
It Takes a Village: New Sensory Garden .....	8
Dormant Spray .....	9
Ode to Master Gardening .....	9
Autumn Project Pressed Leaves .....	10
Spring Master Gardener Garden Tour .....	10
Wreath Workshop .....	12
Fall Gardening Guide .....	13

(Continued from Page 1— Creepy Plants for a Goblin's Garden )

the Sahara Desert to Morocco and the Arabian Peninsula, this succulent can branch up to 3 to 5 feet in height and 3 to 5 feet in width, yet adapts well to the confinement of a pot. Its scientific name, *Senecio anteuphorbium*, refers to the plant's antidotal properties often touted to counter the toxic effects of the milky sap of the Euphorbia plant. Other *Senecio* species are known to produce biocides that are poisonous to livestock.

### Starfish Cactus

Last, but not the least of the creepy plants fit for a goblin's garden, is the starfish cactus from the genus *Stapelia*. A couple years ago, I planted a slip of *Stapelia grandiflora* in a pot hanging on a fence next to the rest of my cactus collection. Finally, a bud appeared this summer. As I swatted away a squadron of flies, while photographing the stunning progression from bud to bloom, I realized this was no ordinary cactus. The lack of thorns should have been my first clue along with the swollen stems. Later research revealed this plant with its thick soft-to-the-touch stems efficiently stores water to survive in the harsh arid environment of southeastern Africa. Yes, the starfish is a succulent that has fooled many a gardener with its "cactus" costume, counting on our hurried glances and casual observations.



Starfish Cactus Bud

But that's not the end of this plant's clever disguise. Due to a scarce insect population in its native habitat, the *Stapelia* uses



Bud Opening

mimicry to attract flies as pollinators. Hence, the reason a starfish flower flaunts an incredulous appearance of exposed flesh. Buds slowly open like mouths, then emit the stench of a dead animal's rotting flesh. Even my Labrador Retriever was attracted to the carrion smell. Yet I detected no foul odor. The intriguing blooms open to five hairy-looking petals in a color palette of reds and

pinks to purples and browns and display a unique center around which flies deposit eggs that soon develop into larvae. When the flowers wither, the larvae die. I witnessed their fate firsthand. But I never again laid eyes on those gullible flies that probably didn't have a ghost of a chance. View photos of other varieties of starfish at:

<http://www.succulent-plant.com/families/apocynaceae/asclepiadaceae/stapelia.html> 🐛



Initial Opening Attracts Flies

## UC MASTER GARDENERS WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE SEASON



### FARMERS MARKETS

#### Vallejo Farmers Market

Saturday's 9:00am to 1:00pm

Year Round (Rain Cancels)

Georgia and Marin Streets

#### Benicia Farmers Market

Thursday's 4:00 pm to 8:00pm

Through October 25, 2018

End of First Street

### HOME DEPOT

#### Fairfield

Saturday, October 6, 2018

10:00am to 2:00pm

#### Vacaville

Saturday, October 13th, 2018

7:45 am to 12:15pm

### ACE HARDWARE

#### Dixon

Saturday, October 6, 2018

8:45am to 12:15pm

#### Vacaville

Saturday, October 20, 2018

7:45am to 12:15pm

**DUNNELL NATURE PARK \* 3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield**  
**Seed Saving and Collecting \* Saturday, October 13, 2018 \* 10:00am to 12:00pm**





## PRESERVING THE PRETTY PERSIMMONS

Pearl Eddy, U.C. Master Gardener and U.C. Master Food Preserver, Solano County



My favorite fall fruit is the persimmon (*Diospyros kaki*). The two varieties most commonly found here are the Fuyu (apple type), which is still somewhat crisp when ripe, and the Hachiya type, (an oval shape with a pointy end) which is at its best when soft or almost jelly-like. It's fun to eat this variety with a spoon, right out of its "shell," but wait until it's soft because otherwise, you will encounter an unpleasant astringent taste from its tannin.

Persimmon trees are easy to grow here as they do not need ideal soil. They tolerate wet feet and frost in winter and dry conditions in summer. They are almost pest free. In the fall the leaves turn pretty colors, and after they drop, the bright orange fruit remains on the tree. You can clip the mature, orange fruit off the tree before they soften. A little black color on the skin is perfectly fine but can be removed if you are making pulp. They will continue to ripen after harvesting when stored at room temperature. Ripe fruit can be eaten immediately, but to slow down the process, store in the refrigerator for up to a month. Some people store the fruit in a plastic bag, but I have good luck simply layering them on paper towels in little flat boxes in the refrigerator.

The average persimmon contains about 95 calories, about the same as a medium-sized banana. It is an excellent source of Vitamin A, providing one half the daily requirement. It also provides about one fifth the Vitamin C needed, some calcium and iron, and is a good source of antioxidants and fiber. Slices or cubes of persimmon are healthful and beautiful in fresh salads such as when combined with mixed greens, sliced or

diced apple or avocado, some crumbled goat cheese, and chopped walnuts with your choice of dressing.

Persimmons are easily preserved by freezing and dehydration. To dry slices, select and wash firm, ripe fruit, and slice crosswise into ¼ inch slices. No peeling or pretreatment is necessary. Lay slices on dehydrator trays and set the thermostat at 135°F. Begin checking after a few hours, but it could take up to 12 hours before the slices have nearly crisp edges and centers which are leathery but pliable. Cool, pack into airtight containers and store in the refrigerator for up to 3 months or in the freezer for longer storage. These slices have such a pretty pattern that they are often used for holiday decorating.

To freeze whole ripe persimmons, simply place washed fruit on a tray and freeze until firm. Then store in a plastic bag. Partially thawed persimmons are like a fresh fruit ice. The skin can be removed and the pulp can be used in many ways. To freeze fruit in a pulp form, peel ripe fruit and remove blossom end, or simply scoop pulp out of the "shell." Mash or puree, add up to one tablespoon lemon juice for each pint to help retain the bright color, spoon into containers, leaving a little headspace, and freeze. This pulp may be used later in cakes, cookies, breads, puddings, spreads, and pies.

When baking with persimmon pulp, the recipe usually calls for some baking soda. For instance, with your favorite muffin recipe, try adding ½ cup persimmon pulp plus ½ tsp. baking soda, but omit 2 Tbsp. of the liquid called for. Persimmons will soon be available this fall, and I hope you will try using this nutritious, tasty fruit soon. There are many recipes available in cook books and on the internet, so you'll have lots of tasty treats ahead. 🍷



# MEET THIS MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR

Kathy Low, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Jennifer and Peg –MG  
Yolo (back with  
camera)

We all know Jennifer Baumbach as the Master Gardener Program Coordinator for Solano and Yolo counties. She's the woman who coordinates and oversees the training program and volunteers, providing us with volunteer opportunities, guidelines, and support needed to carry out our volunteer duties. But how much do we really know about Jennifer? I had the pleasant opportunity to ask her some questions so that we could learn a little more about her.

**Kathy Low (KL): Please tell me about your background**

**Jennifer Baumbach (JB):** I started out studying bioscience at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo. At the time I was interested in becoming a dentist. But then by chance, I happened to take a course that was called something like Gardening 101. The course changed my future plans because I became hooked on gardening. I loved and excelled in the horticulture classes. My parents were not thrilled I was no longer interested in pursuing dentistry. Instead I wanted to pursue a career in horticulture and work as an insect or biological control advisor.

**KL: How did your path lead you to becoming the Master Gardener Program Coordinator for Solano and Yolo counties?**

**JB:** After graduating from college I moved back home to Dixon and took a job at the California Department of Fish and Game. I saw an ad about recruitment for the next Solano Master Gardener training class. Being of interest, I signed up for the program and became a Master Gardener volunteer. About a year later, the Master Gardener Coordinator position for Solano County became vacant. I applied for it and got the job.

**KL: What year was that?**

**JB:** It was about 1998.

**KL: And when did you also become the Coordinator for Yolo as well?**

**JB:** It was about 2014.

**KL: What do you like best about your job and why?**

**JB:** I love the diversity of volunteers I get to meet and work with. I love the flexibility of my job, being able to structure my duties as needed each day. And I love being able to research and constantly learn about gardening related issues in response to inquiries received and other work-related issues.

**KL: If you had a magic wand, what one thing would you wished every gardener would do or know?**

**JB:** I wish everyone knew about all the gardening resources available to them, like the resources available from the Master Gardener program and UC Cooperative Extension. And as far as what every gardener would do, I wish they would not propagate plant material in water, but in potting soil!

**KL: What do you like most about your home garden?**

**JB:** I'm constantly discovering different species of bees in my garden.

**KL: What would your dream garden look like?**

**JB:** It would be filled with lots of color for every season, and would be home to a variety of pollinators. It would not be a pristine well-manicured garden, but one that would be allowed to grow naturally to attract a wide variety of beneficial insects.

**KL: Being a full time working mom, you probably don't have much time for hobbies. But do you have other hobbies you'd like to share with readers?**

**JB:** I love to crochet. **KL: What do you crochet?** Everything, from scarves and blankets to animals. I also love quilting, gardening, and tole painting.

**KL: If you had time, are there additional hobbies you'd like to engage in?**

**JB:** Yes, I'd like to take up hand lettering and fostering kittens.

**KL: And, what's your favorite book and why?**

**JB:** *The Shawshank Redemption* because there's hope in the end.

I currently also enjoy listening to audiobooks by Arnaldur Idriason. 🎧

# GOT WEEDS? BEAUTIFUL WEEDS

Sherry Richards, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Sometimes I think weeds are beautiful. I loved the colors and beauty of the field in this photo and listening to the peaceful sounds it made. Bees, birds, other living things created such beauty and serenity.



Photo by Sherry Richards

Sometimes weeds in your home garden can be beautiful too; attracting pollinators like bees, hummingbirds, butterflies, moths, bats, flies and beetles. *"Pollinators are animals (primarily insect but sometimes avian or mammalian) that fertilize plants..."*<sup>1</sup> This process results in humans and animals of all kinds benefiting from bountiful supplies of food, plants, and flowers. Beautiful!

With winter coming one can dream weeds might disappear for a while from our gardens but that is not to be. There are weeds that grow and flower here in the winter, like dandelions and creeping wood sorrel. However, we can reduce the amount of time weeding our gardens by keeping a select few weeds to provide food, shelter, and habitat for pollinators and other wildlife.

So hold that hoe, save your back and knees! Consider the following and leave a few weeds or a weedy area in your garden!

## Weeds:

- \* are an important food source for many insects, birds & wildlife
- \* provide foraging and living habitat for many insects including predators and parasites
- \* cover bare soil quickly holding water and nutrients in the soil
- \* when decomposing can be a source of additional organic matter
- \* are a source of nectar for honeybees, bumblebees, and hummingbirds
- \* blossoms attract "pollinators" to pollinate fruits, vegetables, and flowers
- \* reduce dust and soil erosion
- \* serve as a potential source of therapeutic pharmaceuticals

To attract pollinators along with using weeds there is a list of plants, including natives, in ANR Publication 8498 *"How to Maintain and Attract Pollinators to Your Garden"*. Google: "UC Davis Publication 8498", or go to <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8498.pdf>. There's also information to design a garden for specific pollinators like bees or hummingbirds.

Consider leaving bare soil areas in your garden or weedy areas for nesting use by hard-working native bees whose numbers are in decline. In California, there are over 1600 native bee species contributing substantially to pollination of food crops. It is estimated that "...approximately 70 percent of native bees in California are solitary ground nesters while 30 percent cavity nesters."<sup>2</sup> (Native bees do not make honey and live in hives like the European Honey Bees.)

Note: Try to remove some weed flower heads after the flowers die so you don't have an enormous amount of weeds sprouting from seeds!

Weeds are usually not much of a problem in healthy turfgrass and getting 100 percent of weeds from your lawn *"isn't realistic or necessary for most lawns."*<sup>3</sup> You can help prevent "weed invasions" with proper lawn care by growing the right turfgrass species for your area, checking sprinkler heads regularly and adjusting to avoid over or under watering, by watering deeply and infrequently, by not removing more than 1/3 of the leaf blade each time you mow, and by avoiding soil compaction by aerating the lawn and remove thatch as necessary.

For a one-page article about weeds in lawns please refer to the University of California (UC) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Quick Tip. Google: "Weeds in Lawns UC Davis", or go to <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/OT/lawnweedscard.html>. Need more detailed information? Google "UC Guide to Healthy Lawns", or go to <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/TOOLS/TURF/PESTS/weedkey.html>. You will find many helpful links to help you maintain a beautiful healthy lawn. 🌱

## Footnotes:

1—Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences, Department of Entomology, 2018

2—ANR Publication 8498, "How to Attract and Maintain Pollinators in Your Garden, October 2013

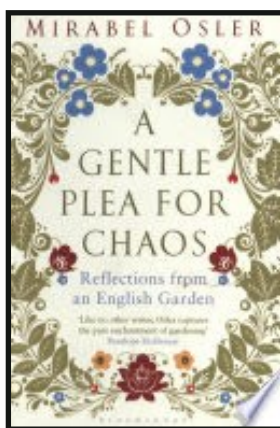
3 - University of California Quick Tip – "Weeds in Lawns"



# A GENTLE PLEA FOR CHAOS: A BOOK REVIEW

*Darrell g.h. Schramm, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

Occasionally when some visitors have viewed my gardens, the polite comments were reserved and minimal, usually a mere “Nice,” with scarcely any elaboration. Was the reaction cultural? Yet such a bland and understated remark made me wonder if they had expected something more formal and manicured like the gardens of Versailles or formally pretty and romantic like, say, a Japanese tea garden, or just a professionally landscaped plot of sterility. But except for the three garden beds at the front of my house, my main garden, the large one behind the house, is a rumpled Mediterranean hillside spillage of plants.



seed themselves where they were not originally planted. Within reason, of course. We wouldn't want that lovely sky blue morning glory taking over the bamboo grove, let alone a rose bush. Osler makes an eloquent plea for some havoc in the garden, for “a little shambles here and there.”

In her descriptions and full-page photos of her own very large garden (actually gardens), she extols the lavish hand of Mother Nature, how one clump of decorative grass nudges into a flowering stand of spires that blend into a spirea bush and that bush into a rambling pink rose beside a lichen wall further softened by creeping jenny—no naked earth

So when I came across the garden writings of Mirabel Osler, an English gardener and writer with an acreage near the Welsh border, I was impelled to read everything she wrote, for, you see, she understood my natural inclinations and sensibilities. Take, for example, her personal reflections in *A Gentle Plea for Chaos*, my utterly favorite book on gardening. I'm aware that 1989 makes it not a recent book, but its content is timeless.

The book is divided into five chapters, and each chapter is divided by white space into whimsical sections. Chapter One addresses trees (and much else); Chapter Two concerns water (and much more); Chapter Three focuses on stone, walls, and climbing plants (and other sidelines); Chapter Four holds court with the queen of flowers, roses (with some tangents tossed in); and the final chapter discourses on bulbs, rhizomes, corms, and the like (with short sallies into birds and the diversity of gardens). All of which is to say that way leads unto way, and no one plant or object or section in the garden garners all the attention all the time.

It is a book about gardening thoughts, ideas that came to Osler while “dead-heading roses, visiting a garden, or buying socks.” These thoughts are creative, lively, sometimes startling, sometimes challenging. Though we can learn much from her, she does not presume to give advice. But she is unabashed about voicing her observations and opinions.

“Men seem more obsessed with order in the garden than women,” she asserts at one point, supporting the assertion with colorful examples. And “The very soul of a garden is shriveled by zealous regimentation. . . . A mania for neatness, a lust for conformity—and away go atmosphere and sensuality.” Ah! She speaks to my own sense of allowing a natural vitality to take over in places, allowing violets, for instance, or *Sisyrinchium* to

showing between plants. Photos show the daffodil bank, the rough wooden footbridge over a brook, the roses climbing into trees, the colorful grasses bordering a path.

That lush melding and flow of color and texture and scents have been a goal for my garden as well, though, since a garden is invariably a work in progress, I've yet to achieve it. Yet that “mild desire for amorphous confusion” will some day, I am determined, set my own garden to singing, and no one will say of it simply, “Nice.”

Osler can be quite amusing, her words sometimes romping and gamboling through the garden she describes—and its her own garden where her lens is focused, with occasional glances or observations of other gardens. She writes that “once started, a garden holds you in its thrall. However irksome it becomes at times, who can go outside and kick a lily?” She writes of “running hopelessly to keep up with the turbulence of summer” in her garden, but, she acknowledges drolly, “It's sheer, blissful hell.” Oh, do I know that! Trying to keep my fruitless pomegranate or my fig tree from overclouding the tomatoes or roses with shade, or trying to keep the oxalis in check.

Above all, readers can sense Osler's pleasure in the plants she loves, but she does not love them all



*Mirabel Osler*

*(Continued on Page 7)*

(Continued from Page 6 - *A Gentle Plea for Chaos; A Book Review*)

indiscriminately. The Rose of Sharon (*Hypericum calycinum*) is a “joyless thing;” dahlias are not “easy on the eye;” heather “mutilates” a garden in its “neutered growth and depressing meanness.” Lupines are “effete,” gladioli appear “spitefully aggressive,” and rhododendrons “do nothing to make my hair stand on end.” But in the plants she loves, the delight scintillates on the page.

Even when weeding, “delving between plants so closely that my breath moves them, I become familiar with the earthy smell, with the sheltered comfort of groping at the root of things.”

Here we can understand her garden-love. We understand, throughout these pages, that gardens and gardening are her home. It is a lovely, heart-warming book of a woman and her husband’s personal, gently chaotic gardens that bring them solace and a quiet joy. 🍂

*A Gentle Plea for Chaos* by Mirabel Osler. NY: Simon & Schuster. 1989.

## COMPOSTING LEAVES

Tina Saravia, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Autumn is upon us; the leaves are falling to the ground in buckets. How do I deal with thee? Let me count the ways.

### Number 1 - Add to the Compost Pile

It’s as simple as raking up the leaves and dumping them into the compost pile, sprinkling a little water and, voila! You’ll have nutritious compost in a few months. If you are an active composter; that is, someone who turns their compost regularly to speed up decomposition into black gold (or compost) then you can harvest your compost sooner.

What if you don’t have a compost pile? Or room for one?

### Number 2 - Use Leaves as Mulch

Spread the leaves in the garden or around trees. The 3-4 inch layer of leaf mulch (as thick as 6 inches if the leaves are dry) will help with keeping the soil moist so you don’t have to water as often, saving you on the water bill, and time, if you’re hand watering. It protects the soil surface from compacting and restricting air to the plant roots when it rains, or when you hand water. The leaves will also keep the weeds down and add valuable nutrients to the soil when they eventually break down.

You can also leave the leaves where they fall unless they’re dropping on shrubs, the flowerbed or lawn; raking is then necessary to move the leaves away.

What if you have buckets and buckets of leaves and not enough ground surface to mulch?

### Number 3 - Rake Up the Leaves Into Bags or a Pile and Make Leaf Mold

An article from the North Carolina Cooperative Extension describes leaf mold as “the result of letting leaves sit and decompose over time. It is dark brown to black, has a pleasant



earthy aroma and a crumbly texture, much like compost. In fact, leaf mold is just that: composted leaves. Instead of adding a bunch of organic matter to a pile, you just use leaves.

Leaf mold is a soil conditioner that helps with soil water retention so you don’t have to water the garden as often. It

helps create air pockets needed to avoid soil compaction. It also provides good habitat for worms and good bacteria.

It does not have the nutrients that compost has because it is just that, decomposed leaves from a bag or a pile. But, it represents six to twelve months of doing nothing, except to occasionally check for moisture and add some water to help it along.

One thing that can help speed up the process regardless of what method you use, is to chop or shred the leaves with a lawnmower, shredder or string trimmer. You can also have the children or grandchildren play in the leaves to shred them; or, use chickens if you have them.

Shredding leaves for composting makes it much easier to mix and turn the pile, and the consistency of the finished compost is uniformly fine. Shredding also helps the leaves stay in place when used as mulch, as whole leaves tend to compact if wet or blow away if dry. Likewise, when making leaf mold, smaller pieces will decompose faster.

So, there you have it. Have fun collecting those leaves and Happy Fall! 🍂

## IT TAKES A VILLAGE: NEW SENSORY GARDEN DEDICATED AT FAIRFIELD LIBRARY

Brenda Altman, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

On Saturday, August 11th, a new Sensory Garden and a bench in honor of Mary Bourguignon were dedicated at the Fairfield Civic Center Library on Kentucky Street.

Mary Bourguignon was a lifetime community activist and Fairfield library supporter. The bench is dedicated in her honor and features her reading a favorite book to her son. Directly across the bench is a plaque honoring Mary Bourguignon. Most of the dedication ceremony focused on her community efforts which included securing long-term funding for community projects. The bench in her honor was at first planned to be placed in the front of the library. It was subsequently blended into the ongoing planning for the sensory garden in the back of the library. If you have the good fortune to visit the site, you'll agree that the bench and the garden work together to make a relaxing setting.

The sensory garden was the brainchild of supervising librarian Serena Enger and Teresa Lavell a literacy program assistant. The garden started off with a \$1,000 staff innovation grant, quickly followed by a \$7,028 grant from the Solano Community Foundation. These grants were just the beginning as Serena and Teresa worked endlessly soliciting in-kind funds, materials and labor from various community sources. Together, they secured a landscape architect, a nursery supplier and volunteer labor. Beth Shedden, president of the Solano County Library Foundation, thanked the Solano Community Foundation, "We appreciate partners like the Solano Community Foundation who support our mission of literacy and lifelong learning. This is a gift that will keep giving to Fairfield families for years to come."

Within 14 months the vision of a sensory garden became a reality when the first shovel of dirt was overturned by a volunteer labor group consisting of Master Gardeners (MG) of Solano County. Teresa Lavell, herself a Master Gardener, asked Jennifer Baumbach, program coordinator of UC Master Gardeners of Solano and Yolo Counties, to ask for volunteer help on the Solano County Master Gardener website. Teresa was impressed with the response and she thanked everyone in an email saying, "I have to admit I felt like the cavalry was coming in when I saw all of you sign up to help out today! Thank you for all you do! What a gift to work with such giving people!!"

The MGs who contributed their time were: Teresa Lavell, Jennifer Baumbach, Brenda Altman, Benita Brittain, Mollie Jarrett, Amy Mason, Karen Metz, Kristina Moore, Sherry Richards, Melissa Sandoval, Kathy Tomko, and Beth Wells. The digging wasn't easy as the soil consisted of hard clay and rock,



but the group was able to plant over 80 plants in two morning plantings. The sun was hot and Teresa saw to it that the volunteers kept well hydrated. Follow up

volunteer work on successive days included irrigation installation done by Teresa. A weeding and mulching party days before the Saturday dedication completed the garden. One library patron, Ryan, saw our mulch party and joined right in, he grabbed a wheelbarrow and distributed mulch around the site; thank you Ryan! Overall the MGs contributed about 60 hours of labor. It truly took a village to make this garden a reality.

Many thanks to Landscape Architect Aimee Ruskewicz, who donated her time and expertise to the planning of the garden. Her blueprints were detailed and easy to follow. Thanks are also in order to: Mija Berg (a former MG and owner of the Ranch Motel) who donated a truckload of compost, and Lemuria Nursery in Dixon, who provided the plants at cost.

Wait there's more! Coming soon tree rounds that have been donated by MG Sterling Smith will be installed as seats for the story time area. The library is hoping to add signage and an information board to update visitors what to look for in the garden as it develops. Other ongoing challenges include: adjusting the irrigation so plants get adequate water; pruning established plants; planting new specimens as needed. As it develops and grows, the garden will incorporate all the five human senses except for taste. The lambs' ears (*Stachys byzantina*) gets my vote for touch!

If you haven't seen the garden, drop by next time you visit the library. In six months, the landscape will change as the plants mature and flower. Come springtime next year, take time to smell the flowers and touch the lambs' ears. Several local bees have already sampled the nectar and they give it two antennae up!

This is your garden come by and enjoy it! Get inspired by nature as you sit down and read your favorite book. 📖



# HAVE YOU EVER USED A DORMANT SPRAY?

*Dottie Deems, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

“Dormant sprays” are all of those that are applied to leafless trees and shrubs during the fall, winter, and spring. Dormant oils are used to reduce populations of over-wintering insects. They work by smothering the insects. Copper sprays are used to control the disease. The two can be mixed following the manufacturer’s instructions. The entire tree should be sprayed, top to bottom, both sides of the leaves, the trunk, and even the soil beneath the tree out to the drip line. Yes, soak it.

Some of the dormant oils should be applied several times during the dormancy period. Applying dormant oil between late November through the middle of March is the time of year that affects beneficial insects and the environment. You’ll need to identify the specific insect or disease you are trying to eliminate, read the product label to make sure that bottle or box of the product is recommended for the specific plant/tree, and at what time during the dormant period it should be applied.

There are dormant oils that control insect populations by smothering the pests. These products are made from refined oils. Some are referred to as horticultural oil and others as insecticidal oil. Those insects include aphid eggs, San Jose scale, mealybugs, and many more.

There are dormant sprays available to control or eliminate specific bacterial and fungal diseases like fire blight, leaf curl, powdery mildew, rust, black spot, and shot hole. Roses are prone to both fungi and to bacterial infections. Some of these products are fixed copper fungicides and others are synthetic fungicides. Read the product label before making your purchase and read it again before you apply the spray. Someone reading this article is chuckling to themselves right now. Why, you say? “Because there is no way I can spray my

whole apple/pear/nectarine tree. It’s as tall as my house! The nursery/garden center said it was a “dwarf”. That person must have been wrong or else my soil is so-o-o good that it became a giant!” Neither of those possibilities is correct. A “dwarf” fruit tree in nursery vocabulary means that it is meant to grow up to twenty-five feet tall.

I know some readers will gasp when they read that new fruit trees should be pruned to knee level before planting. You can resume breathing at this point because that should be above the first few branches. The object of this “butchery” is to encourage side growth, branching all around the tree, rather than increased height. As the tree grows, prune the vertical branches back to the trunk and let those side limbs grow. Keep the tree to a height as tall as you are and you will get plenty of fruit, be able to pick all of it instead of leaving it for the birds, and you will be able to apply the dormant spray to the entire tree. It also means you can net your fruit tree to improve your chances of protecting it from birds during the day and possums at night.

If your fruit tree is already taller than you are, find a tall friend with a ladder. 🪜

## Sources:

“Dormant Spray” by Jolene Adams, Alameda County Master Gardener

“What Are Dormant Sprays” by Michelle Le Strange, Tulare/Kings County Master Gardener

“Garden Good Guys – Dormant Spraying” by Nanette Londeree, UCANR.com

## Ode to Master Gardening

Dreams left in the landscape of the future  
hold no hope for fruition unless they are planted  
in the garden of everyday life.

Raise pick and shovel to shift the vision,  
to transform the desolation into fields of  
color and function.

As optimists and caretakers of the land  
we spread more than seeds, for the soul revitalizes  
in nature’s peaceful tranquility.

Abating the constant onslaught of technology  
the garden offers a quieter, simpler, more direct  
path  
which supports inner calmness.

Dreams released on derelict plots  
nurtured and tended, fill the heart to imaginable  
measure  
as the garden is an ideal canvas.

The physical investment required,  
contributes to a broader wellbeing, beyond the  
human ego  
with its dogged pursuits.

Plant, reap, sow with joy and humor  
I tell them, “I am a Master Gardener which means  
I like to play in the dirt.”

Technically, I mean soil and truthfully  
I love learning and am inspired to share a  
meaningful  
subject that evokes so much joy.

Knowledge is a tool which abates indifference  
provides a sense of personal power and offers  
a foothold in the soil beneath our feet.

These small acts of commitment spread hope  
and give us something in common, a passion  
a curiosity, a sense of purpose.

–Sheila Clyatt, U.C. Master Gardener,  
Solano County

# AUTUMN PROJECT: PRESSED LEAVES

Nancy Forrest, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



I grew up in New York (Brooklyn) by Prospect Park, this is the time of year when all the beautiful leaves start changing colors and fall off. Remember when you were in 3rd grade, OOPS! Too far back huh! As a 3rd grader, I ran to find the prettiest ones, to bring to class. There, our teacher had us place the

leaves between two pages of a heavy book and then wait for two weeks. After that, we could use them to make a collage or a bookmark, or we could glue them onto notepaper to make notecards.

Fast forward to today, I am currently in a plant identification class at Solano College (a lot harder than I thought) and a major part of the curriculum is to gather various plant specimens in order create a collection that will help assist the student in the identification and use of these plants for landscape design. For the best long-term results, the instructor has recommended that we use the press method which takes many hours and about 4- 6 days.

So, since I was going to be away a few days, I didn't really have

the time to use this method, so decided to do some research. I discovered that there are many ways to preserve/press leaves/plants. Each way has pros and cons and is determined by what the leaves are going to be used for. For example, to save a 3-dimensional specimen (branches with leaves) I would recommend glycerin. I've tried the wax paper and iron method, the press method and the newer method of microwaving them.

The most important step is the collection of the specimen, for whichever method you choose to use, it will turn out their best if you use these guidelines when selecting them.

- \* Choose leaves that are relatively flat, not curled.
- \* Look for leaves that aren't spotted or bumpy.
- \* Don't be afraid to try leaves in various stages of changing colors.
- \* Drier leaves press well. More supple leaves, like magnolia and rhododendron, are good candidates for glycerin or silica gel.

The chart on Page 11 outlines the tools and steps needed. Once these steps are complete you can mount your specimen on cards for future reference or you can get creative. The Garden Glove has wonderful ideas and provides instructions for making coasters, photo albums, artwork, bookmarks, candles, plant pots, lampshades, jewelry boxes, and even paperweights.

*(Continued on Page 11)*

## From the Desk of Kathy Gunther...

The Master Gardeners-Solano County are looking for a few lovely gardens to showcase on our 2019 Garden Tour. It will be on April 28th, 2019. We are looking for gardens in the cities of Fairfield and Suisun City, CA for this tour. If you would like to be considered for the tour, or if you have someone in mind that you know has a nice garden, please send an email to me: Kathy Gunther, Garden Tour Chair, at [kathleenmgunther@gmail.com](mailto:kathleenmgunther@gmail.com) There will be at least two master gardeners assigned to your garden for the day of the tour to help with plant identification and any other questions that may come up. We will be sending our Garden Selection Committee out to make home visits in October. Your garden does not need to be "show ready" for the selection committee. They will be looking for safety/accessibility/etc. issues. Please consider being on the tour. My home was on the tour last year and it was so much fun! Will be waiting to hear from you!!

*(Continued from Page 10—Autumn Project: Pressed Leaves)*

METHOD	WHAT YOU NEED	STEPS
Press	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Newspapers</li> <li>• Blotting paper</li> <li>• Corrugated cardboard</li> <li>• 20 lb. weight/ heavy book</li> <li>• Build/buy a plant press</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To press the specimen, clean up the plant. Brush off loose soil and blot off moisture.</li> <li>• Arrange the plant on a sheet of newspaper. Place another piece of newspaper on top of the plant.</li> <li>• Make layers. Place the pieces of newspaper with your specimen inside between two pieces of blotting paper, then between two pieces of corrugated cardboard, to allow air to circulate.</li> <li>• Place the resulting package in the plant press and gently screw it down. As an alternative, you can hold it securely together with straps, or place some heavy objects (books, bricks) on top.</li> <li>• You can dry several plants in the press at one time. Each should be arranged in the same layers as described above.</li> <li>• Check the plants every two or three days, and replace the damp papers with dry ones. It will take from two to four weeks before the specimens are completely dry.</li> </ul>
Glycerin Bath	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Glycerin</li> <li>• Water</li> <li>• Flat pan or disposable plates</li> <li>• A weight or something to keep leaves submerged</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mix the glycerin and water so that it is one part glycerin and two parts water. You only need enough to submerge the leaves — about one cup.</li> <li>• Pour the solution into a flat pan, place the leaves in the solution, and then put the weight on the leaves to keep them submerged. (Tip: try using two Styrofoam or other disposable plates. Put leaves and enough glycerin solution to just lightly cover the leaves in the bottom of one plate. Then put the other plate on top of the leaves and solution. Now you can put a weight of your choosing on the top plate without getting the weight in the solution.)</li> <li>• Keep the leaves submerged in the solution for 2-6 days.</li> <li>• Dry the leaves gently with a paper towel. They should feel soft and pliable.</li> </ul>
Wax Paper/Iron	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wax paper</li> <li>• Thin towel or paper</li> <li>• Iron</li> <li>• Ironing board</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place a leaf between two pieces of wax paper.</li> <li>• Put a towel or a piece of thick paper over the wax paper.</li> <li>• Press on the towel or paper with a warm iron to seal the wax sheets together. This takes about 2-5 minutes on each side, depending on how moist the leaf is. Once you have finished one side, flip the leaf over and do the other side.</li> <li>• Cut around the leaf, leaving a small margin of wax paper to ensure that it will stay sealed.</li> <li>• Rather than cutting out the leaves, you may want to try to peel the wax paper off the leaves, leaving a coat of wax behind to protect the leaves.</li> </ul>
Microwave	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fresh leaves that have not dried out</li> <li>• Paper towels</li> <li>• Microwave</li> <li>• Acrylic spray from a craft store</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arrange the leaves on top of two paper towels. Lay another towel over the leaves to cover them.</li> <li>• Microwave the leaves for 30-180 seconds. Be very attentive and careful. Leaves that are cooked in the microwave too long can catch fire. The drier the leaves, the less time they will need. Leaves that curl after removal from the microwave have not been in long enough. Leaves that are scorched have been in there too long. Only microwave them for a few seconds at a time.</li> <li>• Let the leaves sit for a day or two and then finish by spraying an acrylic sealant on both sides of the leaves.</li> </ul>



# Annual Wreath Making Workshop



DECEMBER 1, 2018  
1:00 PM to 4:00 PM  
St. Mary's Catholic Church Outbuilding  
350 Stinson Avenue  
Vacaville, CA  
RSVP-space is limited

Join the Master Gardeners for a festive afternoon of wreath making on December 1, 2018. The \$50 fee (per person) includes all materials to create one wreath from fresh redwood and a selection of ornamental greens; dried hydrangeas; pinecones; dried lemons, oranges and other fruits; dried lavender; many other organic decorations; ribbon and bows; and the wreath frame and wire.

Master Gardeners provide wreath-making assistance and delicious refreshments.

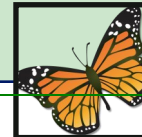
This is a wonderful annual tradition for families!

Contact Jennifer at (707) 389-0645 or [jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu](mailto:jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu) to RSVP today! Please include your name, the name of participants in your party and their contact information.





# FALL GARDENING GUIDE



	OCTOBER	NOVEMBER	DECEMBER
P L A N T I N G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edibles: Plant loose leaf lettuce and spinach, set out seedlings such as onion and garlic for next year's harvest.</li> <li>Ornamentals: Anything that's not frost-tender, including groundcovers, vines and perennials.</li> <li>Dig, divide and replant overgrown perennials after they finish blooming.</li> <li>Put tulip and hyacinth bulbs in the refrigerator for six weeks before planting.</li> <li>Buy and pot amaryllis or 'Paper White' narcissus bulbs for Christmas blooms.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edibles: Plant cool weather vegetable transplants such as broccoli, kale, chard and cauliflower. Plant radishes and peas from seed. Put in biennial and perennial herbs, such as chives, Greek oregano, parsley, marjoram, winter savory, lemon or common thyme.</li> <li>Plant spring-blooming bulbs and tubers.</li> <li>Winter and spring-blooming annuals available now include sweet peas, Iceland poppies, primroses, snapdragons, cyclamen, pansies and violas.</li> <li>Deciduous trees, shrubs and vines are often ablaze now, so shop nurseries for favorite color choices. Plant right away.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Edibles: Plant bare-root berries and grapes, and dormant roots of asparagus and artichokes. Seeds of broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage and lettuce can be planted indoors.</li> <li>Plant for early spring color, with flowering quince, acacias, camellias, primroses and cyclamen.</li> <li>Decoratively pot living holiday gifts, including herbs, which grow well indoors in a sunny window.</li> <li>Plan spring deck, patio and porch plantings.</li> </ul>
M A I N T E N A N C E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep deadheading shrubs and annuals. It will encourage annuals to bloom a bit longer and keep shrubs looking tidy.</li> <li>Fertilize roses for the last time this fall.</li> <li>Renovate a tired lawn by dethatching, aerating, fertilizing and over-seeding. Lower the blades of your mower to 1 inch after summer's heat.</li> <li>Add organic matter/compost to vegetable beds after double-digging and loosening soil to a depth of 24 inches.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adjust water schedule once rain begins. If no rain yet, keep vegetables irrigated.</li> <li>Apply dormant fruit spray to trees after leaves drop. Use 50 percent copper or lime sulfur product for peach leaf curl on peaches and nectarines. On apricots, use fixed copper spray rather than lime sulfur.</li> <li>Fertilize fall-planted annuals and vegetables with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Cut back mums to six inches above ground when they are finished blooming.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to fertilize fall-planted annuals and vegetables to provide needed nutrients for root development.</li> <li>Keep poinsettias in a warm, sunny location, away from drafts. Water weekly and feed monthly through April.</li> <li>Put your living Christmas tree outside until a few days before December 25, lessening stress.</li> <li>Before storing garden tools for winter, clean, sharpen and oil garden pruners and shears, and wash mud off shovels and rakes. Oil wooden handles of all tools.</li> </ul>
P R E V E N T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Remove fallen fruits, vegetables, diseased leaves and weeds from garden beds to reduce next year's garden pest and disease problems.</li> <li>If no rain yet, or very little, continue to irrigate. Once consistent rain begins (fingers crossed), check for areas of standing water, the breeding ground for mosquitos.</li> <li>Apply copper or other recommended controls if you see brown rot or citrus blast on your citrus trees.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bait for snails and slugs with an iron phosphate-based bait.</li> <li>Fight cabbage loopers by using floating row covers to keep the adult white butterflies from laying eggs on leaves.</li> <li>Apply pre-emergent weed control among plantings and on your lawn.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hoe and pull weeds diligently. Mulch to keep weeds down.</li> <li>Apply a dormant spray to kill insect eggs and pests such as aphids, mites and scale, as well as fungi and bacteria.</li> <li>If a freeze warning is in effect, turn off drip irrigation and remove the end plug for drainage.</li> </ul>



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**SEEDS FOR THOUGHT**



**FALL  
2018**