

Meetings and Announcements

37th Annual Landscape Management Seminar

The 37th Annual Landscape Management Seminar is scheduled for Wednesday, February 27, 2018, at Hodels. Visiting speakers include Maggie Reiter of UC Cooperative Extension, Fresno, who will speak about IPM for weeds in turfgrass systems. We'll have a noon demonstration, updates on laws and regulations including a representative from DPR, and updates on the Asian citrus psyllid and citrus yellow shoot disease, plus a talk on fungicides and fungi. Abate-a-Weed is cooperating as a sponsor for this meeting and is handling registration. There are eight hours of PCA credit available for this meeting, including two hours of laws.

2019 Horticulture Classes

Several people have asked about horticulture classes for Bakersfield and other locations in 2019. I usually offer fall classes in Bakersfield beginning late August, but I haven't decided what to offer this year. If you're interested and want to attend, please give me a call or send me an email. I'll consider any request.

Planting and Early Care of Deciduous Fruit Trees

Early spring is a good time to plant a deciduous fruit tree. Bareroot trees become available in February, and may offer a larger selection of varieties than available later in potted stock.

The salubrious climate of the southern San Joaquin Valley allows many kinds of deciduous trees fruit to thrive. The typical winter fog is also beneficial for deciduous fruits because fog events increase the number of chilling hours. Mountain locations are also suitable for fruit species, such as apples, which require additional chilling and cooler summer temperatures to develop quality fruit. However, mountain sites may experience an increased risk of late spring frost, an event that can destroy the crop. Desert locations may be suitable for some fruit varieties, and good yields may be obtained in home orchards – again if late frost does not injure the crop.

When planting, choose a location that will receive plenty of sunlight and, if possible, will be protected from wind. Allow plenty of space for the mature trees. For full-size trees, 20 to 24 feet is a typical spacing. Soil amendments in the planting hole are generally not necessary, and may prove deleterious. It's best to settle the soil with water rather than tamping the soil. Whitewash, or white latex paint diluted 1:1 with water, is recommended for the trunks of young trees to prevent sunburn.

When selecting fruit trees, be sure to obtain a variety suitable for your location. The widest selection is often found in early spring when bareroot trees become available, and bareroot fruit trees are preferable to container stock. Attention to variety selection may also reduce some pest problems. For example, mid-season peaches mature during the annual green fruit beetle flight, whereas later-or earlier-maturing varieties avoid this insect. If cross pollination from another variety is necessary for fruit set, such as for sweet cherries, be sure to get a compatible pollinator, or use a two-in-one or three-in-one grafted tree. It's a good idea to label varieties so that if a tree dies it can be replaced. Similarly, labeling branches of grafted trees may prevent an inadvertent pruning cut which completely removes the pollinating limb. Nemaguard rootstock is preferred for stone fruits where nematodes may be a problem, which is most locations in Kern County. For apple trees, rootstocks of the MM series give varying degrees of dwarfing. For helping in variety selection, we do have a publication, *Deciduous Fruit for the Home*, is available at the UC Cooperative Extension Office, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield. That publication is under revision. You may also contact our Advisor for deciduous fruits and nuts, Mohammad Yaghmour, 661 868-6200.

Wood Ashes for the Garden and Landscape

Wood ashes from fireplaces or stoves may accumulate in winter. There are several potential benefits of adding wood ashes to soil, first in their potassium content. Potassium, or potash, is necessary for the healthy growth of fruits and vegetables. After nitrogen, it is the nutrient used in greatest quantity in plants, and wood ashes contain about 5 to 7 percent potassium. Ashes from hardwoods contain more potassium than those from soft woods. Wood ashes also contain about 1½ percent phosphorus, also a necessary nutrient. To preserve nutrient content, ashes should not be stored where rain will leach out nutrients. Ashes may be spread at a rate of 5 to 10 pounds per 100 square feet of soil followed by incorporation. The minerals contained dissolve easily so ashes should not be used close to seedlings to prevent fertilizer burn.

However, there are several potential disadvantages of using wood ashes as a fertilizer. Many Kern County soils are already high in potassium, and further additions may not be beneficial. Unlike many soil amendments and fertilizers, ashes are strongly alkaline in reaction. Soils in Kern tend to be too alkaline already, and wood ashes further increase pH. For larger gardens and landscapes, mixing small amounts of wood ashes with soil should not be harmful, and is a way of returning plant nutrients to soil.

John Karlik

Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

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