



The Curious Gardener

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Fertilizing Your Trees

by Nicole Harrison, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Trees and woody shrubs usually develop symptoms of nutrient deficiency in the first few years they are in the landscape. Some of the most common symptoms of a nutrient deficiency are slow growth, yellowish or veiny looking leaves, very small leaves, or little or no formation of new leaves. In these situations, the best action is to evaluate the irrigation and send in a soil sample to help determine if there is a deficiency or pH problem.

Mature trees can be more difficult to assess for whether or not fertilizing is appropriate. According to the International Society of Arboriculture's Tree and Shrub Fertilization, Best Management Practices, "The demand for essential elements, particularly macronutrients, is affected by growth characteristics associated with tree species, age, and health." Here are two opposite situations.

1. Does the tree's growing situation provide adequate nutrients without additional fertilization? For example, is the tree in a border near lawn areas? Lawns are usually highly irrigated and over fertilized. If your tree's root system is under your lawn (If the drip line of your tree is over the lawn), it is very unlikely that fertilizing is appropriate. **Unless there is a symptom of a problem in the tree, do not provide additional fertilizer.**
2. Is there adequate soil volume for the roots to access? Small planting spaces surrounded by hardscape, next to a pool, or in

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Note the dieback in the canopy of this tree. Planter areas with limited soil volume will not provide adequate resources for trees and fertilizer will be needed. Photo by Nicole Harrison.

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a raised bed are often inadequate to provide what a mature tree needs to be healthy and function normally. In these cases, it is likely you will need to provide additional fertilizer or nutrients to the soil—especially after the tree has been there for a few years.

While these situations are obvious, most tree owners have more nuanced and complicated situations. Here is a checklist that you can use to help narrow it down:

1. Is there a symptom of a problem in the tree? Is there a deficiency detected by visual, soil or foliar analysis?
2. Has the landscaped area around the tree changed within the last two years (e.g. lawn was replaced with drought tolerant landscaping or a new driveway was installed)?
3. Is the landscape around the tree 'cleaned'? Nutrients are lost as a result of continual leaf removal.

If these situations apply to your trees, contact a qualified ISA Certified Arborist to help identify whether or not your trees need to be fertilized.



Unusual Edible: Chocolate Vine

By Julie Lowrie, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

The chocolate vine, [*Akebia quinata*](#), was imported into the United States as an exotic ornamental plant in the nineteenth century. It is now deemed an invasive plant by certain states, but not by California. It can be managed through appropriate pruning or container planting. Chocolate vine is a semi-deciduous woody vine noted for its distinctive five fingered compound leaves with notched tips, and clustered red-purple blooms which emit a fragrant chocolate scent in early spring, culminating in fruit pods of white dragonfruit-flavored flesh speckled with tiny black seeds. It is frost-tender when subject to hard freezes.

The chocolate vine has long been used for [various edible and medicinal purposes](#) throughout Japan, China, and Korea, where it grows natively. In fact, its stem has been used for 2000 years in traditional Chinese medicine to treat edema, tongue pain, and amenorrhea, while its dried fruit was used to treat obesity in traditional Korean medicine.

Each of the three parts of the fruit pod has nutritional value. The pulp is high in minerals, amino acids, and Vitamin C; the pericarp (fruit wall) is rich in phenolic acids which can create a beneficial antioxidant effect, while the seeds are rich in minerals and high in amino acids. Researchers continue to study its potential medical use to counteract the effects of skin aging and as an anti-obesity agent.



Established landscapes where it is obvious that nutrient cycling is occurring (in the form of leaf litter) do not normally need added fertilization. Photo by Nicole Harrison.

Reference

- *Landscape Plants: Fertilizing & Watering*. UC IPM Quick Tips. June 2023. <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/landscape-plantscard.html>
- Smiley, E. T., and S. Lilly, L. Werner, et al. *Tree and Shrub Fertilization, Fourth Edition. Best Management Practices*. Atlanta: International Society of Arboriculture. 2020.

Cover Cropping In Foothill Gardens

By Talei Mistrion, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

Cover cropping is an agricultural practice traditionally used in large-scale farming, but its benefits are equally valuable in the home garden. This technique involves growing specific plants primarily to cover and feed the soil, rather than for harvest. Feeding the soil means building its biota—its below-the-surface ecosystem of microorganisms like bacteria and fungi, which break down decaying organic matter and infuse the soil with nutrients for the next cycle of plant life.

One of the primary benefits of cover cropping is the **enhancement of soil health**. Our foothills are home to a wide range in elevations resulting in different climates. This diversity can lead to varied soil conditions. Cover crops, such as clover, rye, and vetch, add organic matter to the soil as they decompose. This organic matter improves soil structure, increasing its ability to retain moisture and nutrients. Crops like legumes and peas fix nitrogen in the plant and the nitrogen can be available for the following season. Additionally, the root systems of cover crops help prevent soil compaction by creating channels that allow air and water to penetrate deeper layers. Cover cropping during the hot dry summer season prevents the soil from drying out and the microbial communities living below the surface will continue to thrive. All of this results in healthier, more robust soil that supports healthier plant growth.

Cover crops can also play a crucial role in **nutrient enrichment** by either absorbing or adding nutrients. Leguminous cover crops, like clovers, beans and peas, have a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen-fixing bacteria. These bacteria live in the plant's roots and convert atmospheric nitrogen into a form that plants can absorb and use. When these cover crops are tilled into the soil—which needs to be done before they go to seed—they release the stored nitrogen, reducing the need for synthetic fertilizers. This not only lowers gardening costs but also minimizes the environmental impact associated with chemical fertilizer use. It is always a good practice to test your soil in order to choose the correct cover crop for your garden/land.

Weed management is a significant challenge for many home gardeners. Cover crops can naturally suppress weeds by outcompeting them for sunlight, water, and nutrients. Fast-growing cover crops, such as buckwheat and mustard, create a dense canopy that shades the soil and prevents weed seeds from germinating. This reduces the need for manual weeding and herbicide use, making garden maintenance easier and more environmentally friendly.

Cover crops can also aid in **pest and disease management**. Certain cover crops, like mustard and radish,



Commonly used mix of burr medic and crimson, rose, and subterranean clovers. Photo by Chuck A. Ingels.

have biofumigant properties that can suppress soil-borne pests and diseases. Additionally, cover crops provide habitat for beneficial insects, such as ladybugs and predatory beetles, which help control harmful pest populations. By promoting a diverse and balanced ecosystem, cover crops reduce the likelihood of pest and disease outbreaks, contributing to healthier garden plants.

Incorporating cover crops into a home garden **enhances biodiversity**. Diverse plantings attract a wider

range of pollinators and beneficial insects, which are crucial for the overall health of the garden. This biodiversity supports ecological balance and resilience, making the garden more sustainable and less reliant on chemical interventions.

What Are Your Basic Goals?

Replenishing nitrogen? Choose legumes.

Repairing tight or compacted soil? Choose oats, barley, daikon radish or a cereal grain.

Weed suppression? Choose phacelia and leave some for the bees in spring.

Attracting beneficial insects? Choose buckwheat.

Or maybe you want to create an aesthetic low maintenance addition to your garden during winter dormancy which will provide you with great benefits when spring arrives. (choose any of the above)

Cover cropping will help you achieve all these goals while keeping what's under the soil alive and vibrant.

For more information on choosing specific cover crops, refer to the [UC ANR Cover Crop Database](#) and [UC ANR Quick Reference to CA Cover Crops](#).

References:

- Ingels, C. *Cover Cropping in Home Vegetable Gardens*. UC ANR Environmental Horticulture Notes. September 2002. Updated 2016 and 2017. <https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/files/117129.pdf>
- *Quick Reference to CA Cover Crops*. UC ANR California Cover Crop Resources. 2024. https://ucanr.edu/sites/covercrops/Cover_Crop_Species_Selection_Tools/Common_Cover_Crops/
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- Miessler, D. *Grow your Soil!: Harness the Power of the Soil Food Web to Create Your Best Garden Ever*. Storey Publishing, LLC. February 18, 2020.

Hotline FAQs

What are some soil options for filling raised vegetable beds?

Have gardening questions?
Contact a Master Gardener!

Placer County
530.889.7388

or [submit a question electronically](#)

Nevada County
530.273.0919

or [submit a question electronically](#)

by Linda Wold and Lynn Merrick, UC Master Gardeners of Placer County

There are several recommendations for soil mixes for raised beds. Often native soil can be used. One recommendation for using it as part of the soil mix is to combine one-third to one-half of native soil with the balance being compost or other organic material. The native soil should be dry when you mix it with the organic material and clods and clumps should be broken up. Add several inches of the mixed soil to the bottom of the bed, combine it with the underlying native soil and then add the rest of the mixed soil.

Another similar option for using your native soil is to purchase topsoil from a landscape materials yard, assuming it has the usual mix of sand and organic material. You'll want to ask what the composition is and also inspect it for rocks, non-soil debris, and other unwanted materials. For this option, you create layers starting at the bottom of the bed by adding three to four inches of the topsoil. This should be mixed into the underlying native soil. Add another layer of the topsoil and mix it into the layer you've just made. Continue adding topsoil and mixing it into the layer underneath it until the bed is full.

Don't want to use any of your native soil? You can purchase a good potting soil and use it to completely fill the beds. You'll need to have a minimum of 15-18 inches of this soil in the beds so that the root zones of all your plants will only grow in the soil you added. Be aware that most potting mixes are designed for quick drainage and you may need to water more often. You'll still need to create the bottom layer by mixing some of the purchased potting soil into the underlying native soil before adding the minimum amount of soil needed to fill the bed.

Access UC ANR Publication 8059, [Vegetable Garden Basics](#), for more information.



Marina Madrone, *Arbutus* 'Marina'

by Donna Olson, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

If you're looking for a small- to medium-sized tree (20-40 feet high and wide) for a sunny spot in your garden, Marina Madrone (also known as Marina strawberry tree) might be a good choice for you. It has leathery evergreen leaves and large drooping clusters of urn-shaped pink flowers in fall and winter. The flowers, which are very attractive to hummingbirds, are followed by red and yellow berries that last into late winter. The berries are edible, but very seedy, so might be better left for the birds. The bark is smooth and an attractive mahogany-red. Prune lightly to shape, but also to accentuate the beautiful branches.

Be careful where you plant it, though. It can be messy as it drops bark, leaves, flowers, and berries throughout the year. It would be wise to avoid planting it near paved surfaces such as walkways, driveways or patios. Check out [Roseville Urban Forest Foundation](#) (RUFF) for more details, and some good pictures of the flowers, fruit, and bark.

According to [UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden](#), this tree has low water requirements, once it is established. If you visit the UC Davis Arboretum, this tree can be viewed in the [Arboretum Terrace Garden](#).

[WUCOLS](#) recommends this tree for Sunset Gardening zones 8, 9, and 14 to 24, which may mean that it's not a good choice for the higher elevations in our two counties.



Water-Wise Gardening

Photo and article by Marianne Locher Calhoun, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

A neighbor recently asked me about the expression “water-wise gardening.” My simplistic reply was that it means being thoughtful about the use of water when gardening. Even though Northern California has been fortunate with two snowy/rainy winters in a row, it’s a matter of time before another drought cycle begins. And sometimes there are special circumstances that require cutbacks, such as the recent infrastructure repairs at Lake Spaulding that led to requests by Placer County Water Agency (voluntary) and Nevada Irrigation District (mandatory) for a 20% reduction in water usage. So, let’s be proactive in considering ways to modify our habits and become water-wise gardeners. There are three stages of gardening in which we can become more thoughtful about use of water: before purchasing plants, before planting plants, and before irrigating plants.

Before Purchasing Plants

Before you drive to a nursery to purchase new plants, it’s important to understand that “low water” plants may be different from “drought tolerant” plants. The term drought tolerant on a grower’s label subjectively means the plant should survive when water is restricted. But did you know that gardeners in California are able to select plants that objectively thrive year round with low water?

There is an ever-expanding database, housed at UC Davis, which identifies the water needs of commonly used ornamental plants in California. This [Water Use Classification of Landscape Species/WUCOLS](#) describes 5,000 plants! You can easily input your city plus an ornamental plant’s name to learn if it needs high, moderate, low or very low water in your garden. I appreciate being able to generate a list of low water plants that are cross-indexed with the [UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden’s 100 All-Star plants](#). Please note the Arboretum is well worth the drive to Davis to stroll through its extensive gardens focusing on plants adapted to our Mediterranean climate.

As a fellow Master Gardener recently explained in a presentation, “It is always helpful to visit nurseries that are within your [Sunset zone](#) to obtain appropriate plant information on water, soil, and sun requirements. In addition to expert advice, you are more likely to find plants suited to your area as well as plant labels that may be more applicable.”

If you are interested in low water plants that are native to California, or specifically your zip code, search via California Native Plant Society’s updated website called [Calscape](#). I also encourage you to visit [UC Master Gardeners of Placer County’s new Demonstration Garden](#) at the Loomis Library & Community Learning Center. The garden highlights 200 native and edible plants on 1/3 acre. Gates are open to the public during library hours, yet close at dusk.



The front path separates the moderate water zone, adjacent to house, from low water slope at left.

Before Planting Plants

Another stage of gardening in which we can become more thoughtful about our use of water is before planting plants. Water-wise gardeners have learned to place plants that share the same water and exposure needs together in one area. The landscape design term for this approach is hydrozoning, as “hydro” is the Greek word for water.

Imagine an inverted triangle with one angle beginning at your front door. The smallest portion of this triangle is ideal for plants requiring high water as well as high maintenance such as roses, vegetable gardens, and a small lawn. The largest portion of your property, furthest from your front door, is ideal for being a low water zone with only plants that thrive on low water. Superimpose this imaginary triangle with the reality of your front property.

You may already have become fire-wise by removing large shrubs from within five feet of your house and pruning trees so they don’t overhang your roof. The key to becoming water-wise within an existing landscape is first to identify your trees, their need for water via WUCOLS, and their location on your property. For example, native oak trees are healthiest when very low water herbaceous plants (versus thirsty grass) are placed under their canopy. This information will help you determine which trees you wish to keep and enhance with appropriate plants within a hydrozone. Once you have the contours of several hydrozones based on existing trees, hopefully you can easily relocate perennials and subshrubs so all are grouped appropriately.

When adding low water plants to a (hopefully extensive) low water zone, it’s best to do it in the fall. By allowing their roots to grow over 4-6 months of cooler wetter weather, these plants become established and better able to handle

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the following summer's hot, dry weather. I appreciate that plants grown with low water grow slower and have less maintenance in comparison to high water plants. Modifying the habit of planting plants in the spring, with frequent watering throughout the summer, may be a tough challenge for some gardeners!

Before Irrigating Plants

Now that you've become more thoughtful about the use of water before purchasing and planting plants, let's consider how to become even more water-wise before irrigating plants.

Residential gardeners in El Dorado, Nevada, Placer, and Sacramento counties have a wonderful free irrigation tool for up to ten hydrozones in addition to several tutorial videos. [Sacramento Region's Smart Irrigation Scheduler](#) was created by the Regional Water Authority over 20 years ago so gardeners can create and save watering schedules based on current weather. You'll quickly learn the optimum minutes and cycles to water each zone for the current week, after inputting your gardening situation with zip code, water need of plants, soil, exposure, slope, and irrigation component. I encourage all gardeners to monitor and adjust their irrigation schedule each month as proposed by this Smart Irrigation Scheduler. During our hot summer months, you may want to adjust more frequently.

I especially appreciate clicking on Historical Information and learning the maximum minutes during the hottest month of July. That number becomes the baseline minutes that I enter into my smart controller, so subsequent irrigation is adjusted automatically based on current weather. If you haven't yet upgraded to a smart controller, your irrigation district may be offering a significant rebate. If you don't plan to install a smart controller, you can manually set your baseline to the watering schedule for the hottest month and reduce your watering schedule in the other dry months when it's not as hot.

By incorporating this third water-wise stage of researching and applying the optimum irrigation for each hydrozone, gardeners should be able to relax more during vacations knowing that their plants are thriving. And be proud that they've modified ingrained habits and truly become water-wise gardeners!

References

- *Enhancing Urban Living Through Horticulture*. UC Davis California Center for Urban Horticulture. June 13, 2024. <https://ccuh.ucdavis.edu>
- *Climate-Ready Gardening Toolkit*. UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden. April 12, 2024. <https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/sustainable-gardening-toolkit>
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Dedication of Japanese maple. Photo by Ann Wright.

Master Gardeners of Nevada County Demonstration Garden News

By Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

Despite starting July with scorching triple-digit temperatures, the Demonstration Garden was full of friendship and memories on July 10 when MGNC hosted a dedication and memorial celebration surrounding a recently planted 'Bloodgood' Japanese maple. Dan Macon, our County Director, lost his wife Samia last August, and the Board of the Master Gardeners of Nevada County approved the purchase of a "memorial tree" in honor of Sami. This special dedication was attended by a number of Master Gardeners as well as many staff from the Auburn extension office and CalFresh. Kevin Marini was there as well to recount some wonderful memories of his long association with Dan.

The Japanese maple was planted earlier this spring in a garden space known as the Peace Garden, adjacent to the pergola and water feature. We are hopeful this will be a lovely place to come and sit, rest and reflect on those dear to us who we may have lost, or to just be thankful they are still with us.

In other Demo Garden news, some of the pollinator garden is very much alive and in bloom. The espalier pomegranate has some fruit and catches the eye of many visitors.

We welcome the public to share our beautiful garden at 1036 W. Main St. in Grass Valley. It is generally self-guided, but tours can be arranged by calling 530-273-0919. The garden is open from 8:00 am to 5:00 pm Monday to Friday, and closes at 3:00 pm on weekends.



Breaking News! 2025 Gardening Guide and Calendar is Hot Off the Press!

The theme of this edition is "*Healthy Garden, Healthy You*" and presents the latest and best University of California researched information as you follow the 12-months of in-depth articles and daily tips timed to the changing seasons. Articles include topics such as "*Keys to Healthy Compost*," "*Power Food—Blueberries*," and "*Water + Nature = Stress Relief*." Each article is accompanied by a beautiful local photo.

Every month the reader will learn what to plant during the month and, also what is in season at the local markets. Additional charts, tables, and resources, accompanied by beautiful local photos, provide a wealth of information that any level of gardener will appreciate.

Calendars will be available starting in early September at participating nurseries and businesses in Placer, Nevada, and El Dorado counties, and through the UC Master Gardeners of Placer County website. A list of vendors and how-to-order details can be found at http://pcmg.ucanr.edu/2025_Calendar/.

Insect Bytes: Meet the Spotted Lanternfly

By Bonnie Bradt, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

Right out of the starting gate, spotted lanternflies (SLF) have a confusing story. They are called "flies" but they are not flies. They look like moths, but they are not moths. Their favorite food is a very nasty, highly invasive plant which we would love to control, but we are fighting their spread across the country for all we are worth. OK, let's explain.

Spotted lanternflies (*Lycorma delicatula*) are planthoppers, not flies. Don't know how it got the "fly" designation originally. It is an Asian native, first detected in Pennsylvania in 2014. It has 4 wings (flies have two), but rarely "flies" for extended distance. It jumps, and sometimes uses its wings to help it jump or hop. It lays eggs on anything—telephone poles, stones, pallets, outdoor equipment, firewood, railway cars, vehicles, etc., aiding it in spreading quickly. Adults have not yet appeared in California, though during an inspection at the CA/NV border, eggs were found on an art installation that was being moved to the Bay Area.

It is dramatically colored: yellow and black body, dramatic spotted forewings and screaming red hindwings. But it's a planthopper, not a pretty moth. Moths have a complete life cycle (egg, larva, pupa, adult), but SLF has an incomplete life cycle (egg, nymph, nymph, nymph, adult).

Finally, the favored food of SLF is the invasive "Tree of Heaven" (*Ailanthus altissima*, photo at lower right), which is inexorably spreading out over Nevada and Placer Counties. It is everywhere. But rather than encouraging SLF to come in and help us control that nasty landscape invader, we have to keep SLF out. It may love *Ailanthus*, but it also eats grapes, fruit trees, and landscape trees and would have a huge negative impact on high value crops in California if it gets here. Perhaps you could keep an eye on local *Ailanthus* plants to check for SLF invasions. Call the county Agriculture Inspectors if you see one. We can all help by keeping our eyes open to keep them out.

Read more about these pests [here](#) and [here](#).



Adult Spotted Lanternfly (SLF)
with wings spread.



Spotted lanternfly's life cycle (instars)
with size comparison to a U.S. quarter.



agri-cola, ae *m* tiller of the field, farmer, husbandman
caulis, is *m* stalk, stem of a plant; cabbage
colo, colui, cultum 3 to care for; a) to till, cultivate
farm; b) to tend; *adj*: cultus 3 cultivated, tilled
(culta, orum *n/pl* tilled land, gardens, plantations),
cresco, crevi, (cretum) 3 to grow
cultus *m* cultivation, labor, tilling
land; b) care, training, education
civilization,
florens, tis blooming, flower
floreo, ui 2 to bloom, blossom
flos, oris *m* flower, blossom
fodio, fossom 3 to dig
folium, i *n* leaf
herba, ae *f* grass, herb
hortus, i *m* garden
radix, icis *f* root
viridi- *adj* green
viti-

Corner

BotLat

Red Flag Color

by Peggy Beltramo, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Red flag plants are the focus for this BotLat column. First in line: toyon. It is often seen in “wild patches” alongside the backroads of Placer County in the winter, when the red berries become visible. In fact, there is belief that Hollywood got its name, from the many toyon bushes that were scattered on the hillsides above this new city that were mistaken for holly bushes.

Heteromeles arbutifolia is the BotLat name of this plant. The genus, *Heteromeles*, is a combination of *heteros*, meaning “different” or “varied,” and *melon* or *malus*, meaning apple, pointing to its little apple-shaped fruits. The species, *arbutifolia* refers to leaves (*folia*) shaped like a plant in the *Arbutus* genus. Toyons provide a food source as well as habitat for birds in winter.

Our second red flag plant, also food for birds, is *Toxicodendron diversilobum*. Can you guess the common name of this plant, given the BotLat name? Take the words apart and see what you come up with. Stop reading NOW!

Okay, now check your answer.

The common name for this plant is: ta-dah—poison oak!—a common red flag plant in California. I grew up getting yearly rashes of poison oak, no matter how careful I was. “Leaves of three, let them be!” (They are usually in clusters of three, but may also have 5 or even 7 leaves.)

The genus name, *Toxicodendron*, points to its toxic leaves, and the species name, *diversilobum*, recognizes the varied shapes of the lobed leaves.

Two fall red plants: one to love, one to respect!



Toyon.

Photo by Jack Kelly Clark.

Diagnosing Why a Plant Fails

By Jan Birdsall, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

After all the attention and best efforts to keep your plant surviving, it still lies dying or dead at your feet. Determining the reason it died can be an important source of information for any future plantings. Ask yourself some of the following questions to determine the cause.

If the plant dried out or was overwatered, then it could be your watering system delivering too little or too much water for the plant’s needs—refer to this [irrigation checklist](#). How about too much shade or too much sun beyond its tolerance level? Prior to planting, always determine your [Sunset planting zone](#) and determine the plant’s requirements by reading the information tag furnished with the plant, or go online. Most plants do not like their roots standing in water so be sure the drainage is acceptable. You can do a test by following the directions in [this document](#).

It could be your soil is the problem. Is the soil lacking needed nutrient(s) or is the soil too acidic or alkaline? A soil test conducted from a kit available at most garden centers or online can identify possible nutritional disorders. Amending your soil to balance out those deficiencies will usually correct this problem.

Lastly, pest invasions can be one of the causes of plant failure. Examine the leaves, stem(s) and flowers carefully to determine how, where and what is attacking the plant. Then use the [UC Integrated Pest Management website](#) or the [UC Plant Problem Diagnostic Tool](#) to diagnose and identify the most likely problem(s) that caused the plant to die so you are armed for future issues.



Above: Yellowing of snapdragon foliage caused by a nutritional disorder.

Photo by Jack Kelly Clark.

Below: Necrosis due to sunburn on rhododendron. Photo by Laurence R. Costello.





UC Master Gardeners of Placer County Demonstration Garden News

By Karen Lopez, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Summer in the new Placer County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library brought lots of flowers which in turn attracted a lot of pollinators just as we hoped! We have seen multiple species of native bees, several varieties of birds and many butterflies too. It's nice to see that they appreciate the habitat we are working to build. Our raised vegetable beds are beginning to produce and the straw bale beds are bursting! We did add some strategically placed shade cloth recently to protect some of the more tender vegetables and young fruit trees from the scorching heat. We are pleased to report that the garden is holding up very nicely!

On June 1 we held our first Spring Open House. We welcomed about 150 visitors to the garden on that day. There were activities for the children as well as information tables on several topics including irrigation, tool care, vermiculture and "Ask a Master Gardener". We even had a live band out under the oaks!

It was so much fun that we are going to do it again in the fall! **Please put October 5 on your calendars and plan to attend our first Fall Open House** from 10:00 am to 2:00 pm. This event will be focused on California natives.

On the second Saturday of each month we offer free workshops and "Open Garden Days" when Master Gardeners are available to answer any questions you may have. Visit the [Master Gardeners of Placer County web-site](#) or the [Loomis Library website](#) for details.

We are happy to be a part of the gardening community in Placer County and to be a resource for home gardeners here. Please plan to visit us soon! The garden is open the same hours the library is open so, although we would love to see you at one of our open garden days or special events, you can visit the garden most days of the week.



Pollinator habitat bed. Photo by Sandi Fitzpatrick.

Garden Adventures Video Tour of The Estes Garden in Fall

Join Master Gardener of Placer County Brooke Moeller on a video tour of the gorgeous 1-acre Fall Garden of Keith and Traci Estes in North Auburn by clicking [here](#). This lushly landscaped property is a family playground for adults and grandchildren.

The property features maple, dogwood and ginkgo trees with barberry shrubs. All the leaves are in their glorious fall colors of red, orange and gold.

In this inviting garden are accents, such as bronze statues by famous sculptor Douglas Van Howd, an outdoor kitchen, and many seating areas for family and friends to relax and play. Take a moment to enjoy this delightful garden.

Placer County Farmers Markets

Click [here](#) for full schedule and links to more details.

Roseville Fountains

Tuesdays, through October

Fowler Ranch, Lincoln

1st and 3rd Sundays through mid November

Old Town Courthouse Parking Lot, Auburn

1st and 3rd Saturdays, through October

Sun City Lincoln Hills, Lincoln

2nd and 4th Wednesdays, through September

Nevada County Farmers Markets

Done for the year.

Creating a Pumpkin Succulent Centerpiece

By Michele Rugo, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

Fall is my favorite time of year. Perhaps it's memories of family Thanksgivings together, my New England youth, or simply it being the unofficial start of the holiday season; all inspire me to bring the colors of autumn into my home. And there's no better way to do so than by creating a living pumpkin succulent centerpiece that comes together quickly.

This arrangement will last for weeks on a dining room table or sideboard with bright, indirect light. Place on a thick piece of cardboard cut to shape or a complimentary colored saucer to prevent moisture from damaging furniture and spritz often with water to moisten the moss and help new roots form. Should you choose to display your centerpiece outdoors, be sure to place in a sheltered place to protect it from harsh sun, freezing temperatures, and rain.

Materials Needed

- Pumpkin or gourd (one with a flattened shape works best), stem removed
- Spray adhesive
- Sphagnum moss
- Clear gel crafts glue or hot glue gun and glue sticks
- A collection of small to medium succulents including varying shades of green, red, orange, and yellow. (Keep in mind different shapes, textures and lengths will also add interest)



Succulents arranged on a pumpkin for fall. Photo by Julia Hillier.

Directions

- Apply spray adhesive to coat the pumpkin's top. Make sure the top is thoroughly dry before spraying.
- While spray adhesive is still tacky, place sphagnum moss in a circular pattern to form a 1" layer that covers the pumpkin's surface.
- Beginning in the center, use the clear gel or hot glue to attach the three tallest cuttings into the moss and anchored at the stem base. All cuttings should have short stems to best adhere. Continue arranging cuttings to form rings around the first group, packing tightly. Hens and chicks along with sedums are good choices as they grow slowly, allowing your centerpiece to keep its design shape throughout the season.

- When you're satisfied with your pattern, consider adding one, three or five stems of a more elongated variety such as burro's tail or string of pearls to trail down the sides. (Keep in mind the container garden concept of "Thriller, Filler and Spiller" when arranging.) The overall appearance should be mounded and symmetrical.

When the pumpkin begins to soften, slice off the top few inches containing the succulents in one horizontal section and place in a container filled with succulent potting soil. The pumpkin flesh will in time decompose and the succulents root, providing yet another arrangement for your summer patio or porch.



Follow Master Gardeners on Facebook

Ask home gardening questions, read gardening tips, and find out about our events.

Placer County

<https://www.facebook.com/PlacerCountyMasterGardeners>

Nevada County

<https://www.facebook.com/UCCEmastergardeners.nevadacounty/>



Photo by Elaine Kelly Applebaum.



UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties Workshop and Events Calendar

Always check our websites for the most up to date event information.

Nevada County: ncmg.ucanr.edu

Placer County: pcmg.ucanr.edu

Follow Us on Facebook:

Placer County <https://www.facebook.com/PlacerCountyMasterGardeners>

Nevada County <https://www.facebook.com/UCCEmastergardeners.nevadacounty/>

September

September 14

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Native Plants for Habitat Gardening

Loomis Library

September 14

10:00 am to Noon

Open Garden Day

MGPC Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library

September 21

10:00 am to 11:30 am

Replacing Your Lawn

Roseville Utility Exploration Center
Pre-register in advance by clicking [here](#).

September 21

10:00 am to Noon

Vermiculture

Nevada County Demo Garden

September 28

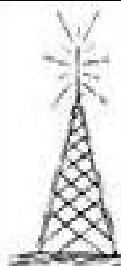
10:00 am to Noon

Best Perennials for Nevada County – Plants for sale!

Nevada County Demo Garden

**Nevada County Events
in Green boxes**

**Placer County Events
in Yellow Boxes**



Master Gardeners and Friends

Radio Talk Show
Saturday 10am to Noon
KNCO 830AM

October

October 5

10:00 am to 2:00 pm

Fall Open House

MGPC Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library

October 5

10:00 am to Noon

Care and Feeding of Garden Tools – New topic!

Nevada County Demo Garden

October 12

10:00 am to Noon

SOS – Save Our Seeds – New topic!

Nevada County Demo Garden

October 12

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Cover Crops

Loomis Library

October 12

10:00 am to Noon

Open Garden Day

MGPC Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library

October 19

10:00 am to 11:30 am

Compost & Mulch

Roseville Utility Exploration Center
Pre-register in advance by clicking [here](#).

October 19

10:00 am to Noon

Growing Berries – Get Ready to Plant in Dec-Feb

Nevada County Demo Garden

November

November 9

10:00 am to Noon

Fruit Tree Pruning

Nevada County Demo Garden

November 9

10:30 am to 11:30 am

Creating Native Bee Habitat

Loomis Library

November 9

10:00 am to Noon

Open Garden Day

MGPC Demonstration Garden at the Loomis Library

November 16

10:00 am to 11:30 am

Bare Root Fruit Tree Care

Roseville Utility Exploration Center
Pre-register in advance by clicking [here](#)

Workshop Location Addresses

Nevada County workshops are held at
The Nevada County Demo Garden on
the NID Grounds, 1036 W. Main Street,
Grass Valley.

Placer County workshops are held at
one of the following:

- **The Loomis Library & Community Learning Center**, 6050 Library Dr., Loomis
- **The Roseville Utility Exploration Center**, 1501 Pleasant Grove Blvd., Roseville
- **The Lincoln Library**, 485 Twelve Bridges Dr., Lincoln.

About UC Master Gardeners

Our mission as University of California Master Gardener volunteers is to extend research-based gardening and composting information to the public through various educational outreach methods. We strive to present accurate, impartial information to local gardeners so they have the knowledge to make informed gardening decisions in regard to plant choices, soil fertility, pest management, irrigation practices, and more.

The Master Gardener volunteer program was started in the early 1970s at Washington State University. Farm Advisors became overwhelmed by all the incoming calls from home gardeners and homesteaders so they trained volunteers to answer these questions and the "Master Gardener Program" was born. The first University of California Master Gardener programs began in 1980 in Sacramento and Riverside counties. The UC Master Gardener of Nevada and Placer Counties Programs began soon thereafter in 1983.

Serving Placer and Nevada Counties for Over 40 Years

Production Information

The Curious Gardener is published quarterly by the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties. All information presented pertains to the climate and growing conditions of Nevada and Placer Counties in California.

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UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Elaine Kelly Applebaum, Production

UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Have a Gardening
Question?

Contact Us!

Placer County Residents

530.889.7388

or contact us through
our [website](#) or [Facebook](#)

Nevada County Residents

530.273.0919

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Agriculture and Natural Resources

UC Master Gardener Program

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