



Does Your Garden Need a Makeover?

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Does your garden need a makeover? Mine does! I remember starting with a landscape design almost twenty years ago, but you couldn't tell that now. I am the kind of gardener that gets a new plant and then walks around the yard until I find a bare spot, and that's its new home. I tend to grow plants that reseed themselves and I know I don't need all those hollyhocks, larkspur, or amaranth, but I don't want to pull them out until they are finished blooming and unfortunately by then they have spread more seeds. Even if your garden is more orderly than mine, it will still benefit from a makeover and fall is the time to do it.

After four years of drought it's easy to tell which plants are the keepers and which ones are struggling and need to go. We are all hoping for more rain this winter, but this is not our first drought and it won't be our last, so why not plant a garden that will look good in the bad years and great in the rainy years. How do you start? I'd start by deciding what plants give you the most joy in your garden with the least amount of work and water and I'd keep them. I'd remove the plants that are poor performers. Just because you are removing a plant, it doesn't mean another one needs to go in its place! A little space around your plants can be a good thing.

If you want to buy new plants the "All-Stars" are a good place to start looking. What are All-Stars? This is taken from the Arboretum All-Stars web site. "The horticultural staff of the UC Davis Arboretum have identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested in the Arboretum, are easy to grow, don't need a lot of water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants and support native

birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California." The All-Stars website http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx has a database to help you find the right plants for your garden. This is very useful site but I have one complaint, they don't tell you the USDA hardiness zones. <http://planthardiness.ars.usda.gov/PHZMWeb/>. So, before you fall in love with a plant, be sure that it will grow in your zone.

The All-Stars site also gives you a list of nurseries that sell them and the dates of the plant sales at UC Davis. Other sources for great water-wise plants are your neighbors, local nurseries, and your Master Gardeners. My challenge to you is take a look at your garden today. If it needs a makeover, now is the time to do it and you won't be alone as I'll be doing my garden, too.

UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County are here to answer your gardening questions!

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