

January 1, 2020



## Wintertime: Musing Ahead For Your Gardening Year

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UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

Splendid quiet and peaceful calm in winter can make this season a favorite. Snow or rain, it's all good—you are snug inside with enough gathered moments to make some gardening resolutions. How about these?

- Research before purchasing. Nurseries often purchase plants in lots from a different growing zone, sometimes from the cool, foggy coast. Ensure that the needs of your purchase match your zone. When checking favorite garden books and catalogues, note the zone in which those enchanting flowers grow ideally, so to avoid disappointment next season. Master Gardeners use several websites for research, like WUCOLS, the State of California water use site which lists only drought-tolerant plants (<https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/>). You may want to check the expansive Calflora site (<https://www.calflora.org//app/ipl?list>) which includes alerts to naturalized and non-native plants which may become invasive. An example is the Chinese pistache (*Pistacia chinensis*). After growing a decade, this beautiful tree may shed thousands of seeds, requiring you forever after to pull seedlings annually. Another example: Beautiful little violets, shaded and safe, will soon march determinedly over other ground covers, hogging soil and water, and establish themselves wherever, unwanted, they decide to thrive.
- Have some fun with your research and challenge yourself to experiment. Try a few new beauties matched to your garden, like Allium bulbs in massive globes of purple or like bright yellow drumstick flowers (a *Craspedia* bulb also known as Billy Buttons or wollyhead). Billy Buttons is an Australian native so we know this perennial will thrive in our Mediterranean climate. Questions? Don't forget that there are on-call specialists on the UCCE Master Gardener hotline, or email questions to our website (details in italics below).

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- Try propagation. Plan to dig up those stubborn violets and make a note to plant them elsewhere in fair weather. (In propagation terms, this is “division”). Design a “grow space” indoors, outfitted with hanging lamps and heated mats, and be the first to plant February tomato seeds. Visit our office (address below) to grab your copy of the 2020 free MG public education class list. Classes cover a plethora of gardening topics. One is Propagation from Seed and another covers division and cuttings.
- Design your ideal potting and gardening tool space. Survey your tools and supplies for the new year, retrieving those items that may have scattered, perched on snowy fence posts, hidden in planter boxes, or been borrowed by a husband. Sand, oil, and sharpen tools in readiness. Stick shovel/hoe/cultivator/lopper tips into a pail of sand and oil to clean and scour them. Put all this in a space under cover from summer sun and winter rain and snow so it’s in one place, ready to go.
- Note enthusiastic plant growth and pay attention to that gardening calendar. The spare nature of the winter garden makes tree and shrub shapes very apparent, so it’s easy to decide where to prune when spring arrives or if a fair day in wintertime happens. In looking at a liquidambar’s (American sweetgum or *Liquidambar styraciflua*) bare branches, I see an invader, the Sweetbriar rose (*Rosa rubiginosa*), her spiny tendrils climbing up the supportive tree branches. Since it’s possible to differentiate between rose and liquidambar when the leaves of both are gone, I will unwind tendrils and cut back the rose back by snipping off rose branch tips (also the proper pruning technique for a climbing rose). One caveat: check the gardening calendar on <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/> (click on Gardening Resources, then Monthly Gardening Tips) to verify what and when to prune so that you do not impede bloom.

Perhaps these suggestions will motivate you, while housebound in this quiet wintertime, to dream and plan your 2020 garden. If you are interested in more ideas, all Master Gardener articles like this one are archived on our website. And be sure to explore the research links listed on the same site.

Join the Master Gardeners on Saturday, January 4, at 9:15 a.m. for a tour of the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville. The Garden is open to the public first and second Saturdays of each month from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, through the winter.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512), or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration\\_Garden](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden) for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see [http://ucanr.edu/master\\_gardener\\_e-news](http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news). Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.