Master Gardener
University of California Cooperative Extension

The Curious Gardener

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In This Issue

UC CE

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Agriculture and Natural Resources

A Garden Bouquet

By Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

There is something very special about a spectacular arrangement of cut flowers—particularly from your own garden. A delight to the senses, a bouquet of cut flowers can brighten up a room, cheer up a friend, or help celebrate a special occasion. Plus, they make people happy! Cut flowers can be enjoyed almost year-round, depending on what's blooming in the garden.

Flowers also nurture a garden by attracting pollinating bees, butterflies and other creatures like birds and beneficial insects. As more people are spending time at home in their gardens, growing flowers specifically for cutting seems to be on the upswing.

To establish a cutting garden, it is important to have a plan—do you want or have room to devote an area strictly for cutting flowers, or do you want to incorporate flowers into an existing area? Keep in mind where the flowers will be planted. Whether in raised beds, in the ground, in containers or pots, consider the sun exposure and source for water. Also, good soil health will be the start to healthy flowers! Add organic matter to the soil—such as compost, worm castings (vermicompost), or aged manure.

Photo by Patricia Wolfe, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

Preparing the location for a cutting garden may be the easiest part of the project. Selecting the plants might be a bit harder—there are so many flowering plants from which to choose! First, consider the life cycle of the plant—is it annual, biennial or perennial? Annuals are plants that complete their life cycle within one year, hence "annual". This means that the seed germinates, the plant grows and blooms, then the blooms go to seed and the plant dies. Annuals are reliable bloomers and because their life cycle is short-lived, they grow and bloom fairly rapidly. When spent blossoms are trimmed off, the plant generally sets

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more blooms to promote more seed production. Some popular annuals include sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, asters, stock, sweet peas, and strawflowers.

Biennials are plants that complete a life cycle in two years. The first year, the plant grows leaves, stems and other vegetative structures. Following dormancy, the stem of the biennial plant elongates, blooms, and produces fruit and seed before dying. Familiar biennials include foxglove, hollyhock, and sweet William.

Perennials are plants that live more than two years—they will grace our gardens year after year. Examples of some popular ornamental perennials are peony, Shasta daisy, dahlia and lilac.

Once flowers are ready to cut, the fun of the harvest begins! Flowers should be cut as early in the morning or late in the day as possible. Never cut flowers in the heat of the day, as they are more water stressed and may not hydrate properly if cut when it's hot. Select flowers just beginning to open and once cut, put immediately into a clean bucket of cool water. They will need to be trimmed again at a sharp angle, under water, helping preserve the freshness and longevity of the flowers.

Containers for displaying the arrangements should be clean—using soap and water to wash away any bacteria or fungi lingering in the container. (Sanitize hard to clean containers by using a 1:10 ratio of household bleach to water, followed by thorough rinse.) If using treated city water for bouquets, allow the water to sit out overnight to allow chlorine to dissipate. Do not use softened water as it is too high in sodium for cut flowers. Refresh the water in the vase every two days.

To learn more about how to start flower seeds to grow your own beautiful cutting flowers, watch the recorded virtual workshop, **Flowers 101—From Seed to Vase** presented in August 2020. The workshop recording is accessible from the Master Gardener of Nevada County website at http://ncmg.ucanr.org/On-Line_Workshops_and-_Videos/Growing_Flowers/. The workshop includes a demonstration of seed planting, transplanting seedlings, and specific hints on growing cosmos, zinnias and dahlias. Presenters will also demonstrate a simple flower arrangement you can make with common plant material in your yard in combination with your newly grown flowers.

References

- Geisel, Pamela and Carolyn Unruh. *Extending the Freshness of Cut Flowers at Home*. UCANR. Publication 8113. 2004. https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8113.pdf.
- Moore, Carol. *Creating a Cut Flower Garden*. UCCE Master Gardeners of San Luis Obispo County. 2019. https://ucanr.edu/sites/mgslo/files/303931.pdf.


Photo by Julie Lowrie

Unusual Edibles: A Sorrel by Any Other Name

By Julie Lowrie, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

While sporting a bloody botanical name, *Rumex sanguineus* is commonly referred to as blood sorrel, bloody dock, bloodwort, red veined sorrel or red veined dock because of its eye-catching deep green leaves marked by dark red to purple veins that can be easily grown in your garden and sprinkled into your dinner salad mix. Its young leaves contain less oxalic acid and taste similar to spinach, while the older leaves can be sauteed and eaten like chard or spinach. Bloody dock hails from European roots when it was brought to New England by arriving English colonists who then subsequently planted and raised this perennial herb in their early gardens.

Because of its uniquely striking foliage, bloody dock is a very versatile ornamental perennial that can be used in rain gardens, ornamental ponds and container water gardens, as well as an edging or accent plant in borders, ornamental herb or vegetable gardens. Bloody dock does not require a lot of maintenance and performs best in full sun to partial shade in average to moist soil. If being placed in a bog, pond or water garden environment, bloody dock will perform well with the plant crown placed above the water.

So, consider adding the striking look of bloody dock to your garden this year and enjoy its leaves as a tasty condiment in your salad or as a sauteed substitute for spinach or chard. Either way, bloody dock will not disappoint!

For more information, click here.

How to Garden in the Most Unlikely Spaces!

By Jan Birdsall, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Container gardening allows you to plant flowers and vegetables without being limited by your lack of garden space or negative environmental conditions. For instance, pots can be placed under windows, at door steps, sunny decks and/or shady patios. Need full sun for your tomatoes? No problem, use a 5-gallon container and move it to where your yard receives full sun.

You can use almost any container you can imagine as long as it is deep enough to accommodate the root system of the plants you are using. Depending on your needs, whether vegetable or flower, there is a wide selection of containers on the market including ceramic, terra cotta, plastic, and wood (such as cedar boxes or wine barrels). Some clever ideas for containers include but are not limited to: old wheelbarrows, old canning pots, even old shoes or boots. If storage space is limited, there are even new various size reusable and collapsible non-woven fabric grow bags that allow aeration.

A container of ten inches wide and deep is the bare minimum size for a single small plant. Even larger containers are better suited for several plants or ones with longer/larger root size requirements such as tomatoes and bushes. However, they can be heavier to move around. Thoroughly scrub used containers and then use a solution of nine parts water to one part household bleach or use non-bleach disinfectant spay. Make sure there are adequate drainage holes or add them yourself by punching or drilling.

Do not use your own yard soil to fill your containers since plants in containers need a more porous mixture to ensure good drainage and air flow around roots. Also, soil from the garden may introduce disease, insects and weed seeds. Always use a commercial "potting mix". Add liquid, dry or time release fertilizer(s) as suited to the plants in your container and apply every two to three weeks thereafter, or use potting soil with controlled release type fertilizer already in the mix.

Dampen potting soil before planting and water thoroughly once you have finished setting in the container plant(s). Add mulch to the surface to delay loss of moisture. Total height should be one to two inches lower than the rim of the container. Check daily for container moisture by inserting a finger one to two inches into top of surface. If it is dry, water until it drains through bottom holes. Better yet, install an in-line water timer and drip sprayer system using a hose from the nearest faucet. Contact your nursery for tips on how to set up your water system.

Whether you are planting flower or vegetable seeds, the seed packages contain information about when to plant, how long to germination, spacing needs and, in the case of vegetables, how long before harvest. If desiring a colorful flower container, use your favorite complimentary color combinations to match your pot or try different leaf color, shapes and textures to make a unique statement. Another flower container design idea is using the "thrill, spill and fill" plan. Use a tall, unique plant in the middle of the pot surrounded by several clumping plants and another one or two plants that trail over the sides.

Whether planting vegetables or colorful flowers, you can claim a little of nature in the most unlikely spots using containers to your advantage.

References:

- *Getting Started with Container Gardening*. UCANR Nutrition Best Gardening #191401. n.d. http://ucanr.edu/sites/Nutrition_BEST/files/191401.pdf.
- Milnes, Sara. *Outdoor Container Flower Gardening*. UCANR Garden Notes blog #46263. 2021. https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=46263.
- Brenzel, Kathleen Norris. Sunset Western Garden Book. Sunset Publishing Company. 2007.

Garden Design: Where Do I Start?

By Annette Wyrick, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

During the past year, we have been at home more and this has given us an opportunity to look at and use our gardens throughout the seasons. While the garden has become a way to expand living space, it may not be living up to your expectations. You may have a small area that needs a new planting design or you have thought about a complete redesign of your entire yard. Summer is a great time to prepare for a design by taking a site inventory and analyzing existing conditions for problems or potential.

The first phase is to gather basic information about your site. A plat, a map of your residence and property lines, may be obtained from your county's surveying and mapping department. The county will have information on setbacks, easements and rights-of-way on your property. If you live within a HOA, obtain information on landscape covenants.

Continuing to gather information, you will take photos and measurements of your site. Shooting "before" photos of your home's exterior walls and existing hardscape will be a helpful reminder of the materials and patterns already existing in your garden. Taking photos from each window or door into the garden will show you the primary views. Maybe you will find views you can borrow beyond your property line.

After taking photos, it is a good time to draw a sketch of your property. Start with a bird's eye view of your residence and property lines. Record measurements for these first. Depending on how large and detailed your landscape is, you may need to sketch sections on separate sheets of paper. Sketch other structures (sheds, garage, etc.), existing hardscape (paths, patios, pools, etc.), utilities (septic/leach zone, propane, power lines, water meter, etc.), and plants.

Next is measuring the existing elements of your site. Start by checking the location of your residence in relation to the property lines. Sometimes the actual build differs from the plat.

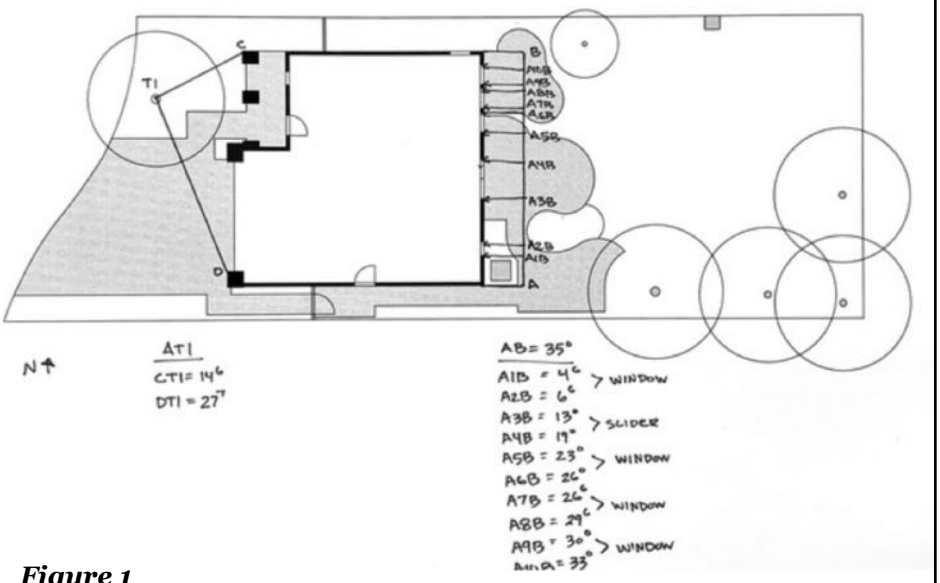

Figure 1
Plan by Annette Wyrick

The corners of the property are usually indicated with a stake in the ground, mark in concrete, or other similar indications. If you are uncertain where the property lines are, seek the help of a surveyor.

The two most common types of measurements are baseline and triangulation. Baseline measurements are running measurements between two fixed points. An example of where you would use this is along a wall or a fence. Triangulation measurements are used to locate one unknown point from two fixed or reference points. These are very useful in determining tree locations and curvilinear hardscape designs. See **Figure 1** for an example of baseline and triangulation measurements. For more detailed information on measurement methods, visit https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP427.

Other useful data to collect is the distance from ground level to the bottom of windows, plant names and diameters, tree trunk diameter, canopy radius, height to canopy, root zone conditions, structural and hardscape materials and heights from ground level, and architectural style of home.

Now you are ready to sit down and draw a scaled base map from your measurements. A scaled base map is important in determining space available for hardscape and plant areas. There are many applications available to create digital plans, but there is generally a learning curve to use them. Traditionally, drawings are on 24" x 36" paper. Use your sketch and measurements to create your scaled drawing. Label your drawing, write down the scale used, and indicate the north direction.

While taking measurements in the garden, you will have already begun the process of site analysis. The purpose of analysis is to determine what is a problem or has potential. Problem areas can be corrected in the new design and areas with potential can be further developed. The following should be analyzed: soil, drainage, sun/shade patterns, wind direction, plants, views, sounds, and smells. Soil samples should be collected and sent for analysis. When it is time to create a

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planting plan, select appropriate plants for the type of soil you have. Plants may give clues to soil conditions such as poor drainage. Proper drainage is very important in the landscape. Water should move away from structures and be directed to other areas for percolation into the soil. Sloped areas should be analyzed for degree of steepness, stability and water runoff. The north arrow on your map will be helpful as you think about how the sun and shade patterns change throughout the year. Microclimates, such as those created by reflected heat and light, or deep shade on the north side of structures, will influence activity areas and plant choices. While there may be a prevailing wind direction, it will be influenced by plants, structures, and open areas. Plants should be evaluated for health, function, and aesthetic purposes. Views, sounds, and smells will affect the placement of activity areas. To complete the site analysis, you need to create a design brief which lists everything you want to accomplish in your garden as well as the style. Think about activity spaces, circulation of people, views/screening, and what needs to be added or removed.

The next step is to make a copy of the base map and add site analysis notes to it. See **Figure 2** for an example of site analysis.

Garden design is a process of taking a site inventory, analysis, and using design principles with creativity to create a space that fulfills the majority of your desires. Creating a base map and site analysis are the first steps of the process. These first steps will prepare you to make decisions and get the creativity flowing for the next part of the design process.

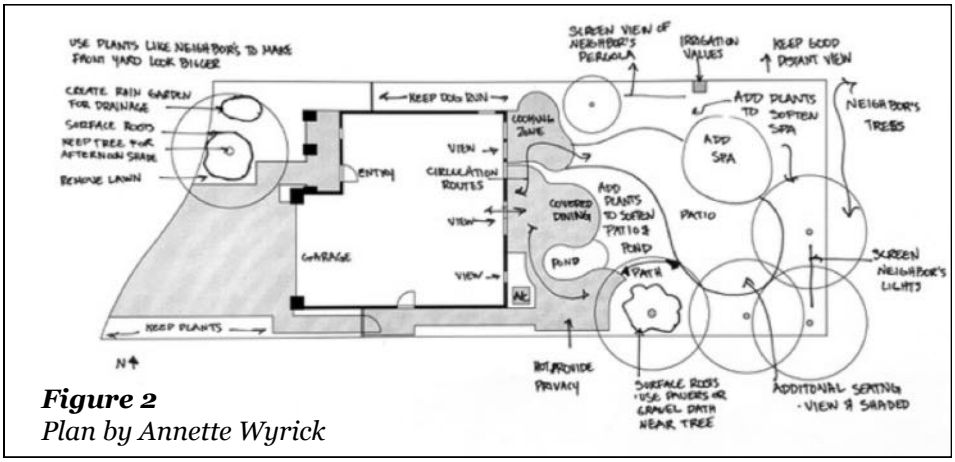


Figure 2
Plan by Annette Wyrick

References/Resources

- *Landscape Design: Analyzing Site Conditions*. University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. 2021. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP426
- *Landscape Design: Putting Your Yard on Paper- Site Measurements and Base Maps*. University of Florida, Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. 2021. https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/publication/EP427

Photos by Ann Wright

Nevada County Demonstration Garden News

By Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

"Restoring nature one garden at a time" has been a recent motivation for a team of Nevada County Master Gardeners (NCMGs) with a vision for the symbiotic relationship between native plants and birds. Plans have been initiated to develop a new interpretive sign for the Demo garden. The sign will provide information about the benefits of native plants which support the biodiversity required to draw our feathered friends. The sign is being designed by an excited team of NCMGs who have met via Zoom a number of times, developing informational panels with focus on gardening strategies for saving ecosystems and the importance of native plants to support the native birds. Information has also been gleaned with input from interpretive specialists from the Cornell Department of Ornithology. Standards are being developed for future signage as well, to bring uniformity and cohesiveness to our public presentation for each area of our garden.

General maintenance has included much needed repair of the cottage steps along with a new handrail and skirting. Paint will follow. Irrigation systems have been fixed, and weeding (which has been a big need this season, since we have been at a distance, but the weeds didn't know) has been ongoing. The hoop house has been a busy area with many seedlings for the spring plant sale. New gravel will soon be delivered and spread on walkways. Currently, mandates require a ten-person maximum in the garden, so it remains closed to the public; Master Gardeners are asked to sign up for work in the garden to allow fewer than ten in the garden at a time.

BotLat Corner

Poetry in the Garden

By Peggy Beltramo, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

"Summer is a'comin' in", so I thought some poetry appropriate for this column after last issue's unpronounceable plant names. Two names that roll poetically off the tongue are selections for this BotLat column.

First, my all-time favorite BotLat name to say is *Verbena lilacina* 'De la Mina', commonly called lilac verbena, but who can resist that BotLat name? (Pictured below) *Verbena,* in Latin, signifies a sacred bough, indicating religious or medicinal qualities of this genus. *Lilacina,* the specific epithet, speaks to its purple color, and 'De la Mina' is the cultivar, named in honor of the canyon on Cedros Island off Baja, Mexico where this variety was discovered. Find out more about this plant at Santa Barbara Botanical Gardens.

A second poetic name was hard to choose, but I chose it for more than its name. Lemon verbena, *Aloysia triphylla*, is considered to be the 'queen' of lemon herbs in the kitchen. It is also known as *Aloysia citriodora*. I will tell you the etymology of the genus, *Aloysia,* and you can take a stab at figuring out the two specific epithets. *Aloysia* is in honor of Maria Luisa, princess of Parma, wife of King Carlos IV of Spain. Aloysia is thought to be a diminutive of Luisa. Now, it's your turn: *triphylla* or *citriodora?*

Triphylla, signifies the placement of three (tri-) leaves (phylla) in a whorl around the stem, and *citriodora* translates to lemon-scented. How did you do with figuring out the meanings? There is more information about lemon verbena here.

Consider these two plants for your garden, so you have a reason to say their names when you pass by.

Photo by Elaine Kelly Applebaum

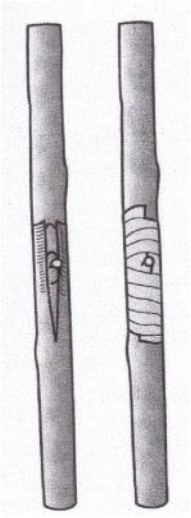
Grafting Roses

By Ann Beinhorn, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Want to graft roses at home? You may want to reproduce your roses by using a favorite floribunda or hybrid tea cultivar. From August to early fall, you can try budding the rose. (Don't choose rose cultivars protected by a patent.)

Grafting is a process of propagation whereby a part of one plant is inserted into or onto another plant to produce a single plant. The rootstock ("stock"), is chosen for the proven ability to thrive locally, and resist some pests. The "scion" of the same genus, is a branch with dormant buds that will produce stems and branches of the new desired plant.

T-budding is a preferred method for grafting because it can be done in several places on a rootstock. The scion is chosen from a previously-flowering stem. Use a very sharp, thin knife. Sanitize tools in alcohol before making your cuts; work away from heat. Find an area on the stem for your bud; remove leaves. You will cut out a scion piece through the bark including the bud; remove outer bark.



T-bud graft. Graphic from California Master Gardener Handbook, 2nd Ed. page 139.

Fortuniana is a vigorous stock rose that is well-adapted to our climate. Near the base of the healthy, well-watered stock plant, you will choose a straight stem, up to one inch in diameter, with smooth bark onto which you'll graft. Cut a "t"-shaped cut through the bark of the rootstock; pull out the sides of the "t" to fit over the scion bud piece. When in good contact, the bud union should be tightly covered by a grafting tape, exposing just the bud for future growth. Afterward, keep hydrated and protect from wind. Between three weeks later and the following spring, remove the tape. Click here to see a video recording of this process.

Hesperaloe parviflora
Coral Yucca

by Brooke Moeller, UC Master Gardener of Placer County


Photo by Fritz Hockstatter

This plant is full of surprises. Although its common name is coral yucca, it is not really a yucca. It's a succulent in the Asparagaceae family, the same as asparagus.

Coral yucca is native to the hot, dry desert in western Texas and northeastern Mexico. Despite being able to grow with little water in harsh conditions, its bright red, pink, and coral bell-shaped flowers bloom from July through November. Hummingbirds and butterflies as well as deer are attracted to their lovely, tall flower spikes.

Coral yucca grows in clumps. It has narrow, strap-like leaves that tend to grow in an arched shape. The blue-green foliage is adorned with thread-like fringe on the edges. Since it is not a yucca, there are no thorns on the leaves. It grows to three to four feet tall and spreads to six feet in width.

Once established, this plant needs little attention or water; and over watering will cause fungal root rot. It has few insect problems although its blooming flowers may attract aphids. You can improve this plant's appearance by removing the spent flower spikes in the fall.

Coral yucca looks great in a large container, or in a Mediterranean rock garden with other low water, sun-loving plants, or grasses. Or you can plant them in a dense border to create a dramatic statement. Try some coral yucca in your garden and you will be pleasantly surprised.

For more information and photos click on the links below.

https://landscapeplants.oregonstate.edu/plants/hesperaloe-parviflora

http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/PlantFinder/PlantFinderDetails.aspx?taxonid=281957&=

https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ornamentals/nativeshrubs/hesperaloeparviflor.htm

What's up with all the caterpillars and moths I saw this spring?

By Elaine Kelly Applebaum, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Populations of caterpillars and moths, like most everything in nature, vary naturally from year to year. If queries to our local master gardeners are any indication, you are not alone in thinking there were a lot more than usual.

Some of the most common culprits in our area are the many types of leafrollers which attack ornamental landscape trees, our native oaks, and some fruit trees. Though the amount of leaf damage from the larval form (caterpillars) of these moths can be alarming, healthy trees will recover quickly from even the worst defoliation. According to the UC Davis IPM Pestnote, "sprays for leafrollers seldom are necessary... Because the fruittree leafroller—the most common leafroller attacking oak and other ornamentals—has only one generation a year, by the time trees are severely defoliated, the caterpillar stage might be almost completed, and sprays will be of no benefit."

The Pestnote provides a great deal of information on how to identify and manage leaf rollers. Try to look on the bright side: after making your trees temporarily ugly, many of those caterpillars became much needed food for baby songbirds.

Hotline FAQs

Have gardening questions?
Contact a Master Gardener!

Placer County
530-889-7388
or submit a question electronically

Nevada County
Office closed due to COVID-19 testing site. Contact us through our Facebook page or submit a question electronically

Events Calendar

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the top priority of UC Master Gardeners remains the health and safety of our communities. At the time of publication, in compliance with CDC, state, and county guidance, the UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have suspended all in-person public workshops, events, and activities until further notice. Please visit our websites for the most up-to-date information.

Upcoming Virtual Workshops (via Zoom)

June

June 5
9:00 – 10:00 am
Integrated Pest Management for Modern Gardeners Part 2
ncmg.ucanr.org

June 12
9:00 – 10:00 am
Softwood Propagation
ncmg.ucanr.org

June 12
10:30 – 11:30 am
Splendid World of Succulents
pcmg.ucanr.org

June 19
9:00 – 10:00 am
Container Gardening
ncmg.ucanr.org

June 26
9:00 – 10:00 am
Garden Makeover: Lawn to Landscape
ncmg.ucanr.org

June 26
10:30 – 11:30 am
Native Plants for Habitat Gardening
pcmg.ucanr.org

July

July 10
9:00 – 10:00 am
Weeds: The Good, Bad, Ugly
ncmg.ucanr.org

July 24
10:00 am
Growing Winter Vegetables
pcmg.ucanr.org

August

August 7
9:00 – 10:00
Seed Saving
ncmg.ucanr.org

August 21
9:00 – 10:00 am
Compost is the Gardener's Best Friend
ncmg.ucanr.org

August 21
10:00 am
Gardening with Native Plants
pcmg.ucanr.org

August 28
9:00 – 10:00 am
Growing Cool Season Vegetables
ncmg.ucanr.org

As pandemic restrictions are subject to change,
Always Check Our Websites for the Most Up to Date Event Information

Nevada County:
ncmg.ucanr.org

Placer County:
pcmg.ucanr.org

September

September 4
Bite Me! Tomato Tasting & Open House Event
ncmg.ucanr.org

September 11
9:00 – 10:00 am
It's Alive! Soil Building
ncmg.ucanr.org

September 11
10:00 am
Wild Wanderers: Plant Thugs, Multipliers and Invasives
pcmg.ucanr.org

September 18
9:00 – 10:00 am
How to Be a Backyard Carbon Gardener
ncmg.ucanr.org

September 25
10:00 am
Roses
pcmg.ucanr.org

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

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

About 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 the 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 Nevada County and Placer County Master Gardener Programs began soon thereafter in 1983.

Over 35 Years of Serving Placer and Nevada Counties

Production Information

The Curious Gardener is published quarterly by the University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties.

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Have a Gardening Question?

Call our Hotline

Placer County Residents
530.889.7388

Nevada County Residents
Nevada County office closed due to COVID-19 testing site. Contact us through our website or Facebook

Master Composter Rotline
530.889.7399

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All information presented pertains to the climate and growing conditions of Nevada and Placer Counties in California.