

Meetings and Announcements

Annual Winter Pruning Demonstrations--Soon

We plan to hold our annual winter pruning demonstrations for deciduous fruit trees and grapes Thursday, January 18 and Friday, January 19, 2024. The location, as usual, the UC Cooperative Extension office orchard, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Ave. Time: noon to 1:30 pm each day. Rain or shine. No charge and no pre-registration. Come one, come all.

Master Gardener Program

UC Cooperative Extension in Kern County has received funding for a Master Gardener (MG) coordinator. The funding cycle began Oct. 1, and the wheels are turning to hire a coordinator. The timeline suggests we would begin the MG program next fall. The MG program offers classroom instruction in horticulture with a required volunteer-hour component. We have not had an MG program in Kern Co. since ca. 1993, when we moved to an educational outreach in horticulture without the volunteer component. I don't have plans for a horticulture class this spring and likely not until the MG program begins.

Next Horticultural Tour

Yes, we are working on an itinerary to northern Spain and Portugal in early autumn, 2024. The likely start date would be either September 8 or 15, depending on hotel availability and other logistics. We had a very good horticulture tour visit to Madrid and southern Spain a few years ago, so this itinerary would take us to areas we have not previously visited on a horticulture tour.

Annual Landscape Management Seminar—is no more

The 40th Annual Landscape Management Seminar was held February 16, 2023, at Hodels in Bakersfield. I do not plan another seminar for 2024 or the future. I want to thank Darrell Feil and Abate-a-Weed for co-sponsoring this meeting for at least the past 20 years.

Those Fallen Leaves

The Wall Street Journal, Friday, Dec. 29, 2023, carried a front-page story, "Meet the Neighbors Who Actually Want Your Fallen Leaves." The subhead is "Leaf thieves roam streets for what they say is a valuable resource, sparking confusion." The article went on to discuss the benefit of leaves as mulch. One person "rescued" 35 bags of leaves from his neighborhood one morning. After the word gets out, people may bring bags of leaves to a

collector, who distributes them at home into gardens. Those fallen leaves can work well in a garden of native plants. St. Francis (see previous Greenscene) would be pleased.

Rule of the Superbowl

As a reminder, spring-germinating weeds, in particular crabgrass, can often be managed with pre-emergent herbicides, but to be effective these materials must be applied before germination has progressed.

Crabgrass is one of the most common weeds in turf in the Bakersfield area. Because it is an annual, it grows from seed each year. Therefore, its biology offers an opportunity to suppress it as it is becoming established, specifically through the use of a pre-emergent herbicide.

In the Bakersfield area, crabgrass seed begins to germinate around the first week of February. That is well ahead of the time bermudagrass and other warm season grasses emerge from dormancy, so crabgrass can have a month or more without competition from other plants. There are several products on the market that can be used with bermudagrass or tall fescue (be sure to check the label!) that will suppress crabgrass but not injure the underlying turf. However, most of these herbicides have little post-emergent activity; that is, they are not effective against established plants. If applied too late, they will not be effective.

By some quirk of fate, the playing of the Superbowl and crabgrass germination occur about the same time in Bakersfield and the southern San Joaquin Valley. So, a handy way to remember when to apply a pre-emergent herbicide is to associate its application with the game. If one does that, the herbicide will not be applied too late.

John Karlik

Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

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