

Garden Planning

By Christine Flagler

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

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When I opened a social media page this morning, with a dusting of snow on the ground outside my window, this quote popped up from *The Country Garden* by Josephine Nuese, “Anyone who thinks that gardening begins in the spring and ends in the fall is missing the best part of the whole year. For gardening begins in January, begins with the dream.” She, like me, I discovered, wrote for her local weekly paper, which makes her a kindred spirit.

Seed and gardening catalogs land in our mailboxes this time of year to inspire our garden planning and buying. We have to be careful to remember what Master Gardeners have learned in their excellent training. Be sure to choose the right plant for the right place. Using this principle can save you heartache down the road. The right plant in the right place can minimize maintenance. Consider the shape of the plant and its mature size, think about its color and texture. Think about how the plant may add winter interest with its evergreen or bare branching properties. Consider and research how it looks at other seasons of the year.



Tracking the sun hours in your garden space as it moves across at different times of the year can help with planning. You can start this month with noticing how little sun you may have on these short days of the year. The sun will increase slowly until it reaches its zenith at Summer Solstice around June 21. To have a successful summer garden you need at least 6-8 hours of sun in the summer months.

We probably want diversification in our gardens (*CA Master Gardeners Handbook Second Edition*, pp .224). Adding flowering plants to a garden can increase floral and nectar sources for beneficial insects that provide biological control of pest insects. It’s popular to call this “companion planting” but many companion plantings are not scientifically proven. When planning your vegetable garden, you want to make sure you rotate your crops. If you planted tomatoes in one garden box one year you don’t want to plant tomatoes a second year. This also goes for cucurbits (melons and cucumbers).

Measuring the space you have available for your garden can be helpful in planning. Making a sketch on graph paper or drawing paper filling in how much space a mature plant may take up may save you from having to physically move it later!

Some beautiful concept words to think about when planning a garden might include: Scale. Proportion. Balance. Perspective. Unity. Repetition. Rhythm. Simplicity. Harmony. Accent. Dominance. And contrast.

I hope these words inspire you to dream your own dream of a garden. You may be planning a garden for the first time or for the seventy-fifth time. May it bring you joy through all the seasons of the year.

Master Gardener classes are offered monthly throughout the county. You can find our class schedule at:

http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education_Classes/?calendar=yes&g=56698, and recorded classes on many gardening topics here:

http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Public_Education/Classes/

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is open through winter with limited hours. Please check our website for further information about activities at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden at: https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/Demonstration_Garden/

Have a gardening question? Master Gardeners are working hard to answer your questions. Use the “Ask a Master Gardener” option on our website: mgeldorado.ucanr.edu or leave a message on our office telephone: 530-621-5512. We’ll get back to you! Master Gardeners are also on Facebook, Instagram, and Pinterest.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news.