THE YOLO GARDENER

Spring 2024

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY THE UCCE. MASTER GARDENERS OF YOLO COUNTY

Please Help Us Spread the Word! Responses Needed for a Survey of Landscape Professionals

Joanna Solins, Environmental Horticulture Advisor and Karey Windbiel-Rojas, Urban Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Advisor

Do you hire anyone to work in your home landscape? Do you work as a landscape professional or have friends or neighbors who work in landscaping? We'd greatly appreciate your help in getting the word out about our survey!

As University of California Cooperative Extension advisors in Environmental Horticulture and Urban IPM for Yolo County, it's our mission to provide resources, education, and training on best practices for landscape professionals who work in this area. We've developed a survey to help us understand what resources would be most valuable, and now we need to hear from as many landscape professionals as possible: landscape contractors, maintenance gardeners, landscape architects, landscape designers, and any others who provide landscaping, gardening, and irrigation services.

Would you be able to share the survey with anyone you know who works in those fields? The survey is available in both English and Spanish at the following link or via the QR codes below:

https://ucanr.edu/survey2024

In English:

[QR Code]

En español:

[QR Code]

Continued on next page

Vol. XVIII, No. i

Survey responses will be kept confidential. To express our gratitude for completing the survey, we are offering respondents a fee waiver of up to $40 to attend a University of California Cooperative Extension class or workshop through 2025. Completing the survey is a great way for landscape professionals to let us know what would be most helpful for their business and to stay informed about opportunities and resources in the future.

Thanks for your help!

"Modern Heirlooms" Bred for Flavor

Tanya Kucak, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

Heirloom tomato varieties are the gold standard for taste. In the past couple decades, I've grown twenty to fifty new-to-me varieties of tomatoes each year, at half a dozen different community gardens. To choose those varieties, I followed the recommendations of tomato growers around the world who participate in online tomato forums. It's not an exaggeration to say that if you ask a thousand serious tomato growers for their favorite tomato, you will get (at least) a thousand recommendations! Narrowing down what you like, and what does well in your garden from one year to the next, can take a while.

But an extraordinarily tasty variety might produce only three tomatoes. Or a great vine-ripened tomato might turn to mush within a day. In my garden, the goals are the best heirloom flavor from a range of colors and sizes (and good shelf life!) rather than the biggest harvest, while others might grow only a few hybrids and value high production per plant.

I've learned that you don't have to choose. It's possible to get excellent flavor, great production, vigorous plants, and outstanding shelf life in the same tomato. The key is to seek out modern tomato breeders who have "heirloom flavor" as one of their main criteria. Many of the tomato varieties offered in this year's tomato seedling sale were developed in the past decade or two by modern breeders: Wild Boar Farms (Brad Gates), Bene Seeds (Fred Hempel), Cream of the Crop, Seed rEvolution Now, Karen Olivier, and Gourmet Genetics. With a few exceptions, the most interesting tomato varieties for backyard gardeners are open-pollinated, which means that the tomatoes will bear true from saved seed.

Probably the most familiar name is Brad Gates of Wild Boar Farms. Gates is local: he has leased farmland from Solano to Sacramento counties, and he occasionally gives talks at nurseries in the area. He calls his often striped and multicolored varieties "modern heirlooms." 'Pink Berkeley Tie Dye' has been popular at the seedling sales for several years, and this year we added 'Janet's Jacinthe Jewel', a bright orange tomato that scored high at the Woodland tomato tasting last year.

Another California tomato breeder, Fred Hempel, had a farm in Sunol until he passed away last year. His seeds will continue to be sold by Bene Seeds. Hempel, who earned a PhD in molecular plant biology from UC Berkeley, worked in biotech for some years and then, about twenty years ago, "quit his stable biotech job and made it his life's goal to develop the perfect tomato."

I visited his farm several times during open houses (and, once, a tomato breeding workshop) and always enjoyed hearing about his interesting collaborations with Bay Area chefs and restaurants. Chefs rave about his Green Bee F1, a unique "crunchy-when-ripe" hybrid cherry tomato that they enjoy cooking with because it stays firm. Chefs also prize Benevento F1, a beautiful large striped tomato that's ideal for tomato sandwiches and keeps

well. And gardeners love the healthy, vigorous, and productive plant. (Last year, my 'Benevento' plant thrived in a bed where other plants were damaged by root-knot nematodes!)

Tomato Sandwich - Photo by Tanya Kucak

Hempel was a regular contributor on several tomato-oriented internet forums. An oft-told anecdote was that he used his background in plant genetics to create favorable crosses, while his young son simply crossed two of his favorite-tasting tomatoes. It turned out that his son's cross produced tastier tomatoes and became breeding stock for many of Hempel's varieties!

Though Hempel initially intended to develop open-pollinated varieties, at some point he discovered that to incorporate or "stack" all the qualities he wanted in single variety, he needed to create hybrids. Most of his hybrid varieties are available only from Bene Seeds, but quite a few seed companies sell his open-pollinated varieties. In this year's seedling sale, we are also offering Sunrise Bumble Bee, Taste Patio, Green Tiger, and Maglia Rosa.

Yet another California-based breeder, Seed rEvolution Now, caught my attention in a webinar from the Culinary Breeding Network. In this webinar, Steve Peters talked about many interesting varieties in development. He and his partner, Kanti Rawal, had long careers in plant breeding and began recently to focus on breeding vigorous climate-resilient tomatoes. Their seeds were not easy to find! I was able to track down California Sungold and Magic Bullet.

Prairie Fire was a taste-test winner at the 2022 Woodland tomato tasting, and we had favorable reports of its flavor and production in gardens last year, so I looked up its breeder: Cream of the Crop, a collaboration between Mark McCaslin and Aaron Whaley. McCaslin, with a PhD from Cornell in plant breeding and genetics, worked forty years in plant breeding, most recently in forage crops. For the past decade, he has been a full-time tomato breeder at Frogsleap Farm in Minnesota. He formed a partnership with Whaley "to couple my breeding ambitions with his knowledge and access to the U.S. vegetable seed market, tomato seed production partners, and his willingness to host our various breeding nurseries and related greenhouse activities." The goal of their Cream of the Crop tomatoes is to "combine the flavor of the best heirloom types with the improved disease resistance, fruit quality, and productivity of modern hybrids." Several Cream of the Crop tomatoes have been All-America selections, and the seeds are available at A. P. Whaley Seed Company in Wisconsin as well as other sources. For this year's seedling sale, I added Pink Champagne and Beefy Red.

Polaris is the only variety from amateur breeder Karen Olivier of Canada in this year's sale, but I am growing several of her other varieties in my own garden this year. Even in "bad tomato years," I've had good harvests of Polaris. It's one of the few repeat varieties in my gardens, thanks to its vigor and exceptional flavor.

Olivier's most recent project is "short and sweet" varieties, which will produce tasty tomatoes on small plants that can be grown in containers, or even under lights indoors during the winter. Though her seeds are not easy to find, they are worth tracking down.

Finally, one of my favorites last year was Rosella cherry tomato. The breeder, Mark Rowland at Gourmet Genetics, was a flower breeder who couldn't find a tomato he liked, so he decided to breed one just for himself. That tomato was Sweet Aperitif, which has been described as "sweeter than Sungold F1." He has since bred several other cherry tomatoes as well as chili peppers. He's based in England, and some of his varieties are not yet available in the U.S.

Woodland Community College Fall Plant Sale

Wilda Knoesen, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

The Spring 2024 Master Gardener Plant Sale will take place on Saturday, April 6 and Saturday, April 13 from 9:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m. on both days. Drought tolerant ornamental garden plants (bulbs, rhizomes, California native plants, perennials, and succulents) will be available. Quart sized pots are $5 each and gallon sized pots are $6 each. Cash ,checks, and credit cards are accepted. The sale is being held at Woodland Community College, 2300 E Gibson Rd, Woodland, CA 95776. Look for our signs!

Shop early for the best selection.

SPRING 2024 PLANT LIST

ANNUALS

Borago officinalis	Borage
Ocimum kilimandscharicum x *basilicum*	African Blue Basil
Tithonia rotundifolia	Mexican Sunflower

BULBS & RHIZOMES

Brodiaea laxa 'Queen Fabiola'	Fool's Onion
Narcissus species	Daffodil
Narcissus tazetta	Tazetta Daffodil
Zephyranthes citrina	Yellow Rain Lily

CALIFORNIA NATIVES

Asclepias fascicularis	Narrowleaf Milkweed
Linum lewisii	Blue Flax
Lupinus albifrons	Silver Lupine
Salvia spathacea	Hummingbird Sage
Sisyrinchium bellum	Blue Eyed Grass
Solidago veluntina ssp. *californica*	California Goldenrod
Symphyotrichum chilense	California Aster

HOUSE PLANTS

Begonia x *corallina*	Angel Wing Begonia
Schefflera species	Umbrella Tree

PERENNIALS

Abutilon x *hybridium*	Orange Flowering Maple
Anemone hupehensis	Japenese Anemone (White)
Antigonon leptopus	San Miguel Coral Vine
Arctotis hybrid 'Orange'	Orange African Daisy
Buddleja species	Dwarf Purple Butterfly Bush
Chlorophytum comosum	Variegated Spider Plant
Dymondia margaretae	Dymondia groundcover
Echium candicans	Pride of Madeira
Echium wildpretii	Tower of Jewels
Erigeron karvinskianus	Santa Barbara Daisy
Ficus elastica 'Variegata'	Variegated Rubber Tree
Fuchsia species	Red & White Fuchsia
Fuchsia triphylla 'Gartenmeister Bonstedt'	Lady's Eardrops Fuchsia
Glandularia lilacina	Lilac Verbena
Hebe 'Amy'	Amy's Hebe
Lavandula dentata	French Lavender
Lobelia laxiflora	Mexican Lobelia
Nepeta x *faassenii*	Dwarf Catmint
Origanum marjorana 'Betty Rollins'	Dwarf Culinary Oregano
Origanum vulgare	Culinary Oregano
Pelargonium 'Snowflake'	Scented Snowflake Pink Geranium
Pelargonium 'Vancouver Centennial'	Coral Geranium
Pelargonium citrosum	Citronella Geranium
Pelargonium species	Geranium Green/Maroon Leaves
Phlomis fruticans	Yellow Jerusalem Sage
Plectranthus argentatus 'Silver Shield'	Silver Spur Flower
Roldana petasitis	Velvet Groundsel
Salvia canariensis	Canary Island Sage
Salvia elegans	Pineapple Sage
Salvia leucantha	Mexican Bush Sage
Salvia microphylla	Magenta-flowered Sage
Salvia microphylla 'Hot Lips'	Hot Lips Sage

Salvia officinalis	Culinary Sage
Saponaria	Soapwort
Scabiosa species	Pincushion Flower (Blue)
Sphaeralcea munroana	Munro's Globe Mallow
Stachys byzantina	Lamb's ear
Teucrium fruticans	Bush Germander

SUCCULENTS

Aeonium arboreum	Green/purple Tree Aeonium
Aeonium canariense	Green Aeonium
Billbergia nutans	Queen's Tears
Cotyledon orbiculata oblonga	Pig's Ear (pointed leaf)
Crassula ovata	Jade plant
Crassula tetragona	Miniature Pine Tree Succulent
Kalanchoe fedtschenkoi	Lavender Scallops Plant

2024 Tomato Varieties

Annual Spring Plant Sale – UCCE Master Gardeners of Yolo County Woodland Community College April 6 and April 13 9:00 a.m. to 1:00p.m.

Many of these tomato varieties have been grown for several years by local Master Gardeners. The variety descriptions are taken from seed catalogs. The "Yolo County" comments are based on our experience growing them, as well as taste tests at the Woodland Farmers Market.

[Legend]

H Heirloom

C Container-friendly

TT Tried and True (grown successfully at least 2 out of the last 5 years by Yolo County master gardeners)

***** New this year

Variety	Description	Type Color Size	Ripens
African Queen [H, TT]	Large potato-leaf plants produce heavy crops of 16-32 oz., 3-5", jade-pink lightly fluted beefsteak tomatoes with red flesh and rich flavor. Grows well in heat. Heirloom from North Carolina. Yolo County: Great flavor, good producer.	Indet. Pink Lg beefsteak	Late
Arkansas Traveler [H, *]	Pink 6-8 oz. slicer with mild flavor and good disease resistance, drought tolerance, and heat tolerance. Our seed source says this is a pre-1900 heirloom from the Ozark Mountains. (Other sources say it was developed at the University of Arkansas and released in 1968.)	Indet. Pink Medium	Mid-Late

Variety	Description	Type Color Size	Ripens
Beefy Red [*]	Juicy, meaty 12-14 oz. slicers, brick red with pale yellow/green stripes and bright red interior. High yields and good shelf life. Brand-new 2024 introduction bred by Cream of the Crop.	Indet. Red striped Beefsteak	Early-Mid
Belmonte Pear [*]	Classic red Italian piriform (pear shape) tomato. Highly regarded for sauces and roasting, these beautiful, 6-10 oz fruits are earlier than other piriforms. Adaptive Seeds sourced the original seed from a U.S. seed company that received it from a friend who got it from an Italian seed company. May originate from an oxheart/Marmande cross.	Indet. Red Piriform paste	Mid
Benevento F1 [TT]	Vigorous hybrid vines produce beautiful medium-large, yellow-striped red fruit with heirloom flavor and long shelf life. Deep watermelon-pink interior. Long ripening window. A favorite slicer, salad, and sauce tomato of Bay Area chefs. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds. Yolo County: Productive, tasty, and disease resistant.	Indet. Red striped Beefsteak	Mid
Bo Mango [*]	Tropical fruity flavors of mango and citrus. Large and juicy green beefsteak, with a firm texture. Top scorer in a 2023 San Diego taste test. Bred by UC Davis and Organic Seed Alliance by crossing classic heirlooms with productive commercial varieties to optimize flavor, production, and disease resistance.	Indet. Green Beefsteak	Mid
California Sungold [*]	Sweet, fruity, vigorous, high-yielding, open-pollinated golden cherry that is resistant to blossom end rot and cracking. For years, growers have been trying to dehybridize Sungold F1. Steve Peters and Kanti Rawal of Seed rEvolution Now took a different approach: they made new crosses and distributed seeds to organic growers all over California. Each year, seeds from the tastiest and most productive plants were saved. This collaborative effort has resulted in a tomato with excellent flavor, ease of cultivation, compact size, keeping qualities, and yield.	Indet. Golden orange Cherry	Early-Mid
Cherokee Purple [H, TT]	Famously rich flavor and texture. Medium-large flattened globe, 8-12 oz. fruits. Color is dusky purple pink with dark shoulders. Relatively short vines, 5-6'. Heirloom from Tennessee. Yolo County: More disease resistant and reliable than many other heirlooms, with rich flavor and good production.	Indet. Purple pink Beefsteak	Mid
Cherry Falls [C, *]	Bright red 1.5" cherry tomatoes have pleasantly sweet flavor. Compact productive plants are great in containers or cascading from hanging baskets. Our seed source says it's open-pollinated; other seed sources label it a hybrid. Originally bred by Floranova/Vegetalis.	Det. Red Cherry	Early
Flaming Burst [C]	Golden 1 oz. pear-shape cherry tomato. Sweet and tangy with a firm texture. High-yielding plants are short indeterminates that grow 4′ tall. Bred by Tom Wagner, selected from a cross with Jaune Flamme. Yolo County: Incredibly prolific with excellent shelf life.	Compact indet. Golden Cherry	Early
Girl Girl's Weird Thing	Gorgeous, dark red and olive-skinned fruit with red/pink striping, 8-16 oz. Reddish-purple interior with complex, balanced, intense sweet and mild flavor. Perfect for sandwiches and slicing. A mutation of Green Zebra originally found in a Canadian garden and named after the gardener's dog, Girl Girl. Yolo County: A top performer!	Indet. Red w/ green stripes Beefsteak	Mid-Late

Variety	Description	Type Color Size	Ripens
Green Bee F1 [TT, *]	A favorite of Bay Area chefs for its tangy flavor, firm texture, and extraordinary shelf life (weeks, not days). Ideal for grilling and roasting because it stays firm even when cooked; also great for pickling, gazpacho, salsa fresca. Fruit can hold a long time on the vine without cracking or softening. Best picked when the skin develops a clear yellow-orange hue. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds. Yolo County: Good flavor, prolific, unique crispy-ripe texture makes it fun to eat.	Indet. Green Cherry	Mid
Green Tiger	Super-sweet snacking tomato! Green striped with yellow, with a lime-green interior. Thin, elongated plum/grape, about 2" long, 1" wide, and tapered at the tip. Bright and acidic yet sweet flavor, refreshing and delicious. Wispy foliage. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds. Yolo County: Almost like candy, they were so delicious!	Indet. Green striped Elongated grape	Mid
Hawaiian Pineapple [H, TT]	Large 16-24 oz. golden yellow to orange beefsteak with scarlet blush. Fruity, sweet flavor with hints of pineapple. Very late, producing ripe fruit about 93 days after transplanting. Heirloom from Indiana. Yolo County: Scores high in taste and appearance.	Indet. Golden Lg.beefsteak	Late
Indigo Cherry Drops	Round 1" fruits have dark purple shoulders with rosy undersides and deep red flesh, 1-2 oz. Excellent sweet flavor and huge yields. Good leaf cover to prevent sun scald. Bred by Dr. Jim Myers at Oregon State University. Yolo County: Nonstop producer of tasty cherries.	Indet. Red Cherry	Mid
Janet's Jacinthe Jewel [*]	Large 16 oz. bright orange striped beefsteak. Sweet with some fruity notes. Good production. Bred by Brad Gates, Wild Boar Farms. Yolo County: Scored high in 2023 Woodland tomato tasting.	Indet. Orange striped Beefsteak	Late
Kellogg's Breakfast [H, *]	Large productive orange beefsteak, 16-24 oz. Delicious rich flavor with a well-balanced flavor profile; a perfect trifecta of sweet, fruity, and acidic. An heirloom from West Virginia preserved and named by Michigan gardener Darrell Kellogg.	Indet. Orange Lg.beefsteak	Late
Legend [TT, C]	Good for containers. Short, bushy plants produce large glossy round red 4–5" parthenocarpic fruit, 8-16 oz. Great for salads and canning. Resistant to late blight. Bred by Dr. James Baggett, Oregon State University. Yolo County: Must-have for many master gardeners.	Det. Red Medium/large	Early
Magic Bullet [*]	Productive plum-shape small cherry tomato with sweet and deliciously complex flavor. Green, yellow, and pink with streaks of dark indigo on the shoulders. A good snacking tomato, excellent fresh or roasted. Resistant to blossom end rot and cracking. Bred by Steve Peters and Kanti Rawal, Seed rEvolution Now.	Indet. Multi Plum-shape cherry	Early
Maglia Rosa [C]	Beautiful 1-3 oz. egg-shape cherry/saladette tomato that got its name from the mottled pink jersey worn by the lead racer in the Tour of Italy. Bushy 2-3 'high plants do well in pots and small spaces. For peak flavor, pick tomatoes just as they transition to light pink, even with hints of green. Wispy foliage. Top pick at University of Florida's variety trials. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds. Yolo County: Sweet taste, moderate production.	Semidet. Pink Large cherry/saladette	Early-Mid

Variety	Description	Type Color Size	Ripens
Pink Berkeley Tie Dye [TT]	Heavy producer of dark pink/purple fruit with metallic green stripes, 8-12 oz. Very meaty with excellent sweet, rich dark-tomato flavor. Good disease tolerance keeps well. Bred by Brad Gates, Wild Boar Farms. Yolo County: Longtime favorite.	Indet. Pink/purple striped Beefsteak	Early-Mid
Pink Champagne [*]	Dark pink, >1" long grape-shape, <1 oz. fruits with an amazingly sweet flavor, 9.5 Brix. Fruits are borne on moderately long trusses. Plants are more manageable (less vining) than other cherry varieties. Bred by Cream of the Crop.	Indet. Pink Grape/cherry	Early
Polaris [TT]	Ripe fruits are deep burgundy in color with a velvety soft core, 7-10 oz. Vigorous and productive potato-leaf variety, relatively early compared to similar varieties. Taste is rich, complex, and sweet. Bred by Karen Olivier in British Columbia, Canada. Yolo County: Excellent texture, a favorite for tomato sandwiches.	Indet. Purple Beefsteak	Mid
Prairie Fire [C]	Elongated grape tomato, 1" x 3", red with subtle gold stripes. Brix of 10: intensely sweet! Top choice for snacking in the garden. Compact vine, wispy foliage. Bred by Cream of the Crop. Yolo County: Top scorer at 2022 Woodland tomato tasting. Extremely productive and incredibly sweet.	Semidet. Red, striped Elongated grape	Early
Pruden's Purple [H, *]	Exceptionally early for a large tomato, averaging 16 oz. Vivid dark-pink skin with crimson flesh and rich, delicious flavor. Large, smooth fruits with some shoulder ribbing resist cracking. Medium-tall potato-leaf plants. Pre-1900 heirloom.	Indet. Pink Beefsteak	Early-mid
Raspberry Lyanna [C, *]	Small to medium size raspberry-pink fruit, very sweet and rich. Fruits are uniform and productive, 3-8 oz. Plants stay 3-5' high and can be planted in containers. Originally from Russia (possibly heirloom).	Semidet. Pink Small/medium	Mid
Rosella Cherry	Rich-flavored half-inch dark-pink cherry with few seeds, ideal for snacking. The intriguing taste hints at a complex blend of raspberries, blackberries, and other summer fruits. Bred by Mark Rowland, Gourmet Genetics. Yolo County: Nonstop production of delicious snacking cherries.	Indet. Dark pink Cherry	Mid
Rugby F1 VFF	Heart-shape, firm, productive 7 oz. pink paste tomato with well-balanced flavor for fresh eating or canning. High-yielding plants have great foliage cover to protect fruits. Resistant to tomato mosaic virus, leaf mold, fusarium crown and root rot, and bacterial speck. Bred by Geosemselect in Bulgaria. Yolo County: Terrific producer, especially good for cooking.	Indet. Pink Paste	Early-Mid
Sunrise Bumble Bee [*]	A beautiful yellow cherry with red stripes and pink marbling inside, >1" round. Excellent sweet and tangy flavor. Productive, crack resistant, and keeps well. Like all the Artisan tomatoes, it was bred for high vigor to perform under tough conditions. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds.	Indet. Yellow striped Cherry	Mid
Sweet Aperitif [*]	Bright red fruits have exceptional flavor and very high levels of sugar (up to a Brix of 13), perfectly balanced with the right amount of acid to give it a complex, wine-like taste and tropical aroma. Plants are completely covered with bite-size, one-half oz. fruits. Bred by Mark Rowland, Gourmet Genetics.	Indet. Red Cherry	Mid

Variety	Description	Type Color Size	Ripens
Taste Patio [C, *]	Compact, bushy, productive plants do well in containers. Egg-shape 2" pink fruits with prominent yellow stripes have rich, sweet flavor. Good disease resistance. Bred by Fred Hempel, Bene Seeds.	Det. Pink striped Saladette	Early
Taxi [C, *]	Sweet and mild, bright-yellow 4-6 oz. round fruits that almost seem acid-free. Compact, bushy plants yield abundantly early in the season. Produces heavily for a short time. Excellent for containers. Origin unknown, possibly heirloom.	Det. Yellow Small/medium	Early
Tommy Toe [H, *]	Exceptionally vigorous and productive plants have high tolerance for heat stress and good disease resistance. The superb flavor of this 1 oz. red cherry tomato won it first place over a hundred other varieties in an Australian taste test. Early-1900s heirloom from the Ozark mountains. Yolo County: Good flavor at any stage of ripeness. A small tomato with big-tomato flavor.	Indet. Red Cherry	Mid
Woodle Orange [H, TT, *]	Tangerine-orange 10-16 oz. tomato with rich, complex flavor. Perfectly round shape and blemish-free. Heirloom from Iowa. Yolo County: Amazing flavor, heavy producer, big plant, handles heat well.	Indet. Orange Beefsteak	Mid-Late

Explanation of Terms

Early/Mid/Late Produces ripe fruit an average of less than 70 days/ 70-80 days/ more than 80 days after transplanting, respectively.

F1 F1 denotes hybrids, which are a cross between two or more plants. Seed saved from a hybrid variety or from cross-pollination will not reliably grow true to type.

Open-pollinated Seeds from open-pollinated (OP) varieties breed true, so they can be saved and used to reproduce the same tomato.

Heirloom An open-pollinated variety that has been passed down at least 50 years in a family or other group, or was commercially introduced before 1940.

Det. Determinate: Short, bushy plants with terminal blossom clusters (meaning the top of the stem is usually flowers, not foliage). Most produce fruits in a short time span while others may produce all season. Usually 4' high or less and may not need staking, and often can be grown in containers.

Indet. Indeterminate: Long vines with subterminal blossom clusters (meaning flowers occur along the sides of the stem), usually produce well until frost. The plant grows continually until it dies at the end of the season. Plants can get quite large and most often produce best when staked or grown in a wire cage.

Semidet. Semi-determinate: Some seed sellers prefer the term "compact indeterminate." Plants usually stay under 5' high and may be suitable for containers, though they may get bushy. They generally produce throughout the season.

Brix A measure of sweetness. Brix of 1 is 1 gram of dissolved solids, mostly sugars, per 100 grams. Most tomatoes measure 5-12 Brix; maple syrup is 68. Sungold F1 tomatoes typically measure 9.5; grocery store tomatoes, 4-5. Exact rating from a particular garden depends on growing conditions.

Potato leaf Potato-leaf tomato varieties have broader leaves without the lobes and serrations found on regular-leaf tomatoes.

Wispy foliage Tomatoes with wispy foliage may seem droopy and sparse, but this graceful fernlike habit is normal for them. The leaves may be thinner than other varieties as well. Plant these varieties where they won't get the brunt of afternoon sun, especially if their fruit is not protected by enough leaf cover.

Tried and True Vegetable Varieties for Yolo County

Michael Kluk, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

Yolo County offers many advantages and a few disadvantages for vegetable gardeners. We have hot dry summers and heavy soils in some areas. On the other hand, our weather is moderate much of the year and those soils have a generous nutrient profile. This article will provide a list of some vegetables that UCCE Master Gardeners of Yolo County have tried and recommend as well-suited to our climate and soils. Planting these should give you a fighting chance of success. And, of course, we hope you also branch out to try others that seem interesting and promising.

First, a few definitions. A *species* refers to what is commonly considered a "type" of vegetable. Tomatoes, whether the fruits are big or small, red or yellow, are all the same species *Solanum lycopersicum* with the first word being the genus and the second the particular species. Corn, whether it is a sweet white corn with five-foot stalks or 10-foot-tall yellow field corn is all the same genus and species, *Zea mays*.

The terms variety and *cultivar* on the other hand both refer to one of many expressions of a specific vegetable species. They have some key differences, however.

A vegetable variety is one that occurred naturally. It may have been selected by a vegetable breeder or maybe a backyard gardener. The key characteristic is that if you pollinate a vegetable variety with the same variety, the resulting seeds will develop plants that are the same as the parent plants. These are often referred to by seed companies as open pollinated or "OP" plants.

Heirloom varieties are open pollinated varieties that have been grown and maintained without hybridization for a relatively long period of time. Beyond that, there is no real agreement on the term. It has no scientific meaning and has become, more than anything, a marketing phrase.

A cultivar on the other hand refers to a plant that has been "cultivated" or created using one or more plant breeding techniques. This is generally done by a plant breeder selecting two plant lines, often open pollinated varieties, and then cross pollinating them to produce a new plant that has the desirable characteristics of both parents. The new plant line is called a hybrid, generally abbreviated by vegetable seed companies as "H." Sometimes the breeder will cross pollinate two hybrids to reach the ultimate goal. If you save and plant the seeds from a hybrid cultivar, the resulting plants will not be the same as the parent plant.

People have been intentionally creating hybrids at least since the Austrian Monk Gregor Mendel demonstrated the basic rules of plant hereditary in the mid-19th century. Cross-pollination is a natural process that occurs within members of the same plant species. Hybrid plants are not genetically modified or GMO plants which are created by modifying the genes in the plant. Only one kind of GMO seeds are currently sold to the public.

Most vegetable seed companies use the designation open pollinated or OP and hybrid or H rather than the terms variety and cultivar. Both open pollinated and hybrid vegetables can have a place in a successful garden, and both have advantages and disadvantages.

Open pollinated varieties often have a relatively narrow range of climate and soils in which they will be most successful because they were often selected over time while grown in a limited geographic area. They may be prone to disease, especially diseases they did not face in their home habitat. Preserving the genetic diversity represented by open pollinated varieties is important however. It is often claimed that, especially with tomatoes,

they have better flavor. That is not universally true. Sungold is a hybrid tomato that has often won tomato tastings. Roma, on the other hand, is an heirloom that has many good qualities, but complex flavor is not one of them. Iceberg lettuce in another heirloom that is not particularly distinguished for interest or flavor. Still, many open pollinated varieties have wonderful flavor and other qualities and deserve a place in your garden. You need to be careful in their selection however because not all are adapted to our climate, soils, insects, and diseases. If you save seeds, you should save open pollinated varieties since the offspring will be true to the parents.

Hybrid varieties are bred to have desirable qualities. They may be less prone to disease than most open pollinated varieties. They may grow with extra vigor and are often able to tolerate a wider variety of climates and soils than their open pollinated brethren. They often will produce more heavily and consistently. They may not have the complex flavor or interesting appearance of some of the open pollinated varieties. But when grown in your home garden, the flavor of most hybrids will far exceed supermarket offerings. They deserve to be included as dependable and productive contributors to your kitchen table. You should not save the seeds of hybrid varieties, unless you are a real gambler, since the offspring will not be the same as the parent.

The following list does not contain recommendations for the full range of vegetables that you can grow in Yolo County. It is limited to varieties and cultivars that Master Gardeners felt they had enough experience and success with to merit an endorsement. Not all these will be available in local nurseries as starts or even seeds. All are available as seeds through on-line retailers.

Recommended Vegetables

Asparagus
Purple Passion (H) – thick, purple-colored spears, generally sweet and tender.

Artichoke
Green globe (OP) – large “flower buds” produced over a long period of time. Will produce the first year when grown from seed in the late winter.

Beans – green
Red Noodle (OP) - long, 18”, heat tolerant, beautiful pole bean.
Romano (OP) – Italian style pole flat bean. Large pods are stringless. Roma is the bush bean version.
Yellow Wax (OP) – a bush bean with stringless yellow pods.
Yardlong (OP) – Long, thin Asian bean sometimes called asparagus bean. Holds up to heat well.
Gita Chinese Long Bean (OP) - Produces 16-20″ long, dark green pods, no bigger than the diameter of a pencil that are string-less, sweet, and richly flavored.
Red Noodle (OP)- Eighteen-inch-long Chinese type pole bean. Heat tolerant.
Seychelles (OP) - Early and vigorous green snap pole bean. The pods are stringless and 5-6” long. Plants are resistant to bean mosaic virus and Anthracnose.

Fava Beans
Windsor(OP)- most common variety, very dependable.
Aprovecho (OP)- larger, more flavorful bean than Windsor.

Beets
Detroit Dark Red (OP) – Standard garden variety, uniform roots with strong healthy tops.
Chioggia (OP) – beets have alternating red and pink rings, good tops for greens.
Touchstone Gold (OP)- Yellow beet that retains its color when cooked. Excellent sweet flavor.
Bok choy (Pak choi)
Canton White (OP) – Big leaves, good thick stems and more heat tolerant than many other varieties.

Broccoli
De Cicco (OP) – Medium sized heads but plants put out a lot of size shoots once the main head is harvested.
Waltham (OP) – Medium to large 5" heads with lots of side shoots. Very cold tolerant.
Calabrese (OP) - Produces a compact dark green central head, with many lateral or side shoots. Slow bolting with good flavor.
Imperial (H) – Medium sized heads, good heat tolerance makes it a good choice for late winter planting.

Carrots
Nantes (OP) – Dark orange color, 6-7" long carrots that like full sun. Can plant in early fall and keep through the winter.
King Midas (H) – Large deep orange carrot, 8-9" long.
Danvers Half Long (OP) - A bright orange carrot with a blunt end, performs well in heavy soils.

Cauliflower
Cheddar (H)- Orange heads that hold up well.
Graffiti (H) – Bright purple heads that maintain their color when cooked.
Amazing (OP) – Old favorite with good leaf cover that does well in wet clay soil.

Chard, Swiss
Fordhook (OP) vigorous plant with large leaves and very thick stems
Bright Lights (OP)- individual stems are red, yellow, orange, gold, or white making a beautiful display in the garden or on the table.

Corn
Golden Jubilee (H)- Six-foot-tall stalks produce 9" ears with yellow kernels. Best if eaten soon after picking.
Silver Queen (H)- Eight-inch ears have white, sweet kernels growing on 7' stalks.
Sugar Buns (H)- Heavy producer of seven-inch ears on 7' stalks. Smut resistant in our experience.

Cucumbers
Lemon (OP) – produces many round, yellow fruits.
Armenian (OP) – actually a melon, not a true cucumber but close enough- never bitter, will stay flavorful even when very large.
Summer Dance (H) – A Japanese type that produces lots of 9" fruits with good disease resistance.
Adams Gherkin (H)- Pickling cucumber, perfect size to fill a pint jar.
Sooyow Nishiki cucumber (OP) – This is a long, thin Japanese cucumber. It is sweet and crisp with a small seed cavity if harvested regularly.

Eggplant
Traviata (H) – Classic glossy black bell-shaped eggplant with good flavor.
Orient Express (H) – early maturing Japanese style, long slender fruits with delicate flavor.
Shoya Long (H) – An extra-long Japanese type of eggplant, very productive.
Black Beauty (OP) – Large eggplant that grows dependably but later maturing and less productive than some other varieties.
Rose Bianca (OP) - Medium sized light pink fruit with white shading. Rich, mild flesh, not bitter.
Kamo (OP)- Round Japanese type eggplant, creamy texture, sprawling plant.
Nadia (H)- Large purple eggplant, very productive.

Garlic
Italian Late (OP) - A soft neck variety.
California Early and California Late- two soft neck varieties. (Note, hard neck varieties do not do well here because they need more chilling in the winter than we typically have.)

Ground Cherry
Miss Molly (OP) – small tomatillo-like fruit that has a husk, very sweet, tastes like pineapple. Harvest after they have fallen to the ground.

Kale
Nero Di Toscana (Lucinanto type) (OP) – Big leaves and great flavor.
Red Russian (OP) – Very hearty, good flavor, tender leaves, resists bolting.

Leeks
American Flag (OP) – Very popular, large thick stocks.
Lancelot (OP) – Heat resistant variety.

Lettuce, head
Batavian Lettuce (OP) - Loose head, thick leaved French lettuce that hold up well in the heat. Also known as summer crisp.
Victoria (OP) - A rich green butterhead type that forms a 10-inch diameter head. Holds up very well in hot weather.

Lettuce, leaf
Black Seeded Simpson (OP) – Very productive trouble-free leaf lettuce.

Melons
Ambrosia (OP) - Very sweet, tender melon on six to eight-foot vines.
Ha'Ogen (OP) Very sweet, aromatic melon with green flesh. Quick growing with 3–5-pound fruit.
Sarah's Choice (H) - Very sweet, oval 3-lb fruit with orange flesh. Resistant to fusarium wilt and powdery mildew.

Onions
Walla Walla (OP) – Large, sweet, white onion that do well at our medium day length latitude.
Stockton Red (OP) – Medium sized red, sweet onion well suited to our climate and soil.
White Spear (OP)- Bunching onion that does well in the heat.
Stockton Yellow (OP)- Medium-large flattened globes. Thin, light brown-yellow skin with soft white, slightly pungent flesh. Resists bolting but is a short keeper.

Peas
Oregon Sugar Pod II (OP) – Short 30” vines do not need staking. Sweet, flat edible pod pea is disease resistant.
Sugar Ann (sugar snap type) (OP) – Snap pea with round full edible pods on 3-foot vines that do not need at trellis.

Peppers – sweet
Yolo Wonder (OP) – Bell-type pepper that turns from green to red when mature, good leaf cover to limit sunburn.
Purple Beauty (OP) – Medium sized bell-type peppers that start out and stay purple.
Corno di Toro (OP) – (Horn of the Bull) Thin-walled Italian style sweet pepper, 9” long and red when mature.
Gypsy (H) – Very productive disease resistant plant produces a lot of 4-5” thin-walled peppers.
Banana (OP) – Thin-walled pepper, 6-7” long, turns from light yellow to red when mature. Very dependable producer.
Ajvarski (OP)- large, pointed, thick walled non-bell. Peppers turn from green to deep red when they mature.
Lesya (OP)- Thick walled, heart-shaped, very sweet pepper. Originally from Ukraine.
Ancho Grande (OP) – Mildly hot 4-inch peppers on large plants that need staking. Good for making chili rellenos.
Alliance (H)- Resistant to a variety of virus diseases. Thick walled, green bell type peppeers that ripen to deep red. Good leaf canopy for protection from sunscald.

Peppers – hot

Ascent (H) – Productive Thai-style mini peppers that pack a punch.
Poinsettia (OP) – Small pepper cluster at the top of the plant, often grown as an ornamental, edible, and very hot.
Jalapeno (OP) – Classic medium hot pepper, heavy producer.
Hungarian Yellow Wax (OP) – Very hot small yellow pepper.
Poblano (OP) – Heart-shaped 6" fruit with medium heat.
Joe Parker (OP) – Multi-purpose Anaheim type chile pepper, 7" long, dependable producer.

Potatoes –
Yukon Gold (OP) – Medium sized potatoes with sweet yellow flesh.
German Butterball (OP) – Medium sized potatoes with buttery white flesh.
All Blue (OP) – Small to medium sized potatoes that have blue flesh, productive but slow maturing.

Radish
Watermelon (OP) – Large round radish, green on the outside, bright pink on the inside with a surprisingly mild, sweet taste.
Daikon (OP) – Large, long radish with a very mild flavor. The tops can be cooked as greens.
Cherry Belle (OP) – Round radish with white flesh, ready to pick 22 days from planting.

Sweet potato
Beauregard (OP) – Most popular sweet potato, good disease resistance.

Squash - summer
Astia zucchini (H) – Very compact 30" diameter plants that produce early and often. Very resistive to powdery mildew.
Fordhook zucchini (OP) – Very productive, classic zucchini.
Black Beauty zucchini (OP) – productive, fast growing, dark green fruit.
Gold Star (H) – Crookneck type squash with good adaptability and disease resistance.
Desert (H) – Very productive dark green zucchini on compact plants. Moderately resistant to common viruses and powdery mildew.
Eight Ball (H)- Round green zucchini that grow on open, bushy plants. Very productive and unique.
Mexicana (H)- Upright plants with an open habit and moderate spines. Strong disease resistance. Produces early, heavy yields of gray-green fruit.

Squash - winter
Sugar Hubbard (OP) – Large trailing plants produce 4-5 squash each weighing 15 lbs. or more. Very sweet orange flesh.
Table Queen Acorn (OP) – Vines spread 4', good producer.
Red Kuri (OP) – Japanese variety that produces 4 lb. fruit.
Waltham Butternut (OP) – very popular butternut variety.
Atlas (H) – very vigorous and productive butternut type, good flavor, powdery mildew resistant.

Tomatoes –
Principe Borghese (OP) – Compact plants, very productive of 1"x2" fruit. The most popular tomato to dry in Italy.
Ace 55 (OP) – Medium sized red tomato developed at UC Davis in the 40's. One of the few open pollinated varieties that is resistant to fusarium and verticillium.
Early Girl (H) – Medium sized plants produce lots of baseball sized tomatoes with good flavor. Good disease resistance.
Indian Stripe (OP)- Indeterminate vines bear 8 to 10 oz. burgundy-purple tomatoes that are very flavorful.
Mexico (OP) - Very large indeterminate plants produce large (1 lb.), dark pink fruits with very good flavor.

Chocolate Cherry (OP) -Indeterminate vines bear a heavy crop of brown skinned cherry tomatoes.
Sungold (H) – Average sized, sweet yellow cherry tomatoes born on indeterminate vines. Very popular.
Costoluto Genovese (OP) – Large, fluted fruit on Indeterminate vines. Heat tolerant.
Lemon boy (H) – Medium sized yellow fruit on Indeterminate vines. Highly resistant to common tomato diseases.
Celebrity (H) – Medium sized red tomato that is very disease resistant. It is sometimes described as semi-determinant because it grows to a set size but will continue to produce throughout the year.
Champion (H) – Good disease resistance, medium sized red fruit. The original version is indeterminate but there are now two separate determinate varieties.
Incas Hybrid (H) A very early ripening pear-shaped tomato with bright red fruits that weigh about 3 oz. and have firm, thick, meaty flesh with excellent keeping quality. Determinate vines with good disease resistance.
Woodle Orange (OP) - Tangerine colored Indeterminate tomato has a very rich & complex flavor. Fruits are round and weigh 10-16 oz.
Cherokee Carbon (H) - A beefsteak type tomato with dusky purple fruit that has a rich, complex flavor. Plants can grow to 7 feet tall.
Benevento (H)- Reliable large raspberry red tomato with striped yellow and red skin
Purple Boy (H)- Very tasty dark salad tomato that produces consistently all summer.
Marizol Gold (OP)- Large yellow tomato, originated in Germany. Large plant, production into the fall.
Picus (H)- Disease resistant paste tomato. Also seems not prone to blossom end rot. Long production period for a determinant type.

Why School Gardens Can Benefit from Public Participation

Lorie Hammond, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

When we are in our gardens enjoying learning about our plants and about the natural environment that affects them, the importance of school gardens is not normally a part of what we think about. However, they do exemplify the spirit of what we are about, and for several reasons, some of us might both enjoy and provide a great service by getting involved in them. First, they are small scale, like home gardens, and are generally very diverse. Second, school gardens need the kind of expertise which interested gardeners have developed and which most educators have not. Third, school grounds often occupy the largest public spaces in suburban neighborhoods, making them environmentally important to these neighborhoods, especially if they are planted appropriately with native plants and pollinators. And fourth, school sites have not traditionally been planted in sustainable ways (flaunting huge lawns) when they could instead model good environmental practices (such as drought tolerant plantings and composting), not only for the students who attend the schools but also for the families and community who visit school sites daily.

I have been involved in school gardens for more than thirty years, initially in urban schools, then at Peregrine School (a private garden school which I founded and directed for fifteen years) and now as the educational advisor to Davis Farm to School (DF2S), a part of the Davis Farmers' Market Alliance (a 501c3 nonprofit) which supports gardens in Davis Joint Unified School District (DJUSD). The biggest problem which all school gardens face is maintaining a consistent and expert volunteer team to plan, maintain, and sustain them. Teachers are busy teaching academics, and while a few are passionate about gardening, they need help. Parent volunteers are essential to any school garden, but they come and go as their own children pass through schools, and fewer parents have time for volunteerism than in the past. The school gardens that succeed best have a long term, consistent, and expert team of community supporters who sustain them over time. Citizens who like to garden are ideal members of such a team.

Harper Junior High School in Davis is a case in point. **"You can't develop and maintain a school garden without an ongoing community of volunteers."** This statement was made by Garry Pearson, retired DJSD Career and Technical Education Director and Harper Junior High's Garden Co-Manager. Every Monday, Wednesday and Friday morning, a group of community adults works joyfully to create a diverse and beautiful garden behind Harper School. Over a half-acre of annual vegetables and flowers flourish on trellises and on the ground, along with perennial gardens of California natives and herbs. This garden is tended year-round by a volunteer team led by Cate McGuire, a retired horticulturalist. (See team photo)

Harper Team

On the Friday when I visited, the Garden Team had picked two large tables of vegetables to share with local preschools. They also provided tomatoes for Salsa Week in a local elementary school. Garry, Cate and others have created a network which includes very supportive school administrators and staff, local businesses, Rotary Club volunteers, UCD interns and experts, parents, and more. But above all, Harper Junior High has an enduring Garden Team of adults, who stay involved year after year. These volunteers make this beautiful garden flourish.

I was initially surprised that students do not maintain the garden. Then I was reminded that junior high school students have tight academic schedules which are not compatible with gardening. The role of the Garden Team is to provide a garden which is beautiful, complex, and serves as a **living laboratory** in any season. Each teacher in the school, regardless of subject, is challenged to spend at least two teaching days in the garden during the school year, creating activities which use the garden to support their curricula. Spanish classes talk about the words for vegetables in Spanish, tasting as they go. The art teacher challenges students to draw various shapes they see in the plants. She states: "Whenever the students hear that we are going out to the garden, there is a collective cheer." Biology classes study the stages of the ladybug life cycle visible on the zucchini, Swiss chard and okra.

The Garden Team reports that they are motivated by the positive feedback they get from students. During the school's Open House, one student shared that he had tasted his first ripe tomato in the garden. Students and staff report that the garden calms them.

In addition to the garden, Harper School has created an arboretum, led by Kenneth McKim, a long-term biology teacher who founded Tree Harper. On a recent Friday morning, some of his students were doing academic work outside, while others were applying mulch to trees all over campus. Mr. McKim told me that sixty percent of the trees on campus were planted by students. Students who volunteer for Tree Harper during Club Friday plant these trees. Eight Saturdays a year, volunteers work on school approved beautification projects. Climate-ready trees are planted in groups by place of origin such as Asia, Mexico, South America, North America, and California. Beautiful plaques were made in shop classes and placed by the trees so students can learn their names. In addition, each biology student is challenged to grow a plant somewhere in the school, making the landscape at Harper colorful and meaningful to all its students.

How are volunteers and the environment kept happy? Cate shared a strategy that other gardens can learn from. She said that volunteers lose their motivation if they must pull weeds week after week. Cate created wide paths and then strip mulched with layers of cardboard covered with donated wood chips. The mulching program not only prevents weeds. It also helps the environment by creating a low-till, low-dig garden which holds carbon in the ground rather than emitting it into the air. A field of solar panels next to the garden, a compost field, water efficient drip irrigation, and low-till gardens all model environmentally savvy practices which are observed and learned by Harper students.

Harper School is one of many environmentally savvy schools in Yolo County communities. The success of its garden and arboretum are based on its Garden Team and some committed teachers who have been building the program over time. Over time, avid gardeners have supported other schools, using their expertise to help plan as well as manage their gardens. I cannot overemphasize the effect which one or two committed volunteers can have on a whole school community. If you are an enthusiastic gardener (or a Master Gardener), consider getting involved in your local school. Almost all schools have gardens. People interested in Davis school gardens can contact Nate Tauzer (nate@davisfarmtoschool.org) Gardens are a place where citizens can make a difference.

Summer Annuals

Sue Fitz, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

The first plants I ever grew came from a packet of annual larkspur seeds. I "helped" my mom sow the seeds directly in the ground and was mesmerized when they germinated and began growing. The purple spikes of flowers sealed the deal, at age eight, I became a gardener. Knowing at that young of an age I didn't have much patience, my mother wisely supplied me with annual flower seeds at first. By the time I was a teenager, I had discovered specialty nurseries and mail order catalogs, and progressed to growing perennials and flowering shrubs, leaving annuals behind as being too easy to be fun anymore.

Growing up in the San Franscisco Bay area with its mild climate, meant most flowering plants I grew bloomed year-round, so it was a shock when I moved to Davis as a young adult, and found most perennials and shrubs stopped blooming as soon as it got hot, generally by July. Evidently most temperate climate plants won't set flower buds once temperatures exceed a certain point, leaving the second half of summer and fall lacking in much color. True, there were roses, and oleanders and crepe myrtles, but not much else, especially fifty years ago. Add in the poor water quality at the time, the situation was bleak.

I did notice that some summer color was supplied by what are called 'annual bedding plants', but the dumpy, stunted plants, lined up in rows, that wilted if not kept constantly damp were hardly attractive. Still, they were blooming despite the heat, so I went over to Stribling Arboretum's horticultural library, read every book they had on annuals, and found the solution to my problem. Warm season annuals were not originally bred to extreme dwarfism and were actually graceful and attractive if older cultivars could be found. Plus, there were many forgotten species of annuals that never caught the plant breeder's attention, and these included several interesting and attractive plants I'd never seen, much less grown before.

My back patio suddenly sprouted multiple flats of baby plants as the 'great experiment' commenced. Almost no American seed catalog had anything other than dumpy bun annuals, so I mined the catalogs of English seed houses like Thomson and Morgan, and Chiltern's seeds, raising dozens of annuals that I knew nothing about. Some just refused to grow. Others turned out to be cool season annuals, that I saved for fall sowing and spring

blooms. But eventually I curated a selection of summer annuals that grew happily and looked as good as perennials in the garden. Yay! I was back in business as a year-round gardener. I no longer hung my head in shame at my summer and fall garden. And, yes, I know, Annie Hayes followed in my footsteps a couple of decades later, much to my amusement.

I realize this is a very long preamble to the main point of this article, which is to encourage gardeners not to sneer at annuals as being too much trouble. If you get the right annual, they are worth it for the sheer bloom power they possess. With the right annual, they will blend into your perennial border like a boss. Pollinators everywhere will thank you. People will stop and admire your yard. You will not have to advert your eyes from your garden in summer and can hold your head high. Yes, yes, you will have to raise many of them from seed yourself, but annuals are easy to grow, and you can put up with a couple of tables of baby annuals on your back porch in April and May. At least most seed companies today have a small selection of taller, looser forms of annuals available, so you don't have to send to England for your seeds, like I originally had to. Or you can pay Annies Annuals for them in four-inch pots, but that gets pricy after a while. At any rate, I'm going to list ten summer annuals I find do well here in the hot valley, that you should try if you want your garden to look it's best. While none of these are water hogs, the first five will appreciate extra water, especially while young.

Celosia spicata 'Flamingo Feather'- Celosias are tropical plants from Indochina, they want heat and humidity. One species, *C. spicata* does well here despite the low humidity, as long as the roots stay moist, so mulch this plant well. The plant is slender, growing to 4 feet tall if happy. It's covered all summer with light pink spikes of flowers. I prefer the purple form, as it stands out more, but it's hard to find seed for it.

Gomphrena globosa, a relative of Celosia, has a totally different look, forming a 2-foot, rounded bush. It's covered with white, pink or magenta flowers until killed by frost. You can find one cultivar in nurseries, called 'Buddy', but it's a dwarfed down plant that doesn't look natural in the garden. Grow your own plants, using a better cultivar.

Polygonum orientale, another plant from Indochina, is 4 or 5 feet tall, slender, with large leaves and stunning sprays of pink flowers swaying at the end of its branches. This plant looks amazing and stops people in their tracks. Self-sows.

Melampodium divaricatum is a 2-foot-tall mound, covered continuously with small yellow daisies. It's nice for the middle of the border, always looking tidy and fresh.

Tithonia rotundifolia, a Mexican native, forms a large 4-foot rounded bush with large, divided leaves. The flowers are large daisies and are a fluorescent orange. The whole plant has a soft, velvety look due to the soft hairs that cover it. It's wildly popular with butterflies, more so than any other plant I grow.

Verbesina encelioides is a bushy 30-inch-tall plant with grey-green leaves. The plant pumps out 2-inch yellow daisies all summer long. It sort of gives the impression of a small, bushy sunflower. Butterflies dig these plants too.

Euphorbia marginata starts out with plain green leaves, until the longest day of the year happens. It then starts putting out leaves with snowy white variegation. You must get up quite close before it's obvious the white is leaves, not flowers. It can grow to three feet high but will be less if you hold back on the water. Looks good until the first frosty day.

Limonium sinuatum is the common statice that you see the dried flowers for sale in stores. The plant grows easily here and can even self sow. Quite drought tolerant but does bloom more with adequate water. About 18 inches high, comes in many colors, and does frequently live over the winter to bloom even more heavily the next year.

Rubeckia hirta produces a large tuft of course, green leaves. 30-inch-high branching stems emerge to hold large three- or four-inch yellow daisies aloft, attracting bees and butterflies. It needs to be deadheaded bi-weekly to keep it in bloom. It often lives over, to produce even more flowers the next year. Drought tolerant but blooms better with more water.

Salvia coccinea is a Texas wildflower. It's short, about 12-15 inches high, so plant it in the front of the flower bed. Its natural color is a bright red, but the newer pink and white forms are very attractive. Deadhead biweekly for the most amount of bloom. It's pretty drought tolerant once it grows up to mature size. Hummingbirds really like it.

Christmas Cactus: Generations of Holiday Cheer

Michelle Haunold Lorenz, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

I get a little weepy when the holiday season approaches. It was around mid-December 2020 when my mom's health began failing. While I was visiting my parents in Oregon before the Christmas holidays, my dad asked me to take some of my mom's plants home with me.

Christmas Cactus blooming outdoors
Photos by M. H. Lorenz

She had a dining room filled with Christmas cactuses and African violets, and many of the Christmas cactuses were in full bloom. Their long, pendulous arms hung down, loaded with bright pink and red flowers, and I was worried the long drive back to California would be too much for them.

Christmas cactuses are hardy plants, and with the right care can live for generations. However, a few steps must be met to keep these plants thriving. The plants I inherited from my mother were close to fifty years old, and now that she has passed on, I am so grateful I took her plants home with me. Unfortunately, I hadn't properly researched their care, so several of her long-lived plants died once I brought them to California. I felt terrible about that and vowed to learn more about their care so I wouldn't kill anymore.

Christmas Cactus should more accurately be called Holiday Cactus since there are three distinct species: the Thanksgiving cactus (*Schlumbergera truncata*), the Christmas cactus (*Schlumbergera russelliana*), and the Easter cactus (*Rhipsalidopsis gaetneri*). You can tell the difference first by when the plants bloom and second by the shape of the leaves (which are more accurately photosynthetic stems). These perennial plants will bloom as the nights get longer and the days shorter, but generally, each species will bloom close to the given named holiday.

Keep your plant out of direct sunlight, drafts, heat sources (such as heaters or fireplaces), and areas with temperature swings (such as a doorway). Native to the coastal mountains of Brazil, these plants prefer dappled sunlight and cool humid conditions. To recreate these conditions in the home, put your plants in a north or east-facing room where there is no direct

sunlight. Water when the top inch of soil is dry, and make sure the potting mix is fast draining, meaning it allows the water to run through the soil quickly and out the drainage hole in the bottom of the pot. Standing water will cause the plant to develop root rot.

I made the mistake of putting some of my mother's plants in a southern-facing window and didn't realize the dry air and bright light would kill them. These plants need to be treated like succulents, not cacti! The leaves bleached to a pale green, and some of the leaves shriveled up. Once I moved the plants to the kitchen, the lower light and higher humidity did wonders for the remaining plants. During the spring, summer, and fall, water regularly and include a soluble balanced fertilizer to encourage the plant to put out new growth.

White Bloom

As winter approaches, shorter days, longer nights, and cooler temperatures will signal the plants it is time to set buds. Make sure your plants are not in a room that has the lights on at night. That was another mistake I made: my husband likes to stay up late at night watching TV; unfortunately, that additional light was enough to keep my Christmas cactuses from getting the total 12-14 hours of darkness needed to signal them to set bloom. When you see buds appear, make sure to keep the plant watered regularly. I felt like a kid at Christmas when the first flowers opened the following year after bringing them to my house. The blooms will last indoors about two weeks, but outdoors, they can last much longer! I had forgotten one of the plants outside where I had moved it during a watering session; it had gotten tucked underneath the weeping fig on my patio. Much to my surprise, that little Christmas cactus bloomed for almost six weeks, thanks to the mild temperatures and cool, rainy weather we had over the holidays and throughout January.

To keep this plant bushy and create more flowers, pinch the segments off after blooming has ended. This encourages more branching, which means more flowers! You can create new plants to share with friends and family with the pruned pieces. Make sure the clippings include at least five or six leaf segments, then tuck two or three segments into a loose, quickly draining potting soil with the remaining segments poking up out of the soil and keep moist. Rootlets will develop within five or six weeks. You can also root the cuttings in water, but because of the tendency for these plants to rot with too much moisture, I have found that just sticking the cuttings into the soil and keeping the soil moist works better.

With the new plants I created from clippings from the original plants, I grew my collection back up to what my mother had. I also had a lot of new plants from her original plants to share with my siblings and help keep my mother's love of these wonderful plants alive for the next generation.

For more information, visit these informative websites: https://worldofsucculents.com/thanksgiving-christmas-easter-cactus/#google_vignette
https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=50947

Notes from My Garden: Dirt

Joy Sakai, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

When I was a child there wasn't much I liked more than playing in the dirt. Well, maybe playing with my pop gun. In those days, it didn't matter what kind of dirt it was; mud; clay, and sand were all okay with me. When my Master Gardener training started, it felt a little pretentious to me that everyone insisted on using the word soil. 'Dirt'

became a dirty word. While I was trying to appreciate the concept of soil during that January, I could not step out into our new, unplanted yard without pounds of mud sticking to my shoes. It sure felt like dirt to me. Clearly, though, I had to get with the program, put away my old way of thinking, and develop a more scientific understanding of the ground we walk on and dig in.

You might wonder, if soil isn't just minerals, what is it? I think the human body provides a good analogy. A healthy body depends on good circulation, oxygen exchange with tissues, food and water, and a plethora of non-pathogenic microorganisms that, for example, break down our food and supply us with usable nutrients and energy. Similarly, healthy soil needs to have good soil structure to drain water, as well as pockets (called pores) that hold air and moisture. It needs organic matter that feeds all kinds of beneficial soil organisms. These in turn break down the organic matter to provide nutrients to plants. Healthy soil is very much a balanced, living system, if not a single organism.[1] It is this thin layer of soil that ultimately feeds all plants and land-dwelling creatures on earth. You might be wondering if your own soil is healthy. If it isn't, you can take steps to improve it.

Much of the Woodland-Davis area has soil characterized as clay-loam, which is less heavy than pure clay. The mineral content (the part I understood as dirt) of clay-like soil is made up of very fine particles. These particles do a good job of holding nutrients and water, but they also drain more slowly and release less water to plants than coarser soil types. Compaction is a common cause of garden problems, and compaction happens easily with the fine mineral particles of clay-ish soil. So, one of the first ways to improve your soil is to stay off of it when it is wet. Avoid soil disruption caused by rototilling or driving vehicles over it. Delineate specific walking paths in your yard, so the rest of the soil isn't compressed.

Next, plan to add as much organic matter to your soil as you can every year. Turn fallen leaves, compost, or manure into the top two or three inches of soil when and where you can. This will feed important soil organism and improve your soil's structure. Keep soil moisture in by covering unplanted areas with a two- or three-inch layer of organic mulch. And finally, if or when your garden needs fertilizer, use a natural fertilizer like manure, fish emulsion, or other natural sources of nitrogen.[2] Remember, when you fertilize you are feeding your soil, and it feeds your plants. It isn't an exaggeration to say that our soils keep us alive. With a little bit of care, we can return the favor.

1.
2. https://ucanr.edu/sites/ucmgplacer/files/378893.pdf
3. https://ucanr.edu/sites/soils/Soils_for_Homes_-_Gardens/#texture

Licorice

Jan Bower, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

I am a longtime lover and eater of licorice. Not the strawberry, blueberry, or lime licorice of late, but good, black classic licorice. My favorite is the Australian style gourmet black licorice, which comes in small manageable pieces, and is vegan-friendly and low in calories.

Licorice in bloom

Pure licorice extract is brownish black. It is made from the licorice root *Glycyrrhiza glabra*. The botanical name Glycyrrhiza is derived from the Greek word meaning "sweet root." It has the reputation of being the sweetest compound in nature, being nearly 50 times as sweet as cane sugar. The licorice plant grows on riverbanks and can reach a height of several feet. It has a taproot which can develop a thicket of runners as long as 25 feet. It is these tangled roots that have commercial value. They contain antimicrobial properties, which have been used for hundreds of years to treat various diseases, stomach pain, sore throats, skin inflammation, and infections. They are also used as a sweetener to flavor candies, soft drinks,

herbal teas, and other products. But beware—eating a large amount of black licorice can be harmful to your heart health, causing the body's potassium levels to fall and resulting in abnormal hearth rhythms, high blood pressure, swelling, lethargy, and congestive heart failure.

Licorice is indigenous to Western Asia and Southern Europe. While some groups of people consider it a medicinal plant, others simply use it as a sweetener and flavoring for baked goods and drinks. In Britain, the Netherlands, and Italy, licorice was popular in its dried natural form as a breath freshener and sweet treat. Today, more colorful and flavorful kinds of licorice are popular,

The manufacture of licorice in the United States began in 1914 by Martin Kretchmer in a small, rented space on West Jackson Boulevard in Chicago. The family-owned company, the American Licorice Company, is now headquartered in La Porte, Indiana and run by his great grandchildren. In the U.S., licorice candy is more often made with oil from anise seeds or molasses, not from the authentic licorice root.

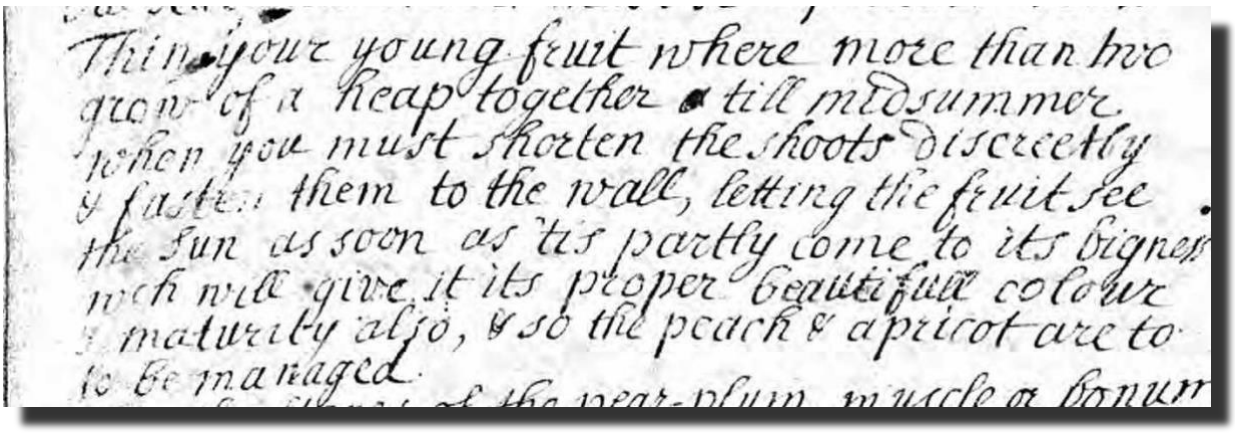
Early in this century licorice was bought as penny candy and used in cough drops for a soothing effect on the mouth and throat, now 90 percent of the processed licorice extract is consumed by the tobacco industry as a blend to sweeten pipe tobaccos, cigars, cigarettes, and snuff. It is also used in other by-products, such as fire-fighting foam, compost for mushroom culture, paperboard for shipping cartons, and insulation board.

Currently, the healing qualities of licorice are being analyzed and tested to combat Addison's disease, a form of anemia which has long baffled medical science, and the healing of stomach ulcers. In the pharmaceutical field, licorice is being used to cover up the taste of bitter drugs. American brewers are incorporating licorice as flavoring and a stimulant to preserve the foam in stout, porter, and ale. It is also being used to flavor cereals, fish, appetizers, and sauces. No one in the licorice industry is willing to guess where prospecting for new and better uses will end.

Spring Garden Tips 2024

Peg Smith, UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County

While searching through parish registers to find ancestral family I found several notes on gardening written by curates within the registers. A full page was devoted to how to espalier and care for fruit trees to maximize the health and fruit yield. This extract was from the mid 1700s and is still good advice.


Thin your young fruit where more than two
grow of a heap together till midsummer
when you must shorten the shoots discreetly
& fasten them to the wall, letting the fruit see
the sun as soon as 'tis partly come to its bigness
wch will give it its proper beautiful colour
& maturity also, & so the peach & apricot are to
be managed.

Several common diseases that affect our ornamental, fruit and vegetable plants are ‘water borne’ the fungal

spores or bacteria are carried in the splashing rainfall or moisture laden air and then infect our plants. With all our rain we need to consider adjusting our plant and tree care being particularly vigilant as the season warms up for the beginnings of any evidence of diseased plant parts. The moisture and the warmth are ideal conditions for fungal and bacterial diseases to run rampant.

For example, with our steady rain cycles this season and moisture laden air there are some additional considerations in fruit tree care. Clear any remaining old fallen fruit from the ground or mummified old fruit still on the tree as these can be a perfect 'bank' of fungal disease spores that will be released by the splashing rain. The usual advice for pruning fruit trees is to wait until the rain stops and the air is less humid because pruning cuts will seal more quickly in the drier air. When we prune, we basically leave an open wound on the tree which is the ideal entry point for fungal spores and bacteria that cause several of the common fruit tree diseases e.g. Fire Blight, a fungal disease, in apples and pears. It has certainly been a little hard to find a gap of a few dry days this pruning season. At this time of year, we dormant prune to stimulate growth, while summer pruning, when the trees are fully leafed, is for shape and size. March is the latest recommended time for dormant fruit tree pruning. If the very wet weather continues and you have kept up with regular pruning and your trees are in reasonably good shape, consider waiting until summer to do some reduction of the canopy pruning. If you skip the dormant season pruning, as the fruit comes on, make sure you thin the fruit so that you reduce the likelihood of limb break for the longer than usual limbs.

When we have this wonderful, repeated rain cycle of wet and drier establishing permanent pathways through both your ornamental and vegetable beds is very advantageous and will reduce soil compaction when stepping into garden beds. Permanent pathways don't need to be very formal; a well mulched access route or stepping stones will allow an easy reach to accomplish needed garden tasks. They are helpful whether the season is wet or dry. Raised beds for vegetable growing are a great approach as they allow a permanent planting area and permanent pathways, this allows comfortable access to work and to plant the vegetables even if it is a wetter season. The elevated raised beds also improve drainage. If not using raised beds, designated well mulched walking areas that allow reaching into the vegetable planted area work just as well. The easier the access to your plants, the easier it is to identify problems or do the needed seasonal maintenance.

SPRING CLEAN-UP

When we emerge into the garden after winter into the pleasant weather of spring, we have a tendency to grab a rake and enthusiastically clean up every scrap of debris in the garden. But lately I have noticed that under leaves and old collapsed stalks I am seeing lady beetles galore, very slow moving with the cold temperatures, so as you clean up take it slow and steady to see if any of our wonderful beneficial insects are still resting and not quite ready to assume their garden duties.

- Examine trees and shrubs for winter damage. Prune damaged foliage and branches.
- If you haven't pruned your roses and fruit trees, early March is the last month to ready them for their spring growth.
- Cut back seasonal grasses.
- Do not prune early flowering perennials such as viburnum and forsythia. It is best to prune them after the blossoms are spent or wait until early fall.
- Apply the final application of dormant oil spray to all fruit trees if the buds are not producing foliage or bloom. Roses need to be sprayed to prevent over-wintering insects and fungal spores. Last year's rose leaves can be stripped off and discarded to reduce the numbers of overwintering spores. http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/GARDEN/PLANTS/rose.html *
- Apply final application of copper and dormant oil to peach and nectarine trees if foliage and bloom have not pushed. http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7426.html *

- Spray a fungicide to control anthracnose on Sycamore and Ash trees. http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7420.html#MANAGEMENT
- For dormant oil sprays there are available both petroleum based dormant oil, such as Volk oil, and plant derived dormant oil such as Neem oil (certified for organic use). As always, please carefully read and follow label instructions and properly dispose of excess materials.
- Weeds are starting to sprout, so take care of them before they take over. "Get 'em small, get 'em often" is the best policy.
- Once your spring bulbs have finished blooming, dead head (remove blossom stalks and finished blossom heads) however, don't remove the leaves until they turn yellow. This will help the bulbs store energy for next spring's bloom. The longer the leaves are left to 'feed' the bulb the more likely you will have blooms next spring.

FERTILIZING, COMPOSTING AND MULCHING

If you need to lightly cultivate your perennial garden for weed control, take care not to dig too enthusiastically close to your plants. If the soil is not too wet to work use a weeder or a Hori Hori knife to loosen the weed's roots, this will prevent too much disturbance of the established plant's roots.

- Add soil amendments, such as compost and organic fertilizer.
- Roses and fruit trees need special attention now. In addition to organic rose food and soil amendments, add a cup of alfalfa pellets around each rose plant. Alfalfa contains a natural plant growth stimulant (triaconatol) that has been shown in some studies to improve plant growth and stimulate basal bud push.
- Be sure to use the fertilizer that is recommended for each plant type. Follow the application directions. Applying too much nitrogen will make a plant grow too quickly, producing growth which will not be as sturdy. This weaker growth is more susceptible to sucking insects. Too much nitrogen encourages leaf growth, not blooms, or fruits.
- As leaves and blooms push, resume your normal fertilizing schedule for fruit trees. Spread a layer of compost around the fruit trees out to the edge of the leaf canopy. If using commercial fertilizer be sure to follow the directions – more is not better.
- Fertilize your spring blooming plants after they finish blooming and repeat for the next three months.
- Fertilize your houseplants.
- Apply mulch your garden to a depth of 4 inches keeping the crown of the plants clear so as not to encourage diseases such as crown rot. The reward will be fewer weeds and less watering in the months ahead.
- Mulch is good for water conservation but to attract our wonderful pollinator native bees, of whom several are ground nesting bees, leave some bare dirt, not mulched, that will not be disturbed. Some bare soil, some nesting possibilities, and a shallow water source combined with a selection of pollinator attractor plants should bring the native bees to the garden. https://xerces.org/pollinator-conservation/yards-and-gardens

PLANTING

Spring is a time when old, worn-out woody shrubs and roses can be replaced. Perennial plants and shrubs need attention now.

- Remove any old woody non-productive growth, any dead branches, any crossing branches or branches that rub on one another.
- Dig and divide crowded perennial plants. Offer them to your neighbors if you have excess.

Select early blooming perennials and annuals.

- Plant candytuft, pansies, violas, and dianthus. An easy-care plant, *Iberis sempervirens*, is a low-growing perennial candytuft that brightens a spring garden.

Select summer blooming plants.

- Bulbs, corms, tubers can be planted now.
  Some colorful choices are cannas, begonias, lilies, and dahlias.

Shade plants include

- Columbine *(Aquilegia)* which comes in many colors. Coral bells *(Heuchera)* comes in a wide variety of bloom and foliage colors. Island Alumroot *(Heuchera maximus)* is the largest of the *Heuchera* and provides a beautiful show in the shade. Australian bluebell creeper *(Sollya heterophylla* a.k.a. *Billardiera heterophylla)* has evergreen mounded growth with a delicate blue flower.

Drought tolerant and sunny location plants

- Island Pink yarrow (*Achillea millefolium)*, blue grama grass (*Bouteloua gracilis*), California fuchsia (*Epilobum canum*), Santa Margarita foothill penstemon (*Penstemon heterophyllus* 'Margarita BOP', hummingbird sage (*Salvia spathacea*), and California goldenrod (*Solidago californica*) will all establish well and give seasonal color to the sunny waterwise garden.
-

Be sure to select these plants with care to ensure that they are strong, healthy, and not pot bound. Check the needed growing conditions so that you are placing them where they will grow and thrive. Plants that need 8 hours + of sun per day will not do well in the shade. Careful selection ensures healthy plants that are easy to grow and maintain. Young plants need additional water regularly to help them through their first summer as they establish a healthy deep root system.

After you have completed your planting, lightly fertilize your plants and mulch well. Plants do better if they are planted at or slightly above grade on a gentle mound with no root exposure.

VEGETABLES

If you are growing your vegetables from seed inside under grow lights by early/late April, you can 'harden off' your seedlings by moving them outside for a few hours each day. Start by taking the seedlings outdoors, placing them in partial shade, return them inside for the night. Steadily increase the time outside and extend the time in the sunlight each couple of days. As the nights warm the seedlings can be left outside overnight. When your seedlings are then transplanted into your vegetable garden, they will be able to tolerate the outside conditions both day and night. The soil temperature needs to be around 50'F before you set out your young plants. Tomatoes and peppers prefer about a 60'F soil temperature before transplanting out. April to May is the prime planting season for summer vegetables such as tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, squash, cucumbers etc. For a year-round guide to vegetable planting https://ucanr.edu/sites/YCMG/files/206763.pdf

DISEASE AND PEST CONTROL

If you have applied your dormant oil and fungicide, your plants will be off to a good start.

- Periodically check plants, especially roses, for signs of black spot, rust and mildew. These often appear first on the interior, lower parts or back of the leaves of the plant. If the spring is especially rainy, you will need to be more vigilant, and either remove the affected leaves or spray more often.
  If your rose leaves have neatly cut out curved sections that is just the native leaf cutter bee collecting leaf pieces to line, the laying sites for their young – something we want to encourage in the garden.
- There are simple solutions to most garden pests http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/ This Integrated Pest Management website is a great resource for the least environmentally toxic way of handling garden pests. Regularly examine plants for damage from caterpillars, slugs, snails or earwigs. As the weather warms, aphids, mites, thrips, and scale may show in your garden. These pests are usually kept in check by a variety of beneficial insects such as lacewings, mantises, ground beetles, tachinidae, and robber flies. Many plants attract beneficial insects including yarrow, alyssum, feverfew, dill, parsley, coriander, penstemon, and asters.

- Attracting birds to the garden with a shallow water source and plants such as sunflowers will also help with insect control. You may have a few torn leaves on your beets and chard from birds such as house finches feeding on the leaves but the balance and gain for the garden is the large volume of insects, scale etc. that they will consume.
- Here is the link to Seasonal Landscape IPM Check: http://www2.ipm.ucanr.edu/landscapechecklist/checklist.cfm?regionKey=2

LAWN CARE

Lawn can still have a place in the garden when managed well. Deep soaking, without having water run-off, encourages deep root growth and this is the key to a healthy summer lawn. Lawn does not need to be watered every day. Even with our hot summers a deep soak once or twice a week will carry a lawn through the hottest season. Lawn does surprisingly well if given a modicum of care with deep soaking and regular fertilizing.

To allow water penetration into heavier clay soils you may need to adjust your irrigation cycle. The ideal length of time for watering depends on when the water begins to run off from the lawn and be wasted. Allow the sprinklers to run for 15-20 minutes if there is run off with this timing adjust the sprinkler system to water for a shorter duration. Then set the irrigation timing to repeat this cycle in about an hour. Doing two watering cycles close together but of shorter duration allows the water time to penetrate more deeply into the soil. This deeper penetration of water will encourage deeper root growth in the lawn so that in the summer your lawn will cope better with a very hot prolonged heat wave.

If you have been watering your lawn every day you will need to 'adapt' the lawn to its new watering routine. Use this spring to change your watering practices gradually over a period of weeks this will give the lawn time to acclimate and develop deeper roots with the new water saving routine.
Start by not watering on one day of the week. Slowly progress dropping more watering days. Choose the one or two days a week you want to water the lawn and using the above guidance to refine the duration of the improved watering cycles. Most lawns can manage with a deep soak once a week unless we have an extended period of over 100˚F.

As spring gives way to summer raise the mower blade to a height of 3 inches to protect the crown of the grass from the heat.

- Re-seed thin spots in your lawn and begin your fertilizing and mowing schedule with the beginnings of vigorous spring lawn growth.
- While it is easier to use commercial fertilizer applying a light topcoat of compost to your lawn will greatly benefit your lawn's growth and soil health.
- Leaving grass clippings on your lawn by using a mulching mower will return needed nutrients. Tolerating a slightly untidy lawn as the grass clippings break down will benefit the soil and the health of the lawn.

FINAL SPRING TOUCHES

- Paint the lower trunks of young trees with water thinned interior white latex paint to prevent sunburn and borer problems. Stake tall growing perennials and vegetables before they begin to bend over in late spring.
- In late spring, thin fruit on the trees, leaving 6 inches between each fruit. This will help the remaining fruit to mature properly and keep the branches from being over-weighted with fruit causing splitting and breaking of the tree limbs.
- Deadhead spent flowers to assure a long blooming season in your garden.
  When California poppies begin to fade trim them back to promote a second bloom.
- Plant containers with your favorite annuals and herbs.
- Keep bird feeders clean and well supplied.

- Sharpen and maintain garden tools.
- Hang your hammock or set out your favorite garden chair. Relax with some lemonade and take time to enjoy a new gardening book or listen to a local garden radio program.

Places you might like to visit this spring:

Dixon, Jepson Prairie, Vernal Pools https://solanolandtrust.org/jepson-prairie

Winters, California Native Grasslands Hedgerow Farm Tour 2024 https://cnga.org/Events

Winters, Winters Yolo County Library Demonstration Garden https://wfol.org/what-we-do/library-support/winters-community-library-teaching-garden/

Woodland, Crawford Park Rain Garden https://www.cityofwoodland.gov/1285/Crawford-Park-Rain-Garden

Woodland, Woodland Community College Demonstration Garden
https://waterwisewoodland.weebly.com/woodland-community-college.html

Sacramento, McKinley Park Rose Garden https://www.cityofsacramento.org/ParksandRec/Parks/Park-Directory/Central-City/McKinley-Park/FrederickNEvansRoseGarden

UC Davis Arboretum https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu

Davis, Central Park Gardens https://www.centralparkgardens.org

Questions about your garden?

We'd love to help!

UCCE Master Gardener, Yolo County Hotline.....(530) 666-8737

Our message centers will take your questions and information. Please leave your name, address, phone number and a description of your problem. A Master Gardener will research your problem and return your call.

E-Mail..... mgyolo@ucdavis.edu

Web Site ..... http://yolomg.ucanr.edu

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