Master Gardener University of California

The Curious Gardener

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In This Issue

UC CE

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Agriculture and Natural Resources

Finding Scenes of Respite in the Garden

by Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

After weeks of sheltering-in-place, having more time to spend outside, especially in the garden, has brightened the days of many. This spring, while out in my garden, the birds seem to be singing louder, the flowers more brilliant in color, and the weight of current events is a bit lighter.

It is remarkable that an organism, small enough to be unseen by the naked eye, has swept across lands and oceans, causing the world to be turned upside down. As the global pandemic has stormed onto center-front stage, day-to-day activities have shifted to stage left or stage right; the scenes are all different with this new scenario. The disruption to our daily lives has left many of us off the mark, and a little out of balance, like a wobbly top—many of the things we love to do have come to a halt. But as resilient beings, the love of the outdoors, particularly the garden, has served as respite for many.

Photo by Pauline Sakai, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Gardening has been proven to be healthy in many ways. A 2016 analysis of scientific literature showed that

Continued on next page

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gardening increases an individual's life satisfaction, vigor, and psychological wellbeing. Positive effects were also noted, such as reductions in depression and anxiety, with increases in quality of life and sense of community. Gardening can reduce stress, help our hearts and provide us with good nutrition. Plus, interacting with nature, exposure to fresh air and, the physical attributes associated with a garden production are invaluable!

For those who enjoy and are able to get out in the garden, consider that it is a wonderful way to take care of body, mind and spirit. Go forth, find the mark, and continue to find scenes of respite and solace in your gardens.

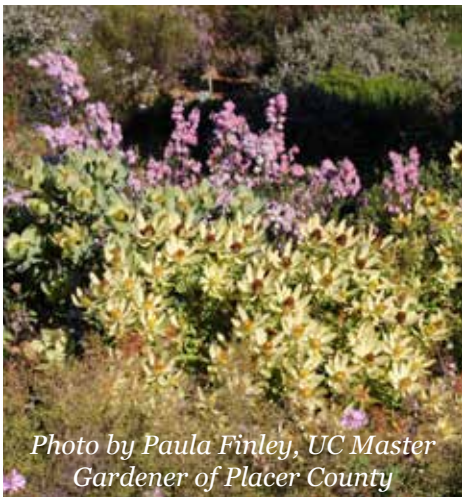

Photo by Paula Finley, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Don't Forget to Take Our Reader Survey!

It's not too late to have your voice heard. Tell us your thoughts about this newsletter by filling out our anonymous online survey. Let us know how we can improve and provide you with the best gardening information for your needs. We can't please everyone with every article, but we strive to provide something of value to each reader in every issue. This is your chance tell us about your gardening situation and what YOU want to read and learn more about. Click here or type https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=10494 into your browser window to access the survey. We look forward to your input!

Great Trees for Our Area

Photo by Ed Gilman

Pineapple Guava
Feijoa sellowiana

USDA Hardiness Zones: 8-11
Height: 18-25'
Width: 18-25'

by Annette Wyrick, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

In the 2020 spring issue of *Curious Gardener*, the article *Select Trees with Existing Conditions and Ultimate Size in Mind* provides information on how to select a tree based on site conditions. This issue will spotlight pineapple guava (*Feijoa sellowiana*), a broadleaved evergreen tree. Broadleaved evergreen plants will drop leaves throughout the year but always have green leaves present. These trees are best at providing structure for the garden, a visual screen of an unsightly view, and/or a focal point. Evergreen trees placed to the northwest have the ability to manipulate the flow of cold wind and will not interfere with much wanted winter sunlight in a home.

This tree loves to enjoy the sunshine and even partial shade. It is not finicky about soil type as long as it is well drained. After it is established, it prefers a deep watering after the soil has dried out and is rated as low water use by WUCOLS. This is a handsome multi-branch tree with a spreading canopy. It has scaly red brown bark and glossy oval medium green leaves with white fuzzy undersides which make the canopy sparkle. Bees are attracted to showy red and white flowers that bloom in spring. In fall, green oval fruit mature and are ripe when they fall to the ground. The fruit litter can be messy so it is advised to plant this tree away from hardscape. The sweet fruit are edible and enjoyed by birds and squirrels too. Deer tend to leave it alone. This tree has few insect and disease problems and has good fire resistance. While this tree requires minimal pruning after harvest, it can tolerate a considerable amount if a hedge form is desirable. For more information on *Feijoa sellowiana*, visit https://edis.ifas.ufl.edu/st249

Here are two additional garden worthy broadleaf evergreen trees. Click on the links to download more information.

Strawberry tree (*Arbutus* 'Marina'), pictured at right
https://ucanr.edu/datastoreFiles/268-721.pdf

Japanese blueberry tree (*Elaeocarpus dicipiens*)
https://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/syllabi/206/Lists/second%20ed/Elaeocarpusdecipiens.pdf

Q&A With an Expert

Christine Casey, Ph.D.

Academic Program Management Officer, Häagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven

Christine Casey, Ph.D., is the Academic Program Management Officer for the Häagen-Dazs Honey Bee Haven at University of California Davis, which is part of the Department of Entomology and Nematology. Laurie McGonagill, UC Master Gardener of Placer County, had the opportunity to ask Dr. Casey some questions.

Laurie McGonagill: Why should we be concerned with promoting bees and other pollinators? Do you make a distinction between honey bees and native bees?

Dr. Christine Casey: Bees pollinate most of the fruits, nuts, and vegetables that make our diets healthy and tasty. Some crops, such as almonds, require bee pollination, while others have better yield (e.g. tomatoes), or higher value, more nutritious fruit (e.g. strawberries) if higher bee pollinator populations are present.

In addition to human food, bees pollinate at least 80% of all flowering plants. That means that most of the plants wild animals rely on for food and shelter are bee-pollinated.

There's definitely a distinction made between honey bees and wild bees. Honey bees are managed livestock, in that queens can be artificially inseminated and a replacement queen can be purchased to replace one who is losing her vigor. Honey bees are used for about 85% of crop pollination in the U.S. because their social colony structure allows hives to be moved from farm to farm. Research over the last decade is providing more and more data to support the importance of wild bees as crop pollinators. Educating growers about how to provide for their needs on the farm and in the home food garden is thus becoming increasingly important.

What are the most important things we can do to support bees and other pollinators?

Plant the correct flowers (see list on next page and beegarden.ucdavis.edu/BeeGardeningResources for a full list), leave some bare soil for nesting, and apply pesticides only when absolutely necessary.

What plants attractive to bees and other pollinators should the suburban homeowner with limited space consider? Does it matter if like plants are clustered together or separated?

An easy way to get started with bee gardening is to plant an herb garden (flowers in the mint family are a good source of nectar and are attractive to bees) along with sunflowers, which provide both pollen and nectar. Add some early-blooming native wildflowers such as California poppy for early season pollen and you'll be off to a great start. It's best to group like plants together. Not only is this more aesthetically pleasing, it makes it easier for bees to find plants and forage efficiently.

For those with more available planting space, what plants would you add?

Ceanothus and manzanita grow wild in Placer and Nevada counties, and there are many horticultural varieties of these that will do well in your gardens and not grow as large as their wild counterparts. Western redbud is a good small tree for bees. Other large shrubs that are good for bees that will grow in your area include toyon, coffeeberry, and germander.

When are honey bees and native bees active and should we aim to have something blooming in our yards all year?

Bees are active when the temperature is 55 degrees or higher, the sun is shining, and the weather is mild (i.e. no rain or strong wind). Most California native bees have relatively short lifespans that correspond to the bloom time of California native plants. Honey bee workers are active year-round and will be seen any time the conditions described above are present. Native bees that are social overwinter as mated females (queens) that can emerge as early as late January in a warm winter. Native solitary bees are active from late February through October, depending on the species. Some have lifespans of as little as six weeks, while others may live for several months.

Christine Casey's Recommended Low-Water Bee Plants for the Sacramento Region

Germander (*Teucrium fruticans*) N
Rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis*)[2] N
Manzanita (*Arctostaphylos* spp.)*[2] N
California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*)* P
Ceanothus (*Ceanothus* spp.)*[2] P
Redbud (*Cercis occidentalis*)*[3] N (pictured below)
Native sages (*Salvia brandegeei, S. clevelandii, S. sonomensis* and their crosses)* N
Lavender (*Lavandula spp.*)[2] N
Mallow (*Malacothamnus* and *Sphaeralcea* spp.)* NP
Catmint hybrids (*Nepeta* x *faassenii* cultivars) N
Cape balsam (*Bulbine frutescens*) NP
Foothill penstemon (*Penstemon heterophyllus*)* NP
Autumn sage, little-leaved sage, and their hybrids (*Salvia greggii, Salvia microphylla, Salvia* x *jamensis*)[2] N
Santa Barbara daisy (*Erigeron karvinskianus*) NP
Blanketflower (*Gaillardia* x *grandiflora*) NP
Gaura (*Gaura lindheimeri*) N
Cedros Island verbena (*Verbena lilacina* 'De La Mina')* N
Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*)* NP
Calamint (*Calamintha nepetoides*) N
Wall germander (*Teucrium chamaedrys*) N
California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*)* N
Russian sage (*Perovskia atriplicifolia*)[2] N
California fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*)*[2] N
Sedum 'Autumn Joy' (*Hylotelephium telephium* x *spectabile*) N
California aster (*Symphyotrichum chilense*)* NP

*=California native; N=nectar source; P=pollen source.
[2]Many cultivars available; all used by bees
[3]Foliage used by leafcutter bees for nesting material

BotLat Corner

Find Out What Those Weird Plant Names Mean

by Peggy Beltramo,
UC Master Gardener of Placer County

The promise of colorful blooms all season long, that's the allure of summer annuals. Many annuals are considered bedding plants, since they are planted into an entire garden bed. Let's look at a couple of them and their BotLat names.

Do you know the most popular bedding plant? According to Missouri Botanical Garden, it is *Impatiens walleriana*, or Busy Lizzie. The binomial genus of this plant indicates how it spreads its seeds. *Impatiens* is Latin, meaning 'impatient' which is what the seed pods are. They burst open, scattering their seeds far and wide. The plant's specific epithet, *walleriana*, gives recognition to the missionary, Horace Waller.

In searching for a second bedding plant to feature, I chose petunias (pictured above), since I always plant at least a couple of these sunny summer flowers. Guess what! Missouri Botanical Garden lists this as the second most popular bedding annual. (Fist bump for me!)

Now, before we discuss the binomial name for this plant, I need to mention the word hybrid. Hybrid plants are crosses between two different species, and therefore, often, do not have a specific epithet following the genus (although sometimes *hybrida* is used.) The genus of this plant is the same as its common name: *Petunia,* which is a Latinized form of the Portuguese word, *petun*, which means tobacco. Petunias are in the same family as tobacco, as are tomatoes, potatoes, peppers and eggplants. (Did you know those vegetables are related to tobacco?)

Do you include these two bedding plants in your summer garden? If so, now you can greet them by their BotLat names.

Integrated Pest Management in Gardens and Landscapes

by David Warman, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Integrated Pest Management or IPM combines environmentally sound methods to prevent or manage pest problems over long term and protect people, the environment and beneficial organisms. IPM was developed in production agriculture over forty years ago. Common IPM practices now include:

- Development of resistant plant varieties. This includes many disease resistant varieties introduced to commercial agriculture and homeowners.
- Encouragement of natural enemies such as our good friend the lady bug.
- The use of physical and mechanical controls. A good example of this is a deer fence to exclude deer from your garden.
- Good gardening practices that encourage development of healthy soil and drip irrigation practices that use less water.
- IPM also means that if a pesticide is used, the least toxic option is used first. This would include both organic and conventional pesticide options.

When we talk about "pests" we are discussing organisms that are annoying us or damaging our plants, structures, or person. Pests are personal. A pest to one may not be a pest to someone else. Examples could be: Tree squirrels? Dandelion? Spider? When dealing with pests its important to consider the level of pests that are present. For example, a minor infestation of aphids on a tree or shrub does little damage. Do they need to be controlled? No, they don't in most cases. Plants in many cases can live with minor pest infestations.

Key IPM strategies for the garden if implemented can greatly improve your community's environment. The concepts are simple:

- Most organisms in the garden and landscape are not pests.
- Identify your "pest" before trying to manage it.
- Practice IPM—rely on prevention, biological control, and integrating nonchemical methods.
- If pesticides are required, choose the least toxic product.

The majority of plant problems found in California home gardens are caused by improper plant selection or poor cultural practices as opposed to diseases, insects, or soil condition. This is the reason native plant selections as a landscaping choice has become such a popular option for a large number of California homeowners. Most nurseries carry a good selection of native plants that use less water and grow well in our soils.

Let's review practical IPM methods and practices that you can implement in your garden or landscape.

Cultural Controls: Habitat modification, remove sources of food, water and hiding places.

- Proper Plant and site selection for your plantings.
- Pest resistant plants. Including Native Plants when possible.
- Sanitation, remove clutter and backyard debris. Many insects and disease overwinter in these areas. A clean garden area will greatly decrease disease and insect problems.
- Proper pruning to promote and manage plant growth.
- Proper fertilization of garden and landscape.
- Water management. Effective irrigation systems help prevent disease and manage plant water needs. Recognize effective drainage is needed for a wide range of the plants we love. Plant your garden in properly drained soils if possible.

Physical and Mechanical Controls: Many times, these methods can be used in place of more toxic solutions such as pesticides.

- Cultivation to control weeds in season.
- Mowing to manage weeds.

Continued on next page

Visit ipm.ucanr.edu

for practical information on pest management techniques and identification for a broad range of California pests

Is this deformation caused by an insect, a disease, or an environmental condition? Proper identification of the culprit is critical in IPM. Is it really a problem, or just unsightly? In this case, growths caused by eriophyid mites may look ugly, but will not seriously harm woody landscape plants. Photo by Jack Kelly Clark.

Continued from previous page

- Flaming using propane is an option in areas such as driveway cracks.
- Mulches are very effective at helping control weeds, improve soil and manage water.
- Traps, screens and fence barriers can keep out unwanted pests such as deer, gopher and other pests that invade our gardens.

Biological Control

Natural enemies are the agents of biological control. Examples are lady bugs, parasitic wasps, lace wings and praying mantids. Recognizing these garden "friends" is an important way to improve your garden. Ensuring any use of a pesticide does not affect or control these insects is an effective way to manage pests such as aphids.

Deciding to use a Pesticide

Before using any pesticide, be sure you need it! Questions to ask yourself are:

- Is a pest really the cause of the problem? How many pests are there and is a pesticide application justified? There are thresholds for insect and disease levels that are somewhat subjective however in many cases plant can withstand some damage.
- Can you change conditions which have caused the pest to become a problem? Will a cleanup reduce overwintering of disease and insects? Can I improve drainage that will eliminate the problem?
- Other than a pesticide, what else might work? Cultural Control, Physical control, Mechanical control, Biological Control, or possibly replant a Native Plant that grows well in the area.

If you decide to use a pesticide use it in an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program that implements a combination of measures that will provide the most satisfactory and long-term pest control.

If you are interested in learning more about IPM you are welcome to attend one of our Master Gardener Workshops. Please visit our websites to view updated schedules of events as many of our usual activities have been postponed or cancelled.

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Pink Phlomis, *Phlomis purpurea*

By Brooke Moeller, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

What? You say your garden is sunny and hot, full of rocks, and infested with deer? And you are looking for a nice drought-tolerant plant that will compliment your lavender, rosemary and cistus (rock rose)? If you like plants with gray-green velvety leaves and pinkish-purple flowers, we have the perfect plant for you. *Phlomis purpurea*, pink phlomis is a great option to consider.

This plant is similar to Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis fruticosa*), its yellow-flowered relative. Originally from the Mediterranean regions, pink phlomis can take our scorching summer heat.

This smallish shrub grows to between four to six feet tall and wide. The spring and summer flowers grow in whorls that some have described as flying saucer shaped. The flowers attract the three B's: butterflies, birds, and bees. Once established, this shrub is drought-tolerant. But it will look better with a little summer water (don't we all?). And it will perform best in soil with a bit of drainage.

Pink phlomis is super easy to care for. Just remove spent flower stalks at the crown. Then, at the end of the season, prune back the plant by about 1/3 to maintain a more compact shape. If it gets too big, it's easy to divide and share with friends. This Arboretum All-Star is an easy shrub to fall in love with.

References

- *Phlomis purpurea*. UC Davis Arboretum and Public Garden n.d. https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/plant/pink-phlomis
- *Sunset Western Garden Book*. Sunset Publishing Corporation, Eighth Edition. 2007

New in Town?
Tips from a Transplant

Western Tent Caterpillar, *Malacosoma californicum*

by Brooke Moeller, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Western tent caterpillar, Malacosoma californicum, larva. Photo by Carlton S. Koehler.

Western tent caterpillar larvae and their silken tent in a coast live oak. Photo by Jack Kelly Clark.

As an enthusiastic newcomer to Placer County I am finding that I have lots of questions about things that are quite different from my urban neighborhood in Orange County. I hope this column will help answer similar questions you may have.

One of the things that may have drawn you to the Sierra Foothills are the oak trees. My new home is surrounded by them. I knew that every tree and shrub is a mini ecosystem, swarming with insects, birds and other living things. But I was surprised when, this spring, my yard and neighborhood were covered with small caterpillars.

Some bugs are good for our gardens and some are definitely not so good. First I needed to identify what type of caterpillar I was dealing with. Then I could figure out what to do about them.

It's important to remember that caterpillars don't start out as caterpillars. There are four stages of growth known as complete metamorphosis: egg, larva also known as the caterpillar (a feeding, destructive phase similar to the teenage years), pupa (an inactive phase) and adult where they reproduce. The larva of butterflies and moths may damage plants, but the adults consume only nectar or do not feed at all.

I took a picture of one of the offending caterpillars with my cell phone and went to UC IPM website: http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/PLANTS/INVERT/folfeedcater.html.

Here is what I learned: There are several kinds of caterpillars that eat oak trees. There are two ways to identify them: by looking at the damaged leaves or by going to the link of photographs of the suspected leaf eaters. I compared my bug with on-line photos and determined the most likely suspect was the Western Tent Caterpillar. This little critter is also fond of eating stonefruit leaves!

They are quite hairy, black, grey or white with an orange stripe longitudinally across the body. There are blue-white lines on each segment, and they are ¾ to 1 inch long. They spin a white cocoon that are attached to branches.

They are called Tent Caterpillars is because they make a 'tent' for the larvae. See the bottom photo at left.

After emerging from the cocoon, there were lots of light gray moths, but they may also be dark red-brown to yellow, tan or gray. Their main job is to procreate, laying eggs on twigs and branches of the host tree, preferably on the sunny side. The larvae hatch 3-4 weeks later but remain inside the egg until the following spring.

Management: Heavy infestations of the Western Tent caterpillar can cause defoliation and can even kill a tree. Most of the time, the infestation is just a nuisance and will run its course. Like most living things, this caterpillar has natural enemies such as parasites (wasps and yellowjackets), predators (birds and spiders) and disease organisms which may 'dispatch it'.

You can prune individual colonies by removing branches. Dispose of the branches and tents by putting them in soapy water or sealing them in a plastic bag. Apply *Bacillus thuringiensis*, a naturally occurring soil-borne bacteria for heavy infestations. Apply when larvae are newly hatched.

My concern about this caterpillar was put to rest when I discovered that it is manageable. Often the best solution is simply to do nothing and let nature take its course.

References

- Ciesla, William, and Iral Ragenovich. *Western Tent Caterpillar*. Forest Insect & Disease Leaflet 119. USDA Forest Service. May 2008. https://www.fs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/fsbdev2_042847.pdf
- *Pest Notes: California Oakworm.* UCANR Publication 7422. April 2009. http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7422.html

Hotline FAQs

Do you have gardening questions?

Call the Master Gardener Hotline in your county

Nevada Co. 530-273-0919

Closed due to COVID-19 testing site

Placer Co. 530-889-7388

I think my bearded iris should be divided, but I'm not sure how and when to do that

by Pauline Kuklis, UC Master Gardener of Placer County

Bearded iris should be divided every 3-5 years during mid to late summer after they have finished blooming. When the rhizomes get too overcrowded, the plants become less healthy and will likely no longer produce lush blooms.

Follow these simple steps to successfully divide bearded iris:

- Create a clean work surface by laying out a large tarp near the iris bed.
- Using a pitchfork, carefully dig out the clumps of iris and lay them on the tarp.
- Gently divide the rhizomes by pulling them apart, or cutting them apart with a clean, sharp knife.
- Look for unhealthy or diseased rhizomes and discard them. Also discard any damaged leaves.
- Select the healthiest clumps for replanting. You will likely have more than you can use, so be sure to share with friends and neighbors!
- Using clean, sharp shears, cut the leaves about 5-6 inches above the rhizome, making a pointed fan (see photo at right).
- Clean all dirt from the rhizomes using a strong spray from your garden hose.

Photo from article "It's Time to Divide Bearded Iris", by Carolyn Melf, UC Master Gardener of Butte County

- Let the rhizomes completely dry in a shaded location for several hours or up to a few days.
- Replant approximately 12 inches apart. The best way to replant is to dig a shallow hole with a small mound in the center. Place the rhizome on the mound and spread the roots over the mound. Fill the hole and tamp down, making sure that the top of the rhizome is slightly above the soil level. If buried too deeply, the iris can develop diseases such as root rot.

For more detailed information about dividing and replanted your bearded iris, refer to the following online articles:

http://cesutter.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener_116/?blogpost=21775&blogasset=77621

https://wimastergardener.org/article/dividing-bearded-iris/

Nevada County Demo Garden News

by Ann Wright, UC Master Gardener of Nevada County

With mandatory closing of businesses and public meeting places, the Nevada County Master Gardener's Demonstration Garden has been attended only as needed to observe plants, and to keep the water going on young plants.

On a recent solo visit to the garden, it was a delight to see so much life and color! The brilliant mix of lavender, white and magenta flowering ground cover was a welcome sight. Jerusalem sage (*Phlomis sp.*) was budding with hints of purple tips, and the hoop house stands tall and ready to take on new starts for propagation in anticipation of future public plant sales. Bright green cypress spurge (*Euphorbia cyparissias*), pictured above, highlighted the rock garden and the orchard was buzzing with bees. The native oak habitat is coming alive with blooming valley violet ceanothus (*Ceanothus maritimus*) and greening meadow grasses.

A calm peace was felt during this very different occasion to visit the garden. It will be good to be back in the garden with our fellow gardeners!

Events Calendar

Due to COVID-19, Public Events Have Been Suspended
Visit Our Websites for the Most Up to Date Information

Nevada County Master Gardeners: **ncmg.ucanr.org**
Placer County Master Gardeners: **pcmg.ucanr.org**

All Public Events Suspended

In the midst of the current coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the top priority of UC Master Gardeners is the health and safety of our communities.

At the time of publication, in compliance with CDC, state, and county guidance, Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have suspended all public workshops, events, and activities until further notice.

Until we can serve you again in person, please check out these "socially distant" resources to aid and inspire your gardening pursuits.

Read Past Issues of *The Curious Gardener*

Ten years of past issues can be accessed at http://pcmg.ucanr.org/Curious_Gardener_Newsletter/?newsList=3648

Follow Us on Facebook

Ask home gardening questions, read gardening tips, and find out when our events resume.

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

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

Nevada County Master Gardeners and Friends Talk Radio:

Listen live on Saturdays from 10:00 am until noon

at KNCO 830AM

Or, live stream at http://www.knco.com

Call in to ask your home gardening questions:
(530) 477-KNCO (477-5626)

On dates Master Gardeners are not available for a live broadcast, past shows will be played from previously recorded podcasts (if this is the case, the call-in feature is not available).

Miss the show? Download a podcast!

- Go to the KNCO website
- Click on the Podcast tab
- Scroll down to find the previous Saturday's date
- Look for "Master Gardeners—The First Hour" and "Master Gardeners—The Second Hour"

Explore Our Websites

Both county's websites are chock full of gardening information, though they are each layed out a little differently.

On the Nevada County site, look at the menu bar on the left side of the homepage, **ncmg.ucanr.org**. Here you will find links to information on WaterWise Gardening, Home Vegetable Gardening, Backyard Orchards, Pest Management and Composting (including videos!).

On the Placer County homepage, **pcmg.ucanr.org**, similar links are found across the yellow top menu bar where you will find headings like Placer Pests, Gardening Essentials (Basics, Composting, Drought Advice), Fruits & Nuts, Vegetables, and Landscape Plants.

These websites will be the best places to get current information about when our workshops and events will resume. We hope to be able to see you in person again soon, but until that time, we wish you happy and healthy times in your garden!

About Master Gardeners

Our mission as University of California Master Gardener volunteers is to extend research-based gardening and composting information to the public through various educational outreach methods. We strive to present accurate, impartial information to local gardeners so they have the knowledge to make informed gardening decisions in regard to plant choices, soil fertility, pest management, irrigation practices, and more.

The Master Gardener volunteer program was started in the early 1970s at the Washington State University. Farm Advisors became overwhelmed by all the incoming calls from home gardeners and homesteaders so they trained volunteers to answer these questions and the "Master Gardener Program" was born. The first University of California Master Gardener programs began in 1980 in Sacramento and Riverside counties. The Nevada County and Placer County Master Gardener Associations began soon thereafter in 1983.

Over 35 Years of Serving Placer and Nevada Counties

Production Information

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Kevin Marini, Editor
Community Education Specialist: Home Horticulture and Composting Education, Master Gardener Coordinator

Judith Brooks, Content Coordination
Elaine Applebaum, Production
Master Gardeners of Placer County

Have a Gardening Question?

Call our Hotline

Placer County Residents
530.889.7388

Nevada County Residents
530.273.0919
Closed due to COVID-19 testing site

Master Composter Rotline
530.889.7399

UC Cooperative Extension Placer County
11477 E Avenue
Auburn, CA 95603
530.889.7385 office
530.889.7397 fax
email: ceplacer@ucdavis.edu

UC Cooperative Extension Nevada County
Closed due to COVID-19 testing site
255 So. Auburn Street
Grass Valley, CA 95945
530.273.4563 office
530.273.4769 fax
email: cenevada@ucdavis.edu

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