



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Master Gardener Program

1st Quarter 2024

Happy New Year =



A butterfly in the classroom?

HELPLINE: Look at the VMS to sign up for the Helpline, Monday afternoons and Thursday mornings. If you need training, contact Marilynne Manfredi or Debbie Morrow if you have ???'s.



Christmas Tree Volunteers: De-lores, Pam, Marilynne, Liz, and Jay

Chair Notes from Mindy:

Happy Holidays to All.

For info on the MG Program, click the QR below.



Merced Master Gardeners

ucanr.edu

MG'ers walk to end Alzheimers



Garden To-Do's: January, February, March 2024

By Pat Shay

Hope everyone enjoyed the Holidays and are now ready to get back out in the garden. Thus far, no rain to speak of. Would be very nice to get some from now through March.

This is the time of year to prepare for warmer months to follow. It is the time for maintenance, for pruning, for dividing, for taking stock of what is in the garden and what we might want to add or subtract, including those plants/trees/shrubs whose prime has passed.

January and February Since we can expect temps to be very similar for these two months, our first order of business is to assess how things went last year and what we may wish to change. Is it time for a new tree? Is it time for more perennials? Is it time to add a shrub that might help to block out an unpleasant view? It is also time to give our tools a good going over to be sure they are ready to take on the New Year's gardening tasks.

First let's look at the bedrock of our garden, the soil. Do we have low spots that collect water? Have we planted low-water plants near those that take more water, thus making vibrant growth and good production hard for both of them? Get out in the yard. Look for plants that are not/have not thrived where they are. It is usually a case of too much or too little water. Try to even out places that have dips that collect water. Look carefully at what has not done well and decide whether to leave it where it is and move a neighbor or the reverse. Are there trees that are making too much shade for one plant or another? Do we want to keep the tree as is and move the plant or trim the tree to allow more light for the plant?

With all the trees having lost their leaves, it is an ideal time to try producing leaf mold to add to your garden soil. Or, if you've disposed of this fall's leaves, maybe now is the time to create a space to try making leaf mold for later in the year or next year.

Check water systems for leaks or damaged sprinkler heads, etc., which can lead to dry spots – not necessarily a problem now, but definitely will be a problem later as warm temps return. Also, with perennials/shrubs and trees pruned back, it is much easier to detect problems and fix them now.

Check tools and sharpen/lubricate as necessary. Shovels, loppers, clippers, hoes all benefit from being sharpened.

Prune roses while temps are in the 50's. Get rid of all old and/or crooked/crossed branches. It may seem counter intuitive, but a pretty hard trim will result in much better production once blooming starts.

Perennials can be divided now and you can share/trade with friends who want what you have and vice versa. If you've left salvia echinacea and other perennials to this point so that birds can benefit from seed, now is the time to collect as much seed as seems suitable and be ready

Garden To-Do's: Continued

to trade/move/augment. You can replant the seed a bit later in the year to increase the number of plants you have. You might want to add some in another area in your garden, whatever works for your circumstances.

Have you decided that you would like another tree or a replacement for one that is no longer producing well or providing shade where you want it to/too much shade where it is a nuisance? Now is the time to plant bare-root fruit trees and accomplish two goals with one planting...fruit and shade. As our climate has warmed, it is a bit of challenge to determine what varieties will do best. Apples, plums and cherries all need a certain period of time with temps in the 40's. There are varieties that can do well here, but it will take a bit of research to find the best fit. Walking around your yard, you can 'feel' areas that stay cooler – a good location for a fruit tree if suitable for your garden plan. To ward off leaf curl on stone fruit trees, it is time for the second and third (January and February) application of dormant spray.

Indoor plants also need special care this time of year. Inside with the heater on, the soil dries out more quickly. They need no fertilizer since a growth phase is still in the future.

If you had a living Christmas tree, it's time to find the right place in the garden to be its permanent home. If yours was a cut tree, early January is the longest it should safely be in the house without becoming a fire hazard. If there is a spot on the edge of your garden where it could provide cover for birds or beneficial insects, by all means cut it up and leave the branches/twigs, etc. to help those who help you later in the year.

If foliage of gardenias and camellias has become yellowed, apply a dose of iron according to label instructions.

If you have a greenhouse or wish to use an indoor window sill, you can plant seeds for veggies and annuals starting in mid-to late February.

March Temps are now beginning to warm, but do not be fooled – still time for frosts which will decimate plant starts. Leave what you've started in your greenhouse or on your window sill until all danger of frost has passed, or plant them out in a cold frame in a sheltered location.

Perfectly fine to visit a garden shop and purchase some winter annuals for pots in a sheltered location. Watch that they are NOT under a drip line from trees or buildings so that they do not become soggy. If you have buddleia or bottlebrush, they will soon begin to bloom for hummingbirds and butterflies.

Clean birdbaths regularly. They can harbor bacteria that will kill the birds you want to attract.

Monitor pests and get a head start on removing/eliminating them. Depending upon the year and the amount of moisture, you may have more earwigs, snails and slugs. Clear away debris from the base of plantings to remove their favorite locations. Toward the end of the month begin to fertilize lawns, shrubs and trees. As roses begin to bud out, fertilize them, too.

Happy Holidays and Special thanks to Denise G for opening her home to us for holiday festivities.



Great food, wonderful Master Gardeners

Artichokes are Changing, Did You Know?



California produces 97% of the nation's fresh artichokes. Of that 97%, 75% is grown in Monterey County. However, the amount of acreage has been reduced, but yields are the same. How is this possible, you might ask. Farmers are moving from the perennial artichoke plant to an annual or seeded variety. This started when a lengthy cold snap killed much of the perennial crop. Seeded varieties can be planted more densely, produce a more uniform crop, and can be harvested in weeks, unlike wilder perennials which take months because the fruit matures at different rates. If you want to know how to grow seeded artichokes, there's great information online beginning with how to start the seeds. Once the plants mature, remember to feed regularly and water often.



Fillmore, Caitlin. *Ag-Alert*, November 29, 2023. 10-11.

Here Come the Merced Master Gardeners

In early October, some of the Merced Mater Gardeners journeyed to Fresno and Madera on a field trip at the invitation of the Fresno Master Gardeners. They visited the *Shinz Garden and the Garden of the Sun*.



Bare Root Fruit Trees

By Tom Dinwoodie

There are great resources available at ucanr on bareroot fruit trees that explain the how, where, and when. Over many years of trial and error, listening to wiser old timers and reading research-based articles, I have developed a few techniques not always found in current articles. So here goes...

Plant a bare root tree with the graft facing north to avoid direct sun beating on the graft. Of course, the graft should be slightly above soil level.

Lean the new two-foot stick to the northwest, prevailing wind direction. It will straighten up in a few years. Oh yes, cut at knee height...tough to do after paying for a taller tree. Later in the tree's life, it will be equally as tough to remove all fruit the first few years. Heavy fruit on small branches will shape those branches downward.

Cut that young tree stem at a 45° angle so water will roll off and not pool and cause rot.

Shovels make very smooth edges as holes are dug. Rough up the edges so those new roots will have obstacles to go around and around. Some would even recommend a square hole!

Water, water, and water even more depending of course on your soil type and drainage. The first-year trees planted at UC Merced were overwatered. They required summer pruning the first year the new growth was so vigorous. Water where the new roots are close to the trunk but provide water in a basin out a few feet. Conserve water. Use a drip system.

We are all anxious to taste the fruits but as with all bare root and potted trees, be prepared to wait up to three years. Eventually you will taste the fruits of your labor!

Do you mist your Poinsettias? Well, if you want your Poinsettias to last longer, click on this link: [Poinsettias: How to Keep Poinsettias Blooming Longer. Oldworldgarden-farms.com/Poinsettias](https://oldworldgarden-farms.com/Poinsettias)

How you water your poinsettia plant is just as important as how often you do. One of the best ways to give poinsettias the moisture they need is to mist their leaves regularly.

Newsletter: Delores Cabezut-Ortiz/Cathy Dunn cabezut48@gmail.com
 Column & Photos Contributors: Pat Shay, Tom, Mary S. , Marilynne, Pete
 Want to write a column? Let me know the subject at mmgnewsletr@yahoo.com

Good to know gardening basics:

Merced/Atwater USDA Growing Zone 9a (low temperature range 20-25°F)

Average First Frost 11/11-20 Average Last Frost 3/11-20

Time To Talk Turkey!

Most of us consume turkey at either Thanksgiving or Christmas, but how much do you know about the noble bird who gives his/her all to look great on our holiday tables?

Here's a short quiz to test your gobble-gobble and strut your stuff(ing).

1. How many feathers does a mature turkey have?
2. How many weeks does it typically take for a tom turkey to reach maturity?
3. How many pounds does a mature tom turkey weigh?
4. What US state is ranked number 1 in turkey production?
5. How many turkeys does the number 1 ranked state raise?
6. How many turkeys are eaten around Thanksgiving in the US?
7. How much feed is generally needed to raise a 38 pound turkey?

Successful Farming, November 23, 12.



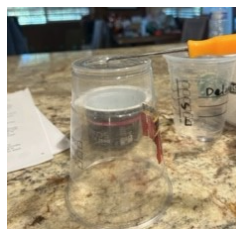
Answers to the Turkey Quiz
 1. 3500
 2. 18 weeks
 3. 38 pounds
 4. Minnesota
 5. More than 40 million
 6. 46 million
 7. 75-80 pounds

Seeding Time is Coming: Don't Throw it Away!



Plastic cups, yogurt cups, jello cups, and oatmeal single serving containers. Tom uses paper cups.

Don't break the bank to start seeds. Just save some preliminary items (like using the container for that rotisserie chicken you just bought as a mini hot-house) from things you usually eat or drink. Wash them well and poke some holes in the bottom or on the sides.



Poke some holes in the bottom or on the sides.

Workshops from Propagating to Succulents to Leaf Mold and Worms What's Not to Love?



On Oct. 16th, the MMG held a succulent workshop for members of the public and attending MG'ers, about 35 in total. The group was treated to a display of succulents, including some cacti, were given a bag to pick out their choice of cuttings, participated in a raffle, and learned a whole lot of information about succulents and the tricks of the trade. Marilynne Manfredi went through succulent soil, diseases, watering needs, light requirements, etc. Liz Swensen discussed and demonstrated propagation techniques, showed a sample wreath and pumpkin with succulents. Both were raffle prizes. Delores demonstrated how to make an artichoke agave safe for admirers.



On November 11, Tom and Delores gave a workshop on vermiculture, leaf mold, and composting to 27 members of the public and about 10 Master Gardeners. Tom began with vermiculture, the positives of raising, what to feed, and how to use the worm castings. He also discussed the new rules on kitchen waste which will go into effect on January 1st.



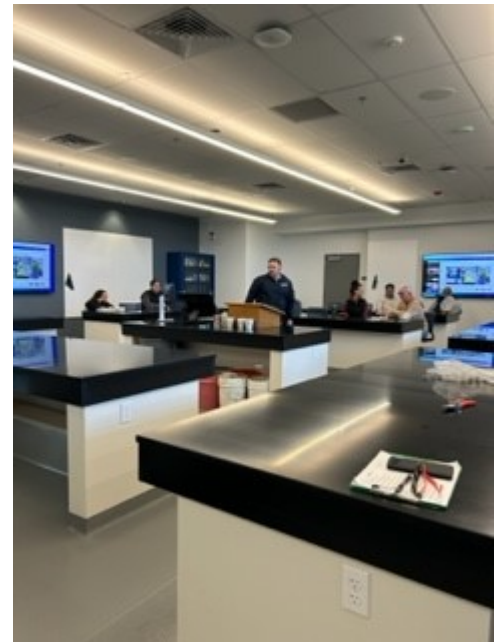
Workshops Continued

Merced College Horticulture Instructor Andy Codd led a workshop on propagation for the public and a few lucky Master Gardeners. The group listened to all aspects of propagation, viewed the greenhouses and new facilities, including learning about the changes to come.

The CE was very complex, with scientific back-up.



We started in the ag classroom and then went to the greenhouses, both of which have been designated for possible demolition when the new facility is built. From there Mr. Codd demonstrated several of the machines for mixing soils to create a premium growing medium.



Our next stop was the plant lab in the new building. There we saw different machines for creating sterile environments for plants.



We ended talking cuttings and then putting soil into seed starter trays with our cuttings to take home!

Workshop Schedule (For Now)



ROSES 101



Presenter: **Mary Brooks, UC Merced Master Gardener**

SATURDAY
JANUARY 13th
1:00 to 3:00 pm

- Types and varieties of roses
- Selecting and planting bare root roses
- Propagating from cuttings
- Managing pests and diseases in a changing climate
- Fertilizing, irrigation and site selection
- Pruning demo and hands-on
- Door prizes

LOCATION: **Our Lady of Mercy School (OLM)**
1400 27th Street Merced

- *Pre-Register by Friday noon the day before the workshop.
- *Use the QR code to the right:
- * Or: <https://forms.gle/joJ9VJWxU893fSV66>
- * email: anrmgmerced@ucanr.edu
- * Walk-ins are encouraged and welcome to attend
- *FREE Event - Donations accepted



**Wear gloves, long sleeves,
eye protection
and your own
pruning shears!**



UPCOMING **2024** WORKSHOPS

FEBRUARY 17th
*Citrus Orchard Walk-About,
Discussion & Tasting*

MARCH 9th
*Container Gardening: Advantages,
Disadvantages & Tips*

April 20th
*Drip Irrigation: Containers, Landscape,
Garden, & Orchard*

*** More Workshop Topics to Come ***

*** Regularly scheduled workshops will resume on the 2nd
Saturday of the month May 11th**

Master Gardeners are a University of California, Department of Agriculture and Natural Resources trained volunteer group within the University of California Cooperative Extension that seeks to extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of Merced County. Master Gardeners accomplish this through extension, informative outreach programs, and workshops.

Contact our **Helpline** with questions at
(209) 385-7403 or anrmgmerced@ucanr.edu
You can also find us at the
Merced Downtown Farmers Market
on the 1st and 3rd Saturdays beginning in March



UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

UC Master Gardener Program

Calendar: Always Check the VMS
**Monthly Meetings: 2nd Mondays (Jan 8th, Feb 12th,
Mar 11th)**

March 23: Grange Plant Exchange

Field Trip to Belmont Nursery and Henderson Garden



On November 16, a group of Master Gardeners toured the Belmont nursery and the Henderson Experimental Garden. William Henderson was a former assistant to Luther Burbank. The group learned about the Keith Davey Chinese pistache, participated in a grafting demonstration, and visited the succulent propagation area. They also learned about different varieties of Poinsettias and could purchase plants if they wished. Afterwards they had lunch in Sanger.