



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Master Gardener Program

4th Quarter Newsletter for the UC Master Gardeners of Merced County

Chair Notes

Although the weather is cooling, the UC Master Gardeners of Merced County are not. We are percolating with activities! There are many opportunities to help out, especially with workshops and with staffing of the Farmers Market booth on the first and third Saturdays of the month. Please make an effort to review and sign up to volunteer for activities in advance on the VMS calendar!

Thank you to De Ette Silbaugh for hosting last week's Harvest Potluck, where 15-20 of us gathered bringing delicious food and having interesting conversations.

Two weeks ago, Tom Dinwoodie coordinated the Lose the Lawn workshop with Jim Brugger, a California Native Plant Society ambassador. Jim is a popular speaker and we had about 15, mostly first-time attendees. We also had 4 available volunteers slots and 0 signed up.

In early September, Mary Shasky, Denise Glassett, Nikolai Laquaglia, and Dino Migliazzo volunteered to serve as judges for the Horticultural Displays at the Madera County Fair.

Thank you to Jay Hawkes for serving as lead for the Farmers Market Booth and to Dennis Evans who is regularly volunteering there. Even if you are not an expert, please sign up to staff the booth. It's a great way to get to know your fellow volunteers, and if you don't have the answer, you can forward a request to the Helpline.

This month, Kristen Concepcion agreed to take the lead on the School Gardens Committee. Thank you to Debbie Morrow for serving as lead this past year. Thank you also to Tess Hampton and Denise Glassett for working with Debbie to create and lead several after-school program activities. Speaking of school gardens, Tom and Dennis Blevins worked two very hot days last month to install an irrigation system for a school garden in Los Banos.

On the Helpline front, Marilynne worked with a com-

mittee to develop a plan and to send out a message to complete the training of our new Master Gardeners on Helpline and MG office orientation. This week, Don Bragonier met with Dennis Blevins to complete his training. New 2024 Master Gardeners, please check the VMS calendar and sign up for one of the training sessions.

De Ette is leading the effort on planning and creating the Demo Gardens around the Wardrobe Ave office. De Ette and Tom are meeting soon to discuss creating an irrigation plan.

Sandino Vazquez is creating a short program on bees to present to third graders at next Thursday's Farm2U event (Oct 3) at the Merced County Fairgrounds. Tess and Tom will be helping him, and as of this writing there is an opening for one more "buzzy" volunteer to help out.

On the morning of Sat, Oct 5, there are three activities you can engage with: the Grange Fall Plant Exchange and the Farmers Market for volunteer hours, or the Walk to End Alzheimer's as a social activity.

We are awaiting word on whether we will have a booth at the Oct 19 Merced County Nut Festival. Last year, there were 7000 attendees, so we will be looking for volunteers to lead and staff our booth to engage attendees.

Thank you for Delores and Cathy on Newsletter, Marc on promo events in the *Merced County Times*, and Zelda on Facebook.

Looking ahead, please mark your calendars for the Monday, Oct 14 and Saturday, Nov 16 general membership meetings from 8:30 – 11:15 am.

Look for messages coming out soon regarding the request for a Field Trip Coordinator and the Holiday Social.

With much appreciation for your contributions,

Judy

Garden To-Do's:

By Pat Shay

Fall has officially arrived, even if daytime temps make it seem as though summer is here to stay. This is the time of year to focus on three things: Cleaning up, preparing for next spring and planting those things that you want to become established when temperatures are cooler and they will get a good start with the season's rain.

October: Harvest the last of the summer garden produce. Remove plants as the last tomatoes, zucchini, cucumbers, watermelons, cantaloupe, etc. have been picked. Particularly if they have any insect or disease infestation at all, put the vegetation on the waste bin – do not add to a compost heap.

Prune off broken branches on perennials. (If there are pieces that look somewhat lively, clip off excess leaves, trim the stem at an angle, dip in root starter and pot into a vermiculite/soil mix – a good source of new plants! Keep the soil moist. Mark sure they have good light, but not direct sun.) Trim back perennials that have become leggy and overgrown, leaving at least some blossoms/buds for pollinators. Prepare beds for winter vegetables. Add two to four inches of compost to improve soil. Monitor watering systems. As temps cool, less water is needed. Check for leaks or broken emitters that may need replacement. On the fringes of the garden where weeds will soon begin to appear, spray with pre-emergent to reduce the need to weed as rain starts.

Fall is THE time to plant California natives. They need to be in the ground so that they can benefit from the (hopefully) soon arriving rains and can get a head start on the coming spring growth period. Some things to keep in mind about natives: They take less water than most other garden plants, so best to have an area devoted to natives so that they are not drowned by being watered with everything else. Natives prefer well-draining soil. If you have clay, you may want to add amendments to break up the soil before planting your natives. They prefer a sparse diet...don't use fertilizer— they are not used to it and do not want it! Most of them prefer full sun. Good sources for California natives and other drought tolerant plants include California Native Plant Society (chapters of which, including Stanislaus County, often have sales this time of year) www.cnps.org. Los Pilitas Nursery in Santa Margarita, CA which offers on-line shopping and mail delivery, UC Berkeley Botanical Garden www.botanicalgarden.berkeley.edu, UCD Arboretum, sales on October 5 (members only), October 26 and November 16 – visit their website for more info, and Sierra-Azul Nursery in Watsonville. The important thing, as with all plants, is to read the label and plant/care for accordingly. The happy thing about natives is that they prosper with mild neglect. Pampering tends to have a negative effect on them.

Begin planting spring bulbs so that come February/March you have a lovely patch of crocus, daffodils, narcissus, iris, etc. to enjoy in the garden and as cut flowers in the house. Maybe try some bulbs that you haven't grown before for a change of pace...anemones, ranunculus or

Garden To-Do's: Continued

freesias. Garden catalogs have wonderful suggestions (undoubtedly TOO many suggestions!). Space out planting so that you have blooms over a period of time in spring. Do not forget to add bone meal or a bulb fertilizer in the planting hole before the bulb. Follow instructions on bulb package or other source for depth to plant.

If gophers are a problem eating bulbs, line planting holes with chicken wire, or similar, when planting. Fertilize azaleas, japonica camellias, and rhododendrons. Sasanqua camellias are blooming now! As the daylight fades earlier moving toward winter, plant a couple of large pots with cyclamen and chrysanthemums to brighten things up. Chrysanthemums in the garden need to be staked as they grow tall....or consider a secondary use for tomato cages! Remember the later into October we go, the cooler the temps and fragile plants... fuchsias, begonias, etc. will need to be moved to more sheltered locations. Succulents which have been enjoying hot, sunny days need to be under eaves to be out of the coming rain.

Don't forget to carve/Sharpie a pumpkin or two for outside enjoyment! (As they begin to deteriorate, the birds will thank you for the seeds and you can compost the rest!)

November: With significantly cooler temps and frost on the horizon, move delicate plants to protected areas. If you plan to start spring annuals for early color, start seeds or grow young plants in cold-frames or a greenhouse. Continue to plant bulbs for spring if you want a display covering several weeks. It's time for the first application of copper sulfate to stone fruit trees to prevent curly leaf. If there has been no rain, continue to water roses, but do not fertilize. Make sure that all rose debris is removed from under the plants to maintain plant health into next year. Cut back perennials and divide as necessary. 'Pieces' can either be planted in other locations in your landscape or traded/given to friends who would like something 'new' for their landscape. Citrus needs protection from the cold. Smaller trees can be covered. Citrus in sheltered places can be protected by a good watering in the evening – water under the tree will evaporate and create temperatures higher than the air.

If you want to add a tree/trees for fall color, now is a good time to visit nurseries to see what is most appealing. Further, now is a good time to plant trees in the garden because they will develop good root systems over winter and really 'take off' in spring.

Continue with garden clean-up to be ready for spring. If you have room, create a habitat for wildlife (birds, small critters either animal or reptile will thank you for providing shelter) in a remote nook in your yard....probably best away from shared fences....your neighbors might not like having uninvited visitors.

Check irrigation systems and flush out lines. As rains come, check your irrigation system and reduce, if not entirely shut off, water for the winter. Carefully monitor new plantings and trees to be sure that they are receiving sufficient water if rains are not regular.

Dahlias will collapse with frost. Trim back the foliage. Here in the valley it is warm enough

Garden To-Do's: Continued

to leave the tubers in the ground.

December: Time to protect your garden for the cold weather to come. Move sensitive plants, if you haven't already. Check any young trees that may need a bit of support to withstand stormy winds. If you have conifers or red berry producing plants, you can prune as necessary for indoor seasonal decorating.

Monitor winter vegetables and harvest as needed....perfect time for veggie soups/stews with the colder weather. You might want to add some winter flowering plants to your flower beds or large pots for color: calendula, cyclamen, pansy, primrose, stock, etc. Placed along a walkway or on a porch they create a lovely impression and brighten your day, too! Prune back chrysanthemums that are finished flowering. Remaining nice blooms can be used indoors for decorating, too! White chrysanthemums with red berry boughs....nice and seasonal!

No more fertilizer! Plants are resting up over winter. Consider leaving seed pods on plants that produce them. Many birds will have left on migration, but those that remain here year round will be grateful for 'snacks'. Suet is a great source of energy. You can purchase suet feeders or purchase suet from a butcher, add seed and either hang in a string produce bag or stuff pinecones and hang out. Be sure feed source is out of reach of neighborhood cats! Sunflower seeds are great for this. You can use millet, too, but anything the birds drop is subject to germination as temps rise and you will find yourself with a thicket to weed come spring!

A word about Christmas trees. If you plan to have a living Christmas tree, remember that two weeks indoors is really the longest it can tolerate comfortably. Watch out for bugs that have made their home in the tree/pot. Water every few days while in the house and soak well when you return it outdoors. Unless the tree you select is a smallish Norfolk pine, plan to have it indoors only one year....two max....longer and the tree with pot become far too cumbersome to move in and back out....time to find the tree a permanent home in your garden.

Happy Gardening

To find where the best view of California's Fall Foliage, go to [California Fall Color Map – California Fall Color](#).
The map is updated weekly.

Workshops, CE, and Fair Judging

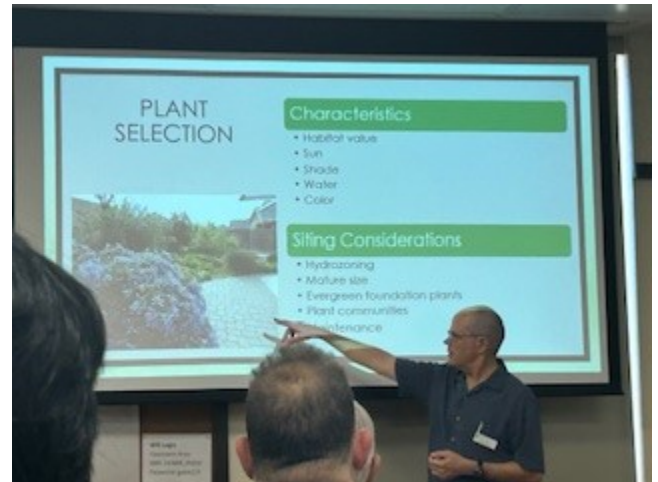


Left: Our Intrepid Group of Madera County Fair Judges: L-R Denise Glassett, Mary Shasky, Nicholai Laquaglia, and Dino Migliazzo



Right: Sara Rosenbaum conducts our September General Meeting CE on Regenerative Ag in the Home Garden

Jim Brugger’s Workshop *Lose the Lawn* was very thorough. He began with the reasons for removing lawns and then went through the steps for using the space, beginning with developing a landscape design, hydrozoning, plant selection, etc. A member of the California Native Plant society, he recommended the following resources for additional information: Cnps.org, calscape.org, lasplitas.com, as well as numerous books on the subject. To watch one of his presentations, search his name on YouTube.



Our Own Sandino Vasquez removes a wild hive from a farm building at Dolores Cabezut-Ortiz’ on McNamara Rd. Sandino’s hobby is beekeeping.

Tom Dinwoodie says Sandino will be buzzing about bees with 3rd graders at the Farm Bureau Farm2U event on Thursday, October 3. Busy Bee volunteers are needed to assist Sandino and have a honey bee of a good time.

Mosquitos 101



Jason Bakken discussed Mosquito Abatement with the group.

Website Mission Statement: Merced County Mosquito Abatement District is dedicated to improving the quality of life for our local community by providing best management practices of mosquito control and disease prevention. We are a special district that is publicly funded with the goal of preventing mosquito-borne diseases throughout Merced County. The commitment to our work is shown through our detailed surveillance, proven treatment programs and our constant efforts to control the mosquito population. It is our responsibility and honor to provide such preventative services in the most cost effective, environmentally responsible manner possible. We find it extremely important to educate the public on what we do and how residents can help make a difference. Public outreach and our education campaign are other services we offer in addition to

mosquito control. We thoroughly enjoy engaging with the public and are grateful to have been serving Merced County since 1946.

Prevent Mosquito Bites

We encourage people to follow the 5 D's for Preventing Mosquito Bites

Dusk and Dawn - Stay Indoors when mosquitoes are biting

Dress - Wear clothing that protects the skin from bites

DEET - Use mosquito repellent containing DEET

Drain - Empty containers holding water around your home

To request service, go the website and fill out the form. Spraying is free and so are mosquito fish if you have standing water.

To submit a request for service please use following:

Call us at (209) 722-1527 or visit the webpage at <https://www.mcmosquito.org/>

The address is 3478 Beachwood Drive, Merced, CA 95348



The **western mosquitofish** (*Gambusia affinis*) is a North American freshwater poeciliid fish, also known commonly, if ambiguously, as simply **mosquitofish** or by its generic name, *Gambusia*, or by the common name **gambezi**. Its sister species, the eastern mosquitofish (*Gambusia holbrooki*) is also referred to by these names. Mosquitofish eat the larva of the mosquito.

[Mosquitofish - Wikipedia](#)

Fall Gathering

On September 21, the UC Master Gardeners of Merced County answered DeEtte’s call for an Autumn Gathering. A non-business meeting, the Master Gardeners and their friends and families gathered at DeEtte’s to share fellowship. The potluck was delicious, with many dishes and wonderful desserts. It was nice to see several of the new Master Gardeners either solo or with spouses. The weather was perfect, gardening was not the main topic of the night. Discussions ranged around the globe. It is safe to say that a good time was had by all in attendance.



New Garden Project Demonstration Garden

If you missed this month's meeting, the Master Gardeners have gotten approval to once again take control of the landscape areas around the office on Wardrobe.

The space is quite large that we can plan, plant and maintain. The decision was made to divide the area in sections that have been determined by shade/no shade, infrastructure in place, and other obstacles. This will give all the Master Gardeners the opportunity to determine what and where they would like to oversee this much needed improvement.

Newsletter

The UC Master Gardeners of Merced County’s Newsletter is a quarterly newsletter, coming out January 1st, April 1st, July 1st, and October 1st (or close to). The articles are based on interest and events in the Master Gardening Community. If you are interested in submitting an article, just send the idea to Delores at cabezut48@gmail.com and she’ll let you know an approximate length and the deadline for copy submission.

You can write about plants, tools, gardening ideas, gardening-related books you’ve read, conferences you’ve attended, field trips you’ve gone on, recipes, etc. Articles can include pics or not, depending on you. If you want to submit pics of interesting (or beautiful or unusual) plants (or flowers) from your garden, then that is ok as well.

Delores Cabezut-Ortiz and Cathy Dunn are the editors of the newspaper. They determine content length and are excellent copy editors. Anything submitted must conform to the rules of written English (or it will be by the time they finish). They are not reporters and cannot attend every event. Therefore, please remember to take pics of field trips or workshops attended and write up a few lines to submit to the newsletter (even just submitting the pics will help). Give it a try. All ideas and articles are welcomed.

Lavender, Washington Style By Teresa Barajas



Master Gardeners Teresa Barajas recently had the opportunity to visit a Cedarbrook, a Sequim, Washington Lavender Farm. She spent time touring the farm and seeing how the lavender was grown and processed.



What Do You Know About Soybeans?

1. When and where were soybeans domesticated?
2. What percentage of the average soybean is meal? What percentage is oil?
3. How many acres of soybeans does the US grow?
4. When was the word soybean first used in US literature?
5. How many pounds of both meal and oil does a bushel of soybean yield?

Soaking some soybeans in water overnight is a simple, hands-off method that taps into the bean's rich nutrient profile, allowing these goodies to leach out and create a fertilizer-quality liquid solution for plants.

Answers below: Soybeans typically measure about 0.2 to 0.6 inches (5 to 15 millimeters) in diameter. Their compact size makes them convenient to handle and transport. The color of soybeans varies, ranging from **pale yellow to light brown, and sometimes even black.** The oval shape remains consistent, resembling a small egg or pill.

Quiz Answers:

1. Northern China in the 11th Century BC
2. 80% meal and 20% oil
3. 87.45 million acres in 2022
4. 1804
5. 11 pounds of oil and 48 pounds of meal

Successful Farming. Agriculture.com July 2024



Countertop Composters: Is One Right For you?

By Cathy Dunn

I read an article from the September 1, 2024, edition of the *Merced Sun-Star* discussing whether countertop composters really work. I live alone and I rarely cook, but I seem to generate kitchen waste and I was hoping a countertop composter would be a better way to deal with the waste I have. The City urges us to put table scraps and other kitchen waste in our green waste can for regular pickup. That works better in the summer months when I have debris from my yard. I don't have any lawn so there are no lawn clippings. When the green waste can is empty, it doesn't feel right to put the can out with only a small bag of kitchen waste. Since I don't generate enough kitchen waste and debris from my yard to justify having a compost pile, I was hoping a countertop composter would be a feasible replacement. I was surprised at the results of my search.

The article was a real eye opener. It turns out that not only are the composters expensive (generally \$300 to \$1,000), most turn the contents into something that resembles dirt but isn't dirt. They really just grind up and dry the contents, turning it into something that resembles dirt but is definitely not compost. If it is put out into the garden, once it gets wet either from watering or rain, it starts to rot. That was not the finished product I was looking for. Some of the suggestions from the manufacturers include mixing the finished product into your existing compost heap (I don't have one) or adding it as an amendment to your soil.

The most intriguing composter I found was from Mill. At 3 feet tall, it may be a stretch to call it a countertop composter. It is not only big, it's expensive. It can be purchased for \$999 or rented for \$9.99 per month. It claims to turn your food waste into "food grounds" which can be mixed into the soil or compost, or you can put the food grounds in your green waste can. I really don't think I need a \$999 appliance to do what I'm already doing—putting my kitchen waste into my existing green waste can. The company also offered another way to dispose of the food grounds. The grounds can be shipped back to Mill which then sells it for use in chicken feed. They charge the customer \$9.99 for this service. Sounds like a great deal for Mill.

In an article from Good Housekeeping dated April 11, 2024, I found what appears to be the appliance which produces the closest product to actual compost. This is the Reencle Home Composter. It can be purchased for \$499 or rented for \$35 per month. This is the only composter I found which uses microorganisms to produce actual compost.

The Reencle has three filter systems and a microbe compost starter. It also comes with a 24 page instruction manual which includes two pages of precautions including cautioning the user not eat the contents of the food waste composter. The optimal amount of food waste to add daily is between 1.5 and 2.2 pounds. The instructions are very detailed and if you like that sort of thing, you might want to give it a try. It's definitely not for me.

After researching the various appliances available, I came to the same conclusion as the author of the Sun-Star article. If a traditional compost heap is not feasible and the available appliances don't appeal to you, a worm bin might be just the solution you're looking for. Worm bins are cheap, quiet, odorless, use no electricity and have no mechanical problems. 250 red wigglers can be purchased from Uncle Jim's Worm Farm for \$27.95, or you can ask fellow Master Gardeners if they have any worms you can get for free.

I didn't expect the results I found. I really hoped there was something available that worked as advertised but I didn't find one that would work for me. Not only are the appliances expensive to purchase and often complicated to use, with one possible exception, they don't produce actual compost. I particularly liked the "offer" from Mill where the customer can mail the food product back to Mill, for \$9.99 per month, so that Mill can sell it to chicken feed producers. Great salesmanship.



Gardening: Italian Style By Dino Migliazzo

Note: Dino is one of new Master Gardeners.

Our family in California has been involved in food production for four generations. From vegetables to row crops and from almonds to dairy, we have been helping feed the world for many years. Recently, I became a Master Gardener through the University of California Cooperative Extension. My love and interest in production agriculture continues to excite me. I try to learn more everywhere I go! This trip to Italy was my opportunity to continue my education.

This past June, I had the opportunity to travel to Europe with my wife Alicia, and our daughter and son-in-law, Deena and Charles. We arrived in Barcelona, boarded the Celebrity Cruise's ship *Equinox*, and began our tour of France and Italy. Marseille, Nice, Santa Margherita, Livorno, Naples, and back to Rome, (via Civitavecchia). During the trip/cruise, a one-day excursion was part of our two-day stay in the port city of Livorno (also called "Little Venice"). The first day we traveled from one bus to another, and finally by train arrived in Florence (Firenze in Italian). The 1 1/2 hour train took us through the countryside of Tuscany, one of the most productive agricultural areas in Europe. Tuscany and Merced/Atwater area are both in the USDA Hardiness Zone 9b, meaning both areas are characterized by a minimum average temperature range of 25 to 30 degrees in winter months. Both have a Mediterranean climate so we share a wide variety of similar crops. This train ride gave us a real view of Italian countryside and filled me with a lot of questions about the different crops and vegetation I saw through the window of the train. The following day, we attended a ship excursion to the beautiful city of Lari, near Pisa and Lucca. Our first stop was the Martelli pasta factory (famiglia di pastai) and one of the owners explained that their pasta was made of Durham wheat, not flour and other ingredients. This area of Italy grows a lot of non-GMO wheat. All the EU is non-GMO production. They continue to stress quality over quantity. Also, heirloom vegetable varieties are very popular.

From there, we boarded the bus to our next stop, the Vialta Family Farm. This is where I felt the most at home: a family farm that grew everything. This farm was a great example of Agrotourism and Biodynamic Farming. They had the following crops growing: Grapes for home-made wine, olives for olive oil, Poplar trees for paper production, wheat for grain, oak trees for Truffle production, sunflowers for oil, hay for animals, corn for cattle and an extensive garden for vegetables and fruit trees to be used in meals for visitors, and more! They also had a store where local items were sold, and this included their oils and wines. Almost every crop in this area was non-irrigated. The soil had a heavy clay composition and felt like talc in my hand. However, there was irrigation for the vegetable garden and small fruit trees.

I noticed very little, if any, herbicide use in Italy. The roadways, shoulders, and farmland are covered with vegetation. Every weed I see in our area of California was present in this area of Italy. This included Russian thistle, Bull thistle, Burmuda grass, Johnson grass, puncture vine, sow thistle, foxtail, ripgut, and more. I think you get the picture—weeds everywhere. Their only control I saw was mowing. They, like us, are concerned with climate change. They explained that the summers are warmer, and the rainfall is less. The growing season has changed as well. Fewer chilling hours and more pests are becoming a bigger problem.

After a 30-minute bus ride, we returned to the *Equinox* for dinner and relaxed after a very educational day of touring the country in and around Tuscany. This concluded our stay in Livorno. Next stop was Civitavecchia.

As a Master Gardener, I continue to be amazed by the world around us. As we continue to survive as a society, I believe our responsibility to care for the environment becomes more important as each day passes. I invite you to admire the world around you and continue to protect mother nature when you can.

Happy gardening!

It's Olive Time

By Delores Cabezut-Ortiz

Do you have one or more lovely olive trees in your yard that fill each fall with green olives which soon turn to black and fall on the ground to make a mess? You can easily cure the olives with a few basic steps. Although there are several ways to cure olives, curing with lye is quick and easy and well worth the effort. If you've never tried it, then this is the time of the year to try.

REMEMBER: Do not use metal pots, spoons, or strainers with lye!

First, pick olives that are green, not bruised and without any marks. Check to see that they are not infected with worms. These are shown by a small speck on the skin. Next clean the olives in fresh water, removing all the debris. I cure the olives in an ice chest since it's plastic, with a lid and a drain spout. Buy Red Devil Lye at either at a hardware store or a grocery store. Don't use Drano which has additives. Wear rubber gloves, long sleeves, closed shoes, and eye protection to mix the lye in a well-ventilated area, using only glass or wooden utensils. AGAIN, DO NOT USE METAL.

Mix the lye one quart to one tablespoon of lye. Don't breathe the fumes; stir to dissolve. Let the mixture cool before pouring it over the olives to cover. Lay a towel on top to push the floaters into the lye. Keep out a couple of olives to use as a comparison. After 8 hours, pull out several to slice open. The inside should be brown to the pit. If not, let them stay in the lye a little longer, checking them every hour. The comparison olives are light green inside. Once the brown color is to the pit, drain off the lye. This mixture is no stronger than stomach acid but still take care when you drain it off.

Cover the olives with clean water and change 2 or 3 times a day until the water is clear. Taste the olives. If they taste a little soapy, then they need more water baths. Once they taste good to you, fill your container. Next mix a brine with kosher salt of 6 tablespoons to one gallon of water and flavor as desired. Do not use Iodized salt.



I put fresh garlic cloves because we like the flavor. We can also eat the garlic too.

Olives are low in cholesterol and a good source of dietary fiber, which the body needs for good gut health. They are also high in minerals that the body requires to function, such as iron and copper. However, it is best to consume olives in moderation, as producers usually preserve them in brine that is high in salt.



Bing.com/images

Flavor olives according to your tastes. They are very porous and soak in the flavors. If they are too salty or too highly flavored, just change the water, wait a day, and you'll have a whole new taste.

Pumpkins, Pumpkins, Pumpkins

Better Homes and Gardens has 5 tips for Making your Pumpkins last longer. 1. Don't touch your pumpkins unless you have to. The oils in your hands cause the pumpkins to rot faster. Also, don't carry it by the stem, only by the fruit. 2. If possible, keep them out of the sun and the rain. Dry, shaded spots are best. 3. Give your pumpkin a bath every now and then to keep its rind fresh in a mixture of one part bleach to ten parts water. Let your pumpkin dry completely before putting it back in place. Put the remainder of the liquid in a spray jar to use as a daily spray to keep pumpkins healthy. 4. When cleaning out your pumpkin, cut the hole in the bottom instead of the top. Also, when you are done, wipe the inside with some of the bleach mixture described above and wipe dry. 5. Once the pumpkin is cut open, it'll dry out faster. You can extend its life by rubbing petroleum jelly around the carved areas of the pumpkin. If you don't have petroleum jelly on hand, use olive oil or coconut oil.

Pumpkin Facts

1. The word "pumpkin" comes from the Greek word "pepon," which means "large melon."

2. More than 1 billion pounds of pumpkin are produced in the United States every year. That's 500,000 tons. That's *a lot*.

3. The average pumpkin weighs in at approximately 13 pounds.

4. Pumpkins are 90% water. And yes, they float.

5. A pumpkin is a fruit because it comes from a flower and has seeds.

6. The average pumpkin has approximately 500 seeds.

7. Most pumpkins are orange because they contain a pigment called "carotene." Carrots are another carotenoid-rich food.

8. Pumpkins come in many different colors, including orange, yellow, green, white and blue.

9. Pumpkins are grown on every continent except Antarctica.

10. Every part of the pumpkin is edible: root, stem, leaves, fruit, and seeds.

<https://thinkeryaustin.org/blog/pumped-pumpkins-10-fun>

Are you stumped about what to do with left-over pumpkins? A scan of the Internet came up with some new ideas. 1. If the pumpkin is still in good shape, cut it in half and make a bird feeder out of it. 2. Save the seeds, wash and dry them, roast them. You can also save them to grow for next year. 3. Have a pumpkin smashing or chunking party. Kids will love it. Gather the pieces and put in the compost, without the seeds. Pumpkins are mostly water so they compost easily and the worms will love them. 4. Donate them to the zoo or a farm to feed animals. 5. If you have chickens, chunk them up and feed them to the chickens. Of course, remove any rot first.



Information

MMG Officer Slate for 2024-2026

President: Judy MacLaren
Vice-President: Denise Glassett
Secretary: Cathy Fossum
Treasurer: Mary Shasky
Past President; Mindy Muchmore-Thompson
Member-at-Large: Bri Freeman
Volunteer Coordinator: Tom Dinwoodie

Meetings:

Executive Board: Last Thursday of the month, 9:30-11:15.

General Membership: 2nd Monday of the month at UCCE Office at Wardrobe Ave, Merced, CA **No general meeting is scheduled for June or December.**

At least one evening meeting per year, TBA.

Always check the VMS Calendar for meeting times.

MG Calendar: Check the VMS

October

- 3: Farm2U Day
- 5: Farmers Market
Grange Plant Exchange
- 12: Office and Helpline Orientation
- 14: General Meeting
Office and Helpline Orientation
- 19: Farmers Market
- 26: Seed Saving Workshop
- 30: Lavender Propagation Field Trip
- 31: Executive Committee Meeting

November

- 9: Mini Farm Workshop
Office and Helpline Orientation
- 16: General Meeting (Saturday)

December

No General Meeting
No Farmer's Markets
TBA: Christmas Tree in Courthouse and Christmas Gathering

Newsletter: Delores Cabezut-Ortiz/Cathy Dunn cabezut48@gmail.com
 Column & Photos Contributors: Everyone:
 Want to write a column? Let me know the subject at mmgnewsletr@yahoo.com

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



Merced Master Gardeners

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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

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.