



Photo by Melinda Nestorode

Seeds For Thought

ZINNIAS: SICKNESS OF THE EYES (MAL DE OJOS)?

Sherry Richards, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Photo by Sherry Richards

Zinnias are a member of the *Asteraceae* family that includes, for example, sunflowers, daisies, and asters. Zinnias originated in Mexico, Southwestern United States and Central/ South America. In the 18th century, European explorers in Mexico took *Zinnia elegans* back to Europe. The explorers called the plants “mal de ojos.” Translated this means “sickness of the eye” because they did not find zinnias pretty. David

Trinklein, of the University of Missouri Integrated Pest Management, wrote, “Thanks to work of European plant breeders who began selecting zinnias for their desirable characteristics, zinnia was introduced into the gardening world in the 19th century.”

Zinnias were named in honor of Dr. Johann Gottfried Zinn, a botanist and anatomist. Around 1920, zinnias became popular in the United States when the Bodger Seed Company introduced the ‘Giant Dahlia’ zinnia.

There are about 20 species recognized today, but only three or four are commonly grown: *Zinnia elegans*, *Zinnia angustifolia*, *Zinnia haageana* and *Zinnia tenuifolia*. Zinnias have two flower forms: dahlia or cactus. They include single and double flowers from ½ to five inches, in many color choices. Heights range from six inches to four feet. Check seed packages or container label for specific characteristics.

Zinnias can be annual flowers growing and dying in one season and never growing back. They can also be perennials, dying back to the roots but growing again the next season, depending on local climate and growing conditions, i.e., growing zone. Seeds which fall from flowers, settle in soil, and receive water, will likely germinate the next season.

Great for Pollinators

Blooming from summer to frost, zinnias are one of the best flowers for attracting pollinators like bees and butterflies to gardens. Taller zinnia varieties with wide, flat blooms give a good landing place for butterflies to reach nectar, while double-flowered zinnias can make it harder for them to reach nectar.

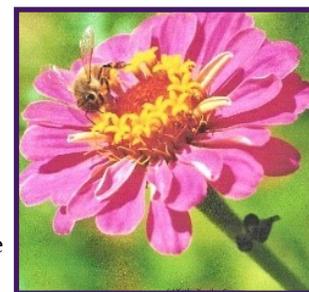


Photo by Kathy Keatley Garvey

In “Zinnias for the Home Garden”, Mary Alice Koeneke, Master Gardener, for Penn State Extension in Butler County, PA, states, “A few suggested zinnias to grow in pollinator gardens include: ‘Zahara’, ‘Benary’s Giant’, ‘Tall State Fair’, ‘California Giant’, ‘Cut and Come Again’, and ‘Lilliput’. One dwarf variety: ‘Dwarf Profusion’, has also been found to attract butterflies.”

Butterflies you might see on Zinnias include: swallowtail (*Papilio* spp.), monarch (*Danaus plexippus*), painted and American ladies (*Vanessa cardui*) (*V. virginensis*) and red admiral (*V. atalanta*.)

Why Grow Zinnias?

- * Zinnias thrive in hot sun, grow in a variety of soils, and bloom spring to frost.
- * They are considered low maintenance, dependable and easily grown.
- * You can sow seeds outdoors from March to July to extend bloom period.
- * It is easy to harvest seeds: let the flowers dry on the stem, remove flower, and pull the petals out. Large arrowhead-shaped seeds are attached to each petal; dry and store the seeds for next year.
- * Tall zinnias are great cut flowers, lasting a week or so in

(Continued on Page 2)

Zinnias: Sickness of the Eyes (*Mal de Ojos*)..... 1
 Preservation Pointers: Globe Artichokes: The Edible Thistle..... 3
 The Willis Linn Jepson Native Garden Renovation Project 4
 A German Rose: ‘Pink Gruss An Aachen’ 6
 Fruits and Vegetables Are Best From Your Own Backyard 7

Solano County Water Agency Rebate Program 8
 Showing Off Your Succulents..... 9
 What’s Blooming in Your Yard Right Now?..... 10
 Master Gardeners in the Community/ Resources..... 11
 Spring Gardening Guide 12

(Continued from Page 1—Zinnias: Sickness of the Eyes (*Mal de Ojos*))

vases. The double-flowered varieties hold their shape well for tall drying.

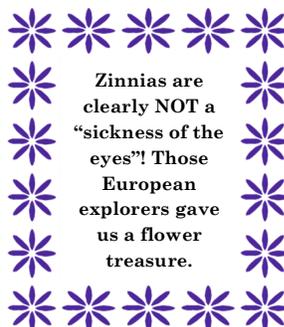


Photo by Sherry Richards

Care

- * Zinnias need a minimum 6 hours of direct sun in well-drained soil.
- * Deadhead regularly to extend flowering.
- * Zinnias require low water after they are established.
- * They are subject to powdery mildew *Botrytis* (gray mold), *Alternaria* (leaf blight) and root rots *Rhizoctonia* and *Phytophthora*.
- * Fertilize at least twice during the growing season using a balanced granular water soluble 20-20-20 granular or a slow-release fertilizer at the time of planting.

Insect Pests: Zinnias can be affected by, for example, aphids, earwigs, leaf miners, thrips, and whiteflies. Pests “bugging” your zinnias? Check the UC Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website at: <http://ipm.ucdavis.edu>—search “Zinnias” with links to insect pests and diseases affecting zinnias. If you prefer you can call our UCCE Mg Hotline at: 707 784-1322 or send us an email: mgssolano@ucanr.edu. ☒



 Zinnias are clearly NOT a “sickness of the eyes”! Those European explorers gave us a flower treasure.



Photo by Sherry Richards

Careful cultivar selection and cultural practices help reduce disease!

Cultivar Selection: Check package, tray labels or online to find zinnia plant breeders who have developed disease “resistant” varieties.

Cultural: do not plant too closely, thinning seedlings as needed to keep good air circulation around plants to avoid diseases. Water earlier in the day giving plants time to dry before night fall. Water only at plant base with a hose or drip irrigation.

Resources:

- Integrated Pest Management, University of Missouri, “Zinnia: Not the Flower Grandma Grew” David Trinklein, University of Missouri, July 10, 2017
- Reiman Gardens Iowa State University, University Extension “Zinnias” Revised June 2008 Cindy Haynes; Lynnette Carpenter, Diane Nelson, Jane Lenaha
- Penn State Extension “Zinnias for the Home Garden” Mary Alice Koenke, Master Gardener, Butler County PA
- “Wildflowers in Bloom Annual, Perennial or Biennial?” <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>
- University of California (UC) Statewide Integrated Pest Management Program (IPM) How to Manage Pests, Pest in Gardens and Landscapes “Zinnia spp.” 2017
- “The Real Dirt Blog” Mgs Butte County CA, Jeff Oster, UCCE MG, Oct 5, 2018

Kathy Keatley Garvey Photo Credit: “Ah the perfect spot” Honey Bees: “Zeroing in on the Zinnias” Kathy Keatley Garvey, Dept of Entomology & Nematology, UC Davis July 29, 2013





Save The Date

Master Gardener Plant Exchange

April 30, 2022
9:00 am until 12:00 pm
UCCE-Solano, 501 Texas Street, Fairfield

Start propagating your plants to share now!

Questions: Jennifer 707-389-0645 (texts ok) or jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu





GLOBE ARTICHOKE: THE EDIBLE THISTLE

Pearl Eddy, U.C. Master Gardener and U.C. Master Food Preserver, Solano County

Someone once said that the globe artichoke looks like a pine cone attempting to be a cabbage. This lovely vegetable, *Cynara scolymus*, grows well here and is useful in an edible landscape. A similar-appearing plant which grows well here is the cardoon, *Cynara cardunculus*, which is grown for its fleshy, edible leafstalks, rather than its flower bulbs. There is also a Jerusalem artichoke, *Helianthus tuberosus*, (sunchoke) a member of the sunflower family which has tuberous roots which look like ginger roots.



The globe artichoke is a perennial in our area and will produce edible flower buds in early summer. If you don't cut the buds to eat, you will end up with spectacular purple 6-in. thistle-like flowers that can be cut for fresh or dried flower arrangements. The plants can be started from seed but it's easier to plant dormant roots or container plants in late winter or early spring. The plants in my garden are about 3 ft. tall and a little wider with large coarse-looking leaves. They do well in full sun, but like partial shade in hot inland areas and like regular watering. The "Sunset Western Garden Book of Edibles" is an excellent source of information.

The largest buds form on top of a central stem, medium-sized buds appear on side branches, and the tiny buds grow from near the base of the plant. These are often sold as "baby" chokes. Harvest bulbs when they are plump and the leaves are tight. Frost damage may cause a bronzed appearance or split tips of leaves, but they are still good eating. They are nutritious, being a good source of fiber, potassium and Vitamin C.

To store fresh artichokes put them, unwashed, in a plastic bag in the refrigerator for up to three weeks. To freeze, blanch the buds in boiling water until they are partially cooked. To keep the nice color, as well as add flavor, add 1 tablespoon lemon juice for each quart of water. Cool quickly in cold water, drain and wrap tightly in plastic wrap. Later these can be thawed and cooked individually in the microwave or covered in a steamer.

To cook raw artichokes, cut off the stems, peel off a few damaged outer leaves as necessary and place them in

pan with a few inches of water with a few tablespoons of lemon juice added. For easier handling, any sharp points can be snipped from the leaf tips, and the leaves can be clipped shorter. Roll each bud in the juice, set upright and sprinkle with salt. Drop cut-off stems between the buds. Cover and steam until the base of the buds and stems are tender. To eat, pull off one leaf at a time, dip the base into a sauce, and use your teeth to scrape off the edible portion. Cut out the choke underneath the leaves. This exposes the most delectable part—the heart, or bottom. Cut this into pieces and use a fork to dip them into sauce and eat. Sauces can be elaborate or as simple as mayonnaise or melted butter.

My favorite is a stuffed Italian style baby choke. I parboil 8 of them first and then stuff gently from the top with a mixture of 1 cup dry bread crumbs, 1 or 2 cloves of minced garlic, 2 Tbsp. olive oil, 1 Tbsp. chopped parsley, and a 2-oz. can of anchovy fillets, mashed with oil from the can. If mixture seems a little dry, add a little water or more olive oil. Bake in oven until very tender. These baby chokes can also be cut into halves and baked.

Hearts have become quite popular in many recipes from dips to main dishes. They are especially tasty fried. An excellent source of recipes is the California Artichoke Advisory Board. ☞



THE WILLIS LINN JEPSON NATIVE GARDEN RENOVATION PROJECT

Paula Pashby, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

There is a lovely spot that we periodically visit in Vacaville, the historical Peña Adobe Park. We enjoy coming to this area to walk our dogs and catch a little 'nature fix' with hikes on the trails that cut over the hills into the Lagoon Valley Park.

On one visit I came to take some photos of pollinators for an article that I was writing. I walked around the Peña Adobe Park and was fascinated when I saw a stunning array of pollinators hovering around a flowering bush. The plant was also covered in ladybugs, butterflies, caterpillars, native bees and honeybees, and some foraging birds. There was a signpost that indicated that this plant is a Sticky Monkey Flower (*Mimulus aurantiacus*). It is such a spectacular plant with blooms that resemble the face of a monkey.

I walked around the area and noticed a few other plant signposts, such as the California Fuchsia (*Epilobium canum*) and the Mock Orange (*Philadelphus lewisii*). However, the plants no longer existed and the area was overrun by weeds. I also found a sign indicating that this is the 'Willis Linn Jepson Native Plant Garden'. I quickly went home to do some research and discovered that this was a very special garden that was named after a well-known botanist.

Willis Linn Jepson was a fascinating man with a strong passion for botany that developed when he was a kid exploring the open areas around Vacaville back in the 1870's. This passion evolved over time, and he became a professor of Botany at UC Berkeley that turned into a 40-year career. He wrote many books on botany, but one became a vital resource for plant identification, called "[A Manual of Flowering Plants of California](#)", written in 1925. The book was republished in 2012 and is still relevant today. Another remarkable accomplishment was when he joined John Muir and other noted conservationists to form the Sierra Club in 1892.

Given this noted history, I contacted the Peña Adobe Historical Society to explore the possibility of restoring the garden with the help from the Solano and Yolo County Master Gardener Chapters (for information on the organization, please see their web page at: <https://www.penaadobe.org>). I had a long conversation with them about the history of the garden and learned that Bob Allen spearheaded the enchanting 900 square



Passionate Master Gardener Volunteers
Photo by Jess Hayden

foot garden project in 2009, with the help of the local boy scouts and other volunteers.

Like Willis Jepson, Bob spent a large part of his childhood exploring this area and discovered the many miracles of nature. He dedicated his time to sharing these discoveries with the community. With this sentiment, Bob designed and developed the Willis Linn Jepson Historical Garden to showcase California

native plants. His vision was to educate the public on how the Indigenous people and early settlers were able to use these beautiful plants for everyday living.

The Peña Adobe Historical Society was delighted about the prospect for renovating the garden back to splendor. To move this project forward, we established a partnership between the Historical Society, the UCCE Master Gardeners of Solano and Yolo Counties and the California Native Plant Society. In keeping with Bob's vision for a teaching garden, the collaborative team developed a renovation plan that includes the original plants in Bob's garden design and other new plants that can provide benefits to the community. The educational criteria for the plant selection include:

- ◇ Historic value and uses for the indigenous communities and settlers
- ◇ Drought and climate change resiliency
- ◇ Proper maintenance practices
- ◇ Importance and identification of local pollinators
- ◇ Inspiration for using these plants in home gardens

The YouTube video in the following link provides some background information on this project: https://youtu.be/djZdEbP_njU.

The collaborative team and volunteers have been working on the numerous phases of the design plan. The first step was to clear the weeds and prepare the space for planting. This activity included 'sheet mulching' the area using cardboard and adding wood chip mulch that was donated by a local arborist. Some of our dedicated Master Gardeners, Cheryl Obert and Janice Hartman, then relocated large rocks to create a garden border

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued From Page 4—The Willis Linn Jepson Native Garden Renovation Project)



Garden Before Clean Up
All Photos on this Page by Paula Pashby

and walkway. The team was also grateful to have Master Gardener, Maureen Clark, design the irrigation system. The irrigation plan was approved by the Historical Society and the City of Vacaville.

team of volunteers will be planting the garden over the next several weeks. I am sure we will encounter a few other hurdles before we bring this teaching garden to



Installing Mulch

completion, but confident that this will turn out great!

We also learned some interesting lessons along the way, such as the "Do's and Don'ts" of cardboard sheet mulching, which are noted in a local blog: [Sheet Mulching with Cardboard-Do's and Don'ts - Under the Solano Sun](https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=51601) - ANR Blogs (<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=51601>).

Come and enjoy the Willis Linn Jepson Native Garden in Vacaville! Peña Adobe is planning a dedication of the park at their May 7th open house event. To get to the garden, take the Peña Adobe exit off I-80 West. Cross back over the freeway and turn left into the park. Take an immediate left to enter the Peña Adobe. Parking in Peña Adobe parking lot is free. Hope to see you there! ☺

The volunteer work, so far, has been rigorous, but also personally rewarding. UCCE Master Gardener-Solano, Cheryl Obert, describes her experience working on the garden, saying, "My first thought was that this is going to take a lot of work, but after some discussion, realized that we can do this! I have enjoyed so much being a part this project, and with each step that we have taken, it will become a beautiful place for everyone to come and enjoy."



Garden Cleaned Up and Ready to Plant

I am so excited to see the progress we have made with this renovation project. We have numerous donated plants, and the



The Secret Life of a Dry Garden & Cactus

"Ever wonder what's inside a "barrel cactus?" Let's literally drill inside a "barrel" and learn what it has to do with propagation! Learn how to make "tree-like" branches on tall cactus for dry gardens and see the very interesting inside of a skeletonized tall cactus. Successful dry gardening - not a secret - choose the right plant in right place and find out some good plant choices!"

Saturday, April 9, 2022
Time: 9 to 11 am
Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center
3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield

Part of the presentation will be outside in our demonstration garden "dry garden" area. Please bring a chair to use in the demo garden. Suggest a hat and water in case it's warm!

To RSVP call Jennifer at 707-389-0645 (texts ok) or jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu

A GERMAN ROSE: PINK ‘GRUSS AN AACHEN’

Spring Tseng, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

The rose ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’ (‘Pink GAA’) - floribunda is one of the 100 “All-Star” plants carefully selected by the botanists of UC Davis for California home gardeners.

Plants included in the “All-Star” list must meet the following criteria, at a minimum:

- ⇒ Attractive for most of the year
- ⇒ Thrive in California’s Mediterranean climate
- ⇒ Tested in the UC Davis Arboretum

The “All-Stars” may also hold other qualities California gardeners appreciate, for example, low maintenance, disease resistance, draught-tolerant and attractive to beneficial wildlife.

The ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’ floribunda rose was introduced to the world in 1929. Its creator was a rose hybridizer, Rudolph Kluis, from the Netherlands. In the “All-Star” brochure, the ‘Pink GAA’ floribunda is classified as a medium sized plant. The bushy plant maybe about 2-3 feet tall with the same spread. Its stems are almost thornless and leaves medium green. The size of its flower is about 2-3 inches in diameter and very double with 26-40 petals. The salmon-pink flowers release a mild fragrance and they grow in small clusters.

The ‘Pink GAA’ floribunda is suitable for USDA planting hardiness zone 6b-9b. Like most roses, the ‘Pink GAA’ floribunda likes full sun but can tolerate part shade. It needs a low to medium water schedule, which means water deeply every one to two weeks during the dry season. In addition, it requires deadheading after flowering and winter pruning.

The ‘Pink GAA’ floribunda has many relatives. For example, ‘Goldene GAA’ (introduced in 1935) bears golden yellow flowers, ‘Climbing GAA’ (1937) is a climber, ‘GAA Superior’ (1942) has larger flowers and ‘GAA White’ (1942) has white flowers, of course. The family of the ‘Gruss an Aachen’ can be traced back to ‘Gruss an Aachen Hybrid Tea’ created by L. Wilhelm Hinner, which was introduced in 1909. The GAA family bare similar cherished characteristics like disease resistance, beautiful flowers, repeat blooming, and near thornless, with slight variations like plant height and color of the flowers.



Rose ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’ in Woodland Library Rose Garden
Photo by Spring Tseng

Although ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’ is one of the top choices for California gardeners, it does not come without drawbacks. For example, the double-petal form blocks its stamens from pollinators’ access. Also, it is not totally care-free like some California natives. In addition, it tends to have a “weak” neck that makes it not ideal for cutting. Nonetheless, if you are a rose lover, you may not want to pass this gem.

Why such a tongue twister name? After consulting with my friend Seifert, who immigrated from Germany in his twenties, it appears that ‘Gruss an Aachen’ is a phrase in German. “Gruss” means “Greeting”; “an” means “to” or “toward”; and “Aachen” is a historical city in Germany. Hence, “Gruss an Aachen” means “Greetings to Aachen”, or “Hello Aachen”.

What is the significance of the city Aachen? Aachen is located near the west-most border of Germany, neighboring Belgium and the Netherlands. It was built by the Romans over a thousand years ago. One primary reason the Romans favored this location must be due to its abundant water supply. In 800 A.D., the Emperor of the Romans, Charles the Great (747-814) built his palace in Aachen because its geographical advantage conveniently connected many other major cities in Europe. Since then, the city became the political center of many kings and emperors. Today, Aachen still preserves its charm, especially when the sulfurous water fills the garden fountains.

You can find a 5-ft tall ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’ floribunda in the Ruth Risdon Storer Garden at the UC Davis Arboretum. The rose blooms in flushes from late spring to fall. These roses may be available for purchase at UC Davis Arboretum Plant Sales events.

People live and fade away, while a beautiful rose lives forever. ✕

REFERENCES

- 1) For the list of UC Davis Arboretum ‘All-Star’ plants
<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars>
- 2) More information about the rose ‘Pink Gruss an Aachen’
<https://garden.org/plants/view/3000/Rose-Rosa-Pink-Gruss-an-Aachen/>
- 3) About the rose family ‘Gruss an Aachen’
<https://helpmefind.com/rose>
- 4) Wikipedia
<https://Wikipedia.org/en/aachen>

FRUITS AND VEGETABLES ARE BEST FROM YOUR OWN BACKYARD

Bob Labozetta, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

“OK, kiddos, let’s sweep up all those tree leaves on the street for the veggie garden.”

Thus began our annual fall roundup of once green photosynthesis machines of the ligneous plants that lined our street. The fallen leaves—multi-hued carbon sinks ready to enrich the garden soil—were invaluable organic additions that resulted in bumper crops of fruits and vegetables. Of course, this directive was always met with moans and groans from my kids, who would rather be playing soccer or football or playing in their bedrooms with friends.



Photo by Julie Gibbons

Collecting this free source of organic soil amendment stems from the practices of my ancestors. I come from a long line of immigrant farmers, dairy people, and herders. People who cared for the health and well-being of their families and customers. Ingrained in this panoply of food producers was the desire to be stewards of the earth and sustainably grow crops or raise farm animals.

I appreciated the fruits (pun intended) of my grandparents’ and parents’ labors in providing homegrown foodstuffs for the dinner table. But, I did not take on the mantle of family food producer until I started a family and began the journey by simply watering our apartment houseplants and container veggies with water from the fish tank.

After we bought our first home, I converted a section of our too-small backyard (our property size was only 5,400 sq ft and contained a 1,400 sq ft home) into an organic garden. By the time my first child came along, I was bound and determined that I would not put synthetic petroleum-based chemicals (fertilizers, herbicides, and pesticides) into my children’s bodies from either store-bought produce or the backyard.

Allow me some time on my high horse. The benefits of growing organically supersede the negatives of higher prices, shorter shelf life, and possibly higher bacterial levels. To wit:

- ◆ Organics keep Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) out of our food choices.
- ◆ Organic farming increases microbiological lifeforms in maintaining healthy soil.

- ◆ Organics restrain the growth of super strains of garden pests.
- ◆ Organic farming protects feral pollinators and beneficial insects.
- ◆ Organics bolster a more wholesome farm lifestyle and a healthier community.
- ◆ Organic foods are often more nutritious because the crops are fertilized with natural formulations more abundant in macro and micronutrients.
- ◆ Organics are customarily NOT factory-farmed in environmentally degrading monocropping. (Monocropping is the habit of growing the same crop on the same plot of ground, year after year. This practice exhausts the soil of nutrients [making the soil less fertile over time, decreases organic matter in the soil, and can cause profound erosion. It also promotes the spread of pests and diseases, resulting in the application of more and more chemicals. The effects of monocropping on the environment are acute when pesticides and fertilizers make their way into groundwater or become airborne, creating pollution.)
- ◆ Organic foods are considered more flavorful as they are not stressed by frequent applications of synthetic fertilizers and other chemicals.
- ◆ Organics keep harmful pesticides and herbicides out of the waterways of streams, rivers, and oceans.
- ◆ Organics reduce taxpayers’ costs totaling millions of dollars for subsidies, clean-up, restoration, and public health.

My organic journey began with a visit to Common Ground in Palo Alto, CA, where I picked up a copy of the organic gardening classic “[How to Grow More Vegetables Than You Ever Thought Possible on Less Land Than You Can Imagine: A Primer on the Life-giving Biodynamic/French Intensive Method of Organic Horticulture](#)” (John Jeavons). My thirst for organic growing knowledge then led to getting a subscription to “[Organic Gardening](#)” magazine—renamed currently “[Organic Life](#).” Now, I was hooked on the philosophy and practice of home-based organic food production, and it fits well with the “Me do it!” attitude of my eldest child when she was very young.

Before long, our little organic “farm” boasted a veggie garden, chickens, and a chicken run that contained a compost pile and a small orchard of apples, pears, peaches, nectarines, and lemon trees. The chickens helped in the whole process by turning the compost pile, tilling the weeds, and eating insect pests. Of course, they would convert their foraged foods into organic

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued from Page 7—Fruits and Vegetables Are Best From Your Own Backyard)

eggs.

At first reticent to partake in the process of organically growing much of our food, the kids at least harvested (and ate) some crops and sometimes helped to dig the soil and transplant seedlings. My son became known as “Chicken Joe” when he took on the job of caring for the chickens. He even became a vegetarian for a few years, increasing the workload of this chef at Thanksgiving by having to prepare a vegan turkey replacement made from a blend of wheat protein and organic tofu alongside the traditional (organic) meat turkey.

Nowadays, my children are connoisseurs of fine food and drink, sustainably grown (preferably organic), which harkens back to the days they strolled the paths between the family’s growing beds plucking delights from vine or tree. And, whenever I visit them, I am expected to prepare toothsome meals with ingredients from locally-sourced origins.

If not for my mission to supply healthy, organic homegrown food for my children, their memories of growing up with Daddy

would be bereft of the times that food growing and preparation enhanced our relationship.

Perhaps your family should discuss the following:

- 1) From where do you get your produce, meats, and other food ingredients? Why?
- 2) Have you considered other food sources? Which? Why?
- 3) How can you better care for Mother Earth in your food selections and sourcing ingredients?
- 4) If you are growing, or intend to grow, some or all of your food, how best can the various members of your family contribute to a sustainable gardening endeavor? ☘

Resources:

- Organic Gardening, Master Gardeners El Dorado County UCCE Cooperative Extension (https://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/files/165024.pdf)
- Organic Gardening by Vera Strader (https://ucanr.edu/sites/tuolumne_mg/files/113102.pdf)
- Posts Tagged: Organic Gardening - News & Information Outreach (https://ucanr.edu/sites/news/All_UC_ANR_blogs/index.cfm?blog_tag=organic%20gardening&blogasset=75643)

A MESSAGE FROM THE SOLANO COUNTY WATER AGENCY

SAVE WATER THIS SPRING WITH SOLANO COUNTY’S LANDSCAPE REBATE PROGRAM



Spring is here! As the weather gradually increases, so too does our need to conserve water! Solano County is home to cooler coastal areas that lend themselves to sunbaked inland valleys. Despite such variation in climactic zones, one thing holds true: California has experienced one of the driest winters on record. In preparation for the summer season, Solano County Water Agency urges all residents to do their part in conserving water, while also helping local biodiversity. That could include planting native, climate appropriate plants, checking your irrigation for leaks, or even updating your garden to include more drought tolerant landscaping.

Solano County Water Agency has been helping conserve water through our Water-Efficient Landscape Rebate Program for over a decade. This program focuses on helping interested residents and businesses convert their grassy lawns to low water-use landscapes. In arid climates like our own, nearly half of household water use is dedicated to outdoor irrigation. Opting for plants that use less water can help homeowners conserve water, especially ahead of another dry year. Since 2010, participants in the Water-Efficient Landscape Rebate Program have saved over 100 million gallons of water. Water-efficient landscapes are not synonymous with barren, dry, or dull. Low-water use plants can be just as glamorous and brilliant as plants that guzzle water. Our landscape program encourages the use of native plants and non-invasive plants that can add color and life to your garden. To learn more about our Landscape Rebate Program, please visit our website at www.scwa2.com and click on the ‘water efficiency’ icon.

SHOWING OFF YOUR SUCCULENTS

Cindy Yee, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

There is a shady corner in our backyard where nothing has survived for long. Our neighbors' huge pine and redwood trees close to the fence have strong invasive roots. A flowering purple glory bush (*Tibouchina granulosa*) and Japanese red maple (*Acer palmatum*) died in succession. It is sloped on a 30 degree incline, with usable space approximately 8'x6' wide, and bounded by a wooden pergola.

Two years ago I planted a potted jade plant (*Crassula ovata*) that my dad had given me as a small cutting. Having long since outgrown its ceramic pot, it was looking straggly and miserable. Almost immediately after planting, its leaves plumped up and the plant quite rapidly doubled in size. Shallow roots made planting much easier. Given the jade's success, it was an easy decision to plant the rest of the slope with succulents.

Rock Perimeters

My first trip was to a local stoneyard for rocks to build the perimeter. Would you believe 162 lbs. of 'moss rock' (weighing 3 to 8 lbs. each) cost \$20? What a deal! I installed them in levels, allowing for planting areas, and plugging any holes with smaller dug-up stones. I then watered the rocks to revive the moss and lichen.

Soil

Succulents do best in fast draining soil. High quality succulent soil was mixed with the heavy native clay. Each pot of purchased succulents had its own soil also mixed in. If planting a large area, you could put together your own mix, which might be more economical. A simple combination would be 50% pumice or perlite, and 50% potting soil.

Choosing Plants

The succulents were chosen according to their tolerance for part shade to full shade. A plus for shade is that they will weather our hot 100°F+ summer much more easily. An enormous jade plant in full sun elsewhere (before we knew better) is gloriously lush in winter and spring, but would shrivel into a crispy heap in summer/fall if not covered. A minus is that colors will not be as brilliant without sun stress.

These are some of the plants I used:

1. *Crassula ovata*; green and variegated jade plants. In our USDA Planting Zone, 9b, happiest in shade. Originally from Africa.
2. *Echeveria*. We used at least 3 varieties. 'Perle von Nurnberg'; lilac rosette, pink tones. *Agavoides* or 'Lipstick' echeveria; dense apple green rosette. 'Red Leaf' echeveria; dark red leaves.
3. *Graptopetalum paraguayense*; 'Ghost Plant', white-grey lobed

leaves. Another variety, 'Fred Ives', does not require stress for gorgeous blue-green-purple coloring.

4. *Haworthia* 'Universe'; slender spikes, sharp points, white speckles. Loves shade.
5. *Portulacaria afra* 'Elephant Bush'; variegated. Small green/white leaves on red stems from South Africa. Elephants' favorite food.
6. *Cotyledon orbiculata* 'Macrantha'; with big round green leaves, from my master gardener neighbor. I am not sure what variety the white cotyledon is, unfortunately it came from an unlabeled pot. It could be a 'Pig's Ear' variant.
7. *Gasteria bicolor*. Best in full shade.

Covering Bare Terrain

One of my hobbies is collecting rocks. In the picture, below, are several colors of jasper, chert, serpentine, petrified wood, agate, quartz and even nephrite jade. Covering the soil has an advantage of retaining moisture and reducing water consumption. I might still add a few tiny filler succulents, and so have not fully covered the soil yet. It was great fun arranging my rocks and pebbles.

And there you have it. It was a pleasure to put together. A little slice of succulent splendor. ☺



Before Photo
All Photos in this Article by Cindy Yee

After Photo

Resources:

- Debra Lee Baldwin, [Succulents Simplified](#)
- Laura Eubanks, YouTube
- Ruth Bancroft Garden, Walnut Creek
- [Succulent Garden Care](#), NYTimes
- [How to Design a Succulent Garden](#): ocsucculents.com
- Erle Nickel, SFGate.com
- Morningsun Herb Farm, Vacaville (plants)

WHAT'S BLOOMING IN YOUR YARD RIGHT NOW?!

Michelle Krespi, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Spring is a wonderful time with everything beginning to bloom! For this Master Gardener, it's especially exciting as I just took ownership of a mature garden planted by the former homeowner who spent forty years cultivating this garden. Everyday something new flowers, some which I'm familiar with, and others providing an opportunity for me to learn something new. About a week ago I looked outside my side door to see this beauty, (see photo) a Primrose Jasmine, also known as Chinese Jasmine.

Jasminum mesnyi is a large, herbaceous, semi-vining shrub that can climb trellises and be trained to grow like a tree. Mesnyi is named after William Mesny a 19th century Chinese General and plant collector. It is a native to Vietnam and Southern China. It is an evergreen known for its flowers and fragrant scent. The flowers grow as either single or double petals and release their intoxicating scent during the evening hours. Blooms begin to grow after it's second year and it does well when pruned after flowering. Chinese jasmine blooms in the Spring, can grow up to ten feet high and three to seven feet wide. It's maximum height is sixteen feet and it grows well in either full sun or partial shade (2-6 hours of sunlight daily.) It is not frost hardy.

Chinese jasmine has long, slender, arching stems, and given support, will become a sprawling vine. Stems are square in cross section, and green, becoming woody with age. Leaves are opposite in arrangement, pinnately compound, with 3-leaflets, each elliptic-oblong to lanceolate, about 2.5-7.5 cm long and glabrous, dark green. Its flowers are lemon yellow, often with semi-double 6-10 petals, about 4 cm across, produced singly, with stalks (pedicels) about 1-4 cm long. It is listed both as fragrant and unscented and blooms in winter or spring, sporadically at other times. The flowers of this shrub are larger than most varieties growing to as much two inches in diameter. It bears a blackish-purple berry, ellipsoid, up to 1cm long and 6mm in diameter, each part containing 1 or 2 seeds.



Photo by Michelle Krespi

Chinese jasmine is easy to maintain as it can withstand neglect, pollution and short periods of drought. It was awarded the Royal Horticultural Society's Award of Garden of Merit! In summation, this shrub will grow in unfavorable soils, is drought tolerant, fragrant and will attract beneficial insects and birds so insecticidal treatment is almost never needed. In fact, it can create a zone of protection for the plants that are grown in proximity to it! These characteristics make *Jasminum mesnyi* an excellent choice for your garden. ☘

RESOURCES

- 1—Wikipedia- *Jasminum mesnyi*
- 2—Dave's Garden (website) www.davesgarden.com
- 3—An article entitled *Jasmine Plant Types: Common Varieties of Jasmine* by Jackie Carroll, found on www.gardeningknowhow.com
- 4—Oregon State University, College of Agricultural Sciences - Department of Horticulture
- 5—Plant Finder- the ultimate garden reference resource
- 6—Information provided by the plant identification app "Picture This"

MASTER GARDENERS ARE A RESOURCE FOR YOUR GARDENING NEEDS



UCCE Master Gardeners of Solano County are located at 501 Texas Street, First Floor, Fairfield, CA 94533-4498



For more gardening and event information, visit our website <https://solanomg.ucanr.edu/>. UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Solano County which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 707-784-1322 or email: mgsolano@ucdavis.edu. Our message center will take your questions and information. Please leave your name, phone number, a description of your problem, and your address. A Master Gardener will research your problem and return your call/email. With email, you can attach pictures of the problem, which may aid in the diagnosis of your plant question.

UC MASTER GARDENERS WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE SEASON!



VALLEJO FARMERS MARKET



**Saturday's 9:00am to 1:00pm
Corner of Georgia and Marin Streets**

**FREE parking
(Rain cancels)**



Please come and discuss your gardening with us, problems or not. We are there to help with suggestions of reading material, handouts on various subjects, both plants and insects, and subjects related to gardening. We learn so much from your experiences in your landscapes!

HOME DEPOT

Fairfield

2121 Cadenasso Drive

**Every *other* Saturday . Beginning April 2nd through October 1st
10:00am to 2:00pm**



DUNNELL NATURE PARK AND EDUCATION CENTER

**3357 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield
9:00am to 11:00am**

**April 9th: DRY GARDENS AND CACTUS
May 14th: POTAGER GARDENS (SMALL GARDENS)**

TOMATOMANIA

**Pacific Ace Hardware
627 Merchant St., Vacaville
April 8th, 9th, 10th
9:00 to 2:00**



DIXON MAY FAIR

**655 S. First Street
Floriculture Bldg.**

**May 5th—4:00pm to 8:00pm
May 6th— 11:00pm to 7:00pm
May 7th—12:30pm to 7:30pm
May 8th— 11:00pm to 7:00pm**

UC MASTER GARDENER RESOURCES

The California Garden Web serves as a portal to organize and extend to the public the University of California's vast collection of research-based information about gardening.
<http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/>

Visit [The California Backyard Orchard](http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/) to learn about the home orchard and understand that it is, in fact, a living expression of genetics interacting with soils, weather, tree spacing, pests, and many other factors.
<http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/>

[Integrated Pest Management](http://ipm.ucanr.edu/index.html), or IPM, is a process you can use to solve pest problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment. IPM can be used to manage all kinds of pests anywhere—in urban, agricultural, and wildland or natural areas.
<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/index.html>

Find quality peer-reviewed products produced by UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) at the click of a mouse. Whether you're looking for advice on crop production, pest management, study materials for Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) exams, nutrition, or gardening, you'll find it in the [ANR catalog](https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/).
<https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/>

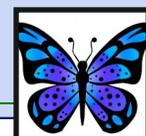
The horticultural staff of the [UC Davis Arboretum](https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/) has identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested, are easy to grow, require little water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants that support native birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California.
<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars?id=4>



Photo by Melinda Nesterov



SPRING GARDENING GUIDE



	APRIL	MAY	JUNE
P L A N T I N G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Edibles: Loose-leaf lettuce, culinary herbs, chard, carrots, radishes, spinach, sorrel ◇ Warm-season annuals: Ageratum, Alyssum, bedding dahlias, impatiens, lobelia, petunia, phlox, portulaca, salvia, sunflower, zinnia ◇ Perennials: Ceanothus, lavender, coreopsis, penstemon, rudbeckia, dwarf plumbago, scabiosa, verbenas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Edibles: Beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, okra, peppers, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, watermelon ◇ Butterfly, bee and hummingbird attractions: agastache, alstroemeria, bee balm, coneflower, coral bells, fuchsia, honeysuckle, penstemon, salvia ◇ Plant chrysanthemums for fall color ◇ Perennial shrubs, trees or vines ◇ Loose roots of pot bound nursery plants before planting in the garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Edibles: Melon, beans and corn from seed; tomato, squash and cucumber seedlings ◇ Successive plantings of basil and cilantro ◇ Summer annuals: Cosmos, marigolds, portulaca, sunflowers, zinnias ◇ Summer-blooming perennials: Daylilies, gloriosa daisy, Russian sage, salvia, yarrow
M A I N T E N A N C E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Control weeds—pull or hoe them as soon as they appear ◇ Fertilize and clean up around azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons ◇ Fertilize citrus ◇ Tune up motor, and sharpen blades on lawn mower. Mow often enough that you cut no more than 1/3 the length of the grass blade in any one session ◇ Spray olives, liquidambar, and other messy trees with fruit control hormone or blast with hose to curb fruit production 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Aerate and fertilize lawns ◇ Fertilize citrus and established perennials and vegetables ◇ Deadhead spent flowers to encourage new bloom; pinch back petunias and fuchsia ◇ Allow spring bulb foliage to yellow and dry out before removing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Roses: Cut back faded blooms to 1/4" above first five leaflet that faces outside bush ◇ Fruit trees: Thin apples, pears, peaches, and nectarines, leaving about 6" between fruit ◇ Sprinklers: Summer heat increases water needs by 2" per week. Adjust sprinklers for adequate coverage and irrigation ◇ Fertilize annual flowers, vegetables, lawns and roses ◇ Dig and divide crowded bulbs; allow to dry before replanting
P R E V E N T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Bait for snails and slugs, following all product instructions ◇ Rid new growth of aphids with a blast from the hose every few days ◇ Dump standing water to slow mosquito breeding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Tune up drip irrigation systems ◇ Build basins around the bases of shrubs and trees; mulch those and garden plants to conserve moisture and reduce weeds, leaving a mulch-free margin around plant crowns and stems ◇ Stake tomatoes and perennials ◇ Remain vigilant against snails, slugs and aphids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Mulch to keep roots cool and to retain moisture ◇ Check underside of tomato leaves for hornworms ◇ Spray roses with Neem oil to help control aphids, black spot, whiteflies, and powdery mildew ◇ Inspect garden for earwigs ◇ Remain vigilant against snails and slugs



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It is available through the internet for free download:

<http://cesolano.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter130.htm>

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SEEDS FOR THOUGHT



**SPRING
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