

Photo by Melinda Nestlerode

Seeds For Thought

PRUNING AND CARE OF ROSES

Darrell g.h. Schramm, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Despite pale, afternoon sunlight from a sun hanging low in a cloudless December sky, the air is cold. I don my hat, jacket, and gloves, then step outside. Collecting my two-bladed secateurs, long-handled pruners, and pruning saw, I next briefly sharpen my clippers (secateurs) and loppers (long-handled pruners). It's time to begin pruning most of my 225 roses.

Most?" you might ask. "Why not all?" The answer is that *not all roses require pruning*. Most people grow only modern Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and/or dwarf patio roses, and, yes, those invariably need to be pruned, so we'll begin with them.

But first a word, or 88 words, about why we prune. To prune is to shorten, to reduce. If you wish only a few large Hybrid Tea blooms, especially as an exhibitor at rose shows, then you must prune hard, prune close, that is to say five or six inches from the ground. If the plant is an established Floribunda, prune an inch or two higher. Such severe pruning generally reduces the life of the roses, encouraging fat, woody crowns (the base of the plant) which can lead to rotting and suckering. But your roses, though fewer, will be larger.

On the other hand, if you grow roses to decorate or perfume the garden or to fill vases, that is, if you desire quantity, not size, prune the Hybrid Teas and Floribundas moderately or even lightly. By moderately I mean cut the stems back to half their length. Light pruning cuts back the canes by a third or so. Light pruning is done mostly with very vigorous plants such as 'Peace', 'Distant Drums', 'Black Magic' and their ilk, or climbers.

The pruning cut itself should be at a slight angle about one centimeter or a quarter of an inch from the bud-eye or node. More than a half inch above this node invites dieback. Sharp clippers are essential; do not force them to cut through a thick cane; for that use your loppers.



'Fisher Holmes' Rose
All Photos In This Article by Darrell g.h. Schramm

Regardless of the pruning technique or the kind of rose, remove all dead, damaged, or diseased wood (the three D's). Of course, this also applies to roses that require no pruning. If the cut surface is brown, cut back farther to where the cut is white. Remove all stems thinner than a pencil as well as any branches that cross and rub against each other. Try to produce an

open- centered bush for good air circulation as a way to prevent fungus. Break or cut off all suckers. Only healthy and ripe canes should remain.

Other classes of roses, however, have different pruning needs. In general, remove most of the old wood and weak wood, erring on the side of generosity. Growth and profusion of flowers depend primarily on root action, which in turn depends on the foliage to stimulate and sustain root chemistry. Accordingly, heritage/antique roses are rarely reduced to the extent of modern roses. And some should not be pruned at all.

A woman in one of the rose societies to which I belong asked me if I would like to have her rose 'Daybreak'. Immediately I accepted, already owning three or four Hybrid Musks. These roses grow in pretty clusters, usually on climbing stems. My 'Cornelia' has grown into a fig tree, its small nosebags of pretty pink and yellow flowers the size of pea coat buttons adorning the tree attractively. I asked her why she did not want 'Daybreak'. "It just doesn't bloom," she said. I asked her if she

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had pruned it. “Of course!” she replied as though the answer should be obvious.

“But it’s a Hybrid Musk,” I told her. “They resent pruning. It takes as much as three years, maybe four, for it to bloom again if you prune it. Deadheading and removing the three D’s

is all you need do.”

All roses are not equal. All classes of roses should not be pruned in the same way. The old, historic roses such as Albas, Centifolias, Damasks, Gallicas, and Mosses should be pruned soon after their blooms are spent for the season. Most of these once-blooming roses can be cut down by one-fourth to one-third, except for Centifolia and Moss roses. Centifolias (the old cabbage roses) should be shortened to about six bud-eyes. Mosses should be shortened by half except for the new growth, shortened to three bud-eyes or so. But if it is a repeat-blooming Moss, prune when the plant is dormant and reduce it by half.

A word about Damasks: remove old growth from the bottom to encourage young shoots. It helps to know one’s roses.

Bourbon roses, whether of the recurrent sort or once-blooming sort and once the plant is three years older or more, are to be shortened by a foot. Portlands, which do rebloom, can be reduced by a fourth. Most Hybrid Perpetuals are to be cut down by a fourth also, though if the plant is especially vigorous, remove two or three old canes in November. Some Hybrid Perpetuals are more temperamental: ‘Baronne Prevost’, ‘Dr. Andry’, ‘Dupuy Jamain’, ‘Fisher Holmes’, and ‘Monsieur Boncenne’ should all be pruned more lightly, and ‘Duke of Edinburgh’ should be pruned lightly or not at all. Know your roses. Observe, study, attend.

Hybrid Chinas should be pruned down to from six to twelve bud-eyes, but never shorten tall canes of six to twelve feet. Chinas, however, require some pruning when dormant but only lightly to shape the bush. This class of roses tends to build on itself. As for drought-tolerant Tea roses, the perfect roses for the Sacramento Valley, they require very little pruning, just enough to shape the bush and to remove the three D’s.

DO NOT prune *rugosas*, *spinosissimas*, or *wichurbanas*, nor miniatures nor ground cover roses. But do remove any obvious dead wood. Also, do not spray these roses with anything stronger than water.

Roses in pots need a pruning much closer than those in the ground—except for Hybrid Perpetuals and Hybrid Bourbons. Prune these down to two eyes. Keep in mind that roses in pots require more water and nutrients than roses in the ground. In the 1990s several organizations including the Royal National Rose Society of England tested what came to be called the “Easy Care Method” of pruning roses. Simply cut all bushes to half their height, quickly, with either secateurs and loppers or a hedge trimmer. The angle of the cut is ignored as are weak and twiggy growth, which is left on the bush. It came as a surprise to the testers and gardeners alike that the bushes were no less healthy and the flowers sometimes larger than and as numerous as those pruned in the traditional method. Roses are forgiving.

Once the pruning has been completed, toss a tablespoon of Epsom Salts (magnesium sulfate) around the foot of the rose bush. It aids the plant in using nitrogen, sulfur, and phosphorus and encourages growth of new canes from the crown. Then spread a three-inch layer of organic mulch or sterilized steer manure around the base of the roses, to within a few inches of the crown (the base of the plant). This covering keeps the soil moist during the dry seasons, reduces weeds, discourages blackspot, and improves the structure of the soil.

In early spring fertilize the roses with a plant food high in nitrogen. Usually I use fish emulsion or feather meal, but sometimes I make a 32 gallon container of alfalfa tea and pour a gallon or two around the base of each plant. (Add a gallon or somewhat more of alfalfa pellets to 30 gallons of water; allow it to sit for three to five days, stirring it vigorously at least once a day. Some rosarians also add a cup or two of molasses. You’ll need a lid. The smell isn’t pleasant.) Roses in pots should be fertilized every four to six weeks, their access to food and water being limited. Do deadhead the spent flowers to encourage more bloom.

I mentioned at the beginning that I’ve begun pruning in early December. The traditional time for pruning has been January through early March, but with climate change, certain roses have been flowering much earlier than usual, bud-eyes emerging as early as late November and early December. Consequently, I’ve begun pruning earlier, so far to no detrimental effects. My one concern is that should a winter frost strike, it could kill any new growth on the pruned roses.

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Finally, once the roses are pruned and mulched, a shallow hoeing or scratching of the soil periodically during summer and fall will prevent hardening of the soil, especially if it is clay. The fertilizer in those seasons should be low in nitrogen and higher in phosphorus and potassium. If you have access to nettles, a

nettle tea is probably the very best fertilizer. Bone meal scratched into the soil or pot around the rose plant provides an excellent source of phosphorus and calcium. Potassium sulfate aids in healthy root development and drought tolerance. Just be sure to irrigate your plants before applying any plant food. ❁

WHERE DOES YOUR LUFFA COME FROM?

Torie Kury, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

For my summer vacation I went south to Pismo beach, just a four hour drive from Fairfield. I'm always looking for something unusual to do on vacation, and I was surprised at some of my options. I chose a small town called Nipomo where I was told there was a luffa (also spelled loofah) farm that gave guided tours. My interest was peaked: are these weird things from the sea or land?? I admit that I would have chosen the sea. In fact, *Luffa aegyptiaca*, the sponge gourd, is part of the cucumber family, and native to South Asia.

I was surprised at how these sponges were grown—not only on land but on trellises, with some plants as old as eight years. The farm was started in Newark, California in the 1980's from a batch of heirloom luffa seeds. The owner later moved to Nipomo where she restarted her farm. The vines grow in 50 gallon nursery pots, are grown under hoop houses, and tended to daily. They are left on the vines to turn brown, usually at the end of the fall season. At this point they become very brittle. They are then removed and placed in bins to collect the seeds. When the brittle brown skin is peeled back and removed what is left is the luffa. The luffas are then soaked for 24 hours and are ready to sell in the store and right at the farm. So, luffas are grown on land and are a fruit. Used as a sponge, they are quite fantastic for your body, face and, yes, the dishes too!

To find out more about these fascinating gourds, visit www.theluffafarm.com. ❁



Photo by Torie Kury

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THINK SPRING WITH ASPARAGUS

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

Fresh asparagus can be found in markets year round, but the abundant, tasty crop from the Delta makes its appearance here in late winter to early spring. Many local home gardeners also find this a very easy vegetable to grow. It is also very nutritious as 1 cup contains only 27 calories but provides 3 grams protein and 11% of the daily requirement of dietary fiber, 12% vitamin C, 20% vitamin A and 10% iron.

Select asparagus stalks with tops that have tightly closed “scales” (no sign of opening). Proper post-harvest handling is the key to keeping good quality. The spears become tough or fibrous if they are not quickly cooled down to 34°F and kept there until they are used. This may explain why spears purchased in our supermarkets usually have a tough base that needs to be cut or snapped off before cooking. Stalks can be stored in the refrigerator for a few days after trimming the base and placing spears upright in a little water.

Asparagus plants are tall, feathery, graceful and highly ornamental, so can be used as background for flowers or other vegetables. Female plants produce small red berries with seeds which the birds enjoy. As a result, my orchard now includes asparagus plants under the trees. This fern-like edible perennial is one of the most permanent and dependable of home garden vegetables. (Don’t confuse this *Asparagus officinalis* with the ornamental “asparagus fern.”)

Plants can be started from seed, but roots are the quickest to produce. Set out roots in the fall or winter in trenches which are 8-10 in. deep. Space plants 1 ft. apart, cover with 2 in. of soil and water them. As young plants grow, gradually fill in the trench, taking care not to cover growing tips. Don’t harvest the spears the first year. These stalks are actually shoots which will turn into fern-like plants which manufacture food to be stored by the roots for the next year’s cycle of growth. When plants turn brown in late fall or early winter, cut stems to the ground. The following spring you can cut spears (5 to 8 in. long) at a slant at soil level for only 4 to

6 weeks, then fertilize and permit plants to grow. Keep watered. The third year you can cut spears for 8 to 10 weeks. Gourmet “white asparagus” spears are achieved by mounding soil around the developing spears to shield them from sunlight, but these spears are not as nutritious as the green ones. More complete instructions on growing asparagus can be found in the [Sunset Western Garden Book](#), and there is an excellent article on the internet called “*Growing Asparagus in the Garden*” from the UC Davis Vegetable Research and Information Center at https://vric.ucdavis.edu/pdf/asparagus_growingasparagus.pdf.

There are many ways to prepare fresh cut asparagus. Be sure to rinse the spears to remove any dirt or sand. They can be preserved by freezing after cutting off the tough ends. Simply blanch in boiling water for 2 minutes, chill, drain and pack in freezer bags. To cook raw spears quickly they can simply be spread out on a platter,

covered with plastic wrap and microwaved on high for about 2 minutes. Let stand a moment and then check for doneness. If necessary, cook another minute, but you don’t want “flabby” spears. These are delicious with a sprinkle of salt and lemon or a mayonnaise type dressing or butter. Also, we stir-fry 2-inch pieces in sesame oil along with minced garlic until slightly tender and then add equal amounts of soy sauce and water and a pinch of sugar, and cover and simmer 1 to 2 minutes longer until crisp-tender. Then sprinkle

with toasted sesame seeds and serve. With the recent interest in “sheet pan” roasting, it is easy to prepare a large quantity at one time, and they are delicious with a sprinkling of coarse salt and a mixture of lemon juice and orange juice.

A very easy way to preserve asparagus is by pickling the spears. A safe, easy and delicious recipe can be found in the [USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2015 Edition](#): https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html. I hope that you will find many ways to enjoy to enjoy this pretty and nutritious vegetable. ❁



GARDENING WITH RAISED BEDS—PROS, CONS, AND PROCESS

Gene Ekenstam, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Technically speaking, a raised bed is a growing space that is raised above the natural level of the garden's soil. It can be either a mound, or mounds, of soil formed into an elevated bed, or it can be a framed bed, essentially a box without a bottom or a top. Formed beds require more space, and since most of us are urban gardeners with limited space, the focus here is on the framed bed approach. A bed need not be square or rectangular—some, such as the “keyhole” bed, have a rounded form.

The advantages of a framed raised bed are several:

- ◆ Efficient use of limited space
- ◆ Easier critter control
- ◆ Focused irrigation
- ◆ Improved soil friability and fertility

The primary disadvantage is initial cost and labor.

Framed raised beds can be made of several materials—untreated wood, concrete blocks, horse watering troughs. Untreated wood is used for vegetable beds so that any coating material from painted wood, creosote logs or pressure-treated wood does not leach into the soil and possibly contaminate the crop, particularly root vegetables.

The dimensions of a bed should be no wider than four feet, and a good workable length is six feet. If a wooden bed is longer than six feet, it needs to be braced with heavy stakes or crossbars in the center so that the weight of the soil does not push the walls apart. The main idea is that the gardener can reach inside the box from all sides to plant, weed, or water. Boxes should be spaced so there is room to work or even maneuver a wheelbarrow between the beds.

If the bed is built of lumber, the board should be at least six inches wide to provide sufficient depth for the early root system to be in enriched soil. A two-inch thickness is preferred because it won't need to be replaced often. This is basically a box made from 2x6 lumber, at a minimum. The depth of the box may depend on your pocketbook, but the taller (or deeper) the box, the less bending or working on your knees.

A different version of a raised bed is a box-on-legs, built at a height that is accessible to a wheelchair. Such a box would need an 8 or 10-inch depth to provide ample room for roots to grow. And, as with horse troughs, sufficient drainage must be allowed.

Heavy clay soil is prevalent in so much of Solano County that the main advantage of a raised bed may be to provide an ideal soil environment for plants rather than spending years to amend the soil. After building and placing the box in its location, the native soil should be dug to a depth of 3 or 4 inches and then amended. This provides a transitional zone between the underlying denser soil and the growing medium above. The growing medium can be native soil that is amended well, or it can be purchased as “garden soil” from a nursery or garden center. Even the purchased soil can be improved by adding coco coir, perlite, or vermiculite for water retention.



Photo by Gene Ekenstam

As a result of an enriched growing medium, plants can be grown closer together. Regular watering then becomes a priority, which is why many gardeners with raised beds use some form of timed irrigation, whether drip system or soaker hose.

If gophers, moles, or voles are a problem, hardware cloth (not chicken wire) can be placed at the bottom of the bed before it is filled with soil. It is relatively easy to install floating row cover over the bed for summer heat and pest protection, or to use a plastic covering in winter to make a mini-greenhouse to help vegetables over-winter. If vining plants are desired, it is just a matter of attaching a trellis to the outside of the bed for a framework for vegetables and flowers that vine.

Mel Bartholomew's book on [Square Foot Gardening](#) is well worth reading. He proposes that a raised bed be marked off in a grid of one-foot squares as a planting system, and that each square contain several plants of the same type. The book lists how many of one plant can be grown in a single square—one cabbage, four marigolds, nine beets, sixteen lettuce, for example.

A framed raised bed can be a useful solution to a number of challenges facing gardeners. Its productivity can well repay the time it requires for planning and building. ☘

GOT WEEDS? WINTER WEEDS

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

Winter weeds grow in cooler weather with moisture from rain or irrigation. They begin to germinate/grow in the fall through early spring (October to March.) Warm season weeds germinate/grow when temperatures rise in the spring (April to May) and through summer with adequate moisture.

Winter weeds are annual, biennial or perennial. Annual weeds complete a life cycle (seed to seed) in one growing season or one calendar year. Biennial weeds complete a lifecycle over two growing seasons. Perennial weeds continue to regrow over a few, to many seasons.

Some common winter weeds you may see:

Stellaria media “**common chickweed**”
and **Cerastium glomeratum** “**sticky chickweed**”:

These are widespread winter weeds in California growing easily in gardens, low-maintenance lawns and agricultural areas. “Mouseear chickweed” *Cerastium fontanum* spp. vulgare can be also be found invading turfgrass. Common chickweed is known to be a “reservoir for insect pests and plant viruses¹.” For example, they can serve as a host for lygus bugs, thrips and a reservoir host for tomato spotted wilt virus and cucumber mosaic virus. Interestingly, “... seeds of common chickweed are a preferred food for chickens and many other birds².” Common chickweed reproduces mostly by very tiny seeds about 1/25 of an inch from January to early March. Without competition from other plants a common chickweed plant can produce about 800 seeds, which take 7 to 8 years for the “soil seed bank” to be 95% depleted! Also, common chickweed, in cool and wet conditions, sometimes forms a dense mass of spreading stems that may root at the weed plant’s nodes. Google: *UC Davis Common Chickweed*, Publication 74129 for details.



Annual Bluegrass (Poa annua): Annual bluegrass is one of the most common weeds in residential and commercial turfgrass, ornamental plantings and gardens in the United States. The genus has over 200 species. Three members of this genus are commonly found in California turfgrass: Kentucky bluegrass (*P. pratensis*), rough blue grass (*P. trivialis*) and annual bluegrass. Annual bluegrass has two plant types: a true annual (*P. annua* var. *annua*) and a perennial type (*P. annua* var. *reptans*). They



can be difficult to tell apart. The true annual tends to produce more seed than the perennial while the perennial seeds germinate very quickly. In my garden, this seems to happen overnight! Annual bluegrass begins germinating in late summer or fall when soil temperatures fall below 70 degrees and continues growing throughout winter. Google: *UC Davis Annual Bluegrass*, Publication 7464 for details.

Bermuda buttercup “**buttercup**

oxalis” (*Oxalis pes-caprae*): This is a low-growing perennial broadleaf plant with shamrock like leaves and found throughout California in orchards, crop fields, yards, gardens, turf, landscapes and urban areas. In coastal areas it grows in full sun but inland in shaded areas. Buttercup Oxalis reproduces from bulblets found at the base of the stem of the plant and from new bulbs that form underground. Each plant can produce about a dozen bulbs a year. Bermuda buttercup can also produce a lateral stem (runner) that forms a new above-ground plant. Google: *UC Davis Creeping Woodsorrel and Bermuda Buttercup*, Publication 7444 for details.



The UC Davis Weed Research & Information Center “Education Online” has a series of short videos presented by UC Davis Weed Specialists called Principles of Weed Control. You may find the videos helpful to manage weeds in your garden and turfgrass. For example, video #3 is about “weed seed banks” where weed seeds are in the soil waiting for the right environment to germinate. Seeds can remain viable for many years so having a little information about managing them may help to reduce the number of weeds in your garden and turfgrass. Video #2 explains how to use other plants in your garden to reduce light, water or fertility (nutrients) needed by weeds to grow. Google: *Weed/RIC education online* .

If you have questions about weeds or other gardening questions UC Master Gardeners are at the winter Vallejo Farmer’s Markets. The days and hours are listed in this newsletter. If you prefer, you can contact our “Hotline” by telephone: 707-784-1322, or email: mgsolano@ucdavis.edu. ❁

Footnotes:

- 1—Pest Note 74129 “Chickweeds” University of California (UC) Agriculture and Natural Resources Integrated Pest Management (IPM)
- 2—Pest Note Publication 74129, UC IPM, April 2006

VIETNAM: TRIP REPORT AND WATER ISSUES

Jenni Dodini, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

In September 2018, Steve and I took a tour to Vietnam. Our interest had been caught when we had talked to others who had been there, and then we got a sale brochure from the travel company that we have used in the past. (Really, a trip you want to take that is ON SALE!!!! Who says no to that???)

We flew into Hanoi via Taipei and were immediately taken by the difference in cultures. Hanoi is a bustling city of millions of people and almost as many scooters. The first culture shock was the scooters. Most Vietnamese cannot afford a car, but a scooter is something that many can obtain. On the roadways, there are so many scooters that are going in all directions, driving on the sidewalks, heading into oncoming traffic, going in and out of other traffic (like buses) that I thought I would be witnessing a fatality any minute. This was something that we experienced in every place we visited. Also, one person riding on the scooter was NOT the norm. Mostly there were entire families (mom, dad, and a couple of kids) or a ton of produce, big water jugs, or whatever household need you could imagine on a scooter.

The next culture shock that we experienced was the warning from our tour guide that we were in a country where the communists are in charge. The people who can actually be in the communist party is a relatively small number due to the restrictions on having been involved in an organized religion for generations; having fought on the side of the Americans and then going through the reprogramming camps to get away from the bad influences of said Americans; and numerous other rules. The tough part for me is that there is no freedom of speech and there are allegedly spies everywhere who are willing to report any person to the authorities so that person can be taken directly to prison. We are so fortunate to be able to speak about our government in any manner that we wish. This is taken for granted until you have to withhold an opinion for fear that the person you are speaking with will end up imprisoned after you are deported!

Anyway, moving on, we travelled to several breath-taking places, saw much that we Americans almost completely destroyed during the years we were involved in bombing North Vietnam. We were there just after the death of our Senator John McCain. While he was noted to be one person who bombed everything he could until he was shot down, there were memorials to him by the lake where his plane went down, and he was recognized as a hero who helped bring normal relations back between our two countries. It was very touching.

The topic that I wanted to bring up is one that is not really unfamiliar to us Californians. WATER. We went on a boat ride

along the Mekong River and also a canoe ride through the delta tributaries. Yes, the same ones that many of us remember from the nightly news in the 1960's and early 1970's. The Mekong River is one of the longest in the world. Its origin is way up in China. As we know, there are millions of people in China, and just like the rest of us, they all need water to survive. Over the past decade or so, China has built several dams on the Mekong to meet those water needs. What appears to be the fallout from that is the water flow to the end of the river, where it empties into the South China Sea (now known as the Eastern Sea), has been severely reduced.

This is not an uncommon theme throughout most of the world. However, in a country where you are not allowed to criticize the government, and that same government pretty much has to answer to the communist party heads in China, the people seem resigned to having the decrease in water flow alter the ecology of the river and all the land that surrounds it. The picture below was taken out the bus window of the rice paddies in the distance and the pineapple field in the nearer part. As we were there at the end of the rainy season (and were caught on the back side of a big typhoon that hit the Philippines) everywhere we looked, the green was there to be seen.

However, the dry season has been very dry over the last few years, and the crops are suffering as well as the fish farming industry. (Sound familiar?) Then there is the change to the downriver runoff. The silt and nutrients that flow downriver are just not getting where they used to. We could debate the issue like crazy people, but since the water originates in China, the Chinese government is happy to keep it there, regardless of the effect on those at the other end. This controversial topic has touched me deeply as I don't see much hope for the Vietnamese people, and there seems to be precious little that can be done about it. After reading a little on-line about China's plans for the river, I have other fears for the future as well, because controlling the water means the people will eventually be controlled, and not just in Vietnam. The consequences may be worldwide... ☹



Photo by Jenni Dodini

MAKING ROOM FOR EVERYBODY

Amalia Rehman, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

As Master Gardeners we are a group of people who love to learn, we appreciate beauty and we need it in our lives. We recognize that nature holds the key to the charm in our lives and our



Photo by Melinda Nestlerode

chests expand with the sense of wonder at this life. Often, this wondrous feeling is expressed and received as love. Love has so many outlets; as we move through our lives, we come across all manifestations of love. I have been privileged to come across something new, at least for me.

I have a friend, kind and sweet and thoughtful. She invited me to stay with her for a while and I got to be a part of her family. It consists of 4 dogs, a cat and one human. That house is full of more love and caring than I have ever experienced in one household. I call it dog heaven.

I was not surprised that, when we started talking about plans for the garden, my friend said she first wanted a designated dog enrichment area. Being a staunch permaculturalist I was perplexed as to how this would fit in the plan I had in mind, but as time went on, and I began to feel a part of this menagerie, I could see this dog playground as a significant contributor to the joy of the family.

So I started researching what goes into such an enrichment park and came up with some simple ideas for those members of the family that often don't have room in our gardens, except to use it as a toilet.

Unlike my friend, I have 2 dogs that are not easy to walk. One is a Rottweiler and the other a Chow Chow. They are difficult to handle when they see other dogs and I have to be on my guard and expect to be in a tug of war with them should any other dog come around. As a result, we walk them separately, we go for relatively short walks and the Rottweiler is delegated to one of my sons. So, my dogs don't get that enrichment and stimulation from new sights and sounds and smells that is so important to keep them happy and busy and fulfilled. If you have a similar situation, for whatever reason, and dog walks are limited, you could consider implementing some of these simple ideas in your home or garden.

Think about all the senses. For dogs, the most significant is smell. And, there is also touch and sound. Incorporate into your garden smooth stone walkways that can border garden beds, and plant between the stones a variety of fragrant herbs that release their gifts when walked on. Consider creating sandy patches for digging and burying. Although, you may have to cover these at night so they don't become the neighborhood litter boxes.

We don't think of bird and animal feeders, bird baths, birdhouses or bee refuges in the garden as something for our dogs. However, if placed correctly, not only can they benefit the wildlife in our area, they can provide stimulation for our furry friends. Having wildlife in the garden is not only good for the environment, but for our own senses and the wonder of our furry family members. Even after the wildlife has moved on, our dogs can smell their tracks.

As much as we enjoy water features, our dogs enjoy them as well. They are sources of a quick drink, a cooling off spot or just to enjoy their sound. Wind chimes can also be utilized for this purpose.

We all know that there is a great variety of toys you can purchase for your furry baby. My rottweiler went through every "tough" ball imaginable, until we finally found a molded hard plastic ball that she is unable to sink her teeth into. Boy does she love that thing. But just as I did with my five children, instead of buying a thousand different toys, I would divide their toys up into different totes and rotate them. I would bring out only one tote at a time and let them play with those toys. By rotating totes, my children often got so excited to open a 'new' tote and see what was in there. It was as if they were new toys. So try that trick with your furry babies instead of getting 50 million different things that they just leave lying around on the floor for you to pick up.

Such toys can contribute to their cognitive enrichment. There are puzzle toys, K9 nose work toys or just playing hide and seek with their toys. One easy way to create a great game is to use a muffin tray, place a treat in one muffin hole and cover the holes with balls or whatever you have on hand. Let them sniff out their prize.

On hot days you can bring out a baby pool and fill it with water and they them splash and play and cool off all at the same time. You can use a board to create a ramp. You can use a bubble making machine and watch them chase after the bubbles and try

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to bite them. Even a sprinkler at the end of a hose would be a great play activity on a hot day.

These are just some of the ideas that I have come across as I start to develop the garden plan for my friend. I have only just begun to look at this aspect of the garden.

Feel free to contact me through our Master Gardener program, by telephone: 707-784-1322, or email: mgsolano@ucanr.edu, if you have any questions, comments or some ideas for me. ☘

WHAT IS A GARDEN MYTH?

Dottie Deems, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Recently, I attended a presentation given by a local nursery owner. The subject was garden myths. I had no idea how thought provoking the subject was going to be. Over a month after that presentation I'm still investigating the subject and reflecting on the advice we, as Master Gardeners, give out.

What is a garden myth? It's all those suggestions and tall tales we have heard for many years and in some cases have followed for which there is no scientific proof. Garden myths are also found in product advertisements and in the popular media. OMG, this sounds like we're getting really close to "fake news" here!

Consider the source of all the claims you hear or read. Did it come from Auntie Ida or was it published in a peer-reviewed journal? Was the information based on scientific rationale? Evidence based? Are there studies and are they valid? What evidence was provided to substantiate the claim? Was it anecdotal or based on scientific study? After all, botany is a science.

Here are a few gardening myths that you might have heard before:

Myth: To get sweeter tomatoes, add sugar to the planting hole.

Fact: That sounds interesting, but tomato plants can't absorb sugar in this way, they produce it through photosynthesis. The sugar content of a variety is predetermined in the plant's genetics.

Myth: Plant peas and potatoes on St. Patrick's Day.

Fact: How could this "fact" be true when in most of the country we haven't even passed the last frost date for the year? About half of the country is still under a blanket of snow! Check the USDA Hardiness Zone map for information that is science-based.

Myth: Add a handful of bone meal to planting holes before installing shrubs and trees.

Fact: Bone meal supplies high levels of phosphorus and calcium, elements that are rarely limited in non-agricultural soil. Phosphorus is a mineral, not a growth stimulator. High levels of phosphorus also inhibit the growth of mycorrhizal fungi. Without mycorrhizal fungi plants must put additional resources into root growth at the expense of other tissues and functions.

Master Gardeners provide home gardeners with information and answer gardening questions at farmers markets, various stores, and events. We give presentations monthly in several libraries. We have a blog, a hotline, and this quarterly newsletter. Our mission statement is "to extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California and be guided by our core values and strategic initiatives."

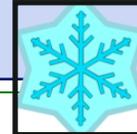
After almost twenty years of being a master gardener I must admit that just like you I have helped perpetuate some garden myths and for that I apologize. I should have realized that if it sounds too good to be true, it probably is.

With a computer at my desk and the internet at my fingertips it's much easier than it used to be to determine if information is fact or fiction. Master Gardeners don't have the science-based answer to every question neatly filed away in their gray matter. What we are trained to do is research the science-based answer.

You can research answers to your own gardening questions. Start your pursuit of garden facts at ucanr.edu and click on "Garden". You'll be amazed at what you find there. Also, the MG program is not limited to the State of California. Every state that has a land grant university has extension programs including a Master Gardener Program. Try typing in *anr*, followed by the initials of the university, then *edu*. The "*anr*" refers to agriculture & natural resources. The "*edu*" refers to a school. With just a little bit of effort you will be able to research science-based answers to your questions at any time. ☘



WINTER GARDENING GUIDE



	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
P L A N T I N G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Sow California poppy (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>) seeds for spring color ◇ Sow indoors cool-season edibles such as chard, kale, and lettuce ◇ Plant winter blooming shrubs; purchase now while in bloom to see what you are getting ◇ Harvest citrus as it ripens—taste for flavor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Plant summer bulbs such as gladiolus, cannas, ranunculus, anemone, dahlia, lily, tuberous begonia and delphinium ◇ Plant leaf crops like lettuce, cilantro, beets, carrots, chard, peas, and spinach directly in the ground ◇ Indoors, start seeds of eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. Transplant outdoors in 6 to 8 weeks ◇ Plant berries: raspberry, boysenberry, and blackberry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Almost any plant (except tropical) can be planted now. Start seeds of old-fashioned favorites such as apricot foxglove, bachelor's button, blue flax and Oriental poppies. Summer sizzlers like cosmos and zinnias also grow more vigorously from a seed start and catch up fast to nursery-started plants ◇ Plant warm season annuals like ageratum, marigold, petunia and sunflower ◇ Switch out cool-season vegetables for corn, beans, peppers and tomatoes
M A I N T E N A N C E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Prune deciduous plants while dormant to keep grapes, roses, fruit and shade trees shapely ◇ Check mulch. Add more to paths and beds for weed suppression ◇ Protect tender plants when cold nights are predicted. Water well—dry plants are more susceptible to frost damage ◇ Fertilize azaleas after bloom; cymbidiums with 1/2 strength fertilizer every week or so ◇ Collect rain water to use on your garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Pinch fuchsias through March; for every stem you pinch, you'll get 2; for every 2 you'll get 4 ◇ Fertilize: citrus and fruit trees, cane berries, roses (only after you see new growth begin) ◇ Fertilize fall planted annuals and perennials, and established trees and shrubs with an all-purpose fertilizer. Wait on azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons until after bloom ◇ Mulch exposed areas to prevent weed seeds from germinating ◇ Repot cymbidiums if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Fertilize almost everything ◇ Flowering and fruiting plants need phosphorus-rich fertilizer ◇ Green leafy plants such as lawns and lettuce require nitrogen ◇ Root plants such as potatoes, beets, and bulbs appreciate a handful of potassium. Read the labels. ◇ Once soils have dried out, give your irrigation system a tune up. Then set to water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep root growth
P R E V E N T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Control snails and slugs by eliminating hiding places, or hand pick ◇ Use a dormant spray to control over-wintering insects on deciduous plants. Control peach leaf curl with lime sulfur or fixed copper. Follow directions for proper application ◇ Spray roses with dormant oil to control over-wintering insects such as aphids, mites and scale. Thoroughly coat trunk, branches, and twigs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Snails and slugs are dormant two times a year, during the hottest part of summer and during the coldest weeks in winter. This is about the time they head out for feeding. Get out early and hand-pick ◇ Don't prune out any frost damaged growth for another month or so—the outer dead foliage may protect healthy growth beneath from further frost damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Now is the time to get a jump on insect infestations; check for signs of aphids (distorted new growth and tiny, often green or black insects) and spittle bugs (under white foam on stems). Both can be effectively sprayed off with a garden hose ◇ Handpick snails at night, or use bait—follow all directions



Information Provided by Dr. Robert Norris, UC Davis Department of Plant Sciences, 2008

	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUN	JUL	AUG	SEP	OCT	NOV	DEC
cauliflower & broccoli													
onion													
cabbage													
lettuce													
lettuce													
lettuce													
shallots & garlic													
tomato													
carrots													
carrots													
potato													
chard													
beets													
pepper & eggplant													
cucumber													
cucumber													
corn													
corn													
corn													
corn													
green bean													
green bean													
melon													
melon													
squash													
lima bean													

 preferred time to seed in a greenhouse or other protected area (e.g. coldframe, well lit window)
 preferred time to transplant
 preferred time to direct seed
 seeding
 transplanting
 Seeding and transplanting dates may vary between varieties. Please check seed package or nursery for additional information.
 Weather can modify planting and harvesting dates.

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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



**WINTER
2019**