



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Planning for Landscaping Changes (August 22, 2020)

by Anne Skinner, UCCE Master Gardener

With more time at home, I've been walking around the neighborhood for exercise. I really enjoy looking at my neighbor's yards but doing so inevitably leads to brainstorming and I start thinking of making some changes to the garden.

While Fall is the best time to plant, hot summer days are a great time to plan. Planning may not sound as exciting as seeing the finished product, but it will make the changes even nicer, and extra thinking can potentially save a lot of money.

Look for garden ideas in your neighborhood

The Central Valley generally has a Mediterranean climate, but locally we have many different micro-climates and soil types. For success with your new plantings, look at which plants and trees are thriving in your area.

If you are attracted to a particular plant not common in your area, start with a small protected spot or potted plant before investing heavily in that plant. If you see a garden that particularly appeals to you, compliment the owner, and ask about the sources of their plants and who did the work.

Visit garden centers and nurseries

Spend time walking through local nurseries for ideas, advice and recommendations for landscapers and landscape designers. Small changes to the garden can often be handled by a homeowner or gardener. If you are thinking about adding trees, large shrubs, patio or pathways, a landscape designer can save you money in the long run by aiding in plant selection, placement, and function. Trees are a big investment and choosing the right location can avoid damage from roots or tree limbs, constant leaf litter on the path, or a tree which does not survive.

Important details prior to the fun part of plant selection

Does the yard drain well currently? This would be the time to prevent standing water issues and prevent mosquito breeding areas. Do you know the location of your property lines, utility easements, electric, gas, sewer and water lines into your home? If you have a septic tank, do you know the location of the tank and leach field?

More details to consider:

- Where are the main water and gas lines connected to the home and the shut off valves?
- If you have an existing irrigation system, where are the valves and shut off valve?
- How well does it water the existing garden, or does it need updating?
- Are there restrictions on planting near the street or sidewalk, to maintain sight lines near an intersection or near a utility pole or streetlight?
- If you are planning to contract the work, obtain references and prices from more than one company, check the company is licensed, insured, and bonded.
- If equipment will be used, check the size and type of vehicles for ability to access the property and to avoid damage to underground utility lines and paved surfaces.

All of this sounds a bit tedious but rupturing a gas line or crushing a water line with heavy equipment and the resulting huge expense is not the memory you want to have of your garden renovation.

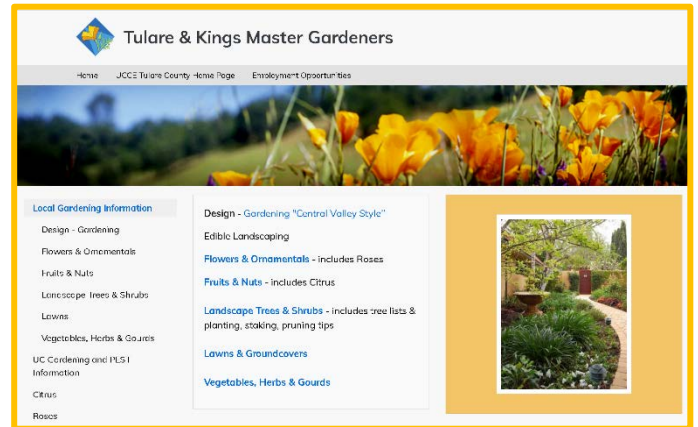
Resources for plants and trees at https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

The Master Gardener website has a wealth of information to help you plan your garden and choose plants and trees for our area.

The Newspaper Article archive has seasonal tips and plant choices, how to cope with pests and problems in the garden, information on "Designing a landscape" and many articles on specific plants for our area with their care. The plant articles are so descriptive, it becomes an 'I want one of those for my garden' moment. There is also information on toxic plants, a concern if you have small children and pets.

Under "Local Gardening" you may find the following:

- "Gardening Central Valley Style" with sustainable landscaping information.
- "Landscape trees and shrubs" has a guide to deciduous and evergreen trees, with a description, mature size, and water needs. Included are valuable tips on planting, especially location, staking and tree pruning. There is an extensive list of shrubs for our area. The flowers and ornamentals section lists flowers by their prime blooming season.
- "Vegetables, Herbs and Gourds" includes the Vegetable Planting Guide for the San Joaquin Valley. This wonderful tool lists planting and harvesting by the month for all commonly grown vegetables.



Considerations for your garden plan

Depending on your location, the Cal Fire web site www.readyforwildfire.org/, can be a home saver. Placement of trees and shrubs in relation to the home is very important. It's also good planning to have tree litter and dead leaves well away from the house and rain gutters. You will be pleased in the future if the tree provides shade, but it isn't causing you to climb the ladder yet again to clear out the rain gutters.

There are many good books and publications on garden design and landscaping. Even if you have a professional design and perform the installation of the garden, knowledge is power, and saves you money. If the plants they suggest will grow quickly and expand in width, you may end up having to remove many of them in just a couple of years due to overcrowding. The same is true of trees--and they are costly to purchase and have pruned.

Patience instead of an instant garden change is worth it.

Research and planning before starting a garden renovation leads to more pleasing results and a more personalized garden space suited to your needs. Planning will also save you money in plant materials, future pruning needs and damage to water lines, pavement, or home foundation from invasive tree roots.

In accordance to the Shelter-at-Home guidelines, the Master Gardeners have cancelled all public events at this time, but if you send us an email or leave a message on our phone lines, someone will call you back!

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325; Kings County at (559) 852-2736

Visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

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