



How Does Your Garden Grow?



News from UCCE Calaveras Master Gardeners

June 2014

From The Editor

We are sending you this e-newsletter because you signed up to receive information from us. This is a new service from Calaveras Master Gardeners. We welcome your feedback.

Happy Gardening!

Odile Morrison
President, Calaveras Master Gardeners

To give feedback or to unsubscribe:
calmastergardener@gmail.com

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Killing Your Lawn (On Purpose)

By Michele Rugo, *University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener for Calaveras County*. *A version of this article appeared in the Calaveras Enterprise on 30 May 2014.*

What is this love affair we have with our lawns? Part of every weekend is spent mowing them while others pay a landscaping service to do the chore. We weed and edge and blow. We add chemicals that pollute our water. The dandelions and other weeds come back stronger than before. And still our lawns require more of our time and money – often a lot more. Enormous amounts of water are used to irrigate our lawns. And because the grass is often severely compacted, many lawns act like paved driveways from which a lot of water simply runs off. Even when properly maintained, our lawns' root systems are relatively shallow. Plants with deeper root systems contribute to healthier soil. And the healthier the soil, the more water it can absorb in the first place.

[Read on...](#)

Open Garden & Plant Sale - June 28th

The Calaveras County Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden will be open on Saturday, June 28th from 10AM – 2PM. A variety of ornamental, native and vegetable plants will be offered for sale from 10AM – 12PM. The Garden is located at the County Government Center, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas.

[More information](#)

Upcoming Events

[Online Calendar](#)

[Download PDF](#)

Need Advice?

Master Gardener Helpline
209 754 2880

[Ask a Question](#)

Visit Us!

Our Demonstration Garden at 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas, is open 10-2 on the 4th Saturday each month from Feb - Nov.

Garden To Do List for June

By Teresa Spence, *University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Calaveras County.*

- ❑ Now is a good time to cage your tomato plants. Caging the plants will help them produce more fruit than just staking them. Make sure the cage material you use has space between the wires that is big enough for you to reach in to harvest the tomatoes.
- ❑ Sweet pepper plants prefer a little shade in the heat of the day. Stake up a shade cloth on the south side of the plant. Pinch off some of the blooms especially in the "v" between the branches to prevent the branches from breaking and to help the plant set bigger peppers.
- ❑ Water cucumbers, melons and tomatoes deeply about every 5 to 7 days. Mulch around these plants to conserve moisture and to keep the roots cool.
- ❑ Control earwigs by leaving out moistened rolled up newspaper. Earwigs will find this to be a cozy place to be during the day. Throw the paper and the earwigs, away in the morning.
- ❑ To prevent ants and other insects from crawling up fruit trees, spread a band of Tanglefoot on the trunk.
- ❑ Hand pick stinkbugs and tomato horn worms and drown them in water.
- ❑ As temperatures rise it is important to irrigate wisely: use drip irrigation wherever possible and check emitters and sprinklers for clogs or damage.
- ❑ Water early in the morning to minimize evaporation; water deeply and less often to promote strong and deep roots.
- ❑ Avoid wetting foliage, especially on cucumbers, squash and melons; this will reduce the chance that they will develop powdery mildew and other fungal diseases.

Killing Your Lawn

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If you live on a cul-de-sac where nearly every house boasts a well-tended front lawn, giving up grass might be seen as subversive. But you can gradually shift toward a front yard that's more garden than lawn by creating deep, curved planting beds along the front and sides of your home. (Or be stealthy and begin with the back.) Plants with drip irrigation use less water and do so more efficiently. Shrubs such as red osier dogwood, common spicebush and viburnum can be planted in mulch outside of a home office or kitchen window. Add a birdbath and wildlife will bring a smile and help distract you from life's more mundane chores.

I used to love my lawn. It was a place for the dogs to frolic and feel that lovely cool grass between my toes with an afternoon glass of tea. I justified the expense because we have well water from natural springs. But the drought of the past few years, the long range forecast of drier ones yet to come and the harsh reality that California as a whole continues to draw down its aquifer has helped me rethink and focus on community. A grass-free lawn also helps create defensible space in the event of fire. As an added bonus, it removes a lot of pollen for allergy sufferers.

Should your imagination be running toward mulched beds with native plants, more of a xeriscape or just plain saving on your water bill, here are some tried and true methods to kill your lawn - on purpose. (If you're a renter or belong to an HOA, naturally check with your landlord or association first. You might let your neighbors in on what you're planning as well.)

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Killing Your Lawn

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Dig it out

You could rent a turf cutter for the weekend and physically rip out your lawn. But aside from the obvious physical labor, grass can be very difficult to kill or contain. Be aware you're bound to miss a few roots that will find their way back with adequate sun and rain. Digging it out with a cutter or shovel works fine for smaller areas but don't rototill. Rototilling destroys the healthy soil life and plants more grass in the process.

Poison it

You could spray your entire lawn with a non-selective herbicide like glyphosate or a grass herbicide such as fluazifop and kill it chemically, but that may also poison whatever you're immediately wanting to plant over it. The goal here is to build healthy soil so why drench it with something toxic? When using herbicides be sure to read and follow the label.

Pickle it

If you prefer not to use a "traditional" chemical, you might want to consider an organic material such as vinegar. Vinegar or acetic acid has been shown to be effective as a contact herbicide. Like other herbicides, acetic acid can be purchased as an herbicide to kill weeds and other unwanted plants. Saturate the grass with it on a hot day, avoiding plants you want to keep. (The neighbors will likely think you're canning.) Wait 3-4 days and then dig it up.

Solarize it

Easy to do but initially aesthetically unattractive. Cut your lawn very short, water thoroughly and cover with clear plastic sheeting that is weighed down with rocks. Don't use black cloth as it will keep the light out, necessary to kill the roots. It'll take about six weeks for the sun to do its work.

Smother it

Sheet mulching is a great way to go both organically and expense-wise. Cover your lawn with five to six layers of cardboard or newspaper. Add 4-6 inches of mulch on top and water thoroughly. Wait two months. You can then dig through it and plant whatever your heart desires, cardboard and all. New plants will be able to send their roots through the decomposing cardboard as deeply as they need. This method also leaves the dead grass behind for the earthworms to enjoy, adding to the overall health of the soil.

Open Garden June 28

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In June we will discover "Great Greens and Edible Weeds". Even in the dog days of summer you can enjoy refreshing and healthy salads created from your garden and yard. Master Gardeners will also be available to provide answers to home gardening questions, including plant and pest problems.

Got Pests?

Master Gardeners use UC research to diagnose and solve pest problems in home gardens. You can access this information yourself on the UC Integrated Pest Management website at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/index.html>

Help is also available on our Master Gardener Helpline at (209) 754 2880 or visit our Help Desk, open Wednesdays from 10 to noon at the Cooperative Extension Office, 891 Mountain Ranch Road, San Andreas, CA 95249.