



How Does Your Garden Grow?



News from UCCE Calaveras Master Gardeners

April 2015

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From The Editor

Spring is here! Time for our amazing plant sales. Details at the bottom of this page. We have lots of plants suited to gardening in Calaveras County, coupled with expert advice from Master Gardeners.

This issue of the newsletter features timely advice on how to start a compost pile. Just one of the many tasks gardeners are enjoying as we prepare for summer planting. I'm heading back to my garden right now.

Happy Gardening!
Odile Morrison
Newsletter Editor

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How to Start a Compost Pile

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

Spring is a good time to start a compost pile; it is one of many ways to be earth friendly. Food scraps and yard waste make up 20 to 30% of the waste that is put into landfills. Much of this waste can be used in making "gardeners black gold".

Compost improves the structure, texture and fertility of soil, and it can save money by eliminating the need for commercially produced compost or chemical fertilizers.

Starting a compost pile is easy. Select a convenient, dry shady or partly shady area near a source of water.



The ideal size for a compost pile is at least 3 feet wide, 3 feet tall and 3 feet deep. This size will keep the compost warm and the organisms healthy. It can be bigger but it may be easier to manage if it is kept to the smaller size. Once the size has been achieved, stop adding materials to this pile and start another one. [Read More](#)

Next Meeting

19 May, 2015 at the Demonstration Garden, San Andreas Govt. Center. Presenter Joel Metzger of CCWD at 11am. Public Welcome!

Spring Plant Sale

April 24 - 3 - 5.30pm
April 25 - 10am to 12.30pm

Next Open Garden 25 April

10am to 2pm
Topic: Gardening at Different Elevations
[More information](#)

Garden To Do List for April

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

- Fertilize perennials that are showing growth after winter dormancy.
- Leave grass clipping on the lawn; they break down quickly and feed nutrients back into the soil.
- Continue weeding if the soil is moist and weeds are still germinating.
- Start a compost pile. See [How to Start a Compost Pile](#) on front page.

Easter Bunny Visits the Garden

We had a surprise visitor this month. This type of bunny is always welcome at the garden!



Plant of the Month: Japanese Maple

The "Plant of the Month" for April is the Japanese Maple. When you talk about maples, you are talking about many different cultivars ranging from large and midsize shade trees, smaller trees, and dainty, picturesque shrub trees. The Japanese Maple, *Acer palmatum*, grows slowly to 20 feet and puts on a wonderful display of color in the fall. It is a deciduous plant with differing types of bark, leaves and colors that likes to grow in well drained soil and does best when not over fertilized. Some grow in sun and some in shade; many can be grown in containers. We have a variety of these beautiful plants available for sale at very reasonable prices at the Master Gardener Plant Sales in April at our demonstration garden on Mountain Ranch Road adjacent to the Government Center in San Andreas.

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Next Open Garden 25 April 2015

Each month Maggi Blood sends a press release to local newspapers. This article is based on the release for April.

The Calaveras County Master Gardeners' Demonstration Garden will be open on Saturday, April 25 from 10AM – 2PM.

This Saturday April 25th, we will consider the role location plays in growing a healthy landscape. Calaveras county varies in climate and topography giving all of us challenges and opportunities.

Experienced gardeners will be available to discuss specific and general techniques for success.

The Plant Sale from 10am to 12.30pm will feature Japanese Maples.

Master Gardeners will answer home gardening questions as well as assist in identifying and diagnosing plant and pest problems. They can also provide key tips on how to navigate the vast resources available to you from the University of California. When the garden is not open, home gardening assistance is offered by Master Gardeners through the help line at: 209-754-2880. The public may leave a message regarding the problem and a Master Gardener will return the call.



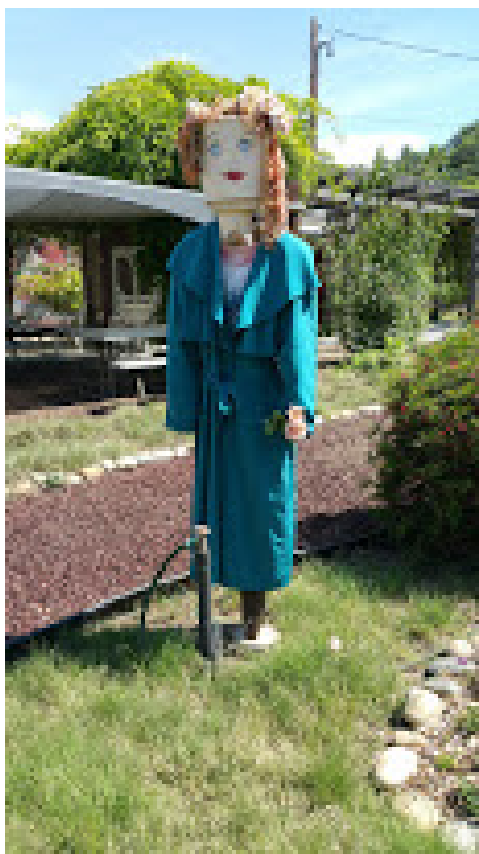
Miss Nancy Says "Thank You"

Some of you may not know but Miss Nancy is named

...How to Start a Compost Pile

for Nancy Norris who helped build the Children's Garden 9 years ago. She and her husband built the lady scarecrow and she named her "Miss Fancy." Upon Nancy's death Bev Eckland requested the name be changed to "Miss Nancy."

Miss Nancy is quite the "fashion plate" with her new extensive wardrobe! Thanks to MaryBeth Leroy, Candace Raupach, Michelle Rugo, and Bev Eckland she has a snappy red raincoat, hat and scarf for winter, a beautiful teal coat for spring, and several outfits for summer including a floral dress and hat from "across the pond". I think Nancy would be proud and happy.



Garden Events

April

24 Spring Plant Sale 3pm - 5.30pm
25 Spring Plant Sale 10am - 12.30pm
25 Open Garden 10am - 2pm "Gardening in Calaveras County"

May

23 Open Garden 10am - 2pm "Favorite Tomatoes"
30 Kids Day 10am - noon

For all events see the [online calendar](#) or [download a PDF version](#)

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There are many ingredients that can be put into a compost pile, but avoid adding too much of one variety at the same time. Three parts brown to one part green is the ideal ratio.

Brown materials such as shredded paper, dried leaves and seedless straw will add carbon; green materials such as fresh grass clippings, soft garden prunings and food scraps like vegetable peelings and coffee grounds will add nitrogen.

When starting a compost pile it is best to layer the materials thinly and uniformly, then add a thin layer of garden soil. Maintaining a good balance of materials and never skipping a layer will make for a successful base for the compost pile. It is only necessary to layer when making a new pile. Once the pile is active and warm, well chopped materials can be buried in the center of the pile or incorporated when turning the pile.

Keep the pile moist but not wet and turn it from the outside to the center every couple of weeks. Steam may rise from the pile when you turn it; that is a sign the pile is heating up and decomposing. In a few weeks you will begin to see black crumbly good smelling compost. Earthworms may also be taking up residence. The "gardener's black gold" is now ready to use. Screen out particles that have not decomposed and put them in your new pile.

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