

## Garden Makeover

Sept 27, 2016

Q & A:

Q: My garden needs a makeover. When we had our house built we had it professionally landscaped but that was 15 years ago, and you couldn't tell that now. I am the kind of gardener that gets a new plant and then walks around the yard until I find a bare spot, and that's its new home. After four years of drought my yard is looking sad. How do I decide what plants to keep and which to remove or do I just take everything out and start over?

A: I don't think you have to start over as you most likely have good structure to your garden if you had a professional landscape plan done. Knowing that we may have another year of drought next year, it should be easy to tell which plants are the keepers and which ones are struggling and need to go. This is not our first drought in California and it won't be our last, so why not have a garden that will look good in the bad years and great in the rainy years.

How do you start? Decide what plants give you the most joy in your garden with the least amount of work and water and keep them. Remove the plants that are poor performers. Keep in mind that just because you are removing a plant, it doesn't mean another one needs to go in its place! A little space around your plants can be a good thing.

If you do want to replace plants look for plants that do well in our climate. The Shasta College and California Native Plant Society Plant sale on Oct. 8<sup>th</sup> or the McConnell Arboretum Nursery are good places to find a large selection of drought tolerant plants. Another great place look for ideas on good performing plants is the "All-Stars" list. What is an "All-Star"? According to the UC Davis arboretum site "The horticultural staff of the UC Davis Arboretum have identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested in the Arboretum, are easy to grow, don't need a lot of water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants and support native birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California." The All-Stars website [http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum\\_all\\_stars.aspx](http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx) has a database to help you find the right plants for your garden. The All-Stars site also gives you a list of

nurseries that sell them and the dates of the plant sales at UC Davis. Other sources for great water-wise plants are local nurseries and your gardening friends