

## Planting Season Is Here

By Carolee James

It is officially fall, the best gardening season of all. We might get some early rains, but the soil is still warm, making it the right time to plant natives. Many California trees, shrubs and perennials begin their growing season at this time of the year, building up strength to endure next summer's dry heat.

And it's not just California natives—even non-native, exotic plants such as landscape trees, shrubs and winter vegetables can benefit. They also utilize the warm soils and the extended time to develop strong roots during the relatively mild temperatures of our Sierra Nevada foothill winters. Cool-season vegetables that cannot tolerate the blazing summer heat thrive in cooler temperatures, some even withstanding snowfalls.

Choosing the right plants for your garden can be a challenging task. To help you with your fall gardening plans, there are two plant sales in Tuolumne County coming up during the month of October.

The first is the Master Gardener plant sale at their demonstration garden Open Garden Day on October 7. Plants—native and exotic—grown by Master Gardeners will be available at very reasonable prices. Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer your gardening questions and offer advice about the appropriate variety to plant. The demonstration garden is located on the campus of Dario Cassina High School at 251 South Barretta Street in Sonora, CA. The garden is open on Saturday, October 7, from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Be sure to mark your calendars for the California Native Plant Society's Fall Native Plant sale on Saturday, October 21, from 9 a.m. until noon. The plant sale will be located at Rocca Park, Main Street, Jamestown. There will be many different species of shrubs and perennials that need minimal water, once established, during our hot summer months. At the sale, there are always many knowledgeable people to answer your questions and help you choose the appropriate plant for your location.

Maybe your fall gardening plans include enhancing your garden to benefit wildlife, especially resident and migratory birds. For example, if you are looking for plants that produce berries that bluebirds love, look at the upcoming sales for: hollyleaf cherry, Sierra current, wild grape, western dogwood, Oregon grape, snowberry, manzanitas, and coffeeberry.

Many of our readers live above two thousand feet and are always looking for plants that do well in higher elevations. Trees that do well are: giant sequoia, incense cedar and big-leaf maple. (Note: both the giant sequoia and big-leaf maple require adequate water throughout the year, a consideration after our experience with drought-induced die-off.)

Shrubs to consider for higher elevations include: fuchsia-flowering current, Matilija poppy, western spicebush and various hybrids of Sonoma sage. And consider perennials for high country gardens: California fuchsia, coral bells, western columbine, milkweed, and for ground

covers, wild ginger and woodland strawberry. Ferns grow very nicely in higher elevations so consider western sword fern and deer fern.

Many plants mentioned for high country gardening do very nicely at lower elevations, as well. One of my favorites is California fuchsia; hummingbirds love the red tubular flowers. Other lower-elevation plants are: desert willow (a small tree with tubular burgundy flowers, another hummer delight), flannel bush (large shrub with yellow/golden flowers—very drought tolerant and deer resistant), and many Ceanothus (wild lilac) species, from ground covers to large shrubs.

Eriogonum umbellatum, ‘Shasta Sulfur’ buckwheat, has beautiful yellow flowers and is a bee magnet. If you pair the yellow buckwheat with Penstemon heterophyllus ‘Margaret BOP’ with its blue/violet flowers, what a stunning combination you will have in your garden!

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