

Valentine's Day

By Joan Bergsund

Each year on February 14th we honor our loved ones with a gift, flowers, unexpected act of kindness or a special card, hand-lettered or carefully chosen. Everyone qualifies—young and old lovers, moms and dads, kids, special friends, and all combinations thereof. This is also a time to plan your own garden for spring and summer.

This year, what about offering a Valentine's gift to some of the inhabitants who share your outdoor space? As our thoughts turn to spring and love, consider participating in the Great Backyard Bird Count to assist in gathering information about some of our favorite fellow creatures. In 2019, it will be held from February 15 – 18, 2019. For more information and to learn how to participate in this global event, go to www.birdcount.org

If you're thinking of a gift for a fellow human being, consider a couple of ideas for this, or next year. Our nurseries, florists and markets have bouquets ready-to-go. Or you can create a gift of your own. Plant a container with interesting plants and foliage and give it as a gift.

Hold on...did I say plant a container? For a container plant in your own garden you may have to wait until spring when all danger of frost has subsided. Check the garage for an old pot or interesting container not in use. Add soil – planters mix from the nursery is best. Then plant a combination of leaf textures and colorful annuals, ground covers or perennials. Just be certain they all have the same water and sun requirements. If you're a novice, ask the nursery staff for advice.

Here's another idea. This time of year look for ornamental quince, blueberry, pear or forsythia (from your own garden preferably, or a neighbor's, with permission). Cut long branches and bring them indoors. Smash the thick woody stems with a hammer for maximum water intake. Place them in a tall vase and watch spring's beauty unfold as the tight bud's bloom in the warmth of your home or give it as a gift to a friend or loved one.

February is also a good time to survey your garden and plan for the oncoming year. Make decisions about what comes out and what stays in. Sit down with your honey, your garden books, seed catalogs and make a plan. What will you try to achieve? Play space for the kids? Pretty flowers to gaze upon? Herbs for the cook? Whatever you decide, there's local advice available.

To help you with the task of planning and planting your spring garden, UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne County are collaborating with FoCuS (Foothill Collaborative for Sustainability) in the 11th annual Seed Share on Saturday, February 23rd, from 10 – 3. This year, it will be held in a new, easily-accessible location at the Tuolumne County Senior Center at 540 Greenley Road in Sonora. A variety of seeds will be available for sale, including cool and warm season vegetables, heirloom vegetables, herbs and flowers. Cost is 10 packets of seeds for a \$10 donation; either checks or cash are accepted. There will be speakers on various topics of interest from “greenhouses and garden structures,” to seed starting, spring and summer flowers and permaculture. There will also be baked goods for purchase, a master gardener information table, and kids' activities.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY!!!

Joan Bergsund is a former University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County.

UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties can answer home gardening questions. Call 209-533-5912 or go to: <http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7269> to fill out our easy-to-use problem questionnaire. Check out our website at: http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners/ You can also find us on Facebook.