



## April 2017 Garden Tips

by Thea Fiskin, UCCE Master Gardener

This is the month we can really get out in the garden and plant everything with no worries about frost. The soil is warming up, so we can plant most anything we want. The nurseries are full of new stock to tempt us. This is the time to plan for summer color, so get to work!

### WHAT TO PLANT

**Annuals** – Ageratum, alyssum, blanket flower, cleome, cockscomb, coleus, cosmos, impatiens, lobelia, marigolds, petunias, salvias, sunflowers and zinnias. Avoid planting snapdragons, pansies or primroses or any other cool season annual as their season is over. They are “goners” as soon as the summer heat arrives. My personal favorite is star zinnias. They bloom from spring through fall and never need deadheading-- the perfect low maintenance summer annual.

**Bulbs** – Spring bulbs to plant now are caladium, callas, cannas, dahlia, gladiolus and tuberose. Stagger the planting of gladiolus over several weeks to lengthen the bloom period. Caladiums are another favorite; if you can't find the bulbs in nurseries, try looking online. They are awesome to grow in those shady spots.

**Perennials** – Begonias, candytuft, coneflowers, coral bells, coreopsis, daisies, geraniums, heliotropes, hollyhock, lantanas, salvias, statice, verbenas and wallflowers do well in our area. Salvias grow especially well here; they are drought tolerant and most bloom all summer long.

**Herbs** – Finally, time to plant basil, as well as beebalm, cilantro, chives, parsley, lavender, oregano, sage and thyme. You don't have to have a dedicated herb garden- just mingle a few herbs among your rose plants or other flower beds. Herbs don't really belong in little pots either and do much better in the ground. There is always an exception, however; plant mint in a pot with a saucer to prevent it from taking over your garden.



**Houseplants** – Rotate your houseplants, so they receive sunlight on all sides. Pinch tips of foliage to stimulate new growth and keep plants full, rather than long and leggy. To keep them healthy, remove any spent flowers, dead or yellowing leaves. With the exception of African violets (and any other plants with “hairy leaves”) wipe leaves with a damp cloth or give them a shower under the faucet to remove dust. Fertilize with a houseplant food or a time release fertilizer.

**Vegetables** – In early April there is still time to plant seeds of beets, lettuce and radishes. In late April after the soil has had time to warm up, plant the heat loving vegetables such as beans, corn, cucumber, eggplant, melons, okra, peppers, summer squash and tomatoes.

## Garden Chores -

- Fertilize lawns, roses, shrubs and trees, just about everything, with a balanced fertilizer.
- Use acid fertilizer on azaleas, gardenias and rhododendrons after they flower.
- When spring bulbs finish flowering, snip off old blooms and fertilize. Do not trim or braid foliage leaves—they are taking up nutrients for next year's flowers. Trim after they turn yellow.
- Pinch annuals and perennials back for dense growth and more blooms.
- If citrus leaves are puny or showing dark green veins with pale middles, then spray them with a liquid cleated iron/zinc mixture. This also works on gardenias, too.
- Prune spring flowering shrubs when they finish blooming: azaleas, camellias, forsythia, lilacs and flowering quince.

## Critter Control -

- Aphids love tender new leaf growth. Spray aphids off with a hose, or use an insecticidal soap.
- Eliminate mosquito breeding sites. Drain excess water from gutters, buckets and plant containers.
- Handpick snails and slugs. They are easier to find in the early morning or early evening.
- Do not spray if beneficial insects such as lady beetles are present.
- Encourage beneficial insects by planting alyssum, black-eyed Susan, cosmos, dill, fennel, feverfew, fleabane and yarrow.
- Add a birdhouse or birdbath to encourage birds in the garden. Birds devour insects that feast on your plants.



## Where can the UCCE Master Gardeners be found this month?

- Tulare Garden Festival: Sat., April 1, 10 am - 2 pm. Tulare City Library, 475 N. "M" St., Tulare
- City of Visalia Earth Day: Sat., April 22. Mineral King Ave., downtown Visalia
- Visit us at the Visalia Farmers Market at the Sear's Parking lot on Mooney on each Saturday. On the 2<sup>nd</sup> Saturday of the month, we will be presenting ongoing talks: April 8 - Herbs; May 12 - Citrus.

We love to talk plants. Come ask us your gardening questions!

March 25, 2017