



August 2018 Garden Tips

by Peyton Ellas, UC Master Gardener

Time to go outside and celebrate with your plants: 'We did it! We survived the hottest and driest month of the year!' Did all of your plants survive? Did you notice how some of your plants thrived in the heat? Whether in the edible garden or in our ornamental planting beds, some plants love, and even rely on, hot days to flower, fruit, seed or grow. If you don't have any of these in your garden, read on and start planning for autumn.



PLANTING: In the edible garden, we begin to plant from seed fall vegetables like Asian greens and kale, beets, chard, broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, lettuce, green onions, peas, radish and turnips. You can also plant seed potatoes. Ever try growing parsnips? This root vegetable looks just like a giant white carrot, and is a Christmas tradition in many cultures. It's a slightly bitter vegetable, similar to turnips, which you can also plant now. Boiled parsnips can be mashed and prepared in place of potatoes, or roasted along with beets and carrots for a terrific autumn or winter side dish.



In the ornamental garden, we plan in August for autumn planting. It's not that you can't plant this month, it's just that anything you plant will need to be watched and babied in order to avoid over- or underwatering. Also, soil temperatures are often too high to support rapid root growth for many plants. Exceptions are tubers, corms and bulbs like Iris, autumn Crocus, and Amaryllis. You can also plant milkweed (*Asclepias*) and succulents. Notice blank spots in the garden? Did anything die last month? Do you have enough summer interest? Perennials and shrubs that bloom in the heat include the many varieties of autumn sage (*Salvia greggii*), Lantana, Verbena, California goldenrod (*Solidago californica*), California fuchsia (*Epilobium californica* and various cultivars), and some of the penstemons like 'Rock,' 'Desert,' and 'Firecracker.' Flowers of native buckwheat (*Eriogonum*) start to turn from white, pink or yellow to rust-colored, which makes a nice autumn accent.



MAINTAINING: Support heavy, fruit-laden tree branches. Push mulch away from trunks, and pick up any fallen fruit. Many plants appreciate being hosed off once or twice in mid and late summer to wash off dust and discourage spider mites. Prune apricot, oleander and olive trees now instead of winter if you live on the valley floor, in order to reduce the danger of disease. Rejuvenate your spring and summer-blooming perennials by removing faded blooms and leggy growth. Remember to keep harvesting your summer veggies. If insects are a big problem on your edible annuals, consider removing plants rather than continue to use insecticides. Sometimes breaking a life cycle one year will result in fewer pests the next year. Don't be afraid to leave a bed

or two fallow for a few months, but cover with cardboard or remove weeds as they germinate. Choose a nice cool morning or evening, and get some garden therapy and a sense of productivity by digging out those pesky perennial and summer annual weeds before they flower. If you are in the process of letting your lawn die to replace it in the fall, mow it short and control opportunistic weeds.

CONSERVING: It's sometimes tempting in summer to water, water, water. Even in a non-drought year, we should think of water as a precious resource and maintain and improve efficiencies. Follow your water district guidelines. Try not to water in the heat of the day, especially when it's windy, to reduce evaporation. Consider allowing your native and Mediterranean-climate plants to go partially dormant, which extends their lives and is very natural to them. You can do this by not over-watering them. Many mature shrubs, regardless of the species origin, need less water than you probably are giving them. We should water enough to keep plants healthy, but over-watering increases waste through run off and encourages disease and pest problems.

While you are planning for autumn, notice if you have abundant birds, butterflies, moths, native bees and wasps, and yes, even spiders, in your yard. If not, plan to bolster their presence by allowing at least one small, less-groomed area, and reducing pesticide use. Add pollinator favorites like yarrow, sage, buckwheat, Lantana, butterfly bush and, of course, native California milkweed.

Where can the UCCE Master Gardeners be found this month?

- Visit us at the Visalia Farmers Market at the Sear's Parking lot on Mooney on each Saturday. On the 2nd Saturday of the month, we will be presenting ongoing talks.
- Porterville Farmer's Market at Sierra View Hospital, Parking Lot, 465 W Putnam Ave., Porterville, -- 8 am-11am each Tuesday in June

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

For answers to all your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 684-3325, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 and 11:30 am; or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m; or visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions: http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

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