



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Spend Some Time in the Garden (September 17, 2022)

by Anne Skinner, Tulare/Kings Counties Master Gardener

Our gardens change more than you would expect over the course of the day. There are many things to enjoy which you might be missing- some flowers only open with a certain amount of light, the bees might not be active visiting flowers until the morning is warmer. It's an opportunity to see which flowers and plants the birds are using for food sources and shelter. Many birds primarily eat insects, and most need some worms for their young. Since they will help with pest control, it's nice to plan a garden that's inviting for our feathered friends.

Observing the plants at different times of day can detect problems while they are easier to remedy.

Check for pests in the early morning and as the evening cools



I found four tomato hornworms munching on the jalapeno peppers this summer. Apparently, this pest is not common in peppers, but there they were, eating leaves and sampling the developing peppers. I hand-picked them from the plants, but they certainly would have done more damage if I hadn't discovered them. Hornworms hide out in the leaves after hatching from eggs laid on the underside of the leaves by the sphinx moth.

Another evening-night critter is the earwig. They are especially attracted to young seedlings and will chew the whole top off of the developing plant. They can be trapped by placing a short can, such as from tuna, out in the garden and fill it about halfway with any cooking oil. They will be trapped in the oil while investigating the can. Another method is a rolled up newspaper or small board dampened and left in the garden. In the morning the earwigs will be hiding underneath and can be shaken into a bucket of soapy water.

In the early morning, check rose buds for tobacco worms which will chew up the center of the bud, depriving you of a lovely bloom. The worms spend most of their time inside the bud, but a distorted bud with a tiny worm entry hole is their signature. Cut off the bud and dispose of it.

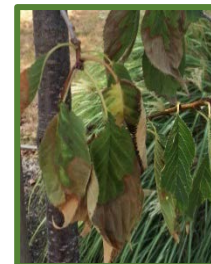
Check for hazards and potential pest issues near the house

As a safety measure, it's wise to check for dead leaves piling up against the house. In addition to providing nesting places for mice, rats and insects, they can be a fire hazard. Also check for tree branches close to the house, which can cause damage to the roof and also provide access for critters and insects.

Check trees for broken branches, especially after a windy day. Look also at large trees for potentially hazardous limbs near walkways or your home. For a tree such as a Valley Oak, having it assessed by a certified arborist is wise. Tree stakes should provide support for a young tree, but still allow for some movement with the wind. The small stake in the nursery container should be removed when the tree is planted and replaced with a cushioned support system. On the Master Gardener web site, the section on trees demonstrates correct planting, staking and pruning of trees.

Checking the irrigation system can't be stressed too often

Any newly planted trees or shrubs need close monitoring of their water needs. Check for water stress symptoms, such as wilting, change in leaf color or dropped leaves. In addition, run the irrigation lines manually at least monthly and check at the root zone with a moisture meter. Perennial plants and grasses do best with a deep watering less frequently. A soaker hose delivers water without evaporation loss into the air, and attached to a hose-end timer can be left for a period of time to deeply water. Established native plants do well with a soaker hose watering at 2-4 week intervals--depending on the air temperature. Watering a small amount each day encourages shallow rooting and isn't the best use of water with drought restricted watering schedules. Lawn grasses benefit from setting the mower blades as high as possible during the summer months. The taller grass blades protect the roots from the sun and keep the soil cooler, while shading out weed seeds which would compete with the grass for water.



If you notice wilted leaves on a plant or shrub after a hot day, check the plant again in the morning and test the soil with a moisture meter. The symptoms of overwatering can mimic dryness. Also it may have been a particularly hot and windy day, causing more

transpiration from the leaves than the plant could replace at that time. If it's then a cool evening, the plant has a chance to catch up and may look fine the next morning.

Check the depth of mulch in the garden

With time, the woody carbon in mulch will break down. Having at least 3 inches of mulch keeps the roots cooler and reduces evaporation from the soil. If you have a garden area left unplanted in summer, cover the exposed soil with mulch, compost, or grass clippings. The healthy soil micro-organisms need protection from the relentless summer sun and heat. If the area is a vegetable garden, only use mulch or grass clippings which have not been treated with chemicals. Herbicides used for lawn weeds can persist in the grass clippings and be taken up into vegetable plants.

Enjoy your garden at different times of day and keep it healthy

The garden can look very different in the early morning or evening light. After planning and planting, you don't want to miss out on an opportunity to see different aspects of your work. Note which plants attract hummingbirds, wrens, butterflies and bees and plan for the future. The jalapeno peppers rescued from my hornworm invasion have new leaves sprouting and more peppers, so I'm glad I took that evening walk. The Master Gardener web site has a wealth of information for Integrated Pest Management solutions and advice on all aspects of gardening.

Hopefully, the brutal heat of summer is gone and we'll all be able to enjoy our gardens more!

The Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions at a few select locations in the next few months!

Visalia Farmer's Market - 1st & 3rd Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears)

Hanford Farmer's Market - 4th Thursday, 5:30-9:30 pm, 219 W. Lacey Blvd

Ace Hardware, Visalia - 1st Sat./every month, 10 am-1 pm

Luis Nursery, Visalia - 2nd Sat./every month, 10 am-2 pm

Questions? Call us:

Call us: Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

Kings County: (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m

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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