



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## Helpful Garden Tips for January 2023 (December 31, 2022)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

Happy New Year! Hopefully, this is a month of continuing snow, rain, fog, and misty mornings. That's just what our climate-adapted gardens want. Although growth slows down in the cold soils of winter, some growth continues, often only underground. Our winter and early-spring blooming shrubs, bulbs, and perennials love frosty damp weather. And what moisture is not used can be stored deep in the soil for later use. Use this month to plan the year's garden goals. Winter is the season of assessing "the bones," or structure, of the garden. If your garden lacks flow, focus, or balance, this is a good month to acknowledge that. You don't have to make changes just yet, or even know exactly what to do, but just assess. On the other hand, if your landscape has a good structure, January can be a beautiful month to explore and enjoy the winter garden.



**PLANTING:** Although we can plant year-round in Tulare and Kings Counties, we usually delay most planting until the (relatively) warmer days of mid to late February. The exception is bare-root planting. Here are some tips:

- Bare-root fruit trees are now available. Check their pollination requirements; not all fruit trees are self-fertile, and some will require a cross-pollinator. Notice the number of chill hours required. Our winters average 700-800 chilling hours.
- Bare root roses-- Hybrid teas, floribundas, climbers, miniatures, and shrubs are available. All do very well in the San Joaquin Valley.
- Bare root berries and grapes-- Plant grape vines, cane boysenberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries.

You can also plant beets, carrots, leek, lettuce, onion, parsley, radish, seed potatoes, onions, peas, radish, spinach, artichokes, and asparagus directly in the garden this month. Begin sowing seeds for summer annuals and vegetables like tomatoes and peppers in a protected location where you can keep the seedlings warm and where they will receive enough light. I might also get in the last sowing of wildflower seeds in a weed-free area. Wildflower seeds love my gravel driveway, so I try to allow volunteers along the edges and still have a space for the vehicles.



**MAINTAINING:** We have less to do in January, but there are a couple of chores that are perfect for doing this month. One of them is spraying roses, deciduous flowering trees, and deciduous fruit trees with winter horticultural oil to smother overwintering insects like spider mites, scales, mealy bugs, and peach twig borers. Spray the branches, crotches, trunk, and the ground beneath the tree's drip line. Hold off spraying if rain is forecast or if the temperature is below 45 degrees. Never spray oil on walnut trees. If you didn't spray your peach or nectarine tree for peach leaf curl in November or December, spray now with a copper-based or synthetic fungicide. You don't have to apply horticultural oil if you are lucky enough not to have these specific pests, but if you've had a problem every spring, summer, or fall, be proactive now and keep your trees and roses healthier year-round.

The other main chore of January is pruning deciduous trees, shrubs, and roses. Keep pruners & loppers sharp. Sterilize the pruners or loppers in between plants. Use a 10% bleach solution or white vinegar. Remove all broken, diseased, or crossing branches first. Two basic cutting techniques are used in general pruning: thinning and heading. Thinning cuts remove entire branches, resulting in a more natural look. Thinning cuts are also used to allow more air circulation and light into the interior of the tree and are the cuts to make first. You might want to take a break midway through and step back to examine the tree from a short distance. You want to end up with a tree that looks balanced and well-structured. Heading cuts shorten branches and should only be used on small branches. Use heading cuts judiciously to shorten over-long branches. You can take off about a quarter of the previous season's growth on these newer, smaller branches if you want to keep the tree smaller. Make sure to cut back to an outward-facing bud to direct new growth away from the interior of the tree. Prune from the bottom up and from the inside of the plant to the outside. Don't be too nervous about it. Healthy trees will recover and re-grow.

Apply pre-emergent herbicide for warm-season weeds. Read and follow the package directions carefully. If you don't choose to use chemical weed control, lightly till your young seedlings' weeds frequently.

Monitor or turn off your irrigation controller if you haven't already. Deep water if we have an extended dry period but don't waste water and all the energy it takes for the water to get to the sprinkler or drip emitter if we don't need it.

## CONSERVING:

Another winter job is to make new bee nesting boxes or repair older ones as needed. Often our older ones have filled tubes, meaning they are "in use." We also check to make sure spiders or earwigs aren't hanging out nearby, waiting to eat the bee larvae inside the tubes. To learn more about this great way to support solitary nesting native bees, visit the [xerxes.org](http://xerxes.org) website.



I love a good foggy day for chipping some of the brush we've been collecting all year on our rural property. Although we leave brush piles for wildlife, some branches, including the Christmas tree, are great replenishment mulch for our planting beds. Instead of sending leaves off your property, shred them and use them as mulch too

We are at a global inflection point, with species extinction happening at an increasing rate. At the same time, we still know so little about soil and the microorganisms that live there. Plants thrive and are more resistant to drought and pest stress if we are constantly caring for the soil.

That does not mean adding chemical fertilizers. It does mean reducing or eliminating erosion, adding (or allowing to remain) leaf and twig litter, a.k.a. mulch, and reducing tilling and compaction. Whether your garden is a small urban backyard or a multi-acre property, we can all nurture our patch of earth and keep its inhabitants in balance and thriving, including of course, our plants! Let's have a wonderful gardening year.

## The Tulare-Kings Counties Master Gardeners will answer your questions:

Wed., December 21, 8-10 am -- Public Rose Pruning Day with the Master Gardeners at the Tulare County Courthouse, Visalia

January 14 - Rose Pruning Workshop, Woodlake Botanical Garden - 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

January 21 - Rose Pruning Workshop, Ralph Moore Garden, Visalia - 10:00 am - 1:00 pm

## Questions? Call the Master Gardeners:

Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30;

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

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