



## Central Valley Gardening



Thinking about changing your landscape to fit the Central Valley of California? Fall is the time to set your thoughts and maybe some changes into motion.

Your changes may take a few seasons to implement unless you are working with a blank canvas. The following will get you thinking, planning and headed into a sustainable direction.

Using the right plant in the right place results in a healthy plant that has room to grow, and requires minimal pruning, fertilizer and pesticides. Selecting appropriate plants can save you maintenance time and money and sends less to green waste or landfill. More time is available for you to enjoy your garden.

How can I accomplish this?

- Select plants that are appropriate for our climate and require less water to thrive. Plants with lower water requirements do well in the Central Valley of California. Bring a Sunset Western Garden Guide with you when you go on your nursery searches. Online, check out the UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars.
- Include native plants in your landscape. Native plants are adapted to our climate, require little to no water once established, have fewer pest problems, need less maintenance, and attract native beneficial insects and wildlife. The book “California Native Plants for the Garden” has detailed information to help with your selections. Fall is the ideal time to plant natives, just make sure their watering requirements are the same as other plants that will get watered nearby.
- Consider conditions involving climate, soil type and sun exposure when planting. Observe the microclimates in your garden; microclimates are pockets of climate conditions different from the much larger area around them. They may be shadier, sunnier, wetter, drier, higher, lower hotter or colder. Trees and large shrubs in your yard and your neighbor’s yard can create shade or shelter. Adjacent buildings and your own home affect the amount of sunlight available for the planting beds. There may be shady places along a north facing wall or under trees perfect for shade lovers. Choose sun loving plants for areas lacking shade from trees, large shrubs or adjacent buildings. Notice the season changes of sunlight to shade.
- Avoid invasive plants so they don't overwhelm desirable ones. Invasive plants require constant vigilance to avoid spreading into areas where they are unwanted. Escaped bamboo, star thistle, tons of grass species, eucalyptus, ivy, curly dock, milk thistle, salt cedar, and periwinkle are just a small sample of invasives introduced to our home and native landscapes by good intentions.
- Consider feeding your soil versus just your plants by adding your homemade compost. Constantly adding compost helps lighten the clay soils that dominate our area, encourages root development, attracts and feeds beneficial microorganisms, helps protect plants from drought and freezing, reduces need for purchased soil conditioners and fertilizers, moderates soil temperatures when used as mulch.
- Buy Local. Supporting independently owned nurseries whose plants are grown here have a better chance of becoming established in your garden.

Submitted by: Michael-Anne Foley, UC Master Gardener of Glenn County