# MAY MONTHLY GARDEN CHORES

By Leslie E. Stevens, UC Master Gardener

May marks the shift from our unusually wet winter to the Central Coast’s dry season – a time when gardens increasingly rely on supplemental water to survive the hot summer months. Watering is just one of many activities to take you into the garden this month.

**Chores**

* Prune winter and spring flowering vines, shrubs, trees and ground covers after they complete their bloom cycles.
* Remove spent flowers and deadhead roses to encourage continued blooming.
* Pinch back chrysanthemums to 12 inches for more flowers on shorter stems in the fall.
* Thin vegetable seedlings to prevent crowding and encourage healthier growth.
* Deep water trees and shrubs with soaker hoses or drip irrigation once/week or twice/month as indicated by local conditions.
* Check lawn timers and schedule watering for morning hours.

**Pests**

* Check undersides of rose bush leaves for sawfly larva (aka rose slugs) that begin to appear now. Remove by hand-picking or a stream of water.
* Hose off any aphids or whiteflies that are taking up residence on your plants. Make sure to reach undersides of leaves.
* Be on the lookout for beneficial insects and parasitic wasps working on those aphids and whiteflies.
* Monitor for ants climbing into fruit trees. Their presence indicates insect pests in the trees.  Control ants in trees with Tanglefoot.
* Handpick snails and slugs or use non-toxic snail bait.

**Flowers**

For a long season of bloom, plant low-water favorites such as daylilies, gaillardia, gazania, Rudbeckia, lavender, and numerous salvias.

**Fruits & Vegetables**

* Sow seeds of heat-loving fruits and veggies such as cucumber, green beans, melon, okra, pumpkin and squash now. Plant seedlings of eggplant, peppers and tomatoes after mid-May.
* When selecting tomatoes, choose indeterminate varieties if you want your tomato crop spread over a long season; pick determinate varieties if you want a lot of tomatoes in a short period of time.

**Trees & Shrubs**

To get a jump start on fall planting ideas for trees and flowering shrubs, now is a perfect time to check out local nurseries, botanical gardens and neighborhood landscapes while these plants are leafed out and blooming.

References:

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/PLANTS/INVERT/sawflies.html>

<http://www.biologicalcontrol.info/natural-enemies.html>