



Master Gardener Newspaper Articles

Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties



UC
CE

Drought Tolerant & Native Plant Favorites Are Available Locally

by Patty Weeks, UC Master Gardener

The Tulare/Kings Master Gardeners tend to our drought tolerant and native plant garden at the corner of Main Street and Fairway Drive just west of downtown Visalia every third Wednesday of the month. There are colorful plants blooming and beautiful grasses in this garden year round. And one of the questions we hear a lot is "Where can I buy plants like this locally?"

Actually quite a large selection of water thrifty plants is commonly found in our local nurseries. We've tested the following plants in our garden and they hold up well with a little less water than many other plants, which is best when you are gardening sustainably or as we prefer to say, "Gardening Central Valley Style".

Lantana is a perennial that lasts all summer long with a gorgeous array of colors including bright yellow, orange and red tiny clusters of flowers. There is one called 'Princess' that has lighter orange and pink blossoms for a softer look. It likes full sun and little water. There are many varieties that are dwarf and more compact than the larger rangier lantanas of the past. Birds and butterflies love lantanas and they are very easy to care for. During the winter lantanas "die back" after a freeze, but wait until some new growth shows early in the spring and trim them back just a bit or a whole bunch (depending upon the site). You can keep them pruned tightly or let them sprawl like a ground cover. Mine come back year after year and just get bigger each year. Lantana blooms constantly over a long time in our area - from spring to later fall and the colors make the garden pop.



LANTANA flowers bloom in clusters from spring through fall.

Lavender - I find lavenders at the nurseries often and my favorite is the English lavender, 'Goodwin Creek'. This plant grows 3-4 feet tall and wide and thrives in our hot valley summers. With its silvery gray, aromatic foliage topped with dark purple flowers on long stems it looks good in a garden with other herbs like rosemary and oregano. The purple color of lavender flowers and silvery foliage also complements the colors of lantanas. The leaves of this variety are toothed at the tips and they have a wonderful aroma. This lavender is on the UC Davis Arboretum All Star plant list that showcases the best plants for the San Joaquin Valley.



Lavender flowers are born on spikes that rise above the silvery foliage.

Iris rhizomes or bulbs also do well without excess water. I had purple iris at my charge and everyone can go home with a selection of baby plant starts for their own garden ranch in Northern California in a garden that had been neglected for years so we decided to try them here in Visalia in this dry garden and they've done extremely well. Master Gardeners always have extra iris so every fall we add more to the garden. We've mixed the colors up and never know what the beds are going to look like year after year. We have some white ones that seem to bloom all year. They need to be divided every few years and fall is the best time to do that.



White iris brightens up any garden.

These are just a few favorites available locally. But if you'd like to see mature plants and learn how to properly prune these perennials for beauty year after year and would like to know how to start your own plants come to our **Pruning and Propagation Workshop on Saturday morning October 19th at the garden along Millcreek** at the corner of Main Street and

Fairway Drive. Drop by between 9am and noon and talk with the Master Gardeners. There is no charge to attend and everyone can go home with a selection of baby plant starts for their own garden.

October 10, 2013