



# Master Gardener Newspaper

## Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties



## Master Gardeners Show Some "Spring in their Steps" for 2016

by Susan Franciskovich, UC Master Gardener

Master Gardeners were showing a bit of "spring in their steps" as we talked about plans and resolutions for 2016. "Spring in their steps," of course, has a double meaning here: Spring will come soon enough ... but with the added excitement of a bit of drought relief from the anticipated El Nino rains. Hoping you can also find a bit of "spring in your step" in 2016, here's what a few Master Gardeners talked about.

**Mood Lifter--**Pam Wallace: "I resolve to remember how much better I feel after gardening. Sometimes, in the dark, foggy winter or the long hot days of summer, I neglect my yard to stay inside where the weather is more comfortable. Working in the yard makes me feel more energetic and improves my mood."

**Vegetable Seeds--**Christina Sundstrom: "My gardening resolution is to improve my success with vegetable seeds. I have great success with squash seeds; other seeds are hit or miss. There are many new varieties of vegetables available from seeds. Plus, it's so advantageous to use seeds because you can stagger planting times."

**Raised Planting Beds--**Karl Church: "I recently acquired several old fruit bins and plan to convert them into raised beds in my backyard." Raised beds are more organized, less likely to be overrun by weeds and can be very productive in a small space.

**Compost--**Norma Guinn: "Whether it's an apartment balcony, back yard, or farm ... compost is compost, and making it follows the same principles. Compost maintains the fertility of the soil. There is a positive relationship between productive soil and growing food and plants sustainably. If I can encourage just one person to make composting a part of their gardening, then I have succeeded".

**Plant Reorganization--**Susan Haynes: "My back yard is full of many different plants---trees, shrubs, flowers, and succulents that I've planted over the years. Some are in the ground and some are in containers and it's evolved into a mish-mash of greens. I would like to "reorganize" things by separating certain plants from others in order to add more focus to plant groupings and highlight key plants. I think that this will create more harmony in my garden."

**Gardening with Grandchildren--**Carol Finney: "I will plan monthly garden activities with my grandchildren. We will start with planting vegetables together, then labeling the plants with some 'Harry Potter' names. I'm hoping that the funky names might make them want to grow and eat the veggies."



**Landscape Schematic--**Patricia Thompson: "We live on a quarter acre, and I plan to create a schematic of the front and back yards, including all trees, shrubs, flowers, ground covers, etc. After I label and assess the watering needs, I will try to establish efficient watering and mulching zones."

**Mulch--**Edward Henry: "My New Year's plan will be to mulch, mulch, mulch my flower beds and around my trees and major shrubs. Organic mulch has many benefits. Mulch helps conserve water by reducing water evaporation from the soil, resulting in less frequent watering needed. It will help lower the soil temperature in summer, which is particularly important for maintaining healthy root zones of plants and trees. Weed growth can be greatly prevented by proper mulching. Also, mulch will add to the organic composition of the soil as it slowly decomposes. Early spring, from late March into April is an excellent time of the year to begin mulching those beds.

**Weeds--**Dorothy Downing: Adding the subject of weeds to the mulching topic, "I plan to apply mulch and pre-emergent in a much timelier manner, so I won't have to weed my mulch."

With her poem, Sharon Plein shares a bit of whimsy about weed conquest in 2016:

"Tis easier to pull a tiny weed  
Three weeks after it was but a seed.  
If you ignore the weed and let it be  
'Twill spread unwelcome progeny.



And finally, this last resolution resonates with all gardeners:

**Follow through--**Peyton Ellas: "This year, I resolve to finish all my half-started landscape projects."

For help on your "follow through" and for general gardening advice: call the Master Gardener helpline Tuesdays or Thursdays from 9:30-11:30, 684-3325 ; visit us at the Visalia Farmer's Market every Saturday morning; and check our website: <http://cetulare.ucanr.edu>.

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