



Garden Tips for January 2016

by Thea Fiskin, UC Master Gardener

Happy New Year! A perfect New Year's resolution would be to spend more time out in the garden. Start by planning a spring and summer veggie garden. Those foggy, dreary and hopefully rainy days are the perfect time to plan your garden on paper ... the garden you have always dreamed of. This month, bare-root plants are in the nurseries. This is the most economical way to buy caneberries, flowering shrubs (such as forsythia), fruit trees, grapes and roses. Go early for the best selection. If there is a particular variety you are looking for, call local nurseries in advance; every nursery carries its favorite varieties, but will usually special order your requests. On the sunny days, prepare your planting beds, and plant bare-root plants that are available now. Bare-root is the way to go; there is usually a larger selection of varieties, and they are much less expensive than potted plants.

WHAT TO PLANT--

Bare-root fruit trees--Time to go shopping! Apricots, cherries, figs, pear, and plums all grow very well in the San Joaquin Valley. Be sure to ask about pollination requirements at the nursery, since not all fruit trees are self-fertile and will require a cross pollinator. For example, an elephant heart plum requires another plum variety such as a Santa Rosa. Cherries, with the exception of Stella, require another compatible cherry to bear fruit. Also be sure to notice the chill hours required; our winter averages 800 chilling hours. When in doubt, ask someone in the nursery for information, check garden books or access the Master Gardener website: <http://cetulare.ucanr.edu>



Bare-root roses--There is always room for more roses, and this is the perfect time to plant them. All varieties: hybrid teas, floribundas, climbers, miniatures and shrubs are available.

Bare-root berries and grapes--Plant grape vines and caneberries (boysenberries, blackberries and raspberries), blueberries and strawberries.

Vegetables--Asparagus crowns, artichokes, horseradish, lettuce, peas, and rhubarb can be planted now.

Camellias--Buy while they are in bloom so you can see the flower color. *Camellia sasanqua* varieties, such as 'Yuletide' can take more sun, but have smaller flowers; *Camellia japonica* varieties (there are many of these) should be planted on the north side of the house or where they will get afternoon shade.

GARDEN CHORES--

Start seeds indoors-- The last freeze is just about 10-12 weeks away, so get those cucumbers, squash, tomatoes and peppers started.

Prune--Just about everything dormant or deciduous needs pruning now. Fruit trees, roses, grapes should be pruned before the buds swell for spring. Do not prune apricots until summer. Wait to prune spring flowering plants like forsythia, lilacs and quince, until after they finish blooming.

Pruning tips-- 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. Heading cuts shorten branches and should only be used on small branches. (Heading can stimulate several weak branches to vigorously sprout, creating an unnatural look.) Begin pruning with thinning cuts to open up the tree. Use heading cuts judiciously to shorten overlong branches. Make sure to cut back to an outward facing bud to direct new growth away from the interior of the tree or bush. Prune from the bottom up and from the inside to the outside of the plant.



PEST CONTROL--

Dormant sprays—After pruning it's time to spray roses and deciduous fruit trees with horticultural oil to smother overwintering insects like spider mites, scale, mealy bugs and peach leaf twig borers. Spray the branches, crotches, trunk and ground beneath the tree's drip line. Hold off spraying if rain is in the forecast or if the temperature is below 45 degrees F. Never spray oil on walnut trees. If you didn't spray your peach or nectarine trees for peach leaf curl in November or December, this is your last chance to spray with a copper-based or a synthetic fungicide.

Weeds --Start thinking about controlling spring and summer weeds. If your flower beds were plagued with spurge or crabgrass last summer, apply a preemergent herbicide to kill the weed seeds as they are germinating. For best results, apply uniformly over the entire between Super bowl Sunday and Valentine's Day, and then be sure that rainfall or sprinkler irrigation is applied to activate the herbicide.

AND FINALLY-

On those rainy days, do some "garden dreaming" and plan the improvements you want to make in your garden this spring.

Happy Gardening in 2016

January 2, 2016