



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## October Garden Tips 2019 (October 5, 2019)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

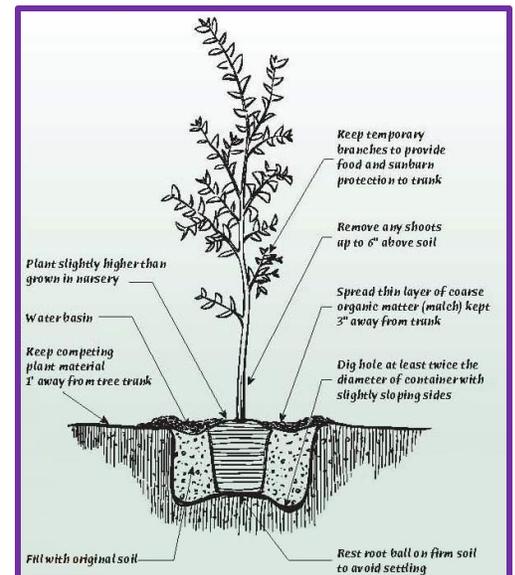
October already! In the garden, that means abundant opportunities for planting, renovating, clean-up, pruning, preparing for winter, and planning from scratch a brand new garden. October is easy on people and plants. Although we can have plenty of hot days, the days are shorter, and the nights are cooler. We might even get the first storm of our Mediterranean-climate winter.

**PLANTING:** In the vegetable garden, plant chard, spinach, turnips, beets, snow peas, carrots, cilantro, lettuce and Asian greens from seed. You can also plant seedlings of greens, broccoli and bulb onions. How about trying something new? Rutabaga is a hybrid of turnip and cabbage and has also been known as the Swedish turnip or turnip-rooted cabbage. This bitter, starchy nutrition-packed root vegetable is most often used in soups and stews, sliced or grated raw into salads, or as a mashed-potato substitute. Plant now for a winter holiday dinner.



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October is a good month to begin to plant most of your trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and ground covers. If you are re-doing your whole yard, October is a great month to do it. Planting can happen all month but is especially successful if done later in the month—hopefully after the first good rainstorm. Have your irrigation system ready before you plant. Those new transplants will need regular water for at least the first two weeks. Don't plant too deep; for all plants, leaving an inch or two of the crown above the soil level is best. Plant high in a hole as wide as the nursery container, or even a little wider. Top off with two or three inches of mulch after planting, but make sure the crown is not buried or covered. I don't personally like adding an amendment to the planting hole, but I know many landscapers and gardeners do so. Amendments are generally not recommended for California native plants like *Ceanothus* (California Lilac), Flannel bush, Manzanita and bush Lupine, or for succulents and cacti.



**MAINTAINING:** Finish or begin your annual yard clean up, especially if you have planting beds or entire yards based on naturalistic styles. Don't be afraid to cut those spring-blooming shrubs back to a third or half their size.

Don't trim deciduous trees yet; we'll wait until winter for that. Deadhead roses one final time for a fall bloom. Divide perennials and replant. You can replant iris now or wait another month. The trimmings can be ground up and used as mulch for the garden or added to the compost bin.

Deep water trees a little extra as they enter dormancy, unless we get several nicely spaced storms. In the mountains and foothills, wrap your pipes and remove and store faucet timers before the first frost. Adjust automatic systems to reflect cooler temperatures.

Mow warm-season lawns a little shorter and overseed with perennial rye seeds if you want green grass in the winter. For brown patches in lawns, scratch the surface with a rake and spread 1/4 inch mulch over the brown patch.

Preemergent herbicide can be applied, except where you plan to grow wildflowers, to help prevent weeds such as annual bluegrass, mustard, mallow (cheeseweed), clover and purslane. Just like with grass and edibles, we have two main seasons of weeds: warm and cool. October is the month all the cool season weeds start popping up. Be ready! This is a good month to check your tree stakes in anticipation of winter winds. If the tree can stand up on its own and the root ball seems secure, remove the stakes completely, and let it bend in a breeze; this will help the trunk gain strength. Stakes should never be right up against the trunk. Those stakes are for transporting from the nursery, not long-term. If you need to stake a tree, we have information on our website on how to do it properly.

[https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Local\\_Gardening\\_Articles\\_-\\_Info/Landscape\\_Trees/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Local_Gardening_Articles_-_Info/Landscape_Trees/)

Go easy on the nitrogen-heavy fertilizer as we go into fall to avoid frost burn of new tender foliage. This is the season, however, to fertilize cool-season lawns and winter-blooming annuals and perennials.

**CONSERVING:** My cucumber plants early this summer were covered with aphids. I didn't spray anything but a few water blasts, barely keeping up with the damage and thinking I might have to just remove the crop. But after two weeks, the ladybugs, lacewings, native wasps and other insects had removed all the pests, and my cucumber harvest was phenomenal. Learning to have a healthy natural garden teaches patience. As an example, after two years of waiting, my sister reported that her native bee population finally used the bee box she provided. The native bee left her eggs in mud-plugged cavities, and now the empty chambers show where the new generation of bees hatched, then flew off to live their brief but glorious lives.

A healthy garden also teaches us to keep learning. Our state's UC IPM website ([ipm.ucanr.edu](http://ipm.ucanr.edu)) is a great resource for trustworthy information on choosing the least toxic method first of pest and disease-management. Part of creating a healthy garden is to avoid the quick fix and the desire to kill all insects, especially if you're not sure what the bug is. After all, it could be an ally you need more of!

Much of plant health depends on healthy soil full of the kind of organisms we rarely think about. Yes, earthworms, but so many more! Mulch, compost, low or no-till, reducing synthetic fertilizers, reducing wind and water erosion, and planting native plants can all improve soil health. Even if you have the type of yard with a traditional lawn and foundation-planting of one or two trees, a healthy soil and balanced approach to maintenance can save you money and work by keeping the plants healthy and growing and blooming vigorously without a lot of added chemicals.

Part of creating the most sustainable, planet-saving garden that satisfies the senses and just feels great to be in, is to try to fit in native plants, climate-adapted plants, and plants that support native wildlife. We can try to manage our gardens as if we are partners with a whole lot of other creatures, even if we don't love them all, even if we don't recognize them all, and even if we don't even know most of them are even there.

**Are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener?** The UC Master Gardener program of Tulare/Kings Counties is recruiting! Our next class runs January 22 through June 10. Applications will be available online in August and must be turned in by October 30. We will be holding a mandatory orientation on Wed., Oct 9 @ 3:00 to share what the training course and the volunteer commitment entail. Please call our office (684-3343) with any questions...we look forward to talking with all interested gardeners! Check us out at: [https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/Become\\_a\\_Master\\_Gardener/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Become_a_Master_Gardener/)

**The UCCE Master Gardeners will be available to answer your gardening questions at the following venues in October:**

Visalia Farmers' Market – Every Saturday morning (8-11 am), Sears parking lot, Mooney Blvd.

Hanford "Thursday Night Marketplace" – 2nd Thursday (5:30 – 9:00 pm) through October.

Oct 12, 10 am - 2 pm: Plant Clinic – Hofmans' Nursery, Hanford

Oct 19, 10 am - 2 pm: Plant Clinic at Luis' Nursery, Visalia

Oct 26, 10:00 – 1:00: Food Day @ FoodLink, 611 2nd St., Exeter, CA

*For answers to all your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 684-3325, Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 and 11:30 am; or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m.; or visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:*

[http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/)

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