

Garden to Do List for March

By Teresa Spence, UCCE Master Gardener Teresa Spence of Calaveras County

If you had worms in your apples or nuts last year, it is time to try to deal with the codling moth. It is difficult to eradicate this pest, but you may be able to control it before it gets out of hand.

- Clear all debris around the trees, as this is a favorite place for over wintering for the moth. The moths mate when evening temperatures exceed 60 degrees: they lay eggs on leaves and fruit. After the larvae hatch, they bore into the fruit and stay there until they mature.
- Codling moth traps can be bought online or at hardware stores or nurseries; however the best method to control these pests is with good sanitation, vigilance and insecticide.
- Check your fruit for stings (look for frass) no later than 3 to 4 weeks after bloom; if all the larvae are in the fruit it is too late to eradicate them. Remove and dispose of this fruit in bags, as it contains the larvae.
- Then spray the tree weekly with CYD-X, a biological insecticide, mixed with 1% horticultural oil, (available online or at nurseries), this insecticide affects only the caterpillar of the codling moth. Another insecticide is called Spinosad; it is sprayed 3 times at 10 day intervals, after the stings are noticed. Spinosad should be mixed with 1% horticultural oil for a better dispersal. This insecticide should be used for future generations of larvae (up to 3 per season); it is important to continue inspecting the fruit, and if new stings are observed, start with a second round of spraying, this time every 14 days. Do not use Spinosad more than 6 times during the season and no later than 7 days before harvest. Make sure you follow all manufacturers' instructions when spraying any insecticides.
- Sanitation is the most important part of reducing the population of moths, so clean up around the trees and pick up and dispose of any dropped fruit. For more information on codling moths, contact a Calaveras County Master Gardener.

Cut out old growth from perennials, such as Butterfly bush, Russian Sage and Goldenrod. They will be producing new shoots soon.

Check Roses for black spot and mildew; spray with a Rose fungicide if necessary. Feed Roses with a Rose fertilizer when you see new growth appear.

It is important to mulch around perennial plants, ornamental and fruit trees to preserve moisture, because of the severe lack of rain. Keep the mulch a few inches away from the trunks of the plants to prevent rot.

Start seeds indoors now if you want to grow unusual or heirloom tomatoes, peppers and other summer loving vegetables. The seedlings should be ready to plant in your garden by mid to end of May.