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Making the All-Star Team

By Susan Zito

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

The Merriam-Webster dictionary defines the term “all-star” as “comprised wholly or chiefly of stars or of outstanding performers.” The U.C. Davis Arboretum All-Stars list is comprised of 100 plants that have succeeded in field trials as ideal plants for our Mediterranean climate. Why are these 100 plants chosen over thousands of other plants? How does a plant become an All-Star? To make the “team” it must thrive in California’s Mediterranean climate, attract beneficial insects and pollinators, and be low maintenance, drought tolerant and attractive for most of the year. Every member of this All-Star team is an outstanding performer in the home garden. You can check out the entire list of 100 All-Stars at:

https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/sites/g/files/dgvnsk1546/files/inline-files/AllStarsBook_201415_final-reduced.pdf

The U.C. Davis All-Star program is a joint project of the U.C. Davis Arboretum and the California Center for Urban Horticulture (CCUH), in collaboration with other partners and test gardens throughout California. Launched in 2009, the All-Star Program is an outreach program of the Arboretum and has been met with great enthusiasm from the gardening community and the wholesale nursery industry. The Arboretum is a 100-acre public garden located on the U.C. Davis campus, and is free and open to the public every day of the year.

Luckily you don’t have to travel all the way to U.C. Davis to view the All-Stars. You can stay local and see 33 of the 100 plants at the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County’s Sherwood Demonstration Garden (SDG). The Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive,

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Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College's El Dorado Center, is free to the public. (Be advised: the college charges a \$2 parking fee.)

At the SDG, you can see key "players" on the All-Star team, including trees such as Washington hawthorn (*Crataegus phaenopyrum*) and Marina strawberry tree (*Arbutus* 'Marina'). Shrubs in the ceanothus and manzanita families are on display, as are herbs such Mozart rosemary (*Rosmarinus officinalis* 'Mozart') and a dwarf oregano (*Origanum vulgare* 'Betty Rollins'). Several ground covers, ornamental grasses, and perennials also made the team.

If your home garden is shady, where sun-loving All-Stars may not thrive, not to worry. In addition to the All-Star Garden, the Demonstration Garden features 15 other gardens to encourage wise planting choices for the home landscape, including the Shade Garden. The SDG website, at http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden/, provides plant lists for each of the 16 gardens. Check out the Shade Garden plant list or take a stroll through the lush garden.

Although many of the All-Star plants are California natives, some are not but have adapted well to our hot summers and cold winters. A bonus of using native plants is that many of them possess a characteristic that deter deer. As we all know, no plant is completely resistant to a hungry deer, but most of these plants are not attractive to deer.

Choose an All-Star for your home garden and you can be sure that your landscape will "hit it out of the park!"

Join Master Gardeners on Saturday, March 7, at 9:00 am for a free group tour of the 16 separate gardens of the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, ranging from the Shade Garden to the Rock Garden and everything in between! Or just stroll through the open gardens on your own. Also, from 10 am-noon, the Community Observatory, which is adjacent to the Garden, will set up their Hydrogen-Alpha telescopes that allow us to safely view sunspots, solar flares, filaments, and solar prominences. All events at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden and the Community Observatory are free.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512), or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.