



Issue #17

May 2011

My Garden – May Tasks

Glen Johnson, Amador County Master Gardener



May is truly planting time for most summer vegetables. In the lower portion of the county planting can start in mid to late April, and at mid elevations from May 1st to 15th, and May 15th or later for up county gardens. All of this depends on your microclimate but these are the averages.

I used to try and plant my tomatoes as early as possible and got away with it in April a few times. I say got away with it as they didn't freeze but they didn't really take off until we had some sustained warm weather. Now I wait until early to mid May, depending on the weather, to plant tomatoes and most of the other warm season crops such as green beans, corn, squash, cucumber, and melons, etc. I find they mature just as soon as those that are planted earlier. The only advantage I see to planting early is it allows the tomatoes to get their roots down and established before the hot weather hits and you need to irrigate more frequently to keep them alive.



In May, try to stretch the interval between irrigations as long as possible without stressing the plants. This encourages deep rooting and in turn healthier plants and less frequent irrigation in the hot months. When the plants are up and several inches high I side dress with compost or mulch the plants, which keeps the roots cooler and conserves moisture.



Normally I'd prune my table grapes back in March, but again, due to the cold weather, freezes, snow and hail, I waited until late April to do it. If you haven't done it, be sure to determine the correct type of pruning for the variety of grapes you are growing.

Most can be spur pruned but some require cane pruning to produce grapes. In the past I had done all of mine by spur pruning them. My Black Monukka grapes weren't producing so I switched to cane pruning and they produced a fine crop of grapes. Sunset Western Garden book has a table indicating which method can be used and indicated either could be used for Black Monukkas, but cane worked best for me.



Now is the time to start applying sulfur to prevent mildew on your grapes. Refer to the Integrated Pest Management website's Pest Note for details on controlling powdery mildew: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES?pn7494.html>.

Many people, if not most, have found dead or dying leaves or limbs on our shrubs and bushes. Again, most of this is attributable to the weather. Roses were hard hit as were many other plants. Prune back the dead or dying limbs and most, if not all, will recover nicely. In addition to the roses, all the blooms were killed on our Western Redbuds, many limbs froze on our Joyce Coulter ceanothus (wild lilac),



Inside this issue:

<i>Wicked Bugs</i>	2
<i>Gardening at Higher Elevations</i>	3
<i>Spring Garden Expo</i>	3
<i>Is the Time Right for Your Tomatoes?</i>	4
<i>Healthy Chips for Smart Snacking</i>	5
<i>Compare Notes</i>	5
<i>Free MG Classes</i>	6
<i>Remember the Dates</i>	7
<i>Pest Notes</i>	7
<i>Get Answers Online</i>	7

Master Gardeners

Advice to grow by ...

Amador County

209-223-6838

Office hours: 10 am–Noon

Tuesday–Thursday

mgamador@ucdavis.edu

El Dorado County

530-621-5512

Office hours: 9 am–Noon

Tuesday–Friday

ceeldorado@ucdavis.edu

Continued on page 2

My Garden – May Tasks

Continued from page 1

hydrangeas were killed back to the ground, and even a camellia's leaves turned brown and dropped off. All are starting to recover nicely. So before you get too concerned that you have a pest, a disease, or you've done something wrong, give them some time and look for new shoots as they will likely recover nicely.

If you are concerned it might be something else, don't hesitate to contact us for help identifying the problem. (In Amador, email us at mgamador@ucdavis.edu or call 209-223-6838 Tuesday through Thursday from 10-12. In El Dorado, call us at 530-621-5512 Tuesday through Friday from 9-12 or email us at ceeldordo@ucdavis.edu.) As always, please provide a sample; photo and as much information you can provide about the problem, watering and fertilizing practices, location, elevation, etc. It all helps in solving problems quickly.

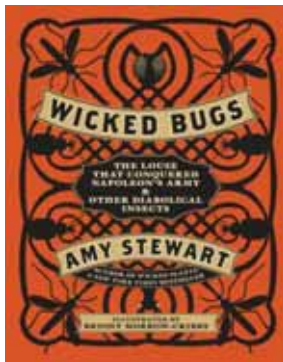
Now, let's just hope that summer doesn't arrive in the middle of May. We need some spring first!

Glen's garden is at 2700' elevation on a south facing slope with full sun all day.



WICKED BUGS COMING TO SUTTER CREEK

Wickedness returns to Sutter Creek with New York Times' **best selling author Amy Stewart's new book "WICKED BUGS."** Amy Stewart's last event with Amador County Master Gardeners was in 2009 with her best selling book, "WICKED PLANTS." She will give a presentation based on her latest book and will be available to sign copies of her current and earlier books. All of Amy Stewart's books will be available for purchase at the event.



June 4, 2011 at 2:00
United Methodist Social Hall
Main Street in Sutter Creek, CA.

Sponsored by Amador County Master Gardeners.

Seating is limited.

Reserve your seat online at <http://ucanr.org/wickedbugs>,
 or call Master Gardener Jerry Trottier at 209-223-9133.

To get the best results you must talk to your vegetables.

Prince Charles (b. 1948, H.R.H. Prince of Wales)



Gardening at Higher Elevations

by Kathy Ruiz, Master Gardener El Dorado County

Nothing makes me yearn for a life in the valley more than the challenge of vegetable gardening at an elevation of 3400 feet, where I live. While the nurseries and big box home improvement stores trot out loads of vegetables and annual flowers, it is much too cold in April to put any of these plants in my high elevation ground. Officially, our last frost date is May 15th, but I never plant tomatoes or warm season vegetables before June 1st.



Over the years, I've had to adapt and make the most of a very short growing season. One of the first things I've learned to do is to focus on veggies that like the cold weather. Peas, leaf lettuce, chard and kale are some of the best candidates. If I take advantage of some of the warm and dry days in February and March to directly sow seeds in raised beds, I will have peas and lettuce sprouting in my garden by April 1st. These vegetables will even handle a late winter snow storm. Because it stays cooler longer up here, I'll have lots of lettuce and peas well into June and even July.

One of things that I use to help my spring veggies along are row covers. They do a great job of protecting the young seedlings from hail and snow. I find it also hides the young plants from birds who love to peck the tender shoots.



Around April 15th, I'll start seeds of warm season vegetables like tomatoes, tomatillos and peppers indoors in small six-pack cells. I use sterile seed starter mix and keep the containers on heating mats until the seeds germinate. Once sprouted, the plants get light from fluorescent lights. As soon as the first true leaves appear I move the tiny plants to 4-inch pots in potting mix. By May 1st, I'll start cucumbers, zucchini and squash seeds in those peat disks that expand ten-fold when soaked in water. Starting them this way avoids having to transplant them to another container before they go in the ground. They seem to get a better start without that extra move.



When I shop the seed catalogs for vegetables I look for seeds of early maturing varieties. Two varieties that work really well for me are the Early Crisp Hybrid Pepper and Early Acorn Hybrid Squash, both from the Burpee Company. Early Crisp Peppers mature 15 days earlier than the California Wonder variety. (That's 60 days versus 75 days.) Early Acorn Hybrid Squash matures in 75 days, whereas most squashes need 85 to 100 days to mature. With a short growing season the sooner the vegetables can be picked the better.

The Early Girl tomato has been my all time favorite. However, last year an heirloom variety called 'Matina' almost took its place. It's a small tomato that ripened before the Early Girl and had excellent flavor.



By October 15th (our first frost date), I'm putting most of my garden to bed. If time and space permits, I'll have started some kale and more lettuce in late summer to take me through the fall. When I see how productive my garden has been through three seasons, I think 3400 feet elevation is just about where paradise is!



Amador County Master Gardener Spring Garden Expo & Plant Sale

Saturday, May 7, 9am—Noon: UCCE Office/GSA Building, 12200 Airport Road, Martell

Bring home a selection of the Amador Master Gardeners' favorite plants that grow well in the area. Choose from a wide assortment of vegetable plants, including over 50 tomato varieties!

Want heirloom tomato taste but have trouble growing them? Attend a demonstration on how to graft heirloom tomatoes onto disease resistant roots. (Grafting isn't just for fruit trees!) Set up a water efficient garden at home and purchase drip irrigation tubing and attend the free gardening demonstration to learn how to design your own drip irrigation system.

For more information about the Amador County Master Gardener Spring Garden Expo, call their office at 209-223-6838 or email them at mgamador@ucdavis.edu.

Is the Time Right for Your Tomatoes?

Robin Stanley, Master Gardener El Dorado County

Whether you're new to the area or are a long-time resident of the foothills, vegetable gardening can be a joy and a challenge. Timing is a crucial for West Slope gardeners whose gardens range from 800' to 4000' elevations. Microclimates in our hilly terrain mean that garden conditions can vary greatly from road to road in the same neighborhood.

To help gardeners plant their vegetables at the correct time, El Dorado County UC Master Gardeners developed the *Foothill Vegetable Planting Guide* several years ago. This guide helps home gardeners calculate the best times to plant both winter/spring and summer/fall vegetables. It gives ideal planting times whether planting seeds in the greenhouse, or seeds and plants in the garden. These guides are laminated to stand up to a gardeners' dirty hands and are available in your local Master Gardener office and at our public classes.

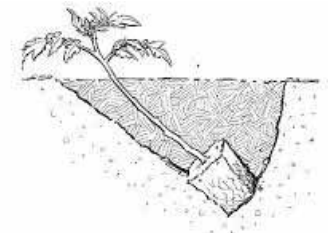
	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Tomatoes						
Peppers						
Eggplants						
Cucumbers						
Zucchini						
Squash						
Beans						
Peas						
Carrots						
Onions						
Potatoes						
Garlic						
Asparagus						
Brussels Sprouts						
Broccoli						
Cauliflower						
Kale						
Spinach						
Chard						
Swiss Chard						
Leafy Greens						
Herbs						
Flowers						
Strawberries						
Raspberries						
Blackberries						
Blueberries						
Apples						
Pears						
Plums						
Cherries						
Peaches						
Nectarines						
Apricots						
Almonds						
Pistachios						
Walnuts						
Pecans						
Macadamia Nuts						
Coconuts						
Avocados						
Olives						
Fig						
Grapes						
Strawberries						
Raspberries						
Blackberries						
Blueberries						
Apples						
Pears						
Plums						
Cherries						
Peaches						
Nectarines						
Apricots						
Almonds						
Pistachios						
Walnuts						
Pecans						
Macadamia Nuts						
Coconuts						
Avocados						
Olives						
Fig						
Grapes						

The *Foothill Vegetable Planting Guide* focuses on planting dates for Placerville and then shows gardeners how to adjust dates for their own elevation. Residents of Camino/Pollock Pines and up-country in Amador County swear that it always snows on the dogwood blossoms, so gardeners who get impatient and plant too early at the higher elevations need to be prepared to protect tender seedlings or replace them if the weather takes a sudden turn for the worse.

Our guide says it's time in many locations for planting tomatoes and other summer vegetables. How can gardeners get the best flavor and harvest from their summer vegetables? Try some new varieties this year to add color and flavor to your meals.

These helpful planting tips will give you a head start on tasty tomatoes:

- Pick a sunny spot in your garden. Like most summer vegetables, tomatoes need full sun for at least 6 hours per day. Some protection from hot afternoon sun can help prevent sunburn. Try to plant tomatoes in a different spot than they were planted last year.
- Work your soil deeply and incorporate both organic matter and nutrients when planting. Tomatoes need a fertilizer with high phosphorous (the middle number on a fertilizer bag). Organic growers can use rock phosphate or a good dose of compost.
- Tomatoes will establish roots on lower parts of the seedling's stem where leaves currently grow. Plant your tomatoes so that 1" – 3" or more of the stem is below ground. The additional roots developed by this method help your plant stay stronger and more nourished throughout the growing season.
- Plan for proper irrigation. Tomatoes need deep, even watering. Drip irrigation is best because overhead watering and moisture on leaves for long periods can cause diseases.
- Be ready to mulch when the weather and soil warm up. Mulch keeps soil moisture more even, protecting tomatoes from drying out in between watering.
- Support your tomato plants as they develop. Whether you choose sturdy stakes, tomato cages or rings, your tomatoes need help staying upright throughout the season, which helps keep fruit clean and sunlight distributed throughout the entire plant. For a great evaluation of a variety of tomato staking techniques researched by the Santa Clara County Master Gardeners, go to http://www.mastergardeners.org/picks/tomato_staking.html.



A little work at planting time can give a big payoff at harvest time. So pull those winter weeds, work that warming soil and get planting, if the time is right in your garden.



Healthy Chips for Smart Snacking

Ora Emmerich, El Dorado County Master Food Preserver

It is all about the crunch. Yes, everyone enjoys snacking, and the crunch of chips satisfies much better than, say, a plate of steamed vegetables. Yet we all agree that most crunchy snacks come loaded with unhealthy oils, sugars and other additives. The time has come to break out the dehydrator and take charge of snack-time with healthy, crunchy alternatives to bagged chips.

Almost any fruit or vegetable dries easily to provide a great snack. The keys to successful dehydrating lie in proper preparation, correct drying time, and temperature and air control. Food can be dried in a dehydrator or in an oven. The best dehydrators have a thermostat to control heat and a fan to provide for proper air flow. Some dehydrators have the heating element at the bottom of a stack of trays. These can be used if care is taken to rotate the trays during drying to avoid having the food on the trays closest to the heat source dry faster than the rest of the batch.



If the drying will be done in an electric or gas oven, the Colorado State University Cooperative Extension recommends "... preheat oven at lowest setting (140 to 150 degrees F), then adjust the thermostat and prop the oven door open to achieve a consistent oven temperature of 140 degrees F, and to allow moist air to escape. ... To ensure maintenance of 140 to 150 degrees F, monitor oven temperature using a calibrated oven thermometer. ...and check it every two hours throughout drying." Remember to leave 2½ inches between trays and to rotate these every half hour for oven drying.

Some fruits and many vegetables must be blanched before dehydrating to be sure to get a quality product. However, one favorite, zucchini chips, requires no blanching and can be a great way to preserve summer bounty. Simply slice clean zucchini into rounds and place on the dehydrating trays. Various spices and salts may be added, and garlic salt produces a great chip. Be careful not to slice the zucchini too thin, as dehydrating removes the moisture from the vegetable and you may end up with zucchini "paper" instead of chips! The Excalibur Dehydrator dehydration guide recommends slicing zucchini into ¼ or 1/8 inch slices before dehydrating for 7-11 hours at 125°.



For potato chips, the Excalibur guide advises steaming washed and peeled new potatoes for 4-6 minutes before cutting French style or slicing into ¼ or 1/8 inch slices. If preferred, the potatoes may be grated. The drying time for potatoes to become brittle or leathery is 6-14 hours at 125°.



Enjoy snacking on wholesome, healthy chips without added fats or "mystery" ingredients. For more dehydrating tips, or to ask questions about dehydrating or any other food preservation method, call the Master Food Preservers and leave a message at (530) 621-5506. A Master Food Preserver will return your call.



The Master Food Preservers are also available free of charge to speak to organizations and clubs about food safety or food preservation topics. Just call the number above to arrange for a speaker for small or large groups.

Visit the Master Food Preserver website at http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Food_Preservers/.

Let's Compare Notes



All gardeners—novice and expert—sometimes have a plant that just doesn't work in their garden but we keep trying each year to make it grow, until we finally say, "I will never plant this again!"

Email us with your "I will never plant this again" experience at mgamador@ucdavis.edu. We would love to hear your stories!



Public Education Classes for Amador and El Dorado Counties – Free!!



Most classes are from 9 am – Noon. Please call ahead to confirm locations; they may change.

Amador County

Location for all Amador classes: GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson.

May

7: Spring Garden Expo & Plant Sale

Expand the bounty of your garden with selections of many of our favorite landscaping plants and vegetables, including over 50 varieties of tomatoes! Drip irrigation tubing is for sale; attend free gardening demonstrations.

18: Irrigation and Water-Wise Gardening

Amador County Master Gardeners will be presenting the class on **Wednesday**, May 18th, from **12 to 3 pm**.

Class topics include:

- Understanding Plants and Soils
- Determining Plant Water Requirements
- Overview of Irrigation Systems
- Basic Components
- Choosing Application Method
- Designing Your System
- Installing Your System
- General Watering Practices

The goal of this class is to take the mystery out of irrigation and irrigation systems, and provide a thorough of efficient and practical water-wise gardening practices. You will learn how to conserve and give your plants the correct amount of water and have a healthier and more productive garden and landscape.

June

11: Preserving the Harvest – Part 1 of 2

Details on the website soon

July

16: Preserving the Harvest – Part 2 of 2

Details on the website soon

If you have any questions about the classes or have other gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners at the UC Cooperative Extension Office from 10am to noon, Tuesday or Thursday, 223-6838. You can also contact us by e-mail at mgamador@ucdavis.edu.

El Dorado County

Location for all El Dorado classes: Veterans Memorial Bldg, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville.

May

14: Salsa Gardening

Do you like hot peppers and south of the border flavors? Join Master Gardener Kristin Rankin as she teaches you how to grow your own salsa ingredients.

21: Children and Gardening

In this class, taught by Master Gardener Barbara Schuchart, we hope to help develop a love, enthusiasm, and perhaps even a lifetime hobby of gardening for children. Topics such as garden safety, garden tools, and creating a garden journal will be discussed. Many fun projects for children such as "The Ivy Tower" and "The Pizza Patch" will be introduced. This class is geared for children, parents and grandparents--anyone who loves gardening.

June

4: Water-Efficient Gardening

Summer is here and most of us have started irrigating our gardens and landscape plantings. Attend this class led by Master Gardener Steve Savage to learn when and how much water to give your plants. Learn which irrigation techniques are appropriate for each kind of plantings.

11: Hanging Baskets

If you want to optimize all your unused space outdoors, such as above walkways and on decks, plan to attend this class. Master Gardener Kristen Rankin will show you how to take advantage of vertical spaces and how to get instant color in containers. She will show you how to plant in containers, talk about the best types of containers to use and how best to care for plants once put into containers.

Check out the El Dorado Master Gardener Facebook page at

<http://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Dorado-County-Master-Gardeners/164653119129>.



Remember the Dates:

In addition to the Master Gardener Office and free public classes, here's where can you find local Master Gardeners during the upcoming months.

May 7	Amador County Master Gardener Spring Expo & Plant Sale (9-Noon)
May 7, 14, 21, 28	Placerville Farmers Market (8-Noon)
May 14	True Value Garden Center Open House, Jackson (10-2)
May 14	Salsa Gardening Class, Placerville (9-Noon)
May 15, 22, 29	El Dorado Hills Farmers Market (8-1:00)
May 19	Irrigation Class, Jackson (Noon-3)
May 21	Earth Day, El Dorado County Library (9-4)
June 4	Amy Stewart Presentation: Wicked Bugs (2:00)



Pest Notes

Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local Master Gardener office.



To explore the Pest Notes on the UC Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website, go to <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu>.

Amador & El Dorado Counties Master Gardener Newsletter
 Editor: Linda Hagye
 Assistant Editor: Janice Johnson

Not on our e-newsletter distribution list yet? Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events? Sign up online:

Amador:
<http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter3145.htm>

El Dorado:
<http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter3286.htm>

Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online

Don't forget about our great Master Gardener websites — they're loaded with gardening goodies:

- Information about Master Gardeners and even how to become one
- List of public classes
- Calendar of Master Gardener events
- Useful links to gardening websites
- Home gardening publications
- Information request form to get answers to your gardening questions

http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener
http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener

Got a specific question? Just email us!

Amador: mgamador@ucdavis.edu
 El Dorado: ceeldorado@ucdavis.edu



The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (including childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services (as defined by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994: service in the uniformed services includes membership, application for membership, performance of service, application for service, or obligation for service in the uniformed services) in any of its programs or activities. University policy also prohibits reprisal or retaliation against any person in any of its programs or activities for making a complaint of discrimination or sexual harassment or for using or participating in the investigation or resolution process of any such complaint. University policy is intended to be consistent with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws. Inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Director, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 1111 Franklin Street, 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94607, (510) 987-0096.

UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, UNITED STATES DEPT OF AGRICULTURE
 AND AMADOR/EL DORADO COUNTIES COOPERATING