



## Spring Plant Sales - Get There Early!

Thinking about updating your flower gardens? Did you lose some plants over the winter to the weather or hungry critters? Are you dreaming of giant tomatoes in your vegetable garden?

Take a few minutes to identify the areas in your yard that need new plants and start a wish list. Then come to one—or both—of the Master Gardener plant sales!

**Amador County Master Gardener Spring Garden Expo – Saturday, April 21, 9am–Noon**  
UCCE Office/GSA Building, 12200 Airport Road, Martell

Bring home a selection of the Amador County Master Gardeners' favorite plants that grow well in the area. Choose from a wide assortment of landscape and vegetable plants. Come back on May 19th for the Tomato Plant sale with 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; 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](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu).

**El Dorado County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale - Saturday, April 28, 8am–3pm**

Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville

Pick up annuals, vegetable starts, garden art, and rare and unusual perennials. Local Herb Society and Native

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### Master Gardeners

#### Advice to grow by ...

Amador County  
209-223-6838

Office hours: 10 am–Noon  
Tuesday–Thursday  
[mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu)

El Dorado County  
530-621-5512

Office hours: 9 am–Noon  
Tuesday–Friday  
[mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu)

**Spring Plant Sales - Get There Early!**, *Continued from Page 1*  
Plant Society volunteers will also have booths at the event.

Tool sharpening is available for a small fee, so bring your tools and get them ready for a busy gardening season while you shop and learn.

For more information about the El Dorado County Master Gardener Spring Plant Sale, call their office at 530-621-5512 or email them at [mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu).

At both plant sales you have the opportunity to choose plants grown locally by Master Gardeners in their gardens. The selections will be fantastic!



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## Are Backyard Chickens A Trend?

*by Janice Johnson, Master Gardener*



Jack Shafer claimed in a 2009 article that raising backyard chickens was a bogus trend. He also said, "In all of God's sweet aviary there exists no bird more diabolical and ruthless than the egg-laying chicken." Those were fighting words to anyone who had a flock of pet chickens. Many articles have countered Shafer's attack on backyard chickens and many articles praise the benefits of raising your own chickens. But are backyard chickens really a trend?

As a kid way back in 1959, I started raising chickens in my backyard from chicks I stole from the stable where I boarded my horse. These were scrappy barnyard bantams and I still remember the time our tiny rooster went to the neighbors' and killed their big leghorn! This all happened in the suburbs

of Portland, Oregon, which now has one of the highest urban populations of backyard chickens.

Most teenagers come home from the state fair with a stuffed bear or a stomachache from eating too many hotdogs, but I came home with a Silkie Bantam hen. She was snow white with a pompon of feathers soft as rabbit fur that covered her eyes, making her seem not too bright because she couldn't see where she was going.

I went off to school, married, and didn't have chickens for many years. In 1986 my husband and I bought a home with a large yard in San Jose. The city allowed chickens but not roosters, and I got a small flock of hens. The backyard was divided into two sections, one with the vegetable garden and the other with fruit trees and flowers. I planned to let the chickens free range in the fruit tree section but keep them out of the

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## Are Backyard Chickens A Trend, Continued from Page 2

vegetables. I also had two cocker spaniels and I wanted them to have the run of both areas, so we put a dog door in the fence between the two areas. People claim that chickens are stupid, but don't believe it; my hens learned to use the dog door before the cockers did!

We moved from San Jose to Pioneer in 1996 and we looked like the Beverly Hillbillies with our chickens squawking in the back of the truck as we left the big city behind. I've had chickens on and off for fifty years, so it's hard for me to think that I am part of a new trend, but I do believe that more urban and suburban homes have backyard chickens than ever before.

If you think you might like to be part of the backyard chicken trend, join me for the Backyard Chicken class on Saturday, March 10th at 10:30 a.m. until noon in the Amador County GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Martell. If you have questions about this class please email me at [pinetown@volcano.net](mailto:pinetown@volcano.net).

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## Workshop: Yellow Starthistle Control and Preventing the Spread of Invasive Weeds in El Dorado County!



<b>Date:</b>	<b>Thursday, March 29, 2012</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>1:00 p.m. - 3:00 p.m.</b>
<b>Location:</b>	<b>El Dorado County Board of Supervisors Chambers 330 Fair Lane - Building A</b>
<b>1:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Yellow Starthistle Biology</b> <i>Mechanical and Cultural Control Methods</i> <i>Wendy West, UC Cooperative Extension</i>
<b>1:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Yellow Starthistle Control Utilizing Herbicides</b> <i>LeeAnne Mila, El Dorado Co. Dept. of Agriculture</i>
<b>2:00 p.m.</b>	<b>Yellow Starthistle Control in Croplands</b> <i>Tips to deal with Yellow Starthistle in orchards and vineyards.</i> <i>Scott Oneto, UC Cooperative Extension</i>
<b>2:30 p.m.</b>	<b>Invasive Weeds Watch</b> <i>Learn to identify other weeds that could spread to our area and what to do if you find them!</i> <i>LeeAnne Mila, El Dorado County Department of Agriculture</i>

There is no fee for this workshop. Registration is recommended. Register online at <http://ucanr.org/ystcontrolwkshp3-29-12> or contact Nancy Starr (530) 621-5503 [njstarr@ucdavis.edu](mailto:njstarr@ucdavis.edu). Walk-in registration available at the event, if space allows.

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## Yellow Starthistle and..., Continued from Page 3

California Department of Pesticide Regulation continuing education credits are available.

These workshops are presented by the El Dorado County Invasive Weed Management Group, University of California Cooperative Extension, El Dorado County Department of Agriculture and the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Funding provided by the US Forest Service and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act. USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.



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## Pollinator!

Kathy Keatley Garvey

When you see the blow fly (below), what do you think?

Well, that depends on who you are and what you do--or maybe your earliest negative/positive insect recollections.

If you hate flies, particularly blow flies, and you despise their larvae (maggots), your response is probably "Yecch!"

If you're an artist, you might think, "Look at that metallic green sheen and those red eyes!"

If you're a photographer: "What kind of camera and macro lens did you use?" (Nikon D700, 60mm)

If you're into flowers, you might say "Ah, a New Zealand tea tree--*Leptospermum scoparium*. Fly? What fly? Is there a fly there?"

If you're a beekeeper and see only the *Leptospermum scoparium*: "Manuka honey!"

If you're a medical doctor and treat wounds: "Maggot therapy!"

If you're an entomologist, particularly a forensic entomologist: "Nice!"

And if you've ever visited the [UC Davis Department of Entomology displays](#) at Briggs Hall during the annual campuswide Picnic Day, you're probably thinking "Maggot Art!" and "When's Picnic Day?" Note: this year's Picnic Day is April 21, and yes, you can create [Maggot Art](#) (take a bow, Rebecca O'Flaherty).

However, if you're an entomologist with a keen interest in insect ecology and insect/plant interactions, the blow fly will bring out the "P" word in you: "Pollinator!"

Honey bees, native bees, butterflies, hummingbirds, bats and the like are all pollinators. But so are flies, including syrphid flies and yes, blow flies.

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Kathy Keatley Garvey

## March In The Garden

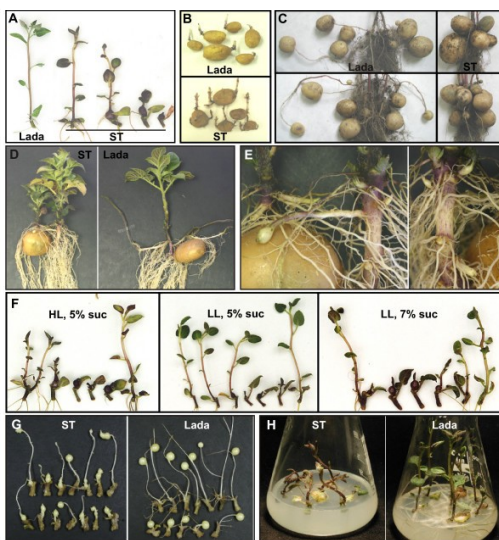
by Linda Hagye, Master Gardener

Spring is usually starting by the beginning of March. It has felt like spring off and on for the last month at least. We don't know what the next week brings: 70 degree weather, hard frost, or snow.

What is certain is that you should be starting your tomatoes and peppers for transplanting when the warmer weather comes and stays with us.

Also mark your calendar for the Master Gardener plant sales in your area. Browse the great selection of vegetables and flowers, talk to some

knowledgeable people, and find a plant you didn't realize you wanted or needed. (I always need a couple more peppers, tomatoes and cucumbers.)



**This is a good time to plant potatoes.** There are several methods to grow potatoes, such as cages, boxes and directly into the garden. Loosen the soil in the area where you are going to plant the potatoes. A great idea would have been to have added compost in the fall and let it breakdown over winter. Create a shallow trench about 6 inches deep. Cut the seed potatoes in half or quarters making sure there are one or two eyes in each piece. Plant these about 12 inches apart in the trench and cover with soil no more than 3-4 inches deep.

You should see green leaves start to appear in about two weeks depending on the soil temperature. When plants are about 6-8" high, hill up the soil around the plants, leaving about 3-4" of plant exposed. Potatoes will develop at the seed potato level and above. Repeat hilling up the soil around the plants again in another 2-3 weeks. Be careful not to damage the roots when hilling up around the plants. If at any point you see potatoes exposed, add more soil to cover them. I add compost as mulch and to hill up around the plants. I have in the past used straw to cover my potatoes but have had more success with the soil.

Keep the soil evenly moist but not wet. Too wet will promote rot and ruin the potatoes.

**Be sure to read about the Codling Moth.** March is the month for putting traps out in your fruit trees. The UC ANR Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website has information about controlling codling moths.

Check out the method described in the IPM Pest Note for making traps at [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7412.html](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7412.html) in the last paragraph under **Mass Trapping**. This won't eliminate all apple damage but should reduced it significantly.



UC Statewide IPM Project  
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## Yellow Starthistle

By John E. Otto, Master Gardener



This time of year is normally when we think positive thoughts about our upcoming spring plantings for beautiful color or delicious eating. But it is also time to take action to eliminate the invasive “Yellow Starthistle” plague.

This noxious (invasive) plant has been waiting all winter long to suck up the ground water and getting ready to bloom into the spiky yellow seed headed monster that is taking over much of our yards, public open space and range lands. The number of yellow starthistle seeds in the soil from last years blooms is directly related to the amount of rainfall the preceding year, and last year (2010-2011) was extremely wet. So expect a large increase in yellow starthistle this year.

**NOW** is the time to start the battle by applying “pre-emergent herbicides”. Pre-emergent herbicides can be applied from late fall to early spring, before the seeds germinate, and it looks like spring is just around the corner. A pre-emergent herbicide for broadleaf weeds is what you need. If you have access to commercial applicators, they can be hired to apply a variety of “selective” and “non-selective” pre-emergent herbicides.



If you are a homeowner you have limited herbicide options, but can still apply the pre-emergent and post-emergent “selective” herbicide Clopyralid, which is marketed by Monterey as “Yellow Starthistle Killer”. The product is available locally and the small container is a 40.90% concentrate of Clopyralid, which should be enough to cover several acres. As with all herbicides, read the labels, directions and apply responsibly.

As the spring warms up, the yellow starthistle begins to suck the water out of the soil leaving less for the rest of the native plant life, and even reducing our aquifer. So if the pre-emergent does not get all the seeds, you can commence the next stage of eradication. As the plant begins to grow (bolt), it can be distinguished by its boxlike stem and blue-greenish color. This is a great time to PULL the plant, roots and all. If you don’t want to pull, then CUT. If you don’t want to cut, then SPRAY with an herbicide containing Glyphosate, a non-selective herbicide.



Here are several choices for more information on yellow starthistle:

Visit the UC Davis Integrated Pest Management website <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/>. Enter “yellow starthistle” in the “search” box (upper right hand corner of the homepage).

Download the Pest Note at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7402.html>

Download a locally prepared four page handout titled “Yellow Starthistle - Brief Homeowner Information Sheet - February 2011” at [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master\\_Gardeners/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners/) in the Gardening Tips section or contact the UCCE Master Gardener office in Amador or El Dorado County for a copy.

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



Most classes are from 9 a.m. – Noon. Please call ahead to confirm locations.

### Amador County

Unless otherwise noted, location for all Amador classes: GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson. Questions? Call 209-223-6838.

#### March

##### 10: Hands-on Seed Starting, Asparagus, and Backyard Chickens

Starting your own seeds is not only cheaper but gives more varieties to grow. You can have top-quality seedlings ready for your garden when you want them, not when the store decides to sell them. The best part is that it's fun, and nothing gets you geared up more for gardening than having a tray of seedlings growing.

We will provide small six-packs and seed starting mix. If you have some containers to contribute, wash them and bring them along. We'll have some free vegetable and flower seeds; feel free to bring some to share.

Learn all about adding the perennial asparagus to your vegetable garden as Master Gardeners teach how to plant and grow asparagus. We'll sell asparagus crowns developed for California. Cost is \$5 for 25 crowns.

Now that you've got your seedlings growing, take the next step and add a small flock of chickens. Fresh eggs from your backyard beat store-bought just like home-grown tomatoes beat ones from the store. Learn the pros and cons of keeping your own chickens.

##### 24: Garden Soil and Not Your Ordinary Vegetables

Join Amador County Master Gardeners as we address garden soils so you can get growing. You'll learn how to build fertile, productive soil and develop an appreciation and understanding of that stuff we walk upon. Learn what you can do right now to get your garden underway.

Next, take your ordinary veggie gardening to extraordinary. We will introduce many vegetables with which you may not be familiar but grow well in our area and are delicious to eat. Some presenters will share seeds and recipes.

### El Dorado County

Unless otherwise noted, location for all El Dorado classes: Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville. Questions? Call 503-621-5543.

#### March

##### 10: Organic Gardening 1

Learn to create a healthy natural environment in your garden. Master Gardener Virginia Feagans will teach you how to have a productive garden without the use of inorganic fertilizers or synthetic pesticides. She will discuss how to group plants and how to encourage natural predators.

##### 17: Organic Gardening II

Master Gardener Virginia Feagans will continue last week's presentation on organic gardening methods. This class will cover how to take care of your soil organically.

##### 24: Backyard Chickens

You might ask, why raise chickens? Join Master Gardener Thorne Barrager as he talks about how easy and inexpensive it is to maintain chickens; how they provide chemical-free bug and weed control in a garden, and how they manufacture one of the world's best fertilizers.

##### 31: Soil and Fertilizers

Learn about the all important plant medium, soil. Master Gardeners Shilo Nielsen & Cindy Young will discuss types of soil, what we find in the foothills, and how it affects everything that is grown.

Learn about the fascinating world of tiny creatures that make their home in the soil and are directly responsible for all plants' health. Amendments, mulches, and fertilizers will be discussed, when you need what and how much, to save money, garden responsibly, and have the best results ever!



[Check out El Dorado Master Gardeners on Facebook.](#)

## How to Make Successful Fair Entries of Preserved Foods, Baked Goods and Confections



Master Food Preserver Mary Groves and the El Dorado County Fair Judge for Baked Goods, Doug Noble, will lead a class for anyone interested in submitting preserved and baked foods entries to the fair. Learn how to show and show off your beautifully preserved products.

Mary will explain how to fill out fair entries forms properly to make sure your entry is in the right category. Both Mary and Doug will explain how a judge evaluates an entry. There's more to it than how it tastes!

**When:** [March 21, 2012, 10:00am to 12 noon](#)  
**Where:** Marshall Building, El Dorado County Fair Grounds



There is no charge for this class and no reservations are required.

Who knows, a blue ribbon could be in your future!

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**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>.



**Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online**

[http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master\\_Gardeners](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners)

- 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

**Got a specific question? Just email us!**  
 Amador: [mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu)  
 El Dorado: [mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu)

Amador & El Dorado Counties Master Gardener Newsletter  
 Editor: Linda Hagye  
 Assistant Editor: Kim Cohen

*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 at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews>.*



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 AND AMADOR/EL DORADO COUNTIES COOPERATING