



# Advice to Grow by...Ask Us! Master Gardener Program

University of California Cooperative Extension 



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Amador/El Dorado County Master Gardener E-News

June 2012

## Master Gardeners At “The Grapest Show On Earth”

Kathy Ruiz, El Dorado County Master Gardener

In keeping with this year’s fair theme, “The Grapest Show on Earth,” Master Gardeners will put on a show of their own with presentations on popular gardening topics sure to interest home gardeners. Master Gardeners will also host an information booth to answer garden-related questions. The booth and presentations are in the Floriculture Building.



On Thursday, June 14th, explore the fascinating art of raising bees at the **Beginning Beekeeping** presentation. Learn how to **Attract Beneficial Insects** to your garden and watch the good bugs help get rid of the bad ones. Tired of mowing, raking and fertilizing your lawn? Learn all about **Lawn Alternatives**.

On Friday, Master Gardeners will kick off the presentations by **Demystifying Drip Irrigation Systems** for you. Let the experts tell you all about designing, implementing and using water conserving drip irrigation systems in your garden and landscape. Don’t pay high prices for limp, flavorless herbs from the grocery store. Learn how easy it is to **Grow your own Culinary Herbs**.



Want to attract **Hummingbirds** to your garden? Learn what to plant to attract them at this presentation. In the **Wildlife Gardening** presentation, learn how to create an environment that is attractive to birds, butterflies, beneficial insects and more while you spend less time on maintenance; leaving you more time to enjoy your garden.

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## Master Gardeners At “The Grapest Show On Earth,” *Continued from Page 1*



Saturday’s presentations start off with **Growing Pumpkins**. Learn the best way to grow pumpkins, perhaps even some giant ones. Discover **Gardening with Deer**, which goes beyond the usual solutions of deer-resistant plants and high fences and provides insights into Black-tail deer behavior and how to improve your chances of having a successful garden. Consider **Sustainable Gardening**. Whether you want to design a new garden or transform an older yard, get tips for landscaping and gardening in an environmentally friendly way that saves you money, too. Learn how to grow

**Citrus** in marginal areas. **Beginning Beekeeping** will also be offered on Saturday.

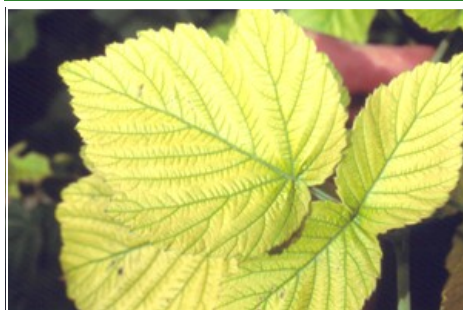


On Sunday, learn to successfully propagate your favorite flowers by sowing and nurturing seeds at the **Propagation** presentation. Explore the art and science of using worms to produce “gardener’s gold” in the **Vermiculture** presentation. See an interesting technique for making your own plant containers at the **Hypertufa** presentation. **Beginning Beekeeping** and **Gardening with Deer** will be offered again on Sunday.

The El Dorado County Fair is June 14 through June 17. [Check the County Fair’s online demonstration schedule](#) for the times of each mini-presentation and then schedule your fair day around your favorite topics. We’ll see you at the fair!

\*

## About Fertilizing



Yellowing Leaf Indicating Chlorosis

Think twice before you fertilize. Too much fertilizer is as bad as too little. Pale leaves indicate they need nitrogen, yellowing indicates chlorosis.

Feed long-blooming perennials and shrubs. Yellowed leaves on plants (azaleas and gardenias in particular at this time) often mean they are starved for iron. Apply chelated iron when this occurs. Feed those acid-lovers. Use controlled release fertilizers for continuously healthy plants.

A dose of fish emulsions will promote beautiful flowers and foliage on fuchsias & tuberous begonias. Young trees need nitrogen or 16-20-0 if phosphorous was not included when planted. On roses that are re-bloomers, remove faded flowers and feed with a complete fertilizer. Feed citrus and avocado trees with a good citrus food. Lightly fertilize vegetables. A controlled release fertilizer encourages steady growth/good health.

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## Oak Trees Dropping Leaves



Oak Galls Caused by Andricus Wasps Laying Eggs



Recently our offices have received a number of phone calls from landowners expressing concerns that the leaves on their oak trees are turning yellow or brown and dropping. Our farm advisor, Scott Oneto, visited several sites and received a number of pictures from others. In all instances the trees have been interior live oaks. The cause of the leaf drop? Stem galls.

Stem galls are caused by an Andricus wasp that lays its eggs in the stem of the tree, causing the tree to create a gall on the stem. The larvae then feed in the gall, later emerging as an adult. As a result of this feeding and the growth of the gall, the stem will often die beyond the gall.

These gall wasps are native insects and don't cause significant harm to the trees, however excessive galls will result in premature leaf drop and terminal branch dieback. There should not be any long term damage to the trees.

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## Search and Destroy: Snails And Slugs!



Snails and slugs are among the most bothersome pests in many gardens and landscapes. The brown garden snail, *Cornu aspersum* (formerly *Helix aspersa*), is the most common snail causing problems in California gardens.

It was introduced from France during the 1850s for use as food. What started out as our food is now eating a lot of our food. Escargot got to go!

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### Search And Destroy Snails And Slugs!, Continued from Page 3

Snails and slugs are most active at night and on cloudy or foggy days. On sunny days they seek hiding places out of the heat and bright light. Often the only clues to their presence are their silvery trails and plant damage. In areas with mild winters, such as southern coastal locations, snails and slugs can be active throughout the year.

Controlling snails and slugs without chemicals is possible, with patience and persistence. The UC Integrated Pest Management site describes several trapping methods.



Position raised boards, flower pots, and inverted melon rinds throughout your garden and landscape. Construct wooden traps using 12- by 15-inch boards (or any easy-to-handle size) raised off the ground by 1-inch runners. The runners make it easy for the pests to crawl underneath. Scrape off the accumulated snails and slugs daily and destroy them; crushing is the most common method, or feed them to your chickens. Don't use salt to destroy snails and slugs, it will increase soil salinity.

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### Do You Have Foaming Plants?



It can be quite disconcerting to admire your beautiful plants in your garden and discover that they have pockets of white foam developing. Is it fighting off an infection? Does it have a disease that will spread to your other plants? Did someone spit on the plant? Did someone spit on all of your plants?

While the foam may look disgusting, it is most likely just the harmless result of immature spittle bugs feeding.

Adult spittlebugs look like leafhoppers and readily jump or fly when disturbed. Females lay small eggs in rows in hidden parts of the plant, such as the sheath between leaves and stems. The presence of immature spittlebugs is easily recognized by the frothy white mass that nymphs surround themselves with while feeding.

Nymphs undergo about five molts and may be orange, yellow, or green. More than one nymph may be found in a single spittle mass.

How do you get rid of them? There isn't a general control method for spittle bug nymphs because they don't cause much damage. They mainly impact the aesthetic appearance of your plant. If the foam bothers you, gently spray the plant with water to remove the foam.

\*



Adult Spittle Bug

## New Master Food Preserver Program In Amador And Calaveras Counties!



On May 1, 2012, the inaugural class of Master Food Preservers for Amador and Calaveras counties completed their UCCE research based training. Like the Master Gardener program, Master Food Preservers are agents of the University of California and work through the UC Cooperative Extension to educate our community. Their focus is on the safe practices of food preservation and food safety.

We're very excited to offer the following services during the first year of the Amador and Calaveras Master Food Preservers:

- Free classes on core food preservation techniques: basic water bath canning, pressure canning, dehydrating, freezing, pickling, and making jams & jellies
- Free pressure canner testing
- Information booth at local farmers' markets
- Articles in local newspapers
- Expansion of the monthly eNewsletter offered by El Dorado County

Our first public event was at the Calaveras County Fair from May 17-20. Look for us next at the Calaveras Senior Center on July 7 from 10-noon at our Jams & Jellies class, and at the Amador County Fair starting on July 26.



Please visit the [UCCE Central Sierra Master Food Preserver website](http://ucanr.edu) for more information about our program or [sign up for the online MFP eNewsletter](http://ucanr.edu) to be the first to hear about upcoming activities in Amador and Calaveras counties.

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## Get Ready For Fire Season!

*Cathy Koos Breazeal, Amador County Master Gardener and Executive Director, Amador Fire Safe Council and Lockwood FPD Volunteer*



This time of year, my office phone rings off the hook with last minute request for chipping or defensible space work. Right now, I am out of low income senior defensible space money, but still have a few bucks left in the chipper account.

So what should you be looking at for fire safety right now? Look in two places - the defensible space perimeter around your house and your driveway access from your street.

### Around the House

In that first 30 feet around the house, keep it clean, green and lean. No need for a xeriscape, though! Keep the landscaping

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**Get Ready For Fire Season!**, *Continued from Page 5*

around your house well irrigated, cleaned of dead twigs and branches. Look for plants that have soft foliage and keep it low growing. Further out from the house in the 30 foot perimeter, keep the grass cut down to 3 - 4 inches, and limb up the branches of trees so there is a 10 foot clearance between the ground and the lowest hanging branch. By removing those low limbs, you remove the ladder fuels that can allow a fire to climb into the crown. Space your trees so they are at least 10 feet apart, or in groupings with 10 feet between each grouping. There is no need to rake down to mineral soil here - just keep duff or grass to no deeper than 3 or 4 inches.



Ice plant (*Delosperma cooperi*),  
a perennial, succulent groundcover

In that outer 30 to 100 foot perimeter, keep the branches limbed up, remove ladder fuels, and keep the grass cut to 4 inches. When it looks like a park, you have done it!

Check this UCCE website for a couple of excellent fire resistant plant listings according to elevation, [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Resources\\_Publications/Publications/Fire\\_-\\_Wildland\\_Urban\\_Interface/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Resources_Publications/Publications/Fire_-_Wildland_Urban_Interface/). Check the Amador Fire Safe Council for defensible space information, [www.amadorfiresafe.org](http://www.amadorfiresafe.org).

**Driveway and Approach to House**

Like a good realtor will tell you, it's all about "curb appeal!" If we have a fire go more than a couple acres, firefighters from outside your area will be coming to help. They don't know your neighborhood and have to make a snap judgment at the end of your driveway. That judgment will be the decision to run up and try to save your house, or continue on to the next driveway that looks more savable. Gone are the days when firefighters will risk their lives to save your house.

If a firefighter cannot see your house from the road, they most likely will not go up your driveway. They don't know if you have a water tank or swimming pool up there; they don't know if you have a good turnaround. Make it apparent - open up that driveway canopy. Make sure you have a Knox box if you have a locked gate. Precious time will be lost if they have to get the big engine and yank your gate off with the chain.

**Signage**

If you have a water tank on your property, put a sign at the end of your driveway by the street. Be sure it has the proper fittings (call me if you are not sure). In recent reviews of roads in the Pioneer, Pine Grove and Volcano areas, I was astonished at how many homes do not have visible address signs at the curb, or the sign only faces one direction. Responders may be coming from a different direction than you expect, so that address needs to be clearly visible from both directions. As a test, drive up your road at 3 a.m. in a snow storm - is your address visible? If you have a good defensible space around your home, I have a small supply of free reflective address signs available. Be Fire Safe this summer - the fire season promises to be early and long.

\*

## June's List

Linda Hagye, Amador County Master Gardener

### Prepare For Fire Season

June is on us and we are into fire season. I have my garden ready for my summer transplants but my full attention is on my 100 feet of defensible space.

Burning is not an option and mowing needs to be done very early with an active hose near the area for a quick hosing of possible sparks. At my house it takes two of us to mow; one does the mowing the other hoses the area to catch any sparks.

In addition to what Cathy mentioned in her [Get Ready For Fire Season](#) article on page 5, here are some more tips on defensible space:

- Clean out your gutters now.
- Dried leaves and twigs can catch fire quickly with just a spark. When you remove branches up to 10 feet on your trees, don't remove more than  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the height of the tree.
- Dispose of vegetation and debris in a safe legal manner, such as composting.



### Cultivating Yarrow (*Achillea millefolium californica*)

At 1800 foot elevation the yarrow is starting to bloom. Yarrow is one of the most carefree and generously blooming native plants. It makes excellent, long-lasting cut flowers and may be dried for year round bouquets. It has fine, feathery, aromatic gray or green leaves and white flower heads that form flattish clusters. It is drought tolerant, but likes a little water now and then. Yellow and white varieties are deer resistant. Cut back plants after they bloom; divide when crowded. The plant is fire resistant.



Yarrow

Native yarrows are not very different from those that grow throughout the world, but most California yarrows are white. Hybrids are available in a variety of colors and range from a few inches tall to some that are four or five feet tall. Plant them once and they'll bloom and spread over time- you'll have some to share.

**Important Note:** The Yarrow plant can be toxic to pets and livestock and can also become invasive. For toxicity details check out ASPCA at <http://www.aspc.org/pet-care/poison-control/plants/yarrow.html>.



### Composting Animal Manure

County's horsemen are an excellent source of animal manure. The thing to remember about animal manure is that nitrogen is in the urine, and phosphorus is in the solids. Confined animals produce hotter manure, hopefully with few weed seeds. Avoid manure from animals that eat meat: pigs, dogs and cats. (With pig manure, if you know the pigs were only fed grains, it is safe to use.) Be sure to compost manure for six months before using it in your garden.

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**June's List, Continued from Page 7**

**Bugs Bugging You**

May and the beginning of June are the months when insects migrate from the drying weeds to our still lush gardens.

Warm season seedlings, beans, eggplant, peppers, basil, zinnias, are subject to attack by earwigs, leafhoppers, sow-bugs, the true bugs and others. Row covers and potting seedlings on elevated benches provide mechanical protection. Next year, planting seeds in March and June will avoid much of the insect/seedling problem.



Left: Leaf Hopper  
Below: Earwig



Sow Bug

**Helpful Gardening Books**

Here are some great resource books for your garden and landscaping. They aid you in identifying what pests you have, what weeds are growing in your pastures, and what insects out there can actually help you in your garden. Stop by your UCCE office and look them over. If you are interested in a certain book, call first as supplies are limited.

- [Weeds of the West](#)
- [Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs](#)
- [Pests of the Garden and Small Farm](#)
- [Tree Fruit Pest ID & Monitoring Cards](#)
- [Natural Enemies Handbook](#)







## 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.

#### July

##### 14: Composting and Vermiculture

There is no better way to improve your soil and the health of your garden than to add compost to the soil. This class will teach you about the various methods of making compost from yard waste and clippings then how and when to apply it to your garden. If you start applying compost to your garden you will find you really have a green thumb after all.

The class will also teach you about using worms to compost household fruit and vegetable waste. The resulting worm compost is amazing material for your garden.

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### Enter the Amador County Fair!

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The Amador County Fair is July 26-29. The deadline to turn in entry forms for most items, including ag-horticulture (veggies, herbs, fruits, etc.), floriculture, preserved and baked foods, and scarecrows (!) is Saturday, July 7 at 6 pm.

Look at your garden and pamper your finest plants and produce to get them ready for the fair. [Click here for exhibit rules and schedules.](#)

### El Dorado County

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

#### June

##### 23: Pets, Pesticides & Poisonous Plants

Master Gardener Heidi Napier will cover the risks to pets of various pesticides and poisonous plants, which pesticides are safe and which are not. She will also cover flea and tick control.

##### 30: Attracting Beneficial Insects

Want to cut back or eliminate using costly and potentially destructive pesticides? You can do it by luring beneficial predator insects to your property. Learn how to turn your garden into an environmentally friendly habitat for your plants, animals, and other beneficial (pollinators) insects. Heck, us humans would benefit too or so says Master Gardener Michael Freitas as he covers this topic.

#### July

##### 7: Water-Efficient Gardening

Summer is in full swing and most of us have started irrigating our gardens and landscape plantings. Attend this class lead 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.

Check out the El Dorado Master Gardener Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Dorado-County-Master-Gardeners/164653119129>.



## New IPM Pest Note: Removing Honey Bee Swarms and Established Hives



A mass of honeybees in a tree or on part of your house can be unsettling. But a swarm doesn't have to be dangerous and can be taken care of quickly if you take the right steps and make the right calls.

The UC Integrated Pest Management program has recently published a new Pest Note on removing bee swarms. This publication explains what's happening during a swarm, when to be concerned and when not to worry, and who to call to remove it, depending on the swarm location. There are several Beekeeper Associations in the Central Sierra Foothills who can help you find someone to remove the swarm.

If you ever encounter a honey bee swarm on your property, call your local Master Gardener office for the contact information of the nearest Beekeeper Association to relocate the swarm instead of automatically calling an exterminator to destroy them.



[Click here to download the new pest note](#) from the ANR Catalog. \*

### 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  
 Layout Editor: Kim Cohen

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### Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online

[http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardeners](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/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!

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