



Carpenter Bees - Why Should You Love Them?

Sharlet Elms, UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Have you ever seen what you thought was a bumblebee but it had a shiny, bare abdomen?

Was it colored a metallic blue-black with greenish or purplish reflections; really quite pretty?

Well...if you did...it wasn't actually a bumblebee, but rather, a carpenter bee and there are a lot of them.

There are over 400 known species! They are often found in and around homes and some people find them quite frightening since the male will aggressively fly into the faces of unsuspecting homeowners trying to intimidate them into leaving! However, the male carpenter bee has no stinger; it's all a bluff! The female can sting but is nonaggressive and will usually sting only when threatened by handling or injury.

Carpenter bees are considered a beneficial insect. They are solitary bees, but like a lot of solitary bee species they don't mind aggregating in small numbers. The female hollows out a tunnel in wood, such as southern yellow pine, white pine, California redwood, cedar, Douglas fir, cypress, mimosa, mulberry, ash and pecan trees. They generally will target sound but untreated woods, hollow a tube about 1/2 inch in diameter and 6 to 10 inches long, and then partition it into several chambers.

The bees do not 'eat' the wood but leave the sawdust outside the tunnel or use it to help partition the tunnel into chambers. Often the mother and daughters will nest next to each other or near other females. They will use old unoccupied tunnels if they are

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Male Carpenter Bee Robbing Nectar From Salvia

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Contact Your Local Master Gardener

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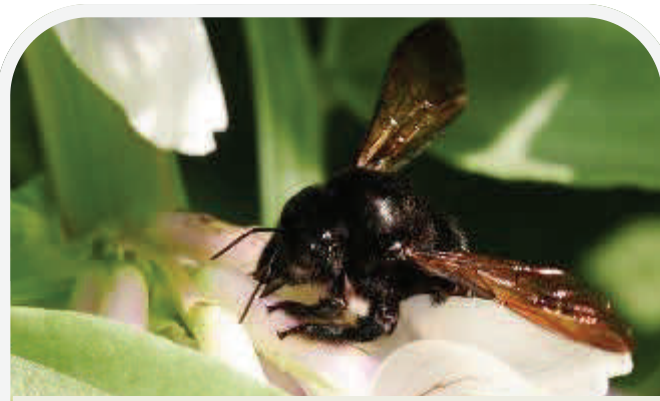
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Carpenter Bees - Why Should You Love Them? *(Continued from page 1)*

available, or they will use a common entrance with tunnels branching off in different directions.

They do not usually cause serious structural damage to buildings, although if you have untreated wood it is often targeted. The bees will leave behind unsightly entrance holes and stains. If enough years pass and the building isn't repainted and cracks and depressions are not repaired, the structure could be weakened by the tunnels, which can extend up to 10 feet into structurally significant beams.



Female Carpenter Bee Robbing Nectar By Splitting Corolla

(c) Kathy Keatley Garvey

Carpenter bees overwinter as adults and produce only one generation per year. The process from egg to adult takes 3 months. The adults often overwinter in the tunnels created for the eggs and pupa.

Why should you encourage them? They are excellent pollinators in your garden and like bumblebees, are early morning pollinators. They like open faced flowers, such as eggplants and tomatoes.

Due to their size they cannot enter the tube-like flowers such as penstemons and salvias. However, they have developed ways of robbing nectar from tube-like flowers by using their mouth parts to cut a slit in the corolla and stealing the nectar without doing their 'duty' of pollination! Because they can 'buzz' pollinate, (remember buzz pollination from last month - shiver their thoracic muscles and get dry pollen grains out of the flowers anthers) they are very efficient pollinators of eggplant, tomato and other vegetables. In the Philippines they are mass bred to be used in farm pollination services!

To keep these efficient pollinators around and reduce the likelihood of them damaging your home or outbuildings, provide wood planks in areas around your flower or vegetable garden. The wood should be a soft, untreated and weathered. Replace it as it begins to decay. Keep your house and outbuildings painted and in good repair, filling in cracks or depressions with caulk or steel wool and repaint if you see signs of carpenter bees settling in.

Review [IPM publication #7417](#) on the [UC IPM website](#) for further information on the carpenter bee. If you love to garden and are looking for ways to increase that yield of tomatoes or more eggplants, consider this helpful bee as a way to get more from your garden patch!

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Frost Damaged Plants: To Prune Or Not To Prune?



As the temperature and snowline drop, it's time to protect your plants from freezing. But did some plants already experience frost damage?

Your first reaction may be to grab the pruners and cut off the damaged stems and branch tips.

Resist the temptation!

Once new growth appears in the spring, then start pruning. Why? Because we still have a lot of winter left and the

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Frost Damaged Plants: To Prune Or Not To Prune? *(Continued from page 2)*

damaged plant parts can help protect the healthy plant parts next to it.

Don't expose the healthy plant tissue at the cut to a future freeze. You may not be able to see the full extent of the damage at this time. You might even remove too much live wood. Dead, unsightly leaves could offer some protection.

Leave the frozen plant alone and wait to prune when the danger of frost has passed.

Want to learn more? Please visit the [University of California - California Agriculture website](#) to gain additional insight.



Frost Damaged Citrus Tree

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Myths And Truths About Keeping Cut Flowers Fresh

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County

Whether your sweetheart gives you roses for Valentine's Day or you pick your own posies, we all want our cut flowers to look their best and last as long as possible.

There are three things your cut flowers need for a long life: water, food, and a clean container. The water, obviously, keeps the flowers hydrated. Food, in the form of sugar, is necessary for continued cell metabolism. A clean container avoids harmful microorganisms that would block the uptake of water and food.

Start with a deep squeaky clean vase. Always wash your vases between bouquets, either by hand with warm soapy water or in the dishwasher. Avoid using containers with nooks and crannies that can harbor bacteria and fungus that will clog the conductive tissues of your flowers. Fill the vase with an acidic solution that has food and a preservative. The acid improves the plant's ability to take up water and food and the preservative prevents growth of harmful bacteria and fungi. The florist's packet that comes with the bouquet is good, but be sure to mix it with the correct amount of water.



If you want to make your own mixture, carefully follow the recipe or you can do more harm than good. A couple of years ago I decided to make my own solution for a newly cut Christmas tree, but could not find the recipe. I did it by memory, just adding a splash of bleach. Two days later, the needles turned pale and started falling off! Obviously I had used too much bleach.

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Myths And Truths About Keeping Cut Flowers Fresh (Continued from page 3)

Here are two recipes that work:

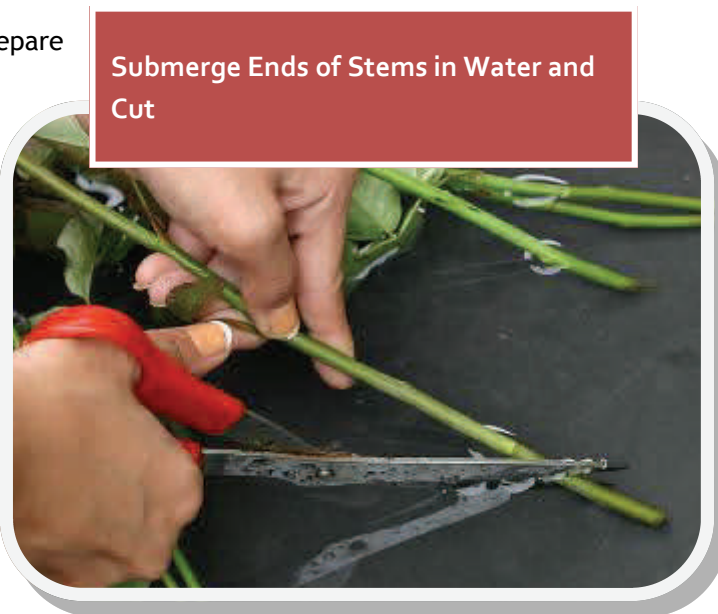
- Lemon-lime soft drink mixture: Mix 1 cup regular clear soda (not diet), 3 cups warm water, and 1/4 teaspoon household bleach.
- Lemon juice mixture: Add 2 tablespoons lemon juice, 1 tablespoon sugar, and ¼ teaspoon household bleach into 1 quart of warm water.

Before you put your flowers in the vase you will want to prepare them. There is no reason to have foliage beneath the water as it will only decay, so remove it. The foliage above the water line is important for transpiration and it looks good, so leave it on the stem. The end of the stems may be dried out and sealed or could have an air bubble. Either one will block the uptake of water and food. Submerge the ends of the stems in a bowl of water and, keeping them submerged, cut at least 1/2" off the ends and don't dillydally putting the flowers into your vase that is already filled with the lukewarm preservative solution.

Keeping your flowers cool will keep them fresh longer. Avoid direct sun and keep them away from sources of heat. Putting them in the refrigerator or another cold place at night will extend their life, but that sounds a little too compulsive for me.

What are the most common myths? Some people think that putting aspirin, diet soda, or vinegar in the water to acidify it will extend the life, but testing has shown that they don't. Acidity is only one part of the preservative solution and may even hurt when used alone. Others think that the copper in a penny will act as a preservative, but it is not soluble and has no effect. Another myth is to crush or burn the end of the stem. This only destroys the water-conducting tissues, so always make a clean cut with a knife or scissors under water. You can learn more about extending the life of your flowers at <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu/pdf/8113.pdf>. Enjoy!

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In The Hen House

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County



Each month I will write an article about backyard chickens. Normally, I would have started with the obvious question, "Which came first, the chicken or the egg?" But I've decided to start with the worst first. What to do with a sick, dying, or dead chicken? That way we'll get the unpleasant part of raising chickens out of the way and we can focus on the fun stuff in future articles.

Last month the [UC California Agriculture Journal](#) talked about the increase in backyard poultry in the state and the concern that diseases in backyard flocks can spread to the commercial poultry industry. A survey of backyard poultry owners showed that 98% of us never take our chickens to the vet. We diagnosis and treat

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In The Hen House *(Continued from page 4)*

our birds on our own or with advice from other chicken owners.

Because diseases can spread rapidly, the California Department of Food and Agriculture wants to monitor the diseases that exist in backyard chickens as an early warning system for the commercial operations. To do this [California Animal Health and Food Safety \(CAHFPS\) lab](#) offers a free hotline for sick birds at 866-922-2473.

Just call with a list of your chicken's symptoms and a veterinarian will help you diagnose the disease. If your chicken is dying or dead, you can take it to CAHFPS for a free necropsy and diagnosis. The closest lab is at UC Davis. Call the lab at 530-752-8700 to get hours and directions.

I hope you won't ever have to use these resources, but it's nice to know they are there if you need them.



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Goldfinches In The Kitchen Garden

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County

When most people see holes in the leaves of their plants, they think insects! If the holes are big, they think deer!

But it could be Goldfinches, those darling little yellow birds we happily feed sunflower seeds and thistle seeds. They also enjoy some greens in their diet and find your kitchen garden a perfect place for a snack.

Most often I see the damage on sunflower leaves. They will eat and eat, until all that is left are the veins. They also like the seeds and leaves of most of the plants in your kitchen garden, including the flowering plants. Some gardeners mistakenly think it is insect damage and get out the spray. This is not only a waste of time and money, but there's no point in adding insecticide to your garden for no purpose.

You may be thinking that it can't be Goldfinches because you've never seen them in your garden. They are stealthy! A small flock will quickly fly in, dine, and leave without you seeing them.

Before you get out the shotgun, these little guys aren't all bad. Weed seeds are their main food, and insects, such as aphids, make up a small part of their diet. Most of us are willing to put up with a few holes in our plants for the pleasure of sharing our garden with such a beautiful bird.



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From Seed To Serving: Asparagus

Linda Hagye, UCCE Master Gardener and Master Food Preserver of Amador County

Asparagus is a member of the lily family. The crown of the plant sends up spears, called ferns when open, that are edible, during the spring and early summer. A well cared for asparagus plant can provide spears for about 15 years without having to be replaced.

Asparagus is a nutrient-dense food high in Folic Acid and a good source of potassium, fiber, vitamin B6, Vitamins A and C and thiamin. This delicious item has no fat, contains no cholesterol and is low in sodium. (What you put on it, cook it in, etc., does change that.)

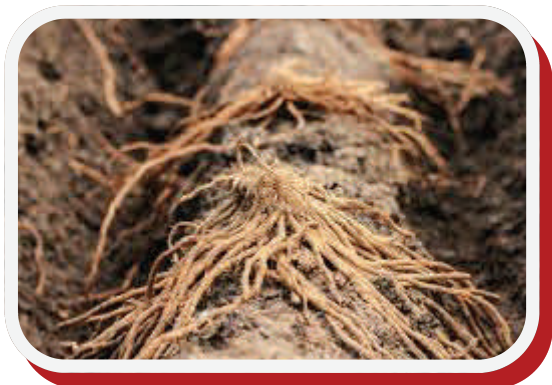
Where To Buy Asparagus

Asparagus can be grown from seed but you can make it easier on yourself and purchase root crowns from your local nursery. This saves you a year of waiting and time-consuming babysitting. The crowns are available at your nursery late in January. (If your soil is too wet, don't plant the crowns; cover the roots with moistened mulch to keep them from drying out.)

Planting

Plant in fall or early winter in milder winters, or in early spring with colder winters. There is no advantage to planting the crowns in cold soggy soil; they grow when the soil is above 50 degrees. Plant asparagus in an area that will not be bothered when you till the rest of your garden in the fall. Asparagus ferns grow tall, so plant it where it will not shade your other plants.

Asparagus Crowns



Plant the crowns in a furrow no deeper than 5 or 6 inches. Apply 1lb of 0-46-0 or 0-20-0 fertilizer in the bottom of the furrow. Set the crown on top of the fertilizer. (The fertilizer will not burn the crowns.) Space the crowns 1½ feet apart in the rows, spacing rows five feet apart. Wide rows allow for the growing fern and also aids in rapid drying of the fern to help prevent the onset of fungus diseases.

Asparagus is drought tolerant but does need to be watered if there is not enough rainfall.

Harvest

The outdoor temperature determines how much time will occur between each picking. Early in the season there could be 4 to 5 days between spear harvests. As the days and nights warm up they could be picked as often as every 24 hours.

Do not harvest the asparagus the year that you plant it. Let it grow. It is producing food for the plant and the crown for next year's production. The year after planting you can harvest several times throughout a three week period, then let the plants continue to grow.

To harvest, snap off 6 to 8 inch long spears with tight tips. Do not cut asparagus below the soil as this could injure other buds on the crown. Try to snap or cut at an angle to allow for water run-off.



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From Seed To Serving: Asparagus *(Continued from page 6)*

Toughness of the spear is related to the tightness of the spear tip. The tighter the tip, the more tender the spear is.

Storing

Asparagus is very perishable and should be harvested in the morning when air temperatures are cool. After picking immerse the spears in ice-cold water to remove heat, drain the water and place the spears in plastic bags. Store the spears in the refrigerator at 38 to 40 degrees.

I store our asparagus by cutting of the bottom just a little and storing them in the refrigerator in a plastic container that holds them upright in clean water. I change the water every other day to keep it fresh. The asparagus keeps for a week or so.

Cooking Tips

Cook fresh asparagus in a small amount of boiling water until tender. Fresh asparagus will be crisp tender in 5 to 8 minutes.

To stir-fry just cut spears diagonally in 1/2 inch pieces, leaving the tips whole. Add to hot oil in a skillet at medium heat. Stir constantly until tender crisp, about 3 to 5 minutes. Learn more at the [UCCE Small Farm Program website's Asparagus section](#).



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2014 Master Food Preserver Training



The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Central Sierra invites adults interested in helping others learn about safe home food preservation to apply to train as a Master Food Preserver (MFP) volunteer. UCCE Master Food Preserver volunteers learn research-based information and then share that knowledge with our community in the Central Sierra counties through public classes, community events, and newsletters.

Classes consist of approximately 1 hour of lecture and 3-4 hours of hands-on lab. Once training is completed, the new volunteers will be certified Master Food Preservers, agents of the University of California.

El Dorado County Training
<p>Training classes begin:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> March 1 and meet consecutively for 12 weeks with graduation on May 17. <p>Two separate training sessions are offered on Saturdays and Tuesdays.</p> <p>The training fee is \$85; payment is due before classes begin. Certified UCCE Master Food Preservers of El Dorado County are required to volunteer at least 50 hours during their first year, and then 35 hours annually. Highest priority for applicants is given to residents of El Dorado county.</p>

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2014 El Dorado County Master Food Preserver Training *(Continued from page 7)*



Amador/Calaveras County Training

The 2014 Master Food Preserver training classes will be on:

- **Mondays, March 24 through June 9**

All classes are from 3:30 - 7:30 pm. Our lab classes will be in Valley Springs and non-lab classes will be in Jackson.

Since the Master Food Preserver program is fairly new to Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties, we encourage prospective volunteers to attend one of our orientation meetings to learn about:

- the Master Food Preserver Program
- our training class schedule
- our community involvement
- your participation requirements.

The two orientation meetings are:

- **Monday, February 3**, from 4-5pm at the UCCE office in Jackson, or
- **Monday, February 10**, from 5-6pm at the Calaveras Senior Center in San Andreas.

RSVP for either session with Robin Cleveland at 530-621-5528 or rkcleveland@ucanr.edu.

The training fee is \$125; payment is due before classes begin. *(We have to cover our training room rental fee.)*

Certified UCCE Master Food Preservers of Amador/Calaveras County are required to volunteer at least 50 hours during their first year, and then 25 hours annually.

Highest priority for applicants is given to residents of Amador, Calaveras and Tuolumne counties.

For more information and to apply, visit http://ucanr.edu/be_mfp.

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Thought For The Day

Flowers always make people better, happier, and more helpful; they are sunshine, food and medicine for the soul.
- Luther Burbank





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



Most classes are from 9am – Noon.

Please call ahead to confirm locations.

Click on the class title to go to our public website and schedule an email reminder for the class.

Amador County

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

February

15: Controlling Starthistle & Grafting Fruit Trees

Star thistle control is a year round task. What can be done about this awful weed this time of the year? Come and find out during the first part of this class.

During the second half of the class, participate in a “hands-on” clinic covering grafting techniques for home gardeners. Master Gardener Dennis Miller will demonstrate whip, tongue and cleft grafts. He will explain bud grafts. A variety of fruit tree scions will be available.

22: Pruning & Grafting Grapes

Do you have a small home vineyard? Master Gardeners at this hands-on class will demonstrate head pruning, spur pruning, and grafting on live grapevines.

Nua Dair Vineyard is hosting the class, located at 13825 Willow Creek Road in Ione. Bring hand by-pass pruners or small loppers to practice the new skills you’ll learn.

[Download the full 2014 Amador County schedule.](#)

 Check out the [UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County Facebook page!](#)



El Dorado County

Unless otherwise noted, the location for all El Dorado County classes is the Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville. Questions? Call 503-621-5512.

February

1: The Art of Growing Succulents

Succulents are water saving plants at their best. Learn how to properly water, grow and feed them. Strategies to prevent your succulents from freezing will be offered. The class will offer hands on succulent propagation demonstrations. Take home cuttings will be available.

8: Beekeeping for the Backyard

Want to do something to improve your gardens and help the world at the same time? Consider keeping bees! This will class introduce you to beekeeping, explain the current state of bees, how bees affect your everyday life, and the process of maintaining a hive or two.

15: Spring & Summer Vegetables

It’s time to prepare your garden for delicious spring and summer vegetables. Master Gardener Zack Dowell will discuss garden plant selection, planting times, site selection, soil preparation, proper seed planting techniques, and pest management.

22: Worms & Worm Bins

Join Master Gardeners Merry Campbell, Gail Fulbeck, and Cindy Young for this presentation on how to use these hardworking friends of all gardeners, the worms. Learn how worms can rapidly break down kitchen waste to make worm compost, one of the best organic fertilizers possible. Covered also will be the types of worms needed, how to harvest the compost and how to set up a worm bin.

[Download the schedule for the first six months of 2014.](#)

Check out the [El Dorado County Master Gardener Facebook page!](#)



Master Food Preservers Classes



Amador/Calaveras County 10:00 am - Noon

Saturday, February 8: Preserving Fish and Game

Location: Amador County GSA Bldg., 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson

Are you a hunter or fisherman? Or is there one in your house who brings home fresh game and fish that needs to be preserved? Come to this class and learn a variety of techniques for preserving your fish and game including marinating, smoking, pressure canning and freezing.

The class is free and no reservations are required. Call 209-223-6857 for more information.

El Dorado County

MFP public classes will resume in July. Master Food Preservers are available to answer home food preservation questions; leave a message at (530) 621-5506 or email edmp@ucdavis.edu. Sign up to receive our Master Food Preservers E-Newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mfpnews/>. [Find us on Facebook, too!](#)

<p>Pest Notes</p> <p>Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local UCCE Master Gardener office.</p> <p>To explore the Pest Notes on the UC Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website, go to http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu.</p>	<p>Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online</p> <p>http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information about Master Gardeners and how to become one • List of public classes • Calendar of Master Gardener events • Useful links to gardening websites • Home gardening publications
<p>Amador & El Dorado Counties Master Gardener Newsletter Editors: Janice Johnson, Sharlet Elms Layout Editor: Kim Cohen</p> <p><i>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.</i></p>	<p>Got a specific question? Just email us! Amador: mgamador@ucdavis.edu El Dorado: mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu</p>



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The University of California working in cooperation with County Government and the USDA.