



Fall 2020

Fostering awareness of successful, research-based gardening practices within our communities.

We are the UC Master Gardeners of Amador and El Dorado counties. Our eNews is issued quarterly, providing information and articles relating to the gardening experience in our areas. Articles in this issue include: Compost on Rangelands, Turkey Talk, Time to Plant Roses (Heritage Rose Garden), Community Resource, Sherwood Demonstration Garden Update, and a Pest Alert.

Compost on Rangelands - Studying the effects of a one-time application of compost to annual rangelands

By Scott Oneto, University of California Cooperative Extension Farm Advisor

As gardeners, we know the value of compost. Many of us use it every day. From saving kitchen scraps to raking leaves and saving every green and brown material in our yard, nothing goes to waste. Why, because these are the ingredients of compost. Compost is like gold to a gardener. We rely on it for enriching our soil and making our plants thrive. Even farmers know the value of compost as many of them use it in row crops and in perennial crops like orchards and vineyards.

There is one sector of agriculture where we are just beginning to understand the potential value of using compost and that is rangelands. Rangelands cover more than half of California's land mass. These grasslands are comprised of mostly exotic annual grasses and forbs from the Mediterranean and are often some of the poorest agricultural soils in terms of fertility. Recent studies have shown a direct benefit from the one-time application of compost to rangelands, including increases in water holding capacity, forage productivity, and carbon sequestration (Silver et al 2010, Ryals and Silver 2013). Based



on these preliminary studies, this project is testing the one-time addition of compost to annual rangelands in an area that currently lacks localized data. By adding compost to the soil, we hope to see an increase in both soil fertility and water holding capacity which will ultimately increase the ability of desirable vegetation to be more resilient to climate variability and better able to compete against noxious weeds. In addition, the added fertility will make desirable forage more nutritious and more abundant for livestock, ultimately resulting in a financial benefit to the producer.



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40 years of volunteer service!



In 1980, the first UC Master Gardener Programs were established in Riverside and Sacramento counties. The [UC Master Gardener Program](#) received official recognition as a statewide program in 2002 and currently operates in 52 of California's 58 counties. Since the program's inception, volunteers have logged more than 5 million hours in service to California gardeners. In the words of our UC Master Gardener Program Director, Missy Gable: "Our volunteers continue to set us apart. With the continued support and commitment from volunteers, UC, and local communities, the program will continue to grow and support gardeners across the state."

Let's Talk Turkey

By Pauline Atkins, UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

We have all seen them, lurking around the foothills in oak hardwood and conifer forests that border on open spaces, such as pastures, fields, orchards, vineyards, and marshes; Wild Turkeys (*Meleagris gallopavo*)! As Thanksgiving approaches, here are a few fun facts about our feathered neighbors.



Where did these big birds come from, and how did they get their name? The wild turkey is one of the only native North American animals that have been domesticated. In the 1500's, Spanish explorers and traders introduced the tasty fowl from Mexico, to the people of Europe. Confusion ensued as to where the bird, which looked similar to an English guinea fowl, had originated. In error, it was believed that the bird was from the Turkish Empire, so it became "a Turkey". Thanks to mistaken identities and miscommunication, the symbol of the Pilgrims first Thanksgiving feast is one of the most international of birds when it comes to its name.

As American history marched on, Benjamin Franklin proposed that the wild turkey should replace the American bald eagle as our country's national bird. He felt that the turkey was a "bird of courage". A majority of his fellow Founding Fathers did not share his opinion and the American bald eagle remained on our national seal.

What do wild turkeys do all day? Well, they eat, walk, talk, dust, preen, and roost for the night. Let's start with their preferred eating habits that can impact gardeners. They are opportunistic foragers, scratching in leaf litter and dirt, chasing bugs and milling for seeds. Turkeys are omnivorous. Included in their diet are nuts, berries, grapes, grass, sedges, grain, insects, and small reptiles. According to the University of California Integrated Pest Management program, turkeys can be problematic in vineyards and home gardens. Grapes are especially tasty to turkeys. Habitat control would consist of fencing, netting, noise frightening devices, mylar streamers, or scare balloons.

In their hunt for food and water, turkeys can walk a mile or two a day. As they stroll along in a flock, or rafter, they communicate with each other by gobbling, clucking, and even purring. They have 28 different calls including an alarm call and a mating call that are so loud, they can be heard for up to a mile away. Turkeys can fly for short distances. At night, they fly up into trees to roost as protection from ground predators.

Turkeys enjoy preening and dusting their many feathers and sunning themselves. An adult turkey has between 5,000 to 6,000 feathers. The adult male, called a tom, has a lush, full tail-feather fan to attract the ladies, called hens. An adolescent male turkey is called a jake and female adolescent is called a jenny. The youngsters, are called poults, and they love eating little insects.

On a very personal level, turkey droppings can tell a bird's sex and age. Male droppings are J-shaped. Female droppings are spiral-shaped. The larger the diameter, the older the bird.

As you drive in the Foothills this fall, be especially careful to watch for a rafter of wild turkeys. Even though they have good daylight vision, and can run quite fast, many times they take their own sweet time crossing the road. Gobble, gobble!



Heritage Rose Garden (Time to Plant Roses)



Penni Thompson works in the Heritage Rose Garden, starting to get it ready for fall.



Rosa californica is particularly noteworthy for its large, showy red hips – which can be used to make a tea rich in Vitamin C.



Another fall task – dividing up Miner's Iris, which had formed a large clump in just one year. Here, Pam Bennetts, Joan Winter and Penni Thompson decide which to replant and which to offer for sale at the fall plant sale (just finished).

(Photos courtesy of Susan Price)

Time to Plant Roses

By Judie Wood, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County

Fall is not only time to plant your winter vegetables. It is also a great time to plant roses. Roses planted now will reward you with spring and summer blooms. One thing we have learned from developing and working in the Master Gardeners' Heritage Rose Garden in Jackson: heritage roses are incredibly hardy and will thrive beyond your wildest dreams.

A number of plants were donated to the garden by various individuals. One was Marchesa Boccella, which dates back to 1868. One of several given to the garden by the family of the late Kay Polk, we planted it last fall. When we received the plant, it looked like a brown, half-dead stalk, unlikely to thrive. But we planted her anyway, and by spring, she had a few lovely, large pink blooms. She hasn't stopped blooming since, and she has become one of our favorites.

We were warned about other heritage roses, such as Old Red Runaround. And the warnings proved to be true. It sends out runners, it grows tall, it proliferates and wants to take over the bed. It would, in fact, make a wonderful privacy hedge or a way to hide a neighbor you never want to see again. A favorite of the early California pioneers, Old Red Runaround blooms only once a year, but it blooms early, with lovely wine-red, claret blossoms.

Here's one important planting tip from the Heritage Rose Garden committee: mix a tablespoon of triple phosphate into the soil at the bottom of the planting hole. Then cover it over with a layer of soil before planting your rose bush – or any other shrub or tree, for that matter. Foothill soils are deficient in phosphorus and this is one mineral that doesn't seep down from the top, like other nutrients. Phosphate helps the roots grow healthy.

Another good idea: mulch around the plant – but not up against the base. Leave about 6 inches around the base free of mulch to keep from rotting out the stem or trunk. The mulch will help suppress weeds and make your springtime chores easier.

Other actions to take in the fall include:

- Stop deadheading your repeat-blooming roses eight or 10 weeks before the first frost, which in Amador County is generally expected the first two weeks of December, depending, of course, on altitude.
- Clean up the debris around your rose bed and discard it. Pathogens often appear in fall with the wetter weather. It is suggested you not add rose trimmings to your compost pile, as some diseases thrive in that environment.
- While you'll want to do your most severe pruning in January or February, fall is a good time to prune off crossing canes that may beat against each other during a storm.
- Roses in California generally do not require winter protection, such as wrapping in burlap. Heritage roses, especially, seem to withstand both frost and snow, as well as our summer heat.
- Fall is also a good time to clean, sharpen and oil your clippers, loppers and other pruning tools so they are ready for winter pruning. It is also recommended that you clean your pruning equipment each time you move from one rose plant to another, since rose diseases can be transferred on your clippers. You can use Clorox wipes, Lysol spray or alcohol – anything that will disinfect the blades.
- It's also a great time to make tea from some of your rose hips – which are very high in Vitamin C.

Have a safe, happy, rosy fall!



Community Resource: Ask a Master Gardener

By Susan O'Reilly, UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Gardening is fulfilling and rewarding, but can also be frustrating and challenging. You admire your steadily growing seedlings, only to find them eaten down to nothing the next morning. What or who was the culprit? Your roses need pruning, but you are reluctant to start – and is this the right time of year to do it anyway? The tree you have enjoyed for years is suddenly not thriving. What do you do?

Master Gardeners to the rescue! El Dorado and Amador county residents have a resource to turn to with their gardening questions. A big part of Master Gardener community involvement is assisting with gardening situations that have you stumped!



Because of COVID-19, we have temporarily suspended our in-person office hours, but we have an assembled team to work virtually on questions that are submitted by county residents. There are many ways to reach us.

In El Dorado County; you can leave a message on our Master Gardener phone line at **530-621-5512**, send us a direct email at mgeldorado@ucanr.edu, or submit a question through our survey tool on our website: [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Ask a Master Gardener](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Ask_a_Master_Gardener). A Master Gardener will contact you to discuss your issue.

In Amador County; you can leave a message on our Master Gardener phone line at **209-223-6838**, send us a direct email at mgamador@ucanr.edu, or submit a question through our survey tool on our website: <https://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=7266>. A Master Gardener will contact you to discuss your issue.

Our virtual office receives dozens of questions each month. Here is an overview of the types of questions we receive, and how we can help.

Plant identification. Master Gardeners love to identify mystery plants and weeds! Pictures can be submitted via direct email, or using the “Ask a Master Gardener” website link. Include your phone number in case further discussion is needed.

Services of an arborist. Some questions that we get about trees ultimately need the advice and expertise of a certified arborist. While Master Gardeners cannot recommend a specific arborist or tree service, you can search for a list of certified arborists in your area at <https://www.treesaregood.org/findanarborist>.

Classes. Each month, Master Gardeners conduct season-appropriate classes on various gardening topics. For the time being, because of COVID-19, all classes have changed to Zoom or Facebook live format. You can view a list of classes, access a recording of a

previously held class, and sign up for a monthly email for advance notice of upcoming classes on our website at [https://ucanr.edu/sites/MG_of_CS/Classes - Events](https://ucanr.edu/sites/MG_of_CS/Classes_-_Events).

Sherwood Demonstration Garden. We get lots of questions about our beautiful demonstration garden, and conversely, we reference the garden in a lot of responses to your questions! The garden is located in Placerville and open Fridays and Saturdays 9 am – Noon from April – October, and also the first and second Saturdays of the month year round. The garden is an excellent resource for landscaping ideas, a selection of plants that grow well in El Dorado County, and plants for specific area types such as shade. Come visit us! The Sherwood Demonstration Website is also full of great information at [http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration Garden/](http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden/).

Heritage Rose Garden. In Jackson, Master Gardeners have constructed a lovely garden filled with heritage roses which have been collected along roadsides, from old homesteads, ranches and local cemeteries in the area. These plants are located at the Mother Lode Land Trust property. We will have open garden dates in the Spring and Summer. For now, visitors can learn more about this exciting project by visiting our website: [https://ucanr.edu/sites/Amador County MGs/Heritage Rose Garden/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/Amador_County_MGs/Heritage_Rose_Garden/) In addition to roses, you will find beautiful natives and heritage plants from the area.

We would love to hear from you!

Sherwood Demonstration Garden



Sherwood Demonstration Garden Update

by Sue McDavid

UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Winter arrived at the [Sherwood Demonstration Garden](#) almost overnight with the first frost necessitating frost protection covers being placed on strategic plants. Even with the issue of Covid-19 and restricted numbers of visitors at any one time, the garden saw a steady stream of people coming to visit on our open days. The garden officially closed to the public on October 31; however, the garden is open to the public from 9 a.m. to noon on the first and second Saturdays of the month. The first Saturday coincides with the Observatory Solar Saturday which has proved to be a very popular event, and we are happy to share this day with our observatory neighbors.

Even with colder weather, work never ceases in the garden. Due to Covid restrictions, individual garden workers stagger days to be at the garden



Photos (from top to bottom): *Acer palmatum* 'Sango Kaku' (Coral Bark Japanese Maple); *Amsonia hubrichtii* (Hubricht's Blue Star, Arkansas Blue Star); first frost in the Children's Garden.

to limit the number of people present. This has worked very well except that we aren't enjoying the camaraderie we are used to. General cleanup is ongoing in all the gardens and cutting back of spent plants will begin soon. During the month of October, the Marsh Garden crew put in many, many hours of labor digging out and hauling away massive growths of cattails. I never knew how invasive these plants are!

Paver installation on the floor of our pergola/outdoor classroom is almost completed and should be finished with one more full day of work. We can then move on to placing a large bulletin board with a white board on the opposite side of it and installing a pull-down screen for PowerPoint presentations. This area should be ready to be used for classes and demonstrations by next summer.

Accompanying photos show beautiful fall color going on in various areas of the garden. There are always changing colors with the seasons.

Pest Alert - Mediterranean Oak Borer

The Mediterranean Oak Borer (*Xyleborus monographus*) is an ambrosia beetle that was found infesting several valley oak trees in Napa County, California in 2019.

The extent of its distribution within Napa County and neighboring Sonoma and Lake Counties is currently undetermined. It is not believed to have spread to other parts of the state. However, there is considerable potential for the beetle's range to expand as they can be moved in infested wood and the females can fly. Native to Europe, the pest is found in a variety of climates, including Mediterranean, and it is likely capable of establishing over much of California.



For more information, visit the UC ANR website: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/mobpc/> or view the [Pest Alert](#).

Master Food Preservers on Facebook

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Contact Your Local Master Gardener

Amador County

209-223-6838

Office hours: 10 am–Noon Tuesday–Thursday

[Email](#)

Have a gardening question?

[Ask a Master Gardener](#)

El Dorado County

530-621-5512

Office hours: 9 am–Noon Tuesday–Friday

[Email](#)

Have a gardening question?

[Ask a Master Gardener](#)

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Free Pest Notes

Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local UCCE Master Gardener office or explore the Pest Notes on the [UC Statewide Integrated Pest Management \(IPM\) website.](#)



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Free! PUBLIC EDUCATION CLASSES

Master Gardener of Amador County Classes

We are enjoying the holiday season and planning for 2021 classes. See website for class information.

Master Gardener of El Dorado County Classes

We are enjoying the holiday season and planning for 2021 classes. See website for class information.

Accessibility: Should you need assistance or require special accommodations for any of our educational programs, please contact us at 530-621-5502.

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UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County and El Dorado County

UC Cooperative Extension Central Sierra | 311 Fair Lane, Placerville, CA 95667

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