



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

October Garden Tips (September 22, 2018)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

Is October your favorite month? For many of us, it is either our favorite, or at least up there in the top two or three. October often brings the first true storms of the season, but we have plenty of warm, blue-sky days and clear star-filled nights. Plants that have been summer-dormant suddenly start looking greener and as if they are coming back from the dead. We may see some fall flowers on plants we usually think of as spring-bloomers, roses are still blooming, tree leaves are turning, and marigold and chrysanthemum are just starting to fill our gardens with fall color.



The cooler weather makes working outdoors pleasant, which is a good thing because this is the busiest month of the year. October begins our main planting season for almost all trees, shrubs and perennials. At the same time, we have a long list of garden chores this month.

PLANTING: It's almost easier to list what you should not plant this month. The wait-until-spring list includes citrus, bougainvillea, Bermuda grass, warm season annual vegetables (the ones you just grew in the summer), and tropical plants. Everything else: start planting! California-native favorites like manzanita, California lilac, red bud tree, oaks, penstemon, and woody sage varieties do best when planted in October. Other Mediterranean-climate favorites like lavender, rosemary, strawberry tree (*Arbutus*), and chaste tree (*Vitex*) are also planted now. In the edible garden, plant broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Asian greens, kale, Swiss chard, onions and lettuce as seedlings and carrot, beet, snow peas, spinach and turnip from seed.

MAINTAINING: In addition to finishing your semi-annual or annual garden cleanup, a lot of October is spent getting ready for winter and preparing for next spring. Prune and shape hedges. Trim old flowers off of sage, lavender, butterfly bush, penstemon, and other flowering shrubs and perennials. You can usually take off up to fifty percent of woody plants (however, limit any tree pruning to thirty percent) in any one year. This is the last good month to prune spring-blooming shrubs like Cleveland sage, lilac (native and non-native), Bush Anemone, monkeyflower (*Diplacus* and *Mimulus*) and penstemon. Deadhead and shape rose bushes to promote a final fall bloom. Divide and thin any perennials that seem crowded. This is a great opportunity to trade plants with fellow gardeners or gift friends with new flowering plants. Cut warm-season grasses short and over-seed with perennial rye or fine fescue for a green winter lawn. Adjust your irrigation controller to account for the shorter days and cooler temperatures (taking into account your city's watering schedule). But make sure deciduous trees (the ones that lose their leaves in winter) are deep watered a few times this month as they enter dormancy. Water near the edge of the leaf canopy, not right up against the trunk. Prepare an area for wildflower seeds. Your wildflower garden needs to be weed-free for the best success. Start a compost pile with the pruning's from the garden. If you have compost ready, spread it in planting beds before adding a new layer of mulch.



Preemergent herbicide can be applied, except where you have seeded for wildflowers, to help prevent annual bluegrass, mustard, mallow (cheeseweed), clover and purslane. Use compost and mulch to suppress weeds. Use mechanical methods (hands and tools) to remove those that do emerge when they are still small. Just like with grass and edibles, we

have two main seasons of weeds: warm and cool. October is the month all the cool season weeds start popping up. Be ready!

This is a good month to check your tree stakes in anticipation of winter winds. If the tree can stand up on its own and the rootball seems secure, remove the stakes completely, and let it bend in a breeze; this will help the trunk gain strength. Stakes should never be right up against the trunk. Those stakes are for transporting from the nursery, not long-term. If you need to stake a tree, we have information on our website on how to do it properly.



http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Local_Gardening_Articles_-_Info/Landscape_Trees/

CONSERVING: Compost and mulch will help with conservation by reducing the use of synthetic chemicals for weed and pest control. If you are overrun with insect pests in the edible garden, consider less-toxic methods of control like hand-picking, trapping and disposing, or using an organic or selective insecticide. Support spiders and beneficial bugs by learning how to identify them and understanding that 98% of insects are either beneficial or neutral. When considering what new plants to add in your garden, think about adding pollinator-favorite plants. Some of the best to consider are native buckwheat, California fuchsia, and almost any sage. In my yard the Palmer's Mallow (*Abutilon palmeri*) is a favorite with people and pollinators alike. Native plants are best for native wildlife, but lots of non-natives are fine too. Think variety, and don't forget many pollinators are tiny native flies, wasps, beetles and bees; they are important too, even if you hardly ever see them.

If you are renovating or remodeling your yard, consider creating a backyard habitat area that is less groomed and full of plants for our local wildlife. Habitat destruction is the main reason that we are reducing the population and the variety of species on our planet. We can create backyard nature preserves with a little advanced planning. A nicely balanced and diverse garden is not only beautiful and welcoming, but requires less maintenance, which we all appreciate with our busy lives.

In late summer or fall, we see a lot of small holes in bare soil. These are nesting cavities for the many native ground-nesting bees. Try not to disturb them and don't cover them with mulch. If you can do it, leave an area in your yard that doesn't get a lot of foot traffic bare of mulch or sprinkler spray. Adding a bird bath, solitary bee nesting box, bird feeder and a bare dirt patch are all habitat plusses in the garden. Don't forget to add a bench or comfy chair. After a day of working in the garden, you'll want to relax and watch all the ways in which your garden is a success!

We love to talk plants. Come ask us your gardening questions!

For answers to all your home gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners in Tulare County at (559) 852-3325. Tuesdays and Thursdays between 9:30 and 11:30am; or in Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursdays only, 9:30-11:30am; or visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions: http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeneers/

The UCCE Master Gardeners will be available to answer your gardening questions at the following venues in September:

KCAO Fruit & Veggie Fest, September 28, 2018, 10:00am – 2:00pm, Hanford Cost Less Parking
Greenfield Garden Workshops – Hanford, September 30, 2018, 2:00pm – Cool Weather Gardening. Greenfield Avenue, North of Lacey Blvd.

You can find us each Saturday at Visalia's Farmer's Market in Sears Parking lot, 8am until 11am.