



# NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

## January Garden Tips 2019 (January 5, 2019)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

Happy New Year! Many of us believe January is a beautiful gardening month. We can see the structure of our garden, now that the leaves are off the deciduous trees and shrubs. We can delay almost every chore until at least the end of the month or into early February. But can clean up, prune, plan, and even plant most things if the mood strikes us. Master Gardeners are having a Demonstration Day for rose pruning **RAIN OR SHINE!**



During the rose pruning demo, we model best practices for pruning, as well as basic care and cultivation advice. Tool Care assistance will be on hand - bring your own for personal guidance.

**Ralph Moore Rose Garden** located in Memorial Park at the corner of W. Main and N. Hall St. in Visalia. Saturday, January 19, 2019, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm

### Tulare County Rose Garden Pruning Demo

Saturday, January 19, 2019, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm. TC Courthouse - 221 S. Mooney Blvd -Visalia.

**Grangeville Rose Pruning Demo** - Monday, January 21, 2019, 11:00 am to 2:00 pm., Old Grangeville Church - Hanford

**PLANTING:** This is bare root season. Shop early before they get picked over. Local nurseries carry varieties suitable for our planting zone--if you buy from a catalog, be sure to research whether your choice is suitable for our area.

- **Bare root fruit trees:** Apples, apricot, cherries, figs, pears, plums and many others are now available. Check their pollination requirements; not all fruit trees are self-fertile, and some will require a cross pollinator. Notice the number of chill hours required. Our winters average 700-800 chilling hours. Our climate trend is towards fewer chill hours, so you can try one of the newer "low chill hours" trees. But one of the things that makes our valley unique in California is the greater extremes of heat and chill that tends to make for better fruit flavor and quantity. Weigh your options, and perhaps try a range of trees.
- **Bare root roses:** All do very well in the San Joaquin valley. Many new varieties require less water than their ancestors, so they are worth looking into as we continue to plan and create our new California "Central Valley Style" gardens.
- **Bare root berries and grapes:** Plant grape vines, cane boysenberries, blackberries, raspberries, blueberries and strawberries. There is nothing like fresh-grown berries, and they are so easy to grow. Our website has lots of specific information, and don't be afraid to ask us for advice!
- **Vegetables:** Asparagus crowns, artichokes, horseradish, lettuce, peas, and rhubarb can be planted now. Hold off planting new citrus or subtropical plants due to the potential for frost damage. Better to wait until spring. You can plant any cool-season vegetables, but growth will generally be slow unless you use row cover cloth, hoop houses or another method to keep the soil and air temperatures warm. You can start seeds for tomatoes, peppers, eggplant and basil if you have a greenhouse or other very warm spot with strong indirect light or wait until next month.



### MAINTAINING:

- **Dormant sprays:** Spray roses, deciduous flowering trees, and deciduous fruit trees with horticultural oil to smother overwintering insects like spider mites, scales, mealy bugs, and peach twig borers. Spray the branches, crotches, trunk, and the ground beneath the tree's drip line. Hold off spraying if rain is forecast, *or if the temperature is below 45 degrees.* Never

spray oil on walnut trees. If you didn't spray your peach or nectarine tree for peach leaf curl in November or December, spray now with a copper-based or a synthetic fungicide. Read and follow package directions for safety and best results.

- **Water:** Adjust your controllers and faucet timers to reduce watering in the winter months. Fog, dew, shorter days and cooler temperatures all mean less added water is needed in winter by our gardens, even if the precipitation is not abundant. But be prepared to add water during extended dry spells (a week or more). Even dormant trees need some water in the winter, and our climate-adapted plants require adequate moisture during winter and early spring to establish and succeed through the hot summer months. Check the soil moisture at the root zone a few times until you get a feel for how much to water. The soil should remain fairly moist at the root zone, but not continuously water-logged or muddy on the surface.
- **Lawns:** Mow cool season grasses, such as fescue, at 1.5 inches (slightly lower than in the summer) to reduce disease problems. Try not to mow when the grass is wet or frozen to avoid compaction.
- Start thinking about controlling summer weeds (Already? Yes!). Apply preemergent herbicide to kill seeds as they are germinating. For best results, apply uniformly over the entire area late this month. Do not use preemergent anywhere you have planted seeds or seedlings recently, **or where you might plant them in the next several months.** Read and follow the package directions carefully. There are some trees and other plants you don't use preemergent around.



- **Tool care:** Sharpen, clean and sterilize your tools. This is one of my favorite winter jobs. It's a great feeling when finished to see all the tools ready for spring! If you don't have time to do them all, at least work on your pruning tools, so you are ready for the next task.
- **Prune:** Dormant deciduous plants such as fruit trees, roses, and grapes should be pruned after leaf drop and before buds swell, so a clear sunny dry day in January is great for this. Put on the caps and gloves and get outside. I love winter pruning on these types of days. I also love pruning on foggy chilly days. It's enjoyable to begin with young trees and shrubs and train them over the years! Sterilize pruning tools after every tree or shrub to avoid spreading diseases. A weak bleach water solution (1:10) or white vinegar in a spray bottle, along with a clean cloth or spray of plain water works well.

The most basic pruning is to remove broken, diseased, or crossing branches. Beyond that, there are two types of cuts: thinning and heading. It's not that mysterious. Think about your cuts before you make them. Thinning cuts remove entire branches, resulting in a more natural look, air circulation improvement, and light into the center of the tree. Heading cuts stimulate many weak branches to vigorously sprout, creating an unnatural look. Begin pruning with thinning cuts to open-up the tree. Use heading cuts judiciously to shorten over-long branches and make a note that you will need to address those inevitable weak branches later. If you do heading cuts, note the direction the bud is facing; that is the direction most of the new branches will head, so direct them outward. Prune from the bottom up and from the inside of the plant to the outside. We have more information on our website. Some plants, like butterfly bush (*Buddleia*), redbud (*Cercis*), pomegranate, and western spice bush (*Calycanthus occidentalis*), can be coppiced, a cut right down to the ground, or almost so. Don't coppice if you are training your redbud or pomegranate to grow as a tree; this is only for shrubs or to keep them dwarfed.

**January is too late to prune spring-flowering shrubs.** If you prune now, you won't get many (or any) flowers. Wait to prune spring-flowering plants like forsythia, lilacs, Ceanothus, lavender, sage and manzanita until they have finished blooming.

#### CONSERVING:

- Make sure your pollinator nesting houses are not getting wet or wind-blown. Move them to a sheltered space, even if some of the tubes are occupied.
- Avoid pruning branches or parts of trees that have active nests in them. This may mean doing summer pruning if you are lucky enough to have a hawk pair nesting. Or consider just leaving that tree alone, as predatory birds return to the same nest year after year. Of course, you must weigh everything against safety.
- Check your bird feeders after rain to remove wet seed and replenish.
- As you do all year, use the "least toxic first" method of pest control. Consider suggesting alternatives to neighbors and friends. Perhaps they don't know that leaf cutter bees don't harm the roses and redbuds, or that a few aphids will feed the ladybugs and lacewings in the spring?

One of my favorite January chores is a must-do. I grab a mug of my favorite hot beverage and stroll through the winter garden, trying to really notice the specific differences between January and July in tone and mood, color and energy. We still have seasons here in our valley; it's good to remember and appreciate that, and January is a great month to do it.

**Mark your calendars! Groundhog Day Winter Festival** at the **Master Gardeners Demo Garden at Hurley Elementary School**. Feb. 2nd from 11-1. Learn about growing winter vegetables, hands-on irrigation for your yard, fruit tree pruning demos, children's groundhog activity, and your gardening questions answered. Bring the entire family and your neighbors!

**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) 684-3325, 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/](http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeneers/)*

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

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