



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Garden Tips August 2019 (July 27, 2019)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

August is back to school for many, and vacation for some of us. Due to the heat, many plants will slow down growth and flowering. Just let them. Don't fertilize. Don't worry. You are busy enough. There *are* a few garden opportunities (also known as "chores"), but it *can* be a slower month.

PLANTING: Believe it or not, the hot months of summer are the best times to start seeds for cool season greens like bok choy, Pak choy, kale, mustard, chard, spinach, broccoli and lettuce. A partly shaded site is great for this. We usually start them in containers and plant them into the garden in about six weeks or so. That's so we can reduce the insect pest damage and weed competition during the warm months. Root crops such as beets, Bermuda onions, carrots, parsnips, leeks, and turnips are seeded directly into the planting beds. You can also continue to plant basil, beans, chives, dill, green onions, kohlrabi, potato, peas and squash. Maybe even sneak in an early variety corn crop. Will it be a long summer? Will fall come early? Even the best scientists and the Farmer's and Planter's Almanac can't tell us for certain. If you're adventurous like me, you'll give it a go. What do you have to lose except a few dollars and a lot of labor time? However, if you can avoid it, don't plant ornamentals until fall. It's hard on both you and the plants. But you can plant tubers, corms and bulbs like iris, autumn crocus, and amaryllis. If you want or need to plant, choose species that can tolerate a lot of summer water and think about shading new transplants from too much sunshine. For the rest, plan, and wait.



Iris Bulbs

Iris Craig, UC Master Gardener, Napa County

MAINTAINING: Much of the attention this month, just like in July, is focused on making sure your plants are getting the right amount of water, and on the other hand, avoiding over-watering. My dear gardening friends, so many issues are caused in the California or the low-water garden by over-watering. Use a watering stake or poke a finger into the soil or dig a little with a hand trowel until you get an idea of what's going on. If you rely on hired gardeners, ask them "what makes you think so?" when they tell you a plant is wilted, brown or small because it needs more water. If they can't say that they checked the moisture level in the soil at the root zone, ask them to do that and report back. Deep watering means the soil will be dry on the surface a day or two after the irrigation cycle. Keep water away from crowns of woody shrubs and tree trunks to avoid disease issues.

Check and make sure all your irrigation components are working properly. This seems to be an especially good idea before you go on vacation.

August is my favorite month to hose off all ornamental plants. Spider mites love dusty plants. If you see cobwebs on plants, it's time to wet things down. In gardens with drip irrigation, this is a big problem, because overhead sprinklers aren't washing plants off. Follow your water district's guidelines but go ahead and play in the water this month. UCANR (University of CA Agriculture and Natural Resources) has an excellent Pest Note on spider mites.



<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7405.html> OR:
<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=10847>

Divide your iris if you haven't already do so. Prune your apricot, olive and oleanders in August. Try to avoid sunburn on newer branches. If you must expose young branches to sunlight, paint them with a water-based white paint. Continue to deadhead roses and remove suckers and unwanted branches. Open rose bushes up to increase air circulation through the shrub. Continue to prune hedges. Keep your pruning tools clean and sanitized. Clean up fallen fruit and support heavy, fruit-laden tree branches. August can also be a good month to top dress with compost or renew mulch. If you have a water feature, or any site with standing water, it's critical to control the mosquitos. Read up on how to control mosquito populations using cultural practices and products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis israelensis* (Bti) here, <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7451.html>

CONSERVING: Avoid using broad-spectrum pesticides. As the labels indicate, they kill as many beneficial insects as pest insects. Insect populations and species are in severe decline worldwide. That means butterflies, earthworms and bumblebees as much (or more so) than aphids and earwigs. Scientists cite many factors in the fall-off of the world's insect populations, but chief among them are the ubiquitous use of pesticides, the spread of monoculture crops such as corn and soybeans, urbanization, and habitat destruction. How can each of us help slow this decline? We must control pests but can we do it in a way that doesn't decimate our pollinators and our neutrals like praying mantis, assassin bugs, damsel flies and dung beetles. Reduction in insects sets off a chain reaction: fewer insects means fewer birds, bats, amphibians and reduced pollination of crops we rely on. What else can we do? Use more compost, less fertilizer; continue to be water-efficient even when we've had a good precipitation season; learn to live with bees and spiders and other bugs that share the garden with us; Prune gently--those plants are alive, you know.



And finally, this can be a good month to spend some extra time indoors caring for your houseplants and enjoying the A/C. Pick up a gardening magazine or book and start planning your fall planting!

Are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener? The UC Master Gardener program of Tulare/Kings Counties is recruiting! Our next class runs January 22 through June 10. Applications will be available online in August and must be turned in by October 30. We will be holding a mandatory orientation on Wednesday, October 9 @ 3:00 to share what the training course and the volunteer commitment entail. Please call our office (684-3343) with any questions...we look forward to talking with all interested gardeners! Check us out at: https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Become_a_Master_Gardener/

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

- Visalia Farmers' Market – Every Saturday morning (8-11 am), Sears parking lot, Mooney Blvd.
- Hanford "Thursday Night Marketplace" – 2nd Thursday (5:30 – 9:00 pm) through October.
- Porterville Farmers' Market @ Sierra View Hospital –Thursdays (8-11:30 am) through June 27.

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 11:30 am; or Kings County at (559) 852-2736, Thursday Only, 9:30-11:30 a.m. 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_Gardeners/

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