



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Garden Tips – April 2021 (April 3, 2021)

by Peyton Ellas, UCCE Master Gardener

Is it just me, or does this spring seem especially vibrant and welcome? Are you also comparing this April with last year? I spent a lot of time in my home garden last spring, and I hope to repeat that this year despite increased pressure to be away from home. There is plenty to do in the April garden, when everything seems comes to life at once, and growth is speeding up with warmer weather.



PLANTING: It's time to plant heat-loving vegetables and fruits. Hooray! Tomato time! Transplant seedlings of tomatoes, peppers, eggplant, okra, and sweet potatoes. Plant seeds or transplant seedlings of summer and winter squash (wait until May for pumpkins), cucumber, and melon. Towards the end of the month, plant seeds of beans and corn. Early in the month, you can still plant radishes, greens, and onions, but be prepared to harvest them while small; they will go to flower quickly in the lengthening days and warm temperatures.

Transplant almost any ornamental tree, shrub, perennial, and ground cover this month. Plant annuals like zinnia, marigold, and petunias in containers or where you can water them regularly without over watering the rest of the garden.

MAINTAINING: Prune flowering shrubs when they finish blooming: azaleas, camellias, forsythia, lilacs, ceanothus, native sage and flowering quince are some examples. Prune citrus and avocado if necessary. You can continue to prune deciduous trees if you haven't yet; it may slow the growth a little but won't hurt them. Ruthlessly thin stone fruits while the fruit is still tiny, to about six-to-eight inches apart. Mow lawns to three inches tall. Mowing lawns too short encourages weeds and diseases.



Monitor for common spring pests like aphids, earwigs, slugs, snails, whitefly, thrips, and codling moth worm. Handpicking or spraying with a strong stream of water is the least toxic option. If you must use pesticides, identify your pest first. Many a beneficial insect has been killed because of haste to destroy all insect life in the garden. Some common beneficials that are often mistaken for pests are lacewing, syrphid fly, spiders, parasitic mites, and parasitic wasps. Read more at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn74140.html>.

Fertilize acid-loving plants (azalea, camelia, gardenia, blueberry) with specialized fertilizer. There are also specialized fertilizers for lawns, citrus, and roses. These special fertilizers contain the trace minerals needed in addition to the big three (nitrogen, phosphorus, potassium). April is also a good month to fertilize stone fruit and nut trees and container plants. Avoid over-fertilizing. When in doubt, go a little lighter/weaker than package instructions. Don't assume all weak or struggling plants require fertilizer. It's best to determine the cause of the symptoms to avoid harming by over-stressing your unwell plant.

Powdery mildew is a common disease problem in spring. Several fungi types cause powdery mildew, and it affects many plants. Manage it by growing resistant plant varieties and altering the growing environment, such as increasing the air circulation by pruning, or providing more sunlight to affected plants, even in some cases by transplanting them. Fungicide treatments might be required for susceptible plant species, but the cultural practices are more effective. Learn more at: <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/powderymildewcard.html>.



And then there are weeds. Remove as many as you can, or at least prevent weeds from going to seed by chopping off the tops. Monitor/bait for ants, which especially like spurge and spotted spurge.

CONSERVING: A healthy garden is an active one. Tolerate some caterpillar damage on ornamental healthy plants to support moths and butterflies. Consider sharing the garden with insects of all sorts. Determine a management threshold for common pests so you don't have to feel you have to eliminate all insects, all weeds. You can have a healthy, vibrant, food-producing garden even with a few bugs, a few weeds. Train yourself to practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM). The first guideline is Least Toxic First. You can travel up the toxicity scale as needed to control pests. Conservation doesn't mean you give in/give up, never spray again. It means being thoughtful and educated on what method to use and when. Don't get discouraged if you're a new gardener. Gardening is partnership between humans, insects, birds, weather, plants, mammals, and soil micro-organisms. Did you think you were gardening alone? Master Gardeners are also here to help, as is the entire UC IPM program online.

As always, conservation also means irrigating the landscape and edible garden efficiently. Look for leaks and repair them. Adjust irrigation controllers. Avoid run off and over watering. Consider adding a rain garden or simple swale to capture more water close to your plants' roots.

Finally, enjoy the season. Perhaps a walk with the wildflowers or other natural areas is possible? Perhaps your own garden is full of vigor and beauty? Happy April!

The Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions at a few select locations in the next few months!

Ace Hardware, Visalia - 1st Sat./every month

Luis Nursery, Visalia - 2nd Sat./every month

At this time, we are not in the office to answer phone calls, but if you send us an email or leave a message on our phone lines, someone will call you back!

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325; Kings County at (559) 852-2736

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/