

FRAGRANT PLANTS IN YOUR GARDEN

By Bernice Honeychurch, UCCE Amador County Master Gardener

It's almost spring! Nursery catalogs arrive almost daily in the mail, bringing visions of a beautiful (and fragrant) garden. Catalogs contain a wealth of information in addition to colorful pictures. Color! Cold Hardiness Zone! (The Zones changed this year, but Amador gardeners can be comfortable with plants listed in catalogs this year for USDA Zone 8.) Water requirements! Shade or Sun? Fragrance! When the ground warms up, prepare your soil by turning it over and spading in lots of compost and you're ready to plant.

Wisteria is a fragrant vine that flowers in the spring and is useful in a wide variety of settings. It is a sturdy vine that needs support and covers quickly, but its rampant growth can be kept in bounds by occasional pruning (which also can encourage re-blooming). Try to purchase wisterias in bloom to be certain of the color, which could be blue, shades of purple, or white. It doesn't need a lot of water once established and likes full sun. If you want lots of bloom, don't over fertilize! Japanese wisteria (*wisteria floribunda*) and Chinese wisteria (*wisteria sinensis*) are the most common types. The main difference between them is the type of flower—Japanese are longer and open gradually; the Chinese variety opens all at once.

Another vine with wonderful fragrance is Star Jasmine (*Trachelospermum jasminoides*, also known as Confederate Jasmine). The flowers are white, the leaves are glossy, and it climbs energetically, but can be kept in bounds by occasional pruning. The plant is evergreen and with the aid of a trellis can be used for screening an unsightly view. Weekly watering and partial to full sun are its' only requirements.

Lilacs (*Syringa*) are fragrant, reliable bloomers and are among the best known flowering shrubs. They prefer full sun and are tolerant of any soil. Water infrequently but thoroughly. They bloom in shades of purple, pink, yellow, and white. Prune them right after bloom or gather bouquets of lilacs to add scent to your house.

Don't forget roses! I will never forget passing by a rose garden that was so fragrant that it perfumed the air. Kathy Pifiari of the Amador Rose Society likes to plant fragrant roses. Her favorites include Mr. Lincoln, Felicia, Stevens Big Purple, Lady Megginch, Crown Princess Margareta, Fragrant Wave, Rose de Rescht, Sheila's Perfume, Sombreuil, and the Prince. Roses like full sun and frequent watering. The nice thing about roses is that they come in many different colors, shapes, and sizes to fit any garden.

Other plants can also be confined to pots on your deck or patio. Asiatic or Oriental lilies are happy in containers. They need year-round water and have a fragrance so pungent it is best enjoyed outdoors, but they are frequently used as cut flowers too. Casablanca and Stargazer are favorite varieties.

It is not necessary to have big, showy, fragrant plants. Many of us are trading turf grass lawns for ground covers such as thyme (*thymus*). Just walk across a planting of thyme to release the fragrance!

Would you like to learn how to grow these fragrant plants from seed? What about asparagus and other vegetables? Join the Master Gardeners for a triple combo class on Saturday, March 10 about Seed Starting, Asparagus, and Backyard Chickens. Come back on March 24 to learn how to prepare your soil to grow healthy plants, and then stay for the "Not Your Ordinary Vegetables" class. Both classes are from 9a.m. to noon at 12200-B Airport Road in Jackson. No reservations are needed for these free classes.

Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Thursday, 10 a.m. to noon, by calling (209) 203-6838. Walk-ins are welcome. The office is located at 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at <http://ucanr.org/mgamador>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews/>.