



A Garden Runs Through It

May 2025

Whether it's a vegetable garden, houseplants or a landscape...

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Upcoming Events

April was a busy month for us, so we do not currently have events planned for May, but please feel free to contact our office and send us recommendations for workshops you would like us to host in Colusa County. We are always looking for new ideas, and more Master Gardener Volunteers!

Plant of the Month
Florida Anise Tree (*Illicium* 'Woodland Ruby')



Florida Anise Tree (*Illicium* 'Woodland Ruby')

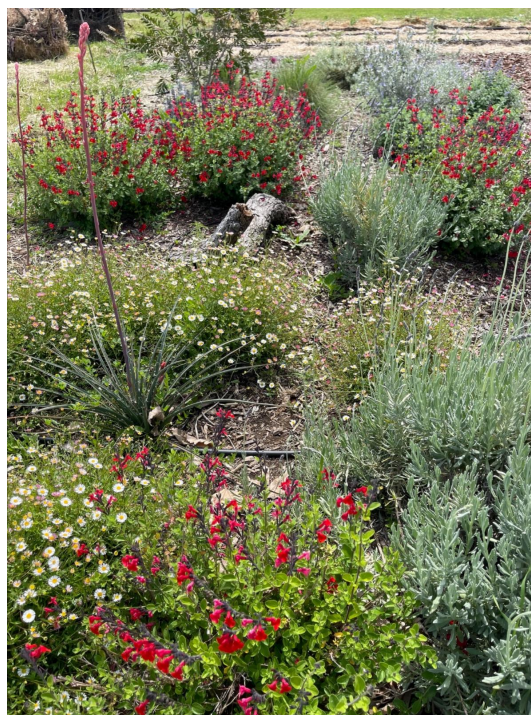
Illicium 'Woodland Ruby' is a hybrid cross between *I. floridanum* 'Alba' and *I. mexicanum*. This rounded shrub or small tree produces large, vibrant purple-red to rose-pink flowers from spring into fall. The plant is toxic if ingested.

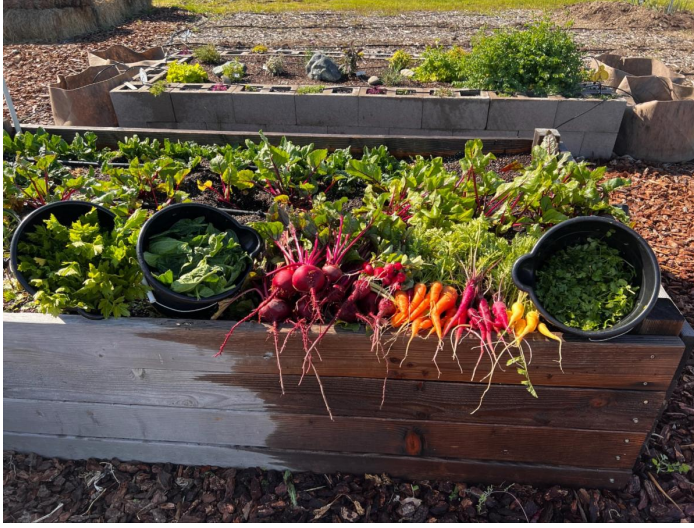
[Click here to learn more](#)

Submitted by Cynthia White

Activities at the Donna Critchfield Demonstration Garden

499 Margurite Street in Williams





Learning and Expanding

April was a super busy month for us at the Donna Critchfield Demonstration Garden! We added multiple trellises to expand our garden vertically this summer. We took a field trip to [Rudy's Original Boysen Berry Farm](#) to learn about how they grow delicious boysenberries on their family farm, and we planted boysenberry and blackberry bareroot plants to a trellis, featured behind Bonnie and the herb garden in the top left photo. We also planted rattlesnake snap pole bean seeds from the [Colusa County Seed Library](#) on the same trellis. Instead of using tomato cages to support our tomatoes this year, we are trying something new, by supporting each row with concrete reinforcement mesh 4' x 6' panels and t-post fencing. See bottom right photo. We will see how it goes!

Seeding and Planting

We planted most of our spring/summer garden in April. We direct seeded marigolds and sunflowers for shade and to deter pests. Cucumbers, eggplants, and squash were planted from starts purchased from our neighboring, Yuba-Sutter Master Gardener Program. Our volunteer planted six types of peppers including poblano, serrano, jalapeno, Anaheim, and green and purple bell peppers; as well as eight varieties of tomatoes: cherry, San Marzano, Roma, sweet 100, early girl, big boy, celebrity and ACE. We have been expanding our landscape area around the garden sign. So far, we have planted mystic spires salvia, and yarrow is being planted today, we are on the lookout for a few more plants so stay tuned to find out what we add to the area! The herb garden continues to grow and thrive, and we are loving the progress and fresh smells and tastes it adds to the garden! Soon we will be planting flower seeds and starts in the raised beds, to have beautiful fresh cut flowers to harvest this summer.

Growing and Harvesting

We have just about finished harvesting what was still growing in our garden. At the end of April, we harvested beets, carrots, cilantro, celery, and spinach, and donated these vegetables to the cafeteria at the Colusa County Office of Education Community School. Potatoes, onions and leeks are still growing in the garden, but they will be harvested soon.

Gardener's Corner

Don't Dig Up Your Garden



Don't Dig Up Your Garden

Gardening in the past brings a strong memory of someone having to spend half a day digging up the garden before planting. It's just what everyone did!! As time has passed, we've learned a lot about how to be successful with gardening and the best part is there's no need to "dig" up the garden anymore. We know that soil is made up of millions of microscopic organisms that are attracted to the sugars that are left by plant roots. The sugar creates a symbiotic relationship with plants. If you break up the soil by digging, the vital organisms get disrupted, and the pathways are broken.

Previous plants or even weeds have made tiny highways for water to be guided and stored in the soil rather than running off. Think about what is just under the surface of the soil – seeds just waiting for sunshine to sprout. If you dig up the soil you bring all those seeds to the surface where they can thrive when the light signals growth.

When it's time to start your garden, layer on some mulch and do your planting. If it has been a notably weedy area you might want to lay down some cardboard before you apply the mulch. This stops the seeds already in the area from sprouting because they will be deprived of the light needed to grow, and you can instead enjoy what you are planting through the mulch to get all the nutrients and light. Don't forget to remove any tape or labels from the cardboard. You can also use newsprint if you have plenty handy but don't use the shiny or colored pages.

The last thing is also simple, be reasonable about what you plant. If you are dreading all the work of a garden, don't overdue things. Make it successful rather than huge.

Submitted by Cynthia White

Gardeners with Heart Award Winners

John and Diane Vafis

We are so thrilled to recognize two UC Master Gardeners leading the way in climate resilience! These Gardeners with Heart are equipping communities with practical solutions for a changing climate.

John and Diane Vafis are integral members of the Colusa County community, and we are so grateful for all the work they have done and continue to do to educate the public about gardening and climate resilience.

Check out the UC Master Gardeners statewide office's latest blog to meet the volunteers

turning climate challenges into opportunities for a greener, more sustainable California!

[Link to the UC Master Gardeners Program Statewide Blog](#)



Recipe of the Month

Spinach, Mushroom and Four Cheese Lasagna

This is my riff on a recipe from Food Network by Emeril Lagasse. I made it for the April 2025, Master Gardener Meeting.

This makes one DEEP 13 x 9" casserole OR a typical 13 x 9" cake pan with leftovers, OR two smaller dishes

[Click here for the full recipe](#)

Recipe submitted by Penny Walgenbach



Gardener's Literature

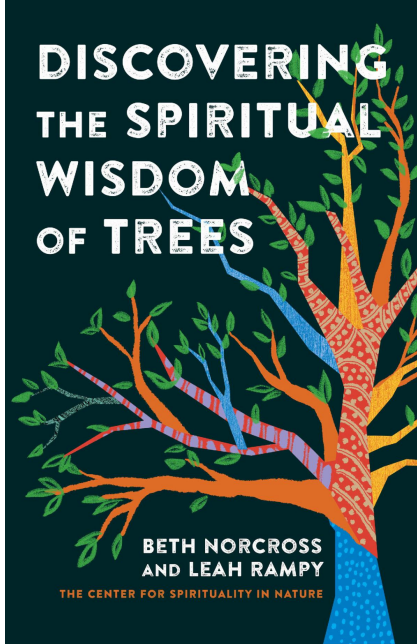
Discovering the Spiritual Wisdom of Trees by Beth Norcross and Leah Rampy

This morning, I was chatting with a grammar school friend, and she said excitedly that she and her brother were going out tree shopping. As you might know, this is a subject near and dear to my heart. I immediately replied what kind of tree and she responded with “shade”. My enthusiasm waned a bit as if she had said “green”, but I gently asked a few things like, how big, how much room do you have, will it be evergreen or deciduous. She responded with “that’s a lot of questions. I hadn’t thought about it that much.” Imagine if I had asked her about the spiritual wisdom she might be seeking!!

This is what you will get when you pick up the Norcross and Rampy book, *Discovering the Spiritual Wisdom of Trees*.

Give this book a try and see what you think.

Submitted by Cynthia White



Thinking Safe and Green

Master Gardener Program

Biting and Stinging Insects

Information available from the National Institutes of Allergy and Infectious Diseases indicates more than 40 fatalities annually can be attributed to severe venom allergic reactions (called anaphylaxis) from insect bites or stings. Common California biting and stinging insects include ticks and chiggers, centipedes, mosquitoes, black, deer, and horse flies, spiders including black widow and brown species, fire ants, midges, scorpions, bees including Africanized honeybees, wasps, and hornets.

[#18 Biting and Stinging Insects](#)

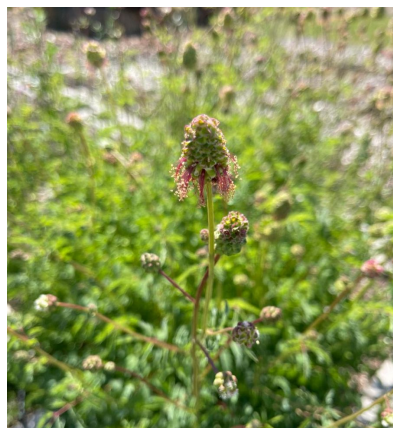


Gardening Guide

UC Master Gardener Program of Colusa County Zones 8 and 9

	May	June	July
Planting	Direct seed in the garden cucumbers, melons, summer squash, beans, corn, and annual herbs. Plant sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, marigolds, and aster in the flower garden.	In the flower garden you can still plant seeds of marigolds, zinnias, cosmos, and sunflowers. You can set out transplants of perennials like yarrow, verbena, black-eyed Susan, and dahlias. In the vegetable garden you can plant seeds of pumpkins, squash, and corn.	You can still plant seeds of annuals: zinnias, marigolds, sunflowers and alyssum will grow and bloom this year.
Maintenance	Fertilize summer blooming flowers early in the month. Apply (or re-apply as needed)	Be sure to water early in the day to conserve water and minimize plant disease.	Be sure everything is well mulched for the heat of summer. Water before 10 am

	organic mulch to all beds to keep the soil cool and enrich the soil. Be sure to leave space around the base of the plants. Trim the dead flowers but not the leaves from spring bulbs. The leaves restore the bulb; so wait to remove them until they turn yellow. Fertilize the bulbs after the bloom is finished with bone meal.	Regularly check your sprinklers and drip emitters for needed repairs and adjustments. Monitor soil moisture in hot weather to be sure you are irrigating enough. (Use a metal rod to push into the ground. If it goes in easily, the soil is moist.) Remember to water your trees. Place a drip line or soaker hose around the tree several times. Let the water run for about 2 hours. Check the ground moisture with a metal rod. It should go in about 2 feet, if not water another hour.	to avoid fungal infections and to minimize water loss to evaporation. If you have blackberries in your garden, cut the canes that bore fruit to the ground. Tie up 3-5 of the new canes and fertilize to promote new growth. Cut canna stems to the ground as they finish flowering to encourage new stems to grow. Dig and divide bearded iris that have not been divided for 3 yrs. Cut the foliage on the divisions to 6-8 inches, replanting only new rhizomes and discarding the old rhizomes.
Prevention	Later in the month prune spring flowering shrubs to shape, removing old and dead wood. The plants flower on the growth that happens during the summer; do not prune in the fall or winter or you will have no flowers on the shrub. Continue the battle against slugs and snails. Deadhead (cut off spent flowers) to get continuing bloom on annuals and perennials. Thin peaches, plums, and nectarines so there is 6" between fruits.	Fertilize summer blooming flowers early in the month. Later in the month use a fertilizer for acid-loving plants like azaleas and camellias. Always follow the directions for proper dilution of concentrates. Dig and divide spring-flowering bulbs when the tops have died down. Before the full heat of summer arrives mulch your beds to control weeds and conserve moisture.	Cut back lavender after flowering to promote a second bloom. You can prune by half to keep the plant in bounds. If you have fruit trees, be sure to pick up dropped fruit to prevent brown rot from developing and leaving spores for future infection. You can dig and divide other bulbs after the foliage has died off. Deadhead blooming plants as they finish flowering to promote continuing bloom. Fertilize roses after each burst of blooms.



Science Word of the Month

Bolting: Bolting is a horticultural term for when a plant prematurely develops a flowering stalk (in a natural attempt to produce seed) before the crop has been harvested. The plant shifts its energy from growing the desired crop to reproduction instead – its final hoorah, if you will. Bolting may also be referred to as “going to seed”.

Pictured: Salad Burnet from our herb garden that bolted and went to seed...it smelled like watermelon but tasted like watermelon rind!

Advice to Grow By ... Ask Us!

In today's fast paced, social media way of life, fake news has become normal.



This includes fake gardening advice.

UC Master Gardeners use cutting edge, research-based information to help you garden better. We are practical, connected and trusted.



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