



UC Master Gardeners of Sutter-Yuba Counties Newsletter

Location:

UCCE Sutter-Yuba
142A Garden Hwy.
Yuba City CA 95991
Office Hours: 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Master Gardener Office

Hours:

Tuesday: 9 a.m. to Noon*
Thursday: 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

*Please see page 2 article

Contact:

530-822-7515
sutteryuba@ucanr.edu

Facebook:

<https://facebook.com/sutteryubamg>



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The Learning Garden

If you've recently driven past the Learning Garden, located at the Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds, you may have noticed our newest addition: The beautiful greenhouse! We're so excited about having the greenhouse to help us in seed propagation and helping to make our spring plant sale even more of a success. The greenhouse installation was truly a work of community cooperation, as SayLove, Blue Zones, and the Sutter-Yuba Master Gardeners came together on November 29 to begin the greenhouse installation. Except for one missing panel, the greenhouse was completed on Monday, December 1. The missing panel was ordered and will be installed soon.



Additionally, we have trenched and installed irrigation piping, ready to install drip irrigation to each of the boxes. We will build out the remaining boxes over the next months, getting ready for a beautiful spring and summer garden.

Submitted by UC Master Gardener Marla Pike

Advice to grow by ... Ask us!

If you have a plant or gardening question, contact us via phone or email or drop by the office with a sample. Check our website or Facebook for workshop announcements.

Office Hours

The Sutter-Yuba Master Gardeners have office hours every week, when we are available to help with any home gardening questions you may have.

- Tuesday morning, 9-a.m. to noon*
- Thursday afternoon, 1 p.m. to 4 p.m.

Samples help with identification and diagnosis, and the office hours are a great time to bring the samples and questions to our group.

If you can't make it into the office, please send us an email outlining your question or concerns. If you can also provide a picture, that helps with diagnosis, as well. Our email address is sutteryuba@ucanr.edu and our telephone is (530) 822-7515.

Additionally, you can bring your samples and questions to our Learning Garden Workshops.

*Effective October 1, Tuesday morning office hours will be discontinued for the fall and winter seasons.

2026 Learning Garden Workshops

The Learning Garden 2026 workshop schedule is here! The workshops are held every 3rd Saturday of the month January-October from 9:00-10:00 am.

The first workshop of the year will be Saturday, January 17th and will be relocated to the UC conference room 142 Garden Highway, Yuba City, where it's much warmer. This workshop will be on "Healthy, Happy Houseplants."

February-October we will be at the Learning Garden in the Y/S Fairgrounds on Franklin Rd (Gate 7).

The February 21 workshop is called "Let's talk dirt."

The March workshop will be the first day of spring! It was only fitting to call this workshop "Spring has Sprung – Reap what you Sow." We will give tips about getting your vegetable garden ready for planting and highlight the varieties we have planned for our spring plant sales.

Please join us to get the rest of the schedule. We have all new planters and a greenhouse to show off!

Submitted by UC Master Gardener Heidi Hudgins

Spring Plant Sales

Dreaming about your summer garden? Mark your calendar for Saturday, April 11 and Saturday May 9. We are getting bigger and better. The spring plant sales are fundraisers to help maintain our Learning Garden and other community events given throughout the year by the Sutter-Yuba Master Gardener program. Tomato and pepper seeds have been purchased and will be planted at the beginning of January. We are focused on bringing you a wide choice of varieties that are easy to grow, hard to find, and have disease resistance. Pre-sale forms will go out the first week of April.

Submitted by UC Master Gardener Heidi Hudgins

Rose Pruning

Did you know that the best time to complete your winter rose pruning is between December 15 and February 15? Once you see the leaf buds forming on the canes, it's time to begin the heavy winter pruning of your hybrid teas, floribundas, and grandifloras so that you may enjoy healthy, happy roses all spring summer, fall, and even into winter.

What do you need to do? First, look for any canes that are crossing into the middle of your rose bush; those are impeding airflow, so need to be pruned out. Second, look for any canes that are brushing against other canes. One of those canes will need to be removed. Third, look for any canes that are diseased or not flourishing. Best to remove those, as well. Note that the older canes will take on a brown or even a gray tinge to them, whereas the newer canes will be green. Once you've removed the crossing, touching, or unhealthy canes, you can then proceed with further pruning of each cane. Your cuts should be no more than ¼ inch above an outwardly growing bud or branch. The reason for cuts above the outwardly growing bud? That's the direction you want the rose to grow.

While general guidelines are to leave only three to five canes on each bush, that's a guideline only. I sometimes leave 10-15 canes on a bush, because I like the look of a robust bush with many canes. And the blooms are spectacular! Rule of thumb: The more intense you prune the bush, fewer but larger blooms result. The less you prune, you'll have more flowers, but they'll be smaller.

Your end goal is to have the rose bush pruned in an open vase-shaped configuration; as you look down into the rose, it should appear open, providing good airflow to help reduce disease potential.

Once you complete your pruning, please be sure to clean up any fallen leaves or other debris from around the bush; again, to reduce disease.

For additional information please see [Roses: Cultural Practices and Weed Control](#) document on the UC Integrated Pest Management site.

Submitted by UC Master Gardener Marla Pike



Our Mission:

"To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California and be guided by our core values and strategic initiatives."

- UC Master Gardener Program Mission Statement

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Winter Weed Management: Get an Early Start!

Submitted by Whitney Brim-DeForest, UCCE Master Gardener Advisor, Sutter-Yuba

Winter may look like a quiet season in the garden, but it's an active time for many common weeds. Species such as common chickweed (*Stellaria media*) (Figure 1), henbit (*Lamium amplexicaule*) (Figure 2), and annual bluegrass (*Poa annua*) (Figure 3) germinate in fall and winter, remain small and hard to spot during cold weather, and then grow rapidly as temperatures warm. Managing these weeds now will significantly reduce flowering and then seed production in the spring. Remember, controlling weeds when they are small reduces inputs of weed seeds into the soil seedbank, thus reducing overall weed populations in the garden.



Figure 1. Chickweed at flowering.



Figure 2. Henbit growing in a turf area (before flowering).



Figure 3. Annual bluegrass in flower.

Why Focus on Weeds in Winter?

Like all weeds, winter weeds also compete with desirable plants for moisture, sunlight, and nutrients, even when slow-growing and small. If allowed to mature, they can produce seed early in spring, replenishing the soil seedbank and increasing weed pressure for years to come.

Best Practices for Winter Weed Control in Home Gardens

- **Hand Pull or Hoe When Conditions Are Right:** In California, winter rains soften soil, making it easier to remove weeds completely. Hand-pulling or hoeing weeds when the soil is moist helps ensure roots come out intact and also minimizes disturbance to nearby plants.
- **Mulch to Suppress Germination:** Applying mulch can be an effective winter weed management tool. A 2–4-inch layer of organic mulch, including leaves, straw, wood chips, or compost, blocks light and prevents many weed seeds from germinating.
- **Use Cover Crops in Empty Beds:** In vegetable gardens, winter cover crops help outcompete weeds, protect soil structure, and add organic matter. Cover crops can be cut down or incorporated into the soil before spring planting.
- **Prevent Seed Production:** Removing weeds before they flower and set seed is key to long-term weed management. Even a small number of winter weeds can produce hundreds of seeds if they are left unchecked.
- **Manage Borders and Pathways:** Weeds along fences, walkways, and edges of beds are often overlooked but serve as major seed sources. Keeping these areas clean can help prevent reinfestation of garden beds.

Spending just a few minutes weeding during winter can save hours of work in spring. Gardens managed well during the cooler months can experience fewer weed problems throughout the growing season.

Brighten Your Holidays with Christmas Cactus

Christmas cacti (*Schlumbergera*) are famous for blooming around the winter holidays. They come in many beautiful and sometimes neon colors, from red to magenta and pink to white. They are a forest cactus that originally came from Brazil and grow naturally in a shaded canopy of leaves. So, their culture and care are very different from desert cactus.

The secret of a healthy, blooming Christmas cactus is to control light and temperature. Christmas cacti need filtered, indirect light, and they will burn or turn yellowish in direct sunlight. They prefer cool temperatures of 55-65 degrees, and don't do well if placed near cold drafts or near heating vents. They do like some humidity, so place them with other plants or in a kitchen or bathroom. Water lightly only if the top 1/4th inch of soil feels dry.

With little care, Christmas cactus can live for decades. They bloom best when they are somewhat pot-bound and can be repotted every 3 years. They like soil that is rich and porous, and they can be pruned to shape. The leaf segments root easily, so it's easy to share plants with friends. They are not known to be toxic to pets.

To get your Christmas cactus to rebloom, temperature and light control are key. Christmas cacti are considered short-day plants. To get them to rebloom, they need a long period of total darkness for 3-6 weeks, cool temperatures of 50-60 degrees and minimal water. You can use a closet, basement, or spare room not used at night for this. Keep the plant in total, uninterrupted darkness for 16 hours a night and low light for the other 8 hours. This should trigger their flower cycle and buds will begin to form. Once this happens, you can water it sparingly and bring it out into normal filtered light conditions again. Your Christmas cactus is now ready to bloom beautifully for another winter season.

References:

California Master Gardener Handbook, Second Edition, 2015, pp.268-269.

Sunset Western Garden Book, 2012, p.595.

Photo Description: Christmas cactus in bloom for the Holidays

Photo Credit: Mai VanDerAa, UC Master Gardener

Written by: Maryann Just, UC Master Gardener



Yuba-Sutter Native Plant

Omphalotus olivascens

Common: Western Jack O'Lantern Mushroom

Family: Omphalotaceae

Okay, okay, botanically this is not a plant, but I just had to share!

Omphalotus olivascens is a mushroom, the fleshy, spore-bearing fruiting body of a fungus, endemic to the North American west coast; almost all of California. It is a saprobe, that is, it survives by decomposing dead or decaying organic material and using it as food. Most yard and garden mushrooms are saprobes.



It grows in large clusters on the stumps or buried roots of hardwoods, especially oaks. It is usually found on oak or eucalyptus, rarely other hosts.

The pileus (cap) is 2 to 8 or more inches across. At first it is convex, becoming flat or shallowly vase-shaped; bald; dry; dull brownish orange, often with olive discoloration; becoming orangish brown to olive brown or brown with age. The stipe (stem) is 2 to 6 inches long. Llamellae (gills) are decurrent (the gills curve partly down the stipe towards the base of the stipe). Fruiting occurs in the late fall through mid-winter. The fruiting bodies are luminescent, at least when fresh, often lasting 40 to 50

hours after collecting. Seeing this can require waiting for several minutes in a completely dark room before the greenish glow becomes visible.

The jack o'lantern mushroom is poisonous; not lethal, consuming this mushroom leads to very severe cramps, vomiting and diarrhea.

It has several lookalikes including *Cantharellus californicus*, chanterelle mushroom, but the jack o'lantern mushroom has true, blade like gills, rather than ridges and they can have olive coloration that chanterelles lack.



Submitted by UC Master Gardener Lesley Harvell; photo credits, Lesley Harvell