

Ventura County Master Gardener

Monthly Checklist — June/July 2026

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Sourced by: Master Gardeners of Ventura County | Contact: mgventura@ucanr.edu

CALIFORNIA NATIVES

- From now until August is the slow season for the native garden.
- Watering can be tricky this time of year. California tends to get little rainfall until October. Near the coast the weather can be cold and drizzly; the eastern side of the county can be blazing hot. Natives need time to dry out between waterings. For established native plants, give one to two deep waterings per month. For newly planted natives, water once a week or two. While most native plants benefit from some summer water, some established non-riparian natives do not like any summer water — these include certain ceanothus, manzanita, ribes, fremontodendron, and woolly bluecurls. Check your plant species on Calscape.org for water requirements.
- If you want to replace your lawn, now is the easiest time to kill it down to the roots. Cover your lawn with clear (not black) plastic for a month or more — this is called soil solarization. The summer heat does the hard work for you. This tends to work better in hotter climates; coastal areas may not reach the temperatures needed to kill turf. Remove the plastic after 6 weeks before it begins to break down.
- Mulch is important for new natives and established plants. It retains moisture and improves the soil. Keep mulch 4 inches deep and 4–6 inches away from the base of your plants.

GROWING FOOD

- Not sure how to get started? Try one of the many food-growing classes offered this month.
- Starter plants that can be planted now: cantaloupe, corn, cucumber, chard, eggplant, green onions, kale, peppers, pumpkin, tomatoes, and watermelons. Best planted in the late afternoon or evening to reduce transplant shock.
- Seeds that can be sown directly in the soil: beans (bush and pole), beets, carrots, lima beans, okra, radish, summer squash, and zucchini.
- Herbs to plant: basil, chervil, chives, dill, lavender, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, summer savory, and tarragon.

PLANTS AND FLOWERS

- Keep an eye on your young seedlings. Even drought-tolerant ones need water to establish. Once they are larger, you can water them less frequently.
- To add color to your garden, plant day lily, alyssum, alstroemeria, celosia, cosmos, marigold, petunias, portulaca, salvia, sunflowers, and zinnias.
- Succulents are easy to grow and propagate. Consider agave, yucca, and aloe.
- To attract beneficial insects, try aster, chamomile, coreopsis, cosmos, feverfew, marigold, scabiosa, and yarrow. Bees prefer floral consistency — plant in patches at least 3 feet square. Native plants help attract native pollinators.
- Alyssum is a host plant for the beneficial hoverfly. Planting it near citrus may help control the insect that vectors the deadly Huanglongbing (HLB) disease.

TREES AND SHRUBS

- Propagate cuttings from red elderberry, toyon, big-leaf maple, and creek dogwood; by fall they should be ready to plant.
- Fertilize non-native trees and shrubs.
- If your fruit trees are showing signs of bearing fruit, thin some fruit to improve quality over quantity. If birds and other pests are helping themselves, cover trees with netting — the same applies to blueberries.
- Plant kumquat, lemon, lime, orange, avocado, cherimoya, and mango. Note: mangoes dislike fog — if you live near the coast, skip them. They thrive in heat.

TOOL AND IRRIGATION CARE

- Invest in a moisture meter probe to check your soil. A simple handheld probe eliminates guesswork.
- Clean and sanitize all tools; sharpen or replace blades on metal parts.
- Rub wooden handles with linseed oil and store in a dry place.
- Check drip lines and emitters for wet or dry patches. Consider switching from high-flow to low-flow emitters. Replace timer batteries if they are low.
- Free irrigation classes are available throughout the month.

INSECTS, PESTS, AND WEEDS

- Watch for powdery mildew — heat combined with moisture creates ideal conditions. Rinse affected leaves in the morning and allow them to dry completely by nightfall. For severe cases, prune affected parts and dispose of them in the regular trash. Do not add to a compost pile or green recycling bin.

- Bees need water to survive, especially during hot summer months. Provide appropriate water sources in your garden.
- Eliminate any standing water — it is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Regularly clean birdbaths.
- Snails and slugs can be hand-picked from the garden daily during heavy infestations, or weekly otherwise. They can be fed to chickens, provided no harmful chemicals were used in your garden.
- Whiteflies: Remove heavily infested leaves. Spray whiteflies off plants with a stream of water in the morning. Neem oil is also effective — follow label directions carefully, as neem can harm bees if applied at the wrong time or damage plants when temperatures are too high.
- Aphids thrive in nitrogen-rich gardens and are less common in native gardens. Ladybugs are natural predators of aphids. For heavy infestations, release ladybugs twice in one week (purchased from an insectary). Store them in the refrigerator until release time, then open the bag and place it under the most infected plant at dusk or dawn.
- Pesticide sprays harm beneficial insects — including ladybugs, bees, and other pollinators. Remember: 90% of all insects are beneficial! If pesticide application is necessary, apply only to infected plants and follow all label instructions for personal and environmental safety.
- For information on Huanglongbing (HLB) and the Asian Citrus Psyllid (ACP) pest, visit californiacitrusthreat.org.
- For all pest advice, visit ipm.ucanr.edu.

WATER, AIR, SOIL, AND FIRE

- Take a free Drip Irrigation class from the Ventura County Master Gardeners.
- Too much water in summer can lead to fungal pathogens and root rot, and may also harm beneficial fungi.
- Stay on top of removing dead plants and fire fuel from your yard. Learn more about fire-wise gardening from your local resources.
- Check gutters for leaves and debris. Add a screen on top of gutters to help with fire protection — note that even screened gutters need periodic cleaning.