
Ventura County Master Gardener

Monthly Checklist - August 2026

CALIFORNIA NATIVES

- ✓ August is the slow season for the native garden.
- ✓ Watering can be tricky this time of year. California tends to not get much 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 watering. For established native plants, one to two deep watering a month and for newly planted natives once a week or two. While most native plants will look better with some summer water, note that some established non-riparian native plants do not like any summer water. These include some *Ceanothus*, manzanita, *Ribes*, *Fremontodendron* and woolly blue curls. Check your plant species on the [Calscape.org](https://www.calscape.org) site for water requirements.
- ☺
- ✓ If you want to replace your lawn now is the easiest time to kill it, down to the roots. You can cover your lawn with clear (not black) plastic for a month or more. This is called soil solarization <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/home-and-landscape/soil-solarization-for-gardens-landscapes/-gsc.tab=0>. The heat of summer will do the hard work for you. This tends to work better in hotter climates. Coastal areas may not meet the temperatures required to kill your turf. Remove the plastic after 6 weeks, before it starts to break down.
- ✓ Mulch is important for new natives and established plants. It will hold in moisture and improve the soil. Keep mulch 3" deep & keep it 4"-6" away from the base of your plants and at least 5' away from your home if you are in a high risk fire area. Separate mulches with non-combustibles such as rocks or gravel.
- ✓ Useful information about native plants, mulch, and other topics is available in this month's newsletter. [Click here to link to it on our website](#) or sign up to receive it monthly by [clicking here](#).
- ✓ Take our free class, Growing CA Native Plants. [Click here for information and to sign up](#).
- ✓ Read up on natives at <https://www.calscape.org/>

GROWING FOOD

- ✓ Not sure how to get started? Try one of the many food growing classes we offer this month. [FREE Master Gardener Classes](#)
- ✓ Starter plants of cucumber, celery, chard, corn, cucumbers, green onions, kale, lima beans, peppers, pumpkins and tomatoes can be planted. Best planted in the late afternoon or evening to reduce shock to the plant.
- ✓ Blue elderberries, California blackberries, huckleberries, and thimble berries are ready for picking.
- ✓ Seeds of (bush and pole) beans, beets, broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, radishes, summer squash, and zucchinis can be planted in your soil.
- ✓ Herbs to be planted basil, chervil, chives, corn, dill, lavender, marjoram, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, summer savory, and tarragon.
- ✓ Check out this article for your summer harvest. <https://ucanr.edu/statewide-program/uc-master-gardener-program/harvesting-and-storing>

PLANTS AND FLOWERS

- ✓ Keep an eye on your young seedlings. Even drought tolerant ones need water to establish. When they get bigger you can water them less.
- ✓ To add fun colors to your garden plant day lily, *Alyssum*, *Alstroemeria*, *Celosia*, Cosmos, marigold, *Petunia*, *Portulaca*, *Salvia*, sunflowers, and *Zinnia*.
- ✓ Succulents are easy to grow and easy to propagate. Consider agave, yucca, and aloe.

- ✓ To attract beneficial insects, try aster, chamomile, coreopsis, cosmos, feverfew, marigold, *Scabiosa*, and yarrow. Bees like floral consistency so plant in patches of 3' square.
- ✓ *Alyssum* is a host plant for the beneficial hoverfly. Planting it near citrus may help in controlling the insect that vectors the deadly HLB disease.

TREES & SHRUBS

- ✓ Propagate cuttings from *Sambucus mexicana* (blue elderberry), toyon, big leaf maple, and creek dogwood and by fall they should be ready to plant.
- ✓ Fertilize non-native trees and shrubs.
- ✓ If your fruit trees are showing signs of bearing fruit, you can thin some fruit to get more quality instead of excess quantity. If birds and other pests are helping themselves to your fruit, you can cover trees with netting. Same for blueberries.
- ✓ Plant kumquat, lemon, lime, orange, avocado, cherimoya, and mangos. Mangos don't like fog. If you live near the coast don't bother planting. They love heat.

TOOL AND IRRIGATION CARE

- ✓ Invest in a moisture meter probe to check on your soil. A simple handheld probe will save a lot of guessing.
- ✓ Clean and sanitize tools, all metal parts (sharpen or replace blades)
- ✓ Rub wooden handles with linseed oil. Store in dry place.
- ✓ Check drip lines and emitters for wet patches and dry patches. Consider switching from high flow to low flow. Replace timer batteries.
- ✓ Free irrigation classes are available throughout the month.

INSECTS, PESTS & WEEDS

- ✓ Keep an eye out for powdery mildew. The combo of heat and moisture can be mildew factory. Rinse affected leaves in the morning. Allow leaves to dry completely by nightfall. For especially bad cases, prune affected parts and throw away in regular trash. Do not add to compost pile or green waste recycling bin.
- ✓ Keep an eye out for any standing water. This is a breeding ground for mosquitoes. Regularly clean out your birdbaths.
- ✓ Snails and Slugs <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7427.html?src=302-www&fr=4548>
- ✓ Whiteflies <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7401.html?src=302-www&fr=4446>
- ✓ Aphids love a nitrogen-rich garden. They are less common in a native garden. <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7404.html?src=302-www&fr=4368>
- ✓ Never mass spray pesticides. You will harm beneficial insects, ladybugs, bees and other pollinators. **90% of all insects are beneficial!**
- ✓ Try adding ladybugs when you have aphids. Release them early morning or late evening under most infected plant.
- ✓ Visit <https://californiacitrusthreat.org/> for information on HLB and the ACP pest
- ✓ For all pest advice - Visit www.ipm.ucanr.edu

WATER, AIR, SOIL, & FIRE

- ✓ Take a free Drip Irrigation class. We have several this month. [Link for FREE drip irrigation class!](#)
- ✓ Too much water this season can lead to fungal pathogens and root rot and can also harm beneficial fungi.
- ✓ Be sure to stay on removing dead plants and fire "fuel" in your yard. Learn more about fire-wise gardening from your local resources.
- ✓ Check gutters for leaves and debris. Add a screen on top of your gutters to help with fire protection. Even screened gutter need periodic cleaning.

✓ For question about your soil, [Click here to go to SoilWeb.](#)