



UC Master Gardeners of Sutter-Yuba Counties Newsletter

August-September 2026

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.

Contact:

Telephone 530-822-7515
Email sutteryuba@ucanr.edu

Facebook

<https://facebook.com/sutteryubamg>



Donate:

Support our program and make a gift donation online: [University of California - Agriculture and Natural Resources](https://ucanr.edu/donate)

Where to find the Sutter-Yuba Master Gardeners in August and September:

Yuba City Farmers' Market, 8 a.m. to Noon, Yuba City Town Square Fountain

- August 22
- August 29
- September 5
- September 12
- September 19
- September 26

Garden Booth Pop-Up, 9 a.m. to Noon, Tractor Supply

- September 12

Learning Garden Workshop (Melon Tasting), 8:30 a.m. to 10 a.m., Yuba-Sutter Fairgrounds

- September 19

Please stop by to say hello and to get answers to your gardening questions. You could even bring a sample or photo of your gardening issue.

Fall Plant Sale

The Sutter-Yuba Master Gardeners will host a Fall Plant Sale on Saturday, October 10, 2026, from 9 a.m. to noon.

This is a great opportunity to begin your cool-weather garden. Available for sale will be broccoli, cauliflower, flowers, and more!

The 4-H kids will also be there, selling pumpkins for fall decorating.

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.

Grow More, Waste Less

Submitted by Liliana Alvarez, UC Summer Fellow

In the United States, roughly 133 billion pounds of food are wasted every year, impacting society on a multilayered scale. Food that could have helped



The EPA's Wasted Food Scale shows the hierarchy of food waste management, encouraging prevention, food donation, and composting before disposal. Source: United States Environmental Protection Agency.

many families in need ended up in the landfill, leading to environmental, economic, and societal consequences. Land, water, labor, energy, and more are used in producing, transporting, and discarding unused food.

Using the EPA Wasted Food Scale as a guide, this article will focus on the most preferred method and some common mistakes home gardeners can avoid. The EPA created a Wasted Food Scale to show what routes should be taken to divert wasted food from disposal. Tiers of the scale show different options for managing food waste, arranged in order from most preferred to least preferred.

At-home gardening is a great start to creating a more sustainable alternative to industrial agriculture.

However, there are common mistakes that home gardeners can avoid to maximize their food production within their means.

Ways gardeners accidentally waste food

Home gardeners most often unintentionally waste food by growing more than they can consume, allowing fresh produce to rot on the vine, and losing viable produce to accidental pests or poor storage.

1. The Overproduction

Gardeners can get carried away by planting entire packets of seeds, leading to massive harvests of crops ripening at once. It becomes too much to harvest or eat fast enough, the harvest rots on the plant and unfortunately becomes waste

Instead, try this:

- **Work Backwards from Frost Date:** Find your area's last spring frost date and first fall frost date. Use these dates to determine when to start seeds indoors or direct-sow outdoors.
- **Staggered Planting:** Instead of planting an entire packet of lettuce, radishes, or spinach at once, plant small, manageable rows every 7 to 14 days. This ensures a continuous, steady supply of fresh produce instead of one massive harvest.
- **Understand Days to Maturity:** Every seed packet tells you how many days it takes for a plant to reach maturity. Calculate this into your calendar so you know exactly when a bed will become available to replant with your next crop.

2. Forgetting to Harvest Hidden Edibles

Individuals often focus only on the main crop and accidentally waste edible leaves and stems that are just as nutritious. When these overlooked portions are discarded, valuable nutrients, resources, and labor invested in growing the crop are also wasted.

Instead, try this:

Researching hidden edibles that may be growing alongside the crops in your garden could help reduce the amount of waste that is unknowingly being created. For example, Broccoli leaves, radish tops, beet greens, and pea shoots are completely edible and highly nutritious, but they often get discarded.

3. Ignoring Imperfect Produce

Since gardeners control how their food is grown, sometimes the perfectionist inside gets the best of us, leaving slightly misshapen or insect-nibbled produce on the vine. These “ugly” foods are completely safe to eat once washed, but most of the time they get discarded.

Instead, try this:

The most effective way to deal with ugly produce is to utilize it in recipes where its appearance doesn't matter.

- **Blending & Pureeing:** Throw leafy greens, blemished fruit, or wonky-shaped vegetables into a smoothie.
- **Soups, Sauces, and Stews:** Any vegetable that is slightly wilted or uniquely shaped can be chopped up and cooked down into pasta sauces, broths, or stews.
- **Creative Peeling:** Many common surface blemishes only affect the skin. Simply peel them and enjoy the yummy core underneath!

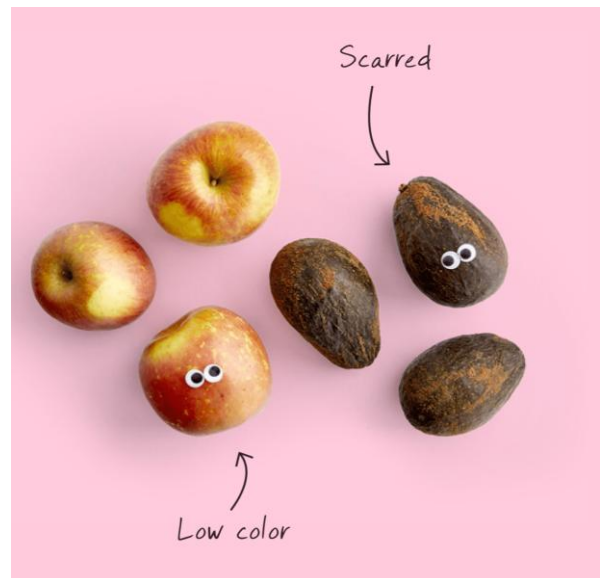
4. Poor Post-Harvest Storage

After a successful harvest, improper storage methods can cause fresh food to spoil before it is consumed. Common storage mistakes include leaving root vegetables in plastic bags, which trap moisture and promote faster spoilage. Additionally, storing certain fruits together can accelerate rot. Some fruits, such as bananas, apples, tomatoes, and mangoes, release ethylene gas, which speeds up the ripening process and can cause nearby produce to spoil more quickly. Another

common issue is storing vegetables in sealed plastic bags, as many vegetables require adequate airflow to remain fresh.

Instead, try this:

- Store root vegetables (like potatoes, onions, and winter squash) in a cool, dark, dry place with good air circulation.
- Keep herbs (like cilantro and parsley) like fresh flowers by trimming the stems and standing them upright in a glass with 1-2 inches of water. Cover the tops loosely with a plastic bag and place in the fridge.



Minor blemishes, irregular shapes, or unusual sizes do not affect the safety or nutritional value of most fruits and vegetables. Embracing imperfect produce helps keep edible food out of landfills. Courtesy of [ImperfectProduce.com](https://imperfectproduce.com)

- If your fridge has adjustable vents, close the vent for high humidity (great for leafy greens, broccoli, and carrots) and open it for low humidity (great for fruits).
- Long-term storage: using methods such as pickling, curing, freezing,

drying, and more can help extend the life of your harvests.

5. Accidental Chaos Gardening

Sometimes gardeners toss kitchen scraps or old whole vegetables straight into the yard or garden beds, thinking it will act as natural compost. While some fruit and vegetable scraps break down well, dumping random seeds and food directly onto the ground without burying them can attract pests and result in an unmanageable harvest.

Instead, try this:

- Explore Composting! All you need is:
 - Carbon-rich materials ("browns"); this will be dry leaves and cardboard scraps
 - Nitrogen-rich materials ("greens"); this will be your kitchen scraps
 - Water (moisture)
 - Air (oxygen)

The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) website has valuable information on starting a compost bin and how to accommodate a smaller space.

- "Quick Trench" Composting: dig a hole or narrow trench that is about 8 to 12 inches deep in a designated garden bed. Chop your kitchen scraps and place them in the trench. Cover the scraps entirely with at least 6 to 8 inches of dirt. The soil acts as a natural barrier, completely preventing seeds from sprouting while allowing worms and soil microbes to break the food down into natural fertilizer.

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/preventing-wasted-food-home#storage>
https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/2016-02/documents/smart_storage_ftgtw_2_1_2016_pu_bnumberadded_508_v2.pdf

Wasted Food Scale/Food Waste FAQs

<https://www.usda.gov/about-food/food-safety/food-loss-and-waste/food-waste-faqs>

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale#wastedfoodpath>

Composting

<https://www.epa.gov/recycle/composting-home>

Photo Credits:

<https://www.imperfectfoods.com/what-imperfect-means>

<https://www.epa.gov/sustainable-management-food/wasted-food-scale#wastedfoodpath>

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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References:

Planting tips

<https://extension.wvu.edu/lawn-gardening-pests/gardening/garden-management/succession-planting>

Preserving and storage