
Ventura County Master Gardener Monthly Checklist

OCTOBER 2026

El Niño

- ✓ Check your drains and gullies for blockage.
- ✓ Clear your rain gutters.
- ✓ If you live in a low-lying area or adjacent to hillside runoff, sand bags may be helpful for diverting water.
- ✓ Bare soil is subject to erosion. A covered soil can help alleviate erosion and slides. Information on using compost for [Capping Soils](#) is available from our Green Blog.

CALIFORNIA NATIVES

- ✓ Why natives? They support our native birds, wildlife and pollinators. Exotic plants may not have the insect populations that feed our wildlife and if you don't have bugs, you don't have birds.
- ✓ This is the time when you will start to see native plant sales, get your lists ready.
- ✓ The best time to plant natives is in the fall when the weather has cooled and the days are shorter. If it is still hot and dry, you may want to hold off on planting until later in the season when we get some rain. Too wet can also be a problem so avoid planting in saturated soils. If you have purchased plants and are waiting for the weather to cooperate for planting, make sure that they get water and shade.
- ✓ Fall is a good time for seeding native grasses and wildflowers. It gives your plants a head start on establishment before the spring bloom.
- ✓ Many native plants have had a long tough summer. Clean out any deadwood and spent foliage. If you live in a high fire hazard area, now is the time to cut back those tall grasses such as deergrass and tall fescues that have turned from green to golden.
- ✓ [Calscape](#) from the California Native Plant Society has information to get you started or to answer questions for the seasoned native plant aficionado.

GROWING FOOD

- ✓ Start by clearing out the debris from your summer garden when you harvest. This will give you a clean slate for your winter garden while thwarting hiding places for pests and diseases.
- ✓ Now is the optimal time to start winter crops such as beets, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower and many more. You can see the full [Vegetable Planting Schedule](#) here.
- ✓ We have free winter veggie classes along with a plethora of other classes that you can sign up for here,
- ✓ [Ventura Master Gardener events and classes](#)

PLANTS AND FLOWERS

- ✓ Fall is the perfect time for planting bulbs. Choose native bulbs or those from a mediterranean climate to avoid pre-chilling requirements. Crocus, freesia, gladiolus and iris do well in our climate and require little care. If you choose native bulbs, make sure to plant them in an area that doesn't get summer irrigation. Native bulbs need a rest and summer water can rot them.
- ✓ Pansies are a happy little flower that can last 9 to 10 months in your garden and come in a variety of colors.
- ✓ Snapdragons can usually be considered a perennial here for year-round color.
- ✓ Seeded now, California poppy, Clarkia, and Mimulus for beautiful flowers starting to bloom in the spring.
- ✓ Look for plants from the daisy or aster family that bloom in the fall to help sustain our pollinators. Goldenrod, coyote brush, salvias and California fuchsia are all good choices.

TREES & SHRUBS

- ✓ Fall is clean up season. Remove any debris and dropped fruit under trees. Remove any diseased wood making sure to disinfect tools afterwards.
- ✓ Plant buckeyes, boxelders, and California black walnuts from seed now. Don't let the seeds dry out. If you are collecting acorns for planting later, you can keep them refrigerated for up to six months in a baggie with the caps removed. Collect acorns that are brown and have caps that come off readily. You can determine their viability by soaking them for 24 hours. If they float, throw them out.

TOOL AND IRRIGATION CARE

- ✓ This is a good time to check your drip irrigation system for clogs and bites. Run the system and look for dry spots or mini geysers caused by those pesky varmints that use drip tubes as chew toys.
- ✓ Set your irrigation timers to run less often (but keeping the same output amount.) As the days are shorter and the temperatures cool, your garden will lose less water to evaporation and your plants will be taking up water for fewer hours during the day.
- ✓ Clean and sanitize tools, all metal parts (sharpen or replace blades)
- ✓ Rub wooden handles with linseed or mineral oil. Store in dry place.
- ✓ We offer a free irrigation class for October with sign up information at [Oct 10, drip irrigation class](#)

INSECTS, PESTS & WEEDS

- ✓ Aphids love a nitrogen-rich garden so don't over fertilize. Many plants go into a resting phase in the fall and don't appreciate fertilizers that make them grow.
- ✓ Never mass spray pesticides and ALWAYS read the label instructions for timing, distribution amounts and plants that the pesticides can be used on. **90% of all insects are beneficial!**
- ✓ Keep monitoring for the Asian Citrus Psyllid on all varieties of citrus. Especially those that flush year-round. [ACP Distribution and Management](#)
- ✓ For all homeowner pest advice - [UCIPM Home and Landscape](#)

WATER, AIR, SOIL, & FIRE

- ✓ Remember to turn off your irrigation system if rain is in the forecast.
- ✓ Santa Ana winds can suck the moisture out of your plants. Look for signs of wilt and irrigate accordingly. South facing slopes will dry out faster.
- ✓ Remove dead or dying foliage especially if you live in a high fire hazard area. Continue hardening your home. [UCANR Fire Network](#)
- ✓ Protect your soil with mulch- [Mulching your Soil](#) and never walk on wet soil or garden beds [Managing Soils](#)