



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Master Gardener Program

## February 2021 Merced Master Gardeners Public Newsletter

### Join Us in January 2022!

Merced County Master Gardener Training Class 2022 will germinate in January of 2022. Information sessions will be held in late summer, with applications due in October 2021. Men and women from all walks of life become Master Gardeners: homemakers, business people, educators, retired persons, and many others. No degree is required, just a strong desire to serve the community. More information available here soon.

### Have gardening questions?

**The Helpline Number is 209 385-7403.**

**The Helpline email is [anrmgmerced@ucanr.edu](mailto:anrmgmerced@ucanr.edu)**

**Hours: Nov-Feb, Th 9-11 a.m.**

**March-Oct M 2-4 p.m.; Th 9-11 a.m.**

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Merced, CA 95341-6445**

**Officers: Jay Hawkes - President  
Nicolai Laquaglia - Vice-President  
Luwanda Jones- Secretary  
Mary Shasky - Treasurer  
Helpline Co-leads: Kaaren Morgner, Liz Swenson  
Gwen Boykin - Member At Large  
Larrae Iencarelli - Affirmed as Past President**

## Happy Gardening!

### Garden To-Do's: A Guide to Late January, February, March By Pat Shay, MMG

#### LATE JANUARY/FEBRUARY

We've spent the last couple of months dreaming of the start of the gardening year, so now is the time to get to work and both reap the rewards of the bulb planting we did in late fall and implement the plans we have conceived over recent months. Since it is still too cold to plant young plants out and the danger of frost is still very present, we can prepare the ground and shop seed catalogs for what we want to plant as well as order bare root roses and trees. It's best not to plant bare root plants until you determine that you have no areas of poor drainage which might drown them.

\*Since we have gotten recent good rain storms, if we begin to put cold-sensitive plants outside, it's best to have someplace sheltered for them, out of rain and danger of frost. Really delicate plants should probably remain indoors into mid-February at least.

\*Drainage should be addressed when we notice areas that have excessive standing water. Perhaps create a dry creek that will divert standing water in an area where it is not wanted to either the edge of the yard where it will cause no problems (or for your neighbor!) or where it can be soaked up over time.

\*The heated atmosphere of your house can be stressful for plants, so check for yellowing or wilting. Light watering or misting can help. A light dose of fertilizer will support flowering plants indoors: amaryllis and Thanksgiving/Christmas cactus in particular.

\*If you still have your Christmas tree, recycle or add it to a brush pile in an out-of-the way area for the birds and small animals to enjoy.

\*Late January and early February is rose pruning time. Don't be timid about cutting a rose back. They can take a serious trim and come back much better for it. Clear out dead branches that interfere with others or are going in the wrong direction. Make a diagonal cut with sharp clippers just above a bud that is aimed in the direction (OUT) that you want the new branch to grow.

\*The end of January and into February is time to prune fruit trees. If you need some information on pruning, call the MG Help Line. Now is also the time to prune grapes. Fruit grows on new growth.

\*At the end of January or first part of February, plan to give your fruit trees one last dormant spray to ward off peach leaf curl and other pests that can be detrimental to a good summer harvest.

\*Check citrus for scale infestation and spray with Neem oil. With more low temps and more frost, be sure that your citrus trees are protected. If you are covering, be certain that the cover does NOT touch the foliage.

\*If you are really adventurous, now is a good time to try grafting. Astonish your friends with two or more varieties of apples or peaches on one tree or two or three different colored roses on one bush. You can also grow lemons, oranges and grapefruit on one tree via grafting. Again, call the MG Helpline for information.

\*Since we've been getting nice rain storms or showers of good duration, make sure that your sprinkler system is OFF! Bad on two levels if still on....drowns plants and wastes water.

\*Now's the time for a trip to a garden shop to purchase and plant some winter color: snapdragons, primroses, cyclamen, etc., potted in a large container in an entry way can ward off the dismal. Also....now is the perfect time to select and plant a Japonica camellia or two.....lovely color to brighten your yard. Give thought to the fact that our summers are way too hot for camellias to be in full sun, so plant in a location that gets shelter in the afternoon. They will also do just fine in large pots that can be moved to more shaded areas later in the year as necessary.

\*Those who are passionate about getting the first tomato off the vine may well have planted seeds in greenhouses or cold frames already, but the rest of us can begin thinking about starting spring veggie seeds now for transplanting into the garden as the temperatures rise and frost is no longer a threat. Also, there is still time to order seeds from catalogs.

\*If you prefer to plant seeds directly into garden beds, do not worry, there is still of time for that as the days get longer and warmer. Seeds are not happy with the idea of germinating in cold ground, so unless you want to enter the first tomato competition, waiting is quite fine.

\*Remember as you do prepare seed/seedling beds, do NOT plant the same veggies in the same bed every year. You need to rotate tomatoes, squash, beans, etc. to avoid disease. Prepare a plot which will get eight hours of sun a day in late spring and summer for best results.

\*Watch out for slugs and snails which are likely to decimate your early spring bulbs. Put out bait – making sure it is non-toxic to pets or use a slug/snail hotel or a flat saucer with beer. Toward the end of February, temps will begin to rise and insect pests will be looking for a good meal. If you see lots of aphids, etc., give them a good spray with the hose. By March lady beetles will begin to appear to help with eliminating aphids.

\*Begin to plant summer flowering bulbs. Set out seasonal annuals for color — primroses, calendula, English daisy, pansy. Plant perennials — alstroemeria, Bergenia, bleeding heart campanula, candytuft, columbine, coral bells dianthus, marguerite, etc. For bloom and fragrance, plant jasmine or trumpet vine.

\*Set out artichokes, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, green onions, and kohlrabi.

\*Fertilize fall perennials. Check foliage of gardenias for yellowing and provide with a dose of iron.

## **MARCH**

While temperatures are now pleasant out in the garden, there can still be danger of frost, so be careful planting tender young plants. If you have the space, you might want to build and use a simple cold frame to whet your appetite for more planting in weeks to come.

\*If you want some more color and love plants that are hardy, you might consider nasturtiums. They come in a colors from yellow to deep red and can be contained in a large pot or allowed to grow up a fence or trellis. The added bonus is that you can use the blossoms in salads.

\*Take a good look at your garden and make plans to fill in gaps or add pops of color for 'tween seasons interest. Don't forget birds and pollinators. Buddleia and bottlebrush are super attractive to hummingbirds and butterflies, are permanent additions to your garden, and provide color for months. You might want to 'fill in' empty places with perennials that don't require a lot of care but perform dependably for at least several years.

\*Continue to monitor pests and act on them quickly so that they do not get out of hand. Depending upon the year, earwigs can be a problem, but they are also fairly easy to control. Roll up some newspaper and place on the ground under plants where you've noticed these pests. Overnight, earwigs will gather under the newspaper rolls and all you have to do is gather up the newspaper and dispose of it in the trash container. Earwigs prefer dark and damp. You can make your garden less attractive by clearing away debris/leaves/twigs, etc.

\*Time to fertilize lawns, shrubs and trees.