



University of California

Agriculture and Natural Resources

Master Gardener Program

April 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**

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

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

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**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 April, May, and June By Pat Shay, MMG

As I type this we are getting some much needed rain showers. Would be great were they to continue on through May!

We are approaching prime gardening time.....planting seeds or seedlings, checking irrigation systems, amending the soil as needed, mulching in to keep weeds at bay and to prepare for the warmer temps to come all too soon.

A caution: Tempting though it is to get out and dig and plant RIGHT NOW, be patient. Do NOT till wet soil. Nothing to be gained by it. Do NOT plant seedlings or seeds out until soil temp exceeds 60 degrees....you gain nothing by it, but may very well watch as your precious seedlings succumb to a last minute frost. YIKES!

APRIL

*Merced College Plant Sale runs from the April 14th to the 16th. Go to their website to make an appointment to go shopping! Tomatoes.....they've got plenty of them in many shapes, sizes and colors.....regular red ACE to purple Black Krim and much in between. Great variety of other veggies. Flowers aplenty – annuals and perennials. Grasses. Succulents. A wide selection to tempt you to buy way more than you really want to spend the time planting and tending!

*This is a good time to plant summer blooming bulbs, tubers and corms....gladiolas, dahlias, crocosmia to name but a few. A little bone meal in the bottom of the hole will be just what they need to get off to a good start. Planting directions may suggest a wide spacing, but for impact, planting closer will work. Dahlias shouldn't be watered upon planting, only once the buds have broken the ground and then be sure that the soil is very well draining. Dahlias do not like to be wet!

*If you have thought about adding a bougainvillea, hibiscus or other semi-tropical plant to your landscape, don't despair. Find a nice sheltered location by a south-facing wall or plant in a pot that you can move as necessary.

*Everyone wants birds to visit their garden, but there is news of a salmonella outbreak, so make sure to change hummingbird feed at least every two days (a good practice no matter what!). If seed has been sitting in your bird-feeder, best to empty remaining seed in the garbage, scrub the feeder with

Gardening Continued.

soapy water, dry carefully and re-fill.

*Now's a good time for a lawnmower check-up in preparation for summer use. Set the blade to cut at a minimum of two and a half inches. Longer grass uses less water.

*Monitor sprinklers to use only the amount of water needed and cut the number by 2. Set sprinklers to water for one cycle to start at 5 or 6 a.m. and run a second cycle an hour later. Water is used more efficiently and avoids run-off (the dreaded 'drool'!)

*Your lawn may need a dose of iron. Follow label directions to apply. As Iris blooms fade, allow foliage to dry. Do not trim old leaves off, but you might want to double them over to improve appearance.

MAY

*Mother's Day is coming up. A nice plant is a great gift. Good choices are azaleas, calla lilies, hydrangeas, and miniature roses that can be enjoyed in the house for a couple of weeks and then either planted into the garden or a pot outside.

*There's still time to plant dahlia corms and/or summer blooming bulbs.

*Check whether your lawn needs aeration to help improve air and water penetration. Great time to plant vegetable starts. Plenty of interesting choices to try.

*Begonias add color to the garden and have a long bloom period. Plant them out, or fill a hanging basket for a patio or porch. Also it's a good time to plant perennials such as those mentioned above as good gifts for mom or simply to add to your yard for more permanence than annuals.

JUNE

*Great time to plant zinnia and/or coreopsis seeds. They grow easily and add terrific color to your flower beds. Coreopsis will self-seed as blooms fade, so you may find that you have more than you expected, but that also lengthens the bloom period. Plant zinnia seed intermittently so that you have a continuous burst of bright color. There are also many wonderful, showy varieties that are a fun change from the ordinary variety. Zinnias range in size from 10 – 12" to 2 – 3'....short along borders and tall toward the back of beds increase their impact.

*Plant corn now that the soil is warm. Again, stagger planting over a few weeks to stretch the crop of fresh corn to eat.

*Also plant more basil, cilantro and other herbs for seasoning summer/fall meals.

*Monitor sprinklers/irrigation systems to maximize water use, being careful to avoid letting veggies wilt. Early morning watering is best. Check for broken emitters, clogged lines, etc. and fix as needed. For lawns, determine the amount of water needed and divide the number by 2. Set sprinklers to water for two cycles, the first to start at 5 or 6 a.m. and run a second cycle an hour later (Remember the dreaded 'drool'!).

*Your lawn may need a dose of iron. Follow label directions to apply.

Feed roses, lawns, ornamentals and veggies to maximize yield.

*Dead head roses to get repeat bloom.

*Maintain a good level of mulch everywhere, leaving the area around the base of the plants clear. Mulch helps the ground retain moisture and inhibits weeds.

*Keep after those weeds that do come up....don't waste water letting them get out of hand.

*If pests on roses are a significant problem, spray with neem oil.

Seed Starting

If you want to try seed starting, you can use some of your household items. I did buy a seed mat to keep my plants warm until they sprout and get a good start. I save yogurt and mac and cheese cups and put about five holes in the bottom. I also save empty toilet paper rolls to plant in and living lettuce containers to use as mini hot houses. The containers are stackable. I do all my seed starting in the house where I can control the temperature. Once the seeds come up, I use a good liquid fertilizer, diluted to about a 25% of what is called for on the label. Decide what kind of plants you want and go in with someone to share seeds. Read the labels carefully as some seeds are better if directly sown rather than started inside. Once the plants sprout, go through and thin them if more than one seed came up in a pot. When plants are 8-10 weeks old and all possibility of frost is past, put them outside during the day to harden them for about a week before planting them. You can plant enough seeds to share plants with others as well.

