



# Gardening for Beginners

## 4 - Working in the Garden

UCCE Master Gardener Program  
Santa Clara County, CA



### Review IPM “Scavenger Hunt”

Here are some possible answers to the Integrated Pest Management Scavenger Hunt:

1. A plant that aphids eat  
According to the IPM site, “Almost every plant has one or more aphid species that occasionally feed on it.”
2. A natural insect enemy of aphids  
Parasitic wasps are one natural enemy of aphids.
3. A technique to control snails & slugs in the garden  
One technique is to remove their favorite hiding places from the garden, like removing old boards, and ivy, for example.
4. A type of lady beetle  
(Note: We commonly call these ‘lady bugs’, but you will get better search results using the more scientific name ‘lady beetle’)  
One type is the Seven-spotted Lady Beetle which has seven spots. Another one is the California Lady Beetle, which has no spots.
5. One way that bermudagrass spreads  
(Note: Spelling bermudagrass as a single word gives best results on the UC IPM site.)  
One way bermudagrass spreads is by underground shoots, called *rhizomes*.
6. A perennial weed  
Yellow nutsedge is one example of a perennial weed.
7. An annual weed  
California burclover is an example of an annual weed.
8. A sign of gophers in a garden  
(Note: Our common gophers are also known as pocket gophers.)  
One sign of gophers is a crescent-shaped mound of dirt, usually with a plug, that they leave when digging tunnels.
9. A plant that can get sunburned  
A lot of plants can get sunburned. Avocados can get sunburned, so can tomatoes, and basil.
10. A common pest or disease of roses  
Black Spot is a common fungal disease of roses.

## Basic tools

Shovel or spade  
Small digger (trowel, hori hori)  
Hose & nozzle  
Pruners  
Container (big bucket, tub, rolling trash bin, wheelbarrow, garden cart)  
Gloves (many kinds) & hat (sun protection)  
Sharpening pruners video reference: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fzwsIJP4uPw>  
Compost Bins: [http://cesantaclara.ucanr.edu/Home\\_Composting\\_Education/](http://cesantaclara.ucanr.edu/Home_Composting_Education/)

## Irrigation

Plan for water: hand watering, drip watering, overhead sprinklers

Hydrozones

Conversion of garden faucet to a drip system: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V\\_ncTofEsgA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V_ncTofEsgA)

Conversion of Sprinkler to Drip: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OuNMAWHtNBA>

(Note: this is not an endorsement of Rainbird; there are many types of conversion parts; this video was chosen because it is a more professional video.)

## Prepare a Planting Bed

### Map the area or bed to be planted

- Understand its sun, shade, space, soil
- Use “Right Plant, Right Place” to select plants

### Prepare soil for planting

- Eliminate weeds, annual and perennial weeds, seeds in soil, cardboard mulch
- Sheet mulching: <http://lawntogarden.org/residents>
- Get right soil moisture before digging, moist and crumbly, not soggy, not dry
- Dig in compost as soil amendment if appropriate
  - Hard, heavy clay soils become more workable if amended with compost
  - Trees and shrubs should be planted in un-amended soil
  - Native plants should be planted in un-amended soil
  - Most annual flowers, veggies, small fruits like berries, and herbs, and many non-native shrubs (ferns, azaleas, roses...) plant in amended soil

## Direct Seeding and Transplanting

### Direct Seeding

- Direct seeding is when seeds are planted directly in prepared soil outdoors
- Many annual flowers and vegetables are easy to grow by direct seeding
- Carrots, radishes, corn and fava beans do not grow well from transplants, direct seed only.
- Follow guidance on seed packet for timing, depth, and spacing.
- Moisture activates the dormant seeds; keep seeded areas consistently moist until seeds have germinated and seedlings are well-established.
- Thin by pulling out or cutting seedlings so healthiest ones are well-spaced.

### Transplanting or up-potting seedlings

- Tip plant out of pot while supporting soil around stem with your fingers
- Handle small plants very gently, handle by leaf not stem.
- Dig hole the size of the root ball, place seedling in, gently firm soil around roots

- Bury the stem at the same depth it was growing before (some exceptions – Tomatoes can bury the stem and new roots will form)

### **Additional tips for transplanting vegetables and bedding annuals**

- Vegetables and bedding annuals should be planted in well-amended soil.
- Water plants well before transplanting AND again afterwards.
- Do not water again until after the soil has dried out 1-2" down.
- After tipping out of the pot, if there is a thick tangled mass of roots at the base, tear or cut it off (yes, do it!)
- If weather is very hot or windy, shade or shield plants for a day or two (cardboard, ½ milk carton, shade cloth, row cover, etc. are all good to protect newly transplanted small plants.)

### **Transplanting shrubs and trees**

- Plants that will be permanent in the landscape should be planted in the native soil; no need to dig in soil amendments.
- Dig a planting hole as deep as the root ball and about twice as wide.
- If soil is dry or dryish, fill hole completely with water and allow to drain two times.
- Remove plant from container by tipping pot upside down with hand carefully cradling plant.
- Gently pull apart major circling roots. It is OK to cut off mats of roots if necessary, so roots will be able to grow outwards from the root ball.
- Place root ball in hole, with bottom resting on firm soil and top at same level or slightly above ground level. Add more soil to the bottom of hole if needed to raise plant high enough.
- Backfill with native soil.
- Mound soil to create a ring-shaped water basin.
- Water deeply, then do not water again until soil has dried 1-2" down.
- Place 3" layer of mulch inside water basin; keep mulch away from base of plant stem.

## **Care for Your Garden**

### **Observing**

- Develop habit of observation in your garden
- Close observation helps anticipate garden's needs

### **Watering**

- Wet the root zone
- Use slow gentle flow from hose, or drippers
- Check water penetration by digging into the soil
- Rule of thumb for beginners: Water deeply to wet the whole root zone, then do not water again until the soil is dry 1" down. Check dryness by digging and looking. Don't forget to water again when top 1" is dry.

### **Weeding**

- Weeds compete with your plants for water, light, and nutrition
- Perennial weeds come back from roots--dig out whole root!
- Weed seeds exist in all soils, and are added by wind, birds, etc.
- Pull weeds when they are small and soil is moist

### **Deadheading**

- Cut or pinch dead or dying flowers
- Prolongs bloom, plants look neater

### **Harvesting**

- Check plants daily in mid- and late-summer
- Some veggies, like green beans, will stop producing if not harvested

### **Pruning and Cutting Back**

- Many plants benefit from some shaping or pruning
- How to cut depends on the type of plant and its growth habit
- Read up on your plants, get help from knowledgeable gardener friend

### **Mulching**

- Refresh mulch when it gets thin
- Adds organic matter, moderates soil temperatures, reduces evaporation

## **Resources**

**Santa Clara County Master Gardener website, lots to explore!**

[mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu](http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu)

**Master Gardener Help Desk: 408-282-3105**

Open for calls M-F 9:30-12:30

**MG Instructional videos**

[youtube.com/user/CAMasterGardener/videos](https://youtube.com/user/CAMasterGardener/videos)

**MG Talks & Classes**

[mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events](http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events)

**Visit a Teaching and Demonstration Garden**

[mgsantaclare.ucanr.edu/demonstration\\_gardens](http://mgsantaclare.ucanr.edu/demonstration_gardens)

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## **Master Gardener Program**

Master Gardener program volunteers are trained by the University of California Cooperative Extension. Our mission is to develop, adapt and extend research-based horticultural information and educational programs to the residents of Santa Clara County.

## **Master Gardener Events**

Master Gardeners host and participate in a variety of activities, ranging from in-garden talks and demonstrations to multiple week courses. A full listing is available through our monthly “Tips & Events” email, and on our Website, <http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/events-calendar/>.

## **Master Gardener Help Desk**

- E-mail questions using our website:  
<http://mgsantaclara.ucanr.edu/contact-us/ask-a-gardening-question/>
  - Call the Help Desk: 408-282-3105 (9:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Monday through Friday)
  - Bring specimens to the Help Desk office during hours above:  
1553 Berger Drive, Building 1, 2nd Floor, San Jose, CA 954112
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