



# THE YOLO GARDENER

Winter 2011

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY THE U.C. YOLO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

## Water-Wise Gardening: Incorporating Native Plants into Your Landscape

Ann Daniel, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener

Native plants do much more than add beauty to the landscape; by incorporating natives into our landscape we are protecting our environment as well.

North American native plants, defined as those that existed here without human introduction, are disappearing at an alarming rate due to human activities such as urban development, agribusiness, and the introduction of invasive species. The loss of native plant communities has reduced wildlife habitat and the genetic diversity necessary for a balanced ecosystem. Our landscape is in peril, but there are things that we can do to encourage people to incorporate native plants into their landscapes.

The benefits to our environment of using natives are numerous. Native plants are adapted to our soils, temperatures, nutrients, and rainfall. Once established natives require little, if any, supplemental water, fertilizer, pesticides or other chemicals. With properly selected native plants, it may not be necessary to modify soil characteristics at all to have thriving gardens.

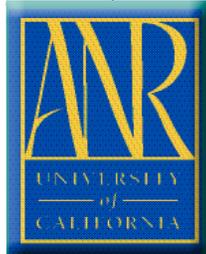
Here are a few tips for growing natives—

- Plant species native to our region. Prepare site carefully—Remove non-native species
- Plant in the fall to reduce heat stress and enable roots to get established
- Know when to water—Do not over water
- Use mulch to reduce moisture evaporation, to reduce water run-off, and to keep soil and roots cool
- Be patient—Most perennials will spend a year establishing their roots before they flower

We have many natives to consider for the landscape. Selecting the right plant for the right spot is critical, so make use of the many excellent books and websites available. Below you will find information about just a few natives, including many featured in this year’s Yolo County Fair Master Gardener Display Garden designed by Master Gardener Linda Magrum:

*Achillea millefolium* ‘Island Pink’- island pink yarrow; colorful pink flowers in spring, summer, and fall make good cut flowers; ferny green foliage will spread; flowers attract butterflies and beneficial insects.

Vol. IV, No.ii



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*Aquilegia eximia* - serpentine columbine; larger and showier than most columbines; attractive delicate foliage in basal mound; attracts hummingbirds.

*Aristolochia californica* - California pipevine; leaves provide food for pipevine swallowtail butterfly larvae; versatile plant that can be used as a climbing vine or a groundcover.

*Bouteloua gracilis* - blue grama grass; green flowers age to tan by the end of the summer; retains tidy, upright shape even when dormant.

*Calycanthus occidentalis* - western spice bush; maroon-red flowers attract pollinating beetles; leaves have a sharp, clean fragrance and turn yellow in the autumn, adding seasonal color to the garden.

*Ceanothus 'Concha'* - concha ceanothus; one of the best California lilacs for the garden with dark-green leaves all year; showy, deep blue flowers with reddish bracts bloom in spring; attracts beneficial insects.

*Ceanothus 'Ray Hartman'* - Ray Hartman California lilac; one of the best ceanothus cultivars for gardens because it can tolerate some summer irrigation; makes a good screen or small garden tree.

*Ceanothus maritimus 'Valley Violet'* - valley violet maritime ceanothus; best small ceanothus for Central Valley gardens; clusters of dark-violet flowers bloom in spring; attracts beneficial insects.



*Ceanothus 'Concha'*

*Epilobium canum* - California fuchsia; easy to grow and tolerates heat and drought; different varieties can have narrow or broad leaves that range from silver to bright green.

*Eriogonum giganteum* - Saint Catherine's lace; large clusters of white flowers appear in summer and attract beneficial insects; fast growing and quickly develops into a large, rounded shrub with woolly, whitish-gray foliage.



*Heteromeles arbutifolia*

*Eriogonum grande var. rubescens* – Red Buckwheat; rosy red flowers in the summer.

*Heteromeles arbutifolia* - toyon, christmas berry, California holly; shrub with leathery, dark-green leaves and profuse red berries all winter that are popular with cedar waxwings, a species of migrating bird in the Central Valley

*Heuchera 'Lillian's Pink'* - Lillian's pink coral bells; bright pink flowers attract bees and hummingbirds; excellent groundcover for small shady areas or borders.

*Heuchera 'Rosada'* - rosada coral bells; one of the best flowering perennials for dry shade; introduced to the nursery trade by the UC Davis Arboretum.

*Isomeris arborea* - bladderpod; one of the only native shrubs that blooms year round; yellow flowers attract beneficial insects and hummingbirds to the garden and then develop into attractive seed pods.

*Muhlenbergia rigens* - deergrass; makes a low informal screen; needs almost no maintenance; remove old leaves

at any time; adds texture and movement to the garden.

***Penstemon heterophyllus* ‘Margarita B.O.P.’** - Santa Margarita foothill penstemon; flowers are golden yellow as buds, bright blue as blooms, then change to purple-pink; unlike many California native penstemons, it thrives in garden conditions.

***Ribes aureum*** - golden currant; flowers have a light, spicy fragrance; good choice for planting under native oaks; attracts butterflies and beneficial insects.

***Ribes viburnifolium*** - evergreen currant; good shade-tolerant groundcover under native oaks and in other dry, shady areas; shiny and fragrant foliage looks attractive all year; attracts hummingbirds and beneficial insects.



*Mublenbergia rigens*

***Salvia apiana*** - California white sage; spring flowers attract pollinating bees; leaves contain fragrant oils.



***Salvia clevelandii* ‘Winnifred Gilman’** - Winnifred Gilman Cleveland sage; evergreen shrub produces maroon-stemmed, blue-violet flowers; heat and drought tolerant; attracts hummingbirds, butterflies, and beneficial insects.

***Salvia spathacea*** - hummingbird sage; leaves have a pleasant, fruity fragrance; excellent drought-tolerant groundcover for sun or partial shade; attracts hummingbirds.

***Solidago californica* ‘Cascade Creek’** - Cascade Creek California goldenrod; bears bright yellow flowers in summer and fall that attract butterflies and beneficial insects; ideal for native grass meadow.

*Salvia clevelandii*

***Viguiera parishii*** - desert goldeneye; golden daisies blossom from early spring until mid-fall among triangular-shaped green leaves; tolerates full sun or part shade and is low maintenance.

***Woodwardia fimbriata*** - giant chain fern; plant needs little care once established; great for a shady oasis near a pond or fountain.

The native plants of California are unlike any other in the world. Now is the time to GO NATIVE. You will help our environment and enjoy knowing that you are a water-wise, eco-friendly gardener. ✨

# Bulbs

Laura Cameron, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener

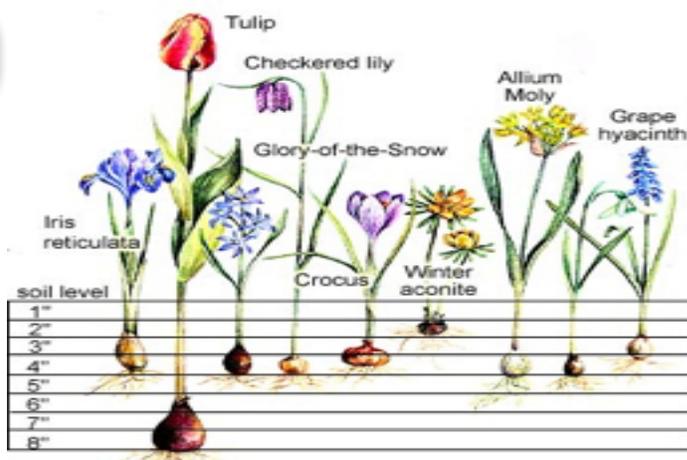
The harbinger of spring for many is daffodils warming their faces in the sun. Bulbs are beloved for their beautiful blooms. They gather food for next year's bloom for about six weeks after the flower fades, and then rest comfortably beneath the earth awaiting prime conditions to repeat the cycle once again.

Bulbs are all perennials, even tulips which are often treated as annuals. Cut the bloom only when it has faded and allow the leaves to remain until the color has left them, at which point they are easy to pull off. You can leave bulbs in year round, dividing them every three to five years or as blooms diminish in quality.

Many bulbs like full sun; some prefer partial shade or filtered sun. Most often they are not fussy about the soil they are in though they like it to drain well. With the exception of tulips, which like to be planted 8" deep, plant most other bulbs about twice as deep as they are tall and water them initially. Winter weather should take care of the rest of the watering needs. Most need to be planted in early to late fall and can be purchased in stores or ordered via specialty catalogs, often with a wider variety of choice, and they will ship at planting time.

Take advantage of the beauty of flowering bulbs in garden design. Plant tall tulips within a sea of other blooms of contrasting colors. Dense flower concentrations or formal patterns can be quite striking when planted well. Naturalizing is as easy as tossing bulbs in the air and planting them where they land.

In order to get tulips to bloom again the following spring, fertilize at fall planting time and again each fall. If you miss the fall fertilization add high nitrogen fast release fertilizer in spring as the shoots first appear to help promote blooming year after year.



All flowers that we think of as bulbs for spring and summer beauty (daffodils, tulips, lilies, irises, begonias, cyclamen, hyacinth and crocuses) fall into one of five bulb types:

- True bulb**      Specialized underground stem that produces new bulbs  
 Separate every two to three years after the leaves have withered  
 Example: daffodil, tulip, hyacinth and various lilies
- Corm**      The swollen base of a stem axis surrounded by dry, scale like leaves  
 New corms form on top of the old corm  
 After the leaves have withered, pull; dry in indirect light for 2-3 weeks  
 Separate the new corm from the old corm, dust with fungicide and store in a cool place until planting time  
 Example: crocus and gladiolas
- Rhizome**      A thickened stem growing partially or fully underground  
 Roots grow directly from the underside  
 To divide cut into sections that have visible growing points  
 Example: Iris
- Tuber**      Swollen underground stem with no distinct organization  
 Roots grow from all sides with multiple growth points all over the surface  
 To divide cut into sections making sure

each one has at  
 least one growing point  
 Annual example: potato  
 Perennial example: begonias and  
 cyclamen

#### Tuberous Root

A true root thickened to store nutrients  
 Fibrous roots for the uptake of water  
 and nutrients develop from sides and  
 tip  
 Grow in a cluster with the swollen  
 portions radiating out from a central  
 point

Divide by cutting the root cluster apart so  
 each piece has a root and part of a stem  
 base with one or more growth buds

Example: Dahlia, sweet potato

Bulbs not only provide beauty; they can provide  
 food. Foragers (people who eat what they can find in  
 nature) will wisely search out wild bulbs and eat them,  
 being careful as not all bulbs are edible. Bulbs have  
 been part of the natural diet many moons ago. Potatoes,  
 garlic, shallots and chives are a few of the food products  
 that we are all familiar with. All these plants provide  
 beauty to the yard with the end result being some good  
 eats. ■

## The Winner Is . . .

*Linda Parsons, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

All-American Rose Selections ([www.rose.org](http://www.rose.org)) has selected its newest winner to add to its already-impressive and lengthy lineup. Living up to its name, Sunshine Daydream exemplifies the beauty and quality that is implicit in an "AARS Winner."

This yellow cupped rose to win under no spray best of the best after participating testing program.. This two year challenging horticultural testing year the AARS award recognizes only beautiful in appearance and proven to be easy growers and



Grandiflora rose is the first garden conditions. This rose was selected in the rigorous two-year AARS testing program is one of the most programs in the world. Every new rose varieties that are not fragrant, but also roses that have require minimal care.

The goal of AARS is of the year. This year, only the rigorous requirements to award. Sunshine Daydream was Roses, who are internationally

Winners, including The Knock Out Rose, Bonica, and Peace. Sunshine Daydream was hybridized by Meiland International, which has 18 AARS Winners to its credit, including Carefree Spirit and Elle.

to identify the best new roses one rose was able to meet all receive the prestigious AARS introduced by Conard-Pyle/Star recognized for countless AARS

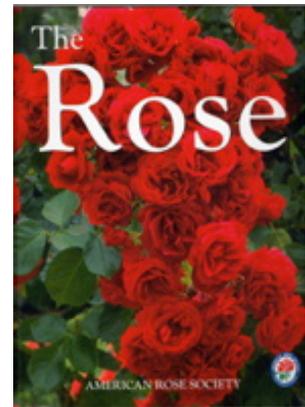
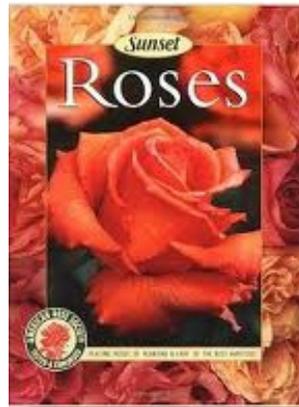
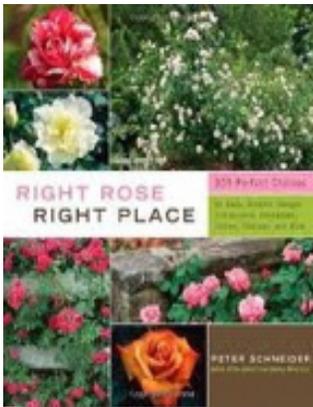
Sunshine Daydream blooms prolifically and is a vigorous shrub with dark glossy foliage. The light yellow cupped flowers finish creamy yellow and blend well into any garden color palette.

To be chosen as an AARS winner, a rose must undergo comprehensive testing in 21 gardens throughout our fifty states. These test gardens judge the contenders in 15 categories including the ability to resist disease, vigor,

fragrance overall beauty, growth habit and general ease of maintenance. Each AARS winner bears the AARS red-rose seal of approval that ensures gardeners that they are purchasing and growing the best roses.

Sunshine Daydream joins the illustrious list of AARS Winners, including Easy Does It, Cinco de Mayo, Julia Child, Betty Boop, Secret, Golden Showers, Chrysler Imperial, and Peace.

For a complete list of all the AARS Winners, which began their selections in 1940, go to [www.rose.org/past-winners/](http://www.rose.org/past-winners/)



There are many wonderful rose books, but if you are just beginning or want a good introduction to the world of roses, here are several excellent rose guides.

*Right Rose, Right Place: 359 Perfect Choices* Peter Schneider

*Roses: Placing Roses, Planting and Care: The Best Varieties* The Editors of Sunset Books

*The Rose* The American Rose Society

## *Grace Garden: A Master Gardener-Led Community Project*

*Cid Barcellos, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

Grace Garden was started in the summer of 2009, inspired by a garden at the Methodist Church in Santa Rosa. Its mission is to feed the hungry of our community. By using sustainable gardening practices, we feed the soil. Working together we grow relationships that nourish the body and the soul. The five eighths of an acre at the rear of Davis United Methodist Church's property were full of Bermuda grass, morning glory vine, star thistle, mallow and various other weeds. We started with two in-ground beds, approximately 10' by 10' in summer 2009. By spring of 2010 we had four 4' by 50' beds, four raised beds and two "demonstration" gardens, along with a compost bin, and a flower and herb area.

The harvest from these plots is for those in need. Fresh produce often ends up at the bottom of the grocery list when money is tight, yet fresh fruits and vegetables are a very important part of a healthy diet. We donate 95 percent of our harvest to the Friday's Harvest at the Korean Church of Davis. The Yolo Food Bank is also a participant in this giveaway program. The recipients of the produce are predominately families and the elderly.

When we first contacted Friday's Harvest in the spring of 2010, they were handing out 70-80 bags a week. By midsummer the count was up to 100-120 bags weekly. This spring they are handing out 120-150 bags weekly. There is definitely a growing need.

In January 2011 we planted 10 fruit trees (apricots, plums, pluots, nectarines and peaches) and added 4 more 4' by 50' beds. Two more compost bins are planned, and the temporary irrigation system is close to becoming permanent. We built a hoop house in 2010. Unfortunately it took a beating from the winter storms. This is still a work in progress but should be ready for seed planting in January 2012.



*AmeriCorp builds a raised bed at Grace Garden*

Utilizing sustainable practices is paramount to this garden existing for the community. We practice this by using drip irrigation, composting, rotating crops, and planting cover crops. We plant flowers to bring in pollinators. We recycle and reuse building materials as they become available to keep costs down and because they are still useful. Stepping stones and bark mulch have been donated. Pieces of the old concrete walkways are used to weigh down row covers as well as to define planting areas.



*Produce from Grace Garden*  
January 7 at 10 a.m.

We like to involve as many people as possible in planting and maintaining the vegetable garden and fruit trees, and draw volunteers from the entire community: Davis High School; the UCD community service fraternity Phi Delta Theta; The Davis United Methodist youth group, CREW; Cal Aggie House; AmeriCorps; other churches; Master Gardeners; as well as many individuals.

We also include teaching. Master Gardeners have taught classes in the garden and we are working to schedule more for 2012. These classes are open to everyone who needs help solving a problem or who wants to learn more about gardening. Classes include such topics as planning and planting a garden, composting, beneficial plants, cover crops, irrigation and sustainability, to name a few. These classes are publicized in the local newspapers and are open to everyone. Our first 2012 class will be fruit tree pruning on

Donations have sustained Grace Garden since we began. The Northern California Construction Training group has donated a tool shed, an 8' table, and a picnic table. NCCT teaches construction skills to those wanting to turn their lives around. They are very generous with their donations and support of Grace Garden. A local arborist generously donated by enough wood chips to completely cover the ground 4 to 5 inches deep on two thirds of the garden. Many other generous individuals have donated plants, bulbs and tools.

Our fundraisers include an annual spring plant sale. This fall we also have 2012 Grace Garden calendars with pictures are taken in Grace Garden. A list of 4 to 5 things to do in the home garden is included each month. We have a fiscal relationship with Davis United Methodist Church so we can fundraise and those who donate are able to take a tax benefit. ❖

## Cut Flowers Banish Winter Blues

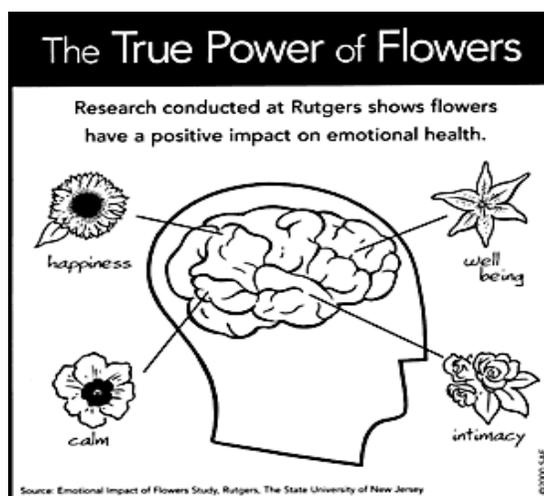
Jan Bower, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener

Cut flowers are generally used to commemorate special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, and anniversaries. But with the supply of cut flowers so readily available at local florists, box stores, grocery stores, shopping malls, and farmer's markets, we can now have them in our homes every day. Particularly, as the days shorten and get colder and the warm weather becomes a memory, we need some brightly colored flowers to uplift our spirits. Although November is one of the darkest months of the year, it ends with Thanksgiving, a festive day of celebration, and Christmas is not far behind. This is the season when we like to decorate our homes and give gifts to friends and family. So decorate your home with a vase of beautiful freshly cut flowers and give a fragrant bouquet as a present to someone you love. This should help banish those winter blues!

### Health Benefits and Research

A behavioral research study at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, and published in the April 2005 issue of *Evolutionary Psychology*, found that flowers provide a simple way to improve emotional health. The presence of flowers triggers happy emotions, heightens feelings of life satisfaction, and affects social behavior in a positive manner far beyond what is normally believed. The research also showed that those who send flowers, in comparison to other gifts, are viewed as successful, caring, and emotionally intelligent with an appreciation for beauty.

Another study at Harvard University in 2006 found that flowers are the perfect pick-me-up for millions of Americans who do not consider themselves to be "morning people." Although the participants suffered the morning blahs, they perked up when a small bouquet of flowers was placed into their morning routine. The study confirmed that flowers feed compassion; chase away anxieties, worries and blues at home; and provide a boost of energy, happiness, and enthusiasm at work.



Leatrice Eiseman's  
Nurturing Flower Palette

### International Flower Trade

On November 8-9, 2011, the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers held their annual National Conference and Trade Show in Reston, Virginia. The association was formed in 1988 to connect and educate flower growers in floral marketing, sustainable farming techniques, and flower research. The ASCFG has 600 members in 47 states, six Canadian provinces, various South American countries, New Zealand, Australia, and Great Britain. That is a lot of growers supplying millions of top quality cut blooms.

California is the top cut flower producer in the United States; Florida is second. However, despite their long history of quality fresh flower production, domestic growers are struggling to compete with foreign competition. Each year more than 11 million boxes carrying 342,000 tons of flowers pass through the Miami

International Airport. This represents two-thirds of America's \$13 billion in annual retail sales of cut flowers. It makes for a heavy workload for the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Miami officers, who have to clear 10 to 20 million stems of flowers daily. During the holidays, numbers can rise by 50%. Most of these flowers come from South America, primarily Colombia.

The JFK International Airport in New York is the northeastern gateway for flowers from the Netherlands, Israel, South Africa, Thailand, Australia, and New Zealand. Canada is also beginning to tap into the American market and exports roughly 4.8 million stems and bunches to their southern neighbor. Mexico, Costa Rica, and Chile are other budding flower-producing nations.

**Flower Arrangement**

Leatrice Eiseman, an international color expert, has developed the philosophy of Flower Therapy. Eiseman believes that certain color combinations, which are easily expressed in floral arrangements, can stimulate and relax the senses, release happy memories, and enhance our moods. She classifies flower arrangements as nurturing, romantic, sensuous, tranquil, or whimsical, according to their combination of colors. For example, a nurturing palette would have colors that are fragile, soft and tender to create a sense of caring and make one feel safe, snug, and loved. The flower arrangement might be a white willow basket of apricot roses, yellow tulips, green carnations, yellow freesia, lavender wax flowers, and heather. This flower arrangement would be appropriate for a new mother or a sick friend.

Here's a good parlor game for a winter get-together...

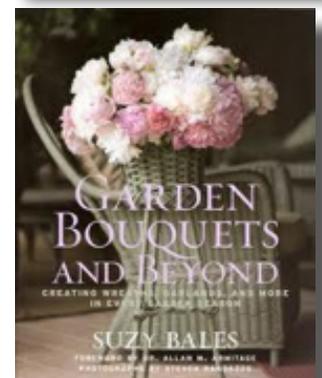
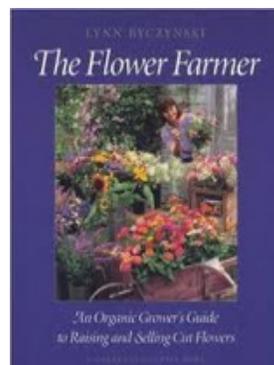
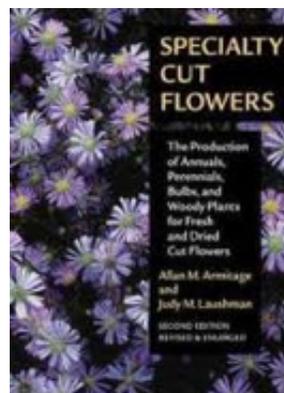
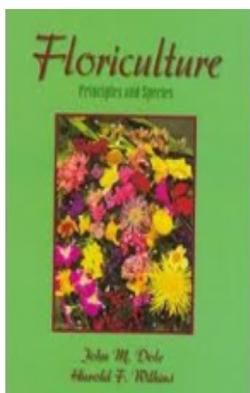
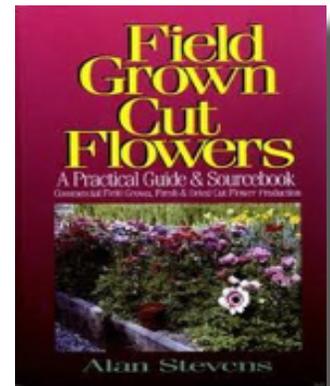
**Question:** What are the ten most popular cut flowers?

**Answer:** (in order of popularity) Roses, Gerbera, Star Gazer Lily, Carnation, Lily of Peru, Sunflower, Tulip, Orchid, Chrysanthemum, and Poppies.

If you are interested in learning more about cut flower arrangement, contact the Davis Flower Arrangers. They meet at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of each month at the International House, 10 College Park in Davis. For more information, call co-presidents Phyllis Baecker at (530) 758-7814 or Tina Crutcher at (530) 662-9035.

Recommended Reading:

- Field Grown Cut Flowers: A Practical Guide and Source Book by Alan Stevens
- Garden Bouquets and Beyond by Suzy Bales
- Floriculture: Principles and Species by John M. Dole and Harold F. Wilkins
- The Flower Farmer: An Organic Grower's Guide to Raising and Selling Cut Flowers by Lynn Byczynski
- Specialty Cut Flowers: The Production of Annual, Perennials, Bulbs and Woody Plants for Fresh and Dried Cut Flowers by Allan M. Armitage and Judy M. Laushman



## The Food Bank Garden

Steve Radosevich, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener

One of the last things you would expect to see among the commercial and industrial buildings and paved parking lots east of N. East Street in Woodland, is a 20 by 30 foot backyard sized vegetable garden. Why the garden is here and how it got here become more understandable after realizing that this is the headquarters and distribution center for the Food Bank of Yolo County, whose mission is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition.

Although the main focus of the Food Bank is to collect surplus food and distribute it to those in need, they also want to encourage people to eat healthier and save money by growing and consuming some of their own food. That's where the garden fits in. Much of the food produced in the garden is used by Food Bank Chef Arturo Vargas in his cooking classes where he demonstrates delicious and nutritious recipes for fresh produce. Produce not used in the cooking classes is distributed to food recipients in other Food Bank programs.

Chiseled out of what most likely had been a gravel parking area years ago, the garden had not been very productive for the past couple years. In April, 2009, Jose Martinez, the Food Bank Director, requested the assistance of the Yolo County Master Gardener program to help get this garden producing well and looking good. He had also been reading the *All New Square Foot Gardening* book by Mel Bartholomew, and was anxious to demonstrate this gardening method to Food Bank staff, volunteers, and food recipients. Two Master Gardeners, Robert Dragoon and Steve Radosevich, agreed to help with the project, and work got underway to prepare the area for a summer garden.

This "industrial" like garden setting provided a unique variety of both challenges and opportunities.

**Soil** -The stunted growth of weeds from the previous winter made soil nutrition suspect, and digging into the soft compost like soil surface revealed a hard packed largely impervious layer of gravel about six inches down. The square foot gardening method which required the addition of six to twelve inches of new soil inside of wood enclosed raised beds addressed both of these problems.

**Irrigation** – After our new drip system sprung a leak and flooded the whole area one night, we realized that watering the garden was going to be challenging. The leak was easy enough to fix, but the impervious gravel layer six inches below the soil surface was going to make it even more important not to overwater and create too much standing moisture in the root zone. Thanks again to Mel and his raised beds and the additional soil which partially alleviated this problem.

**Bunnies** – Fortunately, we realized that a mid-summer green garden would be very attractive to the numerous bunnies we saw hopping across the sterile blacktop and gravel parking lots surrounding the garden site. Surrounded by cyclone fences on two sides and a metal building on one side, the addition of a two-foot high



Master Gardeners Steve Radosevich and Robert Dragoon discuss planting new crop of heirloom tomatoes

wood and wire fence on the fourth side made the garden nearly rabbit proof. Failure to secure the garden gate one evening and the loss of a few new seedlings, confirmed the need for the rabbit fence.

**Warehouse Wind Break** – We did not realize the value of the two story white metal warehouse on the north side of the garden until we installed a winter garden. Right away we appreciated protection from cold winter winds during our Tuesday morning mid-winter work days. As long as the sun was shining, it was pleasant working out in the garden. Likewise, we quickly noticed how the winter vegetables also appreciated this warm microclimate. Compared to other winter gardens in the area, everything here grew faster and looked happier.

**A Vigorous Vine** and that did not mind the negative taken full advantage of the rampant sprawling grape vine the garden. By mid-August of was taking over its corner of had no way to escape the to tame the vine that winter and for next season. The grape to be the perfect shady location bench some previous gardener



Newly planted 'square foot' raised beds

**A Rustic Bench** – One plant soil conditions, and that had friendly microclimate, was a in the northwest corner of our first summer, as the vine the garden and the gardeners summer sun, we made plans provide some needed shade arbor we constructed proved for a wonderful rustic wood had crafted and left behind.

“Overall the garden has been a blessing for the Food Bank” effuses Director Martinez. “It helps us promote healthy and nutritional eating in a beautiful and inviting oasis in this industrial setting. Robert and Steve offer classes on different aspects of gardening which are open to our clients as well as the general public. We highlight the garden in our tours of the Food Bank facilities, Chef Arturo uses the garden as part of his cooking classes, and we use the garden to encourage people to garden at home. I also love to take a quick break from the office by going out to the garden and ‘fresh harvest’ mouthwatering, delicious, and pristine tomatoes.” □

*Questions about your garden?  
We'd love to help!*

**Master Gardener Hotline**..... (530) 666-8737

Our message centers will take your questions and information. Please leave your name, address, phone number and a description of your problem. A Master Gardener will research your problem and return your call.

**E-Mail**..... mgyolo@ucdavis.edu

**Drop In**..... Tuesday & Friday, 9-11 a.m.  
70 Cottonwood St., Woodland

## *Holiday Magic at the New York Botanical Garden*

*David Studer, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

By show of hands, how many gardeners out there have ever traveled to New York City for the holidays?...Okay, let's assume that a lot of hands went up. Maybe you saw the Thanksgiving Day Parade or went window shopping at Macy's. Perhaps you went ice skating at Rockefeller Center or saw the Radio City Music Hall's Christmas Spectacular starring the Rockettes. The bravest may even have risked seeing the ball drop on New Year's Eve at Times Square.

Keep your hands up if you have visited the New York Botanical Gardens during your holiday visit. Oooooo, a lot of hands probably went down there, huh? Why go to the New York Botanical Garden in winter? Doesn't it snow in New York City? Isn't it cold? Yes, it snows and yes, it is cold but those who have visited the New York Botanical Garden have been treated to the wonders of the holiday tradition known as the Holiday Train Show.



Created by landscape designer Paul Busse, the Holiday Train Show has thrilled and amazed children and adults alike for the past twenty years. Model electric trains whiz around the Enid A. Haupt Conservatory—the nation's largest Victorian-era glasshouse—on 1200 feet of track woven between a growing collection of more than 140 of New York City's most recognizable landmarks. All are made from plant materials like acorns, twigs, flower petals, tree bark, and seeds—it's organic! Structures include Yankee Stadium, the Statue of Liberty, the Empire State Building and the Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York's iconic bridges—the Brooklyn, George Washington, Hell Gate and Manhattan Bridges constructed of tree barks, vines, twigs grasses, bamboo and pine cones carry trains over visitors' heads.

The entire display takes a crew of twenty people 10 days to set up. No one would mistake this as an actual model of the "concrete jungle" also known as New York City. The structures stand together in the Conservatory's permanent plant collection "A World of Plants": ferns, flowers, carnivorous and aquatic plants as well as the world's most comprehensive collection of palm trees under glass.

The runway at JFK airport is represented, lined with blue primroses and surrounded by bromeliads. The terminal composed of gourds, twigs, tree bark, mushrooms and flower parts even has





solidified tree sap for windows—even the planes are made of plant parts! The New York Times describes the Statue of Liberty as “draped in palm leaves and grasses, her torch a dried monarch flower embedded in half a pomegranate”.

As the winter sun sets on the cityscape the display’s lighting glows with a warm, cozy holiday cheer. As you exit, your knowing smile informs those about to enter of the magical treats in a truly wondrous winter wonderland. A happy holiday season to all!

This year, the New York Botanical Gardens will chug, toot, whirr and whistle between November 19th and January 16<sup>th</sup>. If you are in the neighborhood, it is one of the most rewarding

family activities for the holidays. Find directions, tickets, garden hours and other useful information about a visit on the New York Botanical Garden Web site [nybg.org](http://nybg.org).

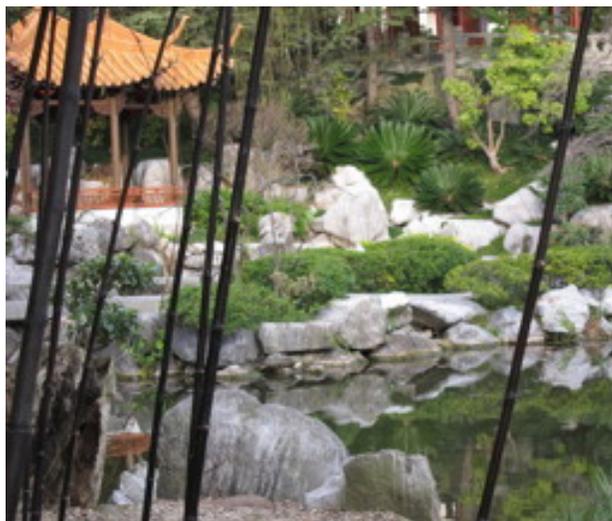
If you won’t be in New York City for the holidays, there are over a dozen videos on the internet that provide a pretty good idea of the holiday magic. Happy gardening! ✨

## Chinese Gardens

*Willa Bowman Pettygrove, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

The low point in my life as a public garden aficionado had to be on Portland, Oregon’s Max (light rail) as I made a pilgrimage to the Japanese Garden in Washington Park<sup>1</sup> and encountered en route the ignorance of fellow tourists. I enthused to some other visitors (from Des Moines? Trenton? New York City?) about another garden I had only recently discovered in Portland’s Chinatown—the Portland Classical Chinese Garden<sup>2</sup>, now more properly called the Lan Su Yuan Garden, The Garden of Awakening Orchids. They replied that, given limited travel time, they would have to make the Japanese Garden count for both. Their response belied a deep misunderstanding about public gardens in other cultures.

I’m not qualified to analyze the question of public gardens in different cultures, and instead want to encourage you to explore as many different ones as time and money permit. My own interest in the classical Asian gardens comes from two sources. As a would-be urban planner, the gardens of Japan and China offer very different solutions to the same problem. That is, how to represent the beauty of nature in very small spaces, often surrounded by dense populations. Visiting either is an experience in being liberated, if only for an hour, from the constraints of space and time in one’s overly programmed life.



The other source of interest for me is from my horticultural biases toward plants and away from hardscape, for example, rocks. Classical Chinese gardens use rocks in very intentional ways. More than five hundred tons of rocks were brought to the one block garden in Portland from Suzhou, China. Included in the rocks were specimens of huge, heavily textured limestone formations from nearby Lake Tai. Stones also are used in lovely patterns for mosaic paths, and in less structured ways. The hardscape creates a frame for plants, water, birds, and fish within the very urban context of the Chinese gardens. Nature is not in conflict with urbanism; reminders of nature are everywhere, even in the roof tiles shaped to represent little bats.



In summer 2010 I traveled to Australia with my husband. We learned just by reading some tourist guide that the largest Chinese Classical Garden outside China is in Sydney. We had just a couple of hours, it was an easy walk from our hotel, and it will be in my memory forever. Just inside the entrance to the garden (a large Ferris wheel continued to churn outside for tourists with other tastes) we delighted in the beauty, calm, and quiet of an urban retreat.

Unlike the garden in Portland, which is located on an existing, flat city block, the Sydney garden could take advantage of a varying topography and invite visitors to climb small hills and see more views from different elevations<sup>3</sup>.

My most recent “garden” experience was in Milwaukee’s Art Museum. The exhibit Emperor’s Private Paradise: Treasures from the Forbidden City had as a focal point the gardens. The artifacts included items unchanged over a long period from the reign of one emperor in 1795 to the last, in 1924, when the gardens were abandoned. In this exhibit, plants and other horticultural elements were represented only by photographs, and symbolically in the various art pieces. I still felt as if at moments I was in the gardens I had visited in Sydney and Portland.

Next, I hope to visit the Liu Fang Yuan Chinese Garden at the Huntington Library in Los Angeles<sup>4</sup>. If I wait until spring 2012, I will be able to visit both the Chinese and Japanese gardens there. You come, too.▲

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## Winter Gardening Tips

Linda Parsons, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener

We have had a lovely fall. Roses are still blooming and only recently, have we turned over our summer vegetable gardens. It is time to think of winter gardens and beyond. Our mild winters allow us to grow and enjoy flowers and vegetables the year round.

I have been looking about in our neighborhood plant nurseries and have noted an increased offering of annuals and perennials that bloom through winter, and spring. For spots and pots of color, try planting pansies, violas, calendulas, primroses, Iceland poppies, stock, and snapdragons. If you plant nasturtiums, sweet alyssum, and foxglove seedlings now, they will reward you with early spring color. All of these plants naturalize well with bulbs.

If you are looking for something unusual, one of my favorite winter garden attractions is the Japanese maple, Sango Kaku. (Coral Bark). Its bright coral bark is very showy through the winter. Classic winter plants include, holly, lenten rose, sweet box, viburnum, nandina, and daphne. In our mild climate, all of these plants are easy to care for and brighten up our winter gardens. December 22nd ushers in winter. Be sure to welcome her with a fresh and colorful winter palette.



*Sango Kaku*

While our gardens are resting and preparing for spring, take time to tidy and protect the trees and plants in your garden.

### WINTER CLEANUP

- Continue to remove fallen leaves, spent annuals and vegetable plants.
- Add disease free plants and leaves to your compost pile.
- Clean garden pots and store for future use. Turn all unused pots on end to prevent water collection and breeding areas for pests and diseases. Treat pots with a dilute solution of bleach.
- Sharpen, clean and oil garden tools.
- Lawnmowers need a yearly tune-up and blade sharpening. Now is a good time.



### WATER

- Watering can be eliminated once the rains begin. Until then, most lawns and plants do well with weekly watering. If it is very windy, the temperature drops significantly or there has been no rain in several weeks, check for signs of dehydration in your garden. Additional water may be necessary.
- Check the plants under tall evergreen and under eaves of the house to see that they have sufficient moisture.
- Potted plants need to be checked often. Too much water in the saucer can cause your plants or bulbs to rot.

**PROTECTION**

- \* Protect frost-sensitive plants. Move potted plants to a more protected part of your garden or patio. Shelter them under the eaves of your home or place them under a table or a garden chair. This will help to minimize damage from the wind and cold.
- \* Cover sensitive, larger plants and small trees with sheets or burlap when the temperature approaches freezing at night. Adding strings of electric lights can also be helpful.
- \* Anti-transpirant sprays, such as Cloud Cover, can also be used to reduce frost and freeze damage.
- \* Cover sensitive ground cover with layers of newsprint at night and remove in the morning.
- \* Plastic sheeting is not recommended to protect plants because it cannot breathe and collects moisture.

**PLANT**

- December is the last month to plant spring blooming bulbs such as daffodil, tulip, anemone and crocus. Plant bulbs three times deeper than their greatest diameter. Use bulb fertilizer.
- What to plant now:
  - cool season annuals: pansies, violas, snapdragons, calendulas and Iceland poppies.
  - cool season perennials: Helleborus, Daphne and Iberis.
  - annual vegetables: peas, spinach, kale, loose leaf lettuce, radish, carrot, and broccoli.
  - winter herbs: cilantro, flat and curly parsley
  - bare-root fruits and vegetables: strawberries, berries, rhubarb, grapes, fruit trees, artichokes, asparagus, horseradish onions and garlic.
- Use row covers to protect seedlings if plants are bothered by pests or cold nights.
- Extend your harvest time by planting vegetables every two weeks through December.
- Late winter is the best time to plant or transplant most any garden shrub or tree. Both deciduous and evergreen shrubs can be planted or transplanted including roses. Your local nursery will be stocked with many varieties of potted and bare-root trees and plants.
- After you have discarded your summer vegetable plants, turn the soil over before it becomes too wet. This will help to disturb the over-wintering tomato worm larvae that live in your garden soil.
- Sow seeds in early February for your summer garden. Favorite selections include tomatoes, squash, eggplant, peppers and herbs. Seedlings can be transplanted in your garden after the soil temperature reaches 50° F. Begin planting spring annuals: alstroemeria, dianthus, lobelia, and alyssum. Summer bulbs, such as callas, dahlias, cannas, tuberous begonias, and lilies are now available at your local nursery.

**FERTILIZE**

- Mid to late February is the time to fertilize trees, shrubs and evergreens. Use an acid-loving plant fertilizer to feed evergreens like junipers, conifers, broadleaf evergreens, azaleas and camellias. Use a rose or all-purpose garden type fertilizer to feed roses, fruit and flowering trees, plus other deciduous trees and shrubs. If you use granular fertilizer, keep it off the foliage and water it in thoroughly.

- Extra nutrients for roses can encourage healthier growth. Try using 1 ounce (2 Tbl.) of Epsom salt (MgSoO4) and 8 ounces (1 cup) of plain alfalfa pellets for each plant. Sprinkle around the drip line of each rose. The Epsom salt helps improve chlorophyll production, and alfalfa contains the growth stimulant triacontanol, which encourages basal breaks.

### DISEASE, PEST, AND WEED PREVENTION

- Early winter is a good time to make an application of dormant oil spray on your roses, fruit and deciduous trees and shrubs. It is best to prune these before you apply this spray. Dormant oil spray helps prevent over-wintering of insects and diseases in your garden.
- Peaches and nectarines need to be sprayed with lime-sulfur or copper sulfate to prevent leaf curl and blight. An easy way to remember this schedule is to spray on or near Thanksgiving, New Year's and Valentine's Day. The spray should be applied when the temperature is above 45° F and there will be dry weather for at least twenty-four hours. Complete spraying before buds begin to open.
- Snails, slugs and earwigs need periodic checking. Handpick, bait or trap if they become a nuisance.
- Mulch your garden. This is the easiest way to prevent new weeds. Place several layers of newspaper under a thick layer of mulch to provide superior weed control. Remove weeds while they are small for easiest control.

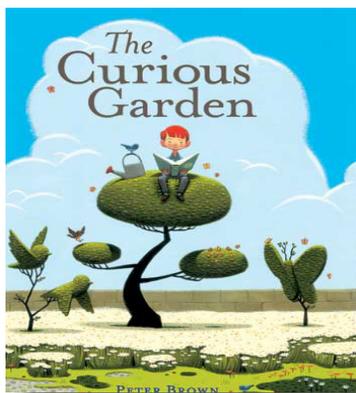
### PRUNING

- Roses can be pruned in late December through early February. Prune according to the type of rose (*e.g.* floribunda, hybrid tea, climbing, *etc.*)
- Deciduous fruit trees and ornamental shrubs and trees need pruning. Winter pruning stimulates more growth. Fruit trees pruned in early summer will require less winter pruning.
- Wait until February to prune woody plants, such as *buddelia*, *artemisia*, and Mexican sage. Prune ornamental grasses. Cut these fast growing plants close to the ground.
- Late winter or early spring blooming shrubs like quince, forsythia, and spirea should be pruned after they complete blooming.
- Garden shrubs and hedges, such as boxwood and viburnum, should be pruned before they put out their new spring growth.
- Basic pruning is done to remove dead, decaying and dying branches, as well as to remove unwanted growth such as sprouts, suckers and crossed branches. Pruning can improve the shape, vigor and appearance of plants and trees.
- Lawns will need little or no mowing until early March. Mowing on soggy soil will ruin your lawn.

### FAVORITE THINGS

Have you noticed the return of our migrating birds? A bird watching friend recently told me that there are more than 150 different birds that live and migrate through Yolo County. In addition to enjoying their beauty and songs, our gardens benefit by their foraging for insects. Most birds feed on insects and their larvae. *Best-Ever Backyard Tips: Hundreds of Easy Ways to Attract Birds You Love to Watch* by Deborah Martin, is the perfect book to help welcome birds into your garden. Topics include plants, feeders and water features that attract a variety of birds, including owls, finches, chickadees and hummingbirds.

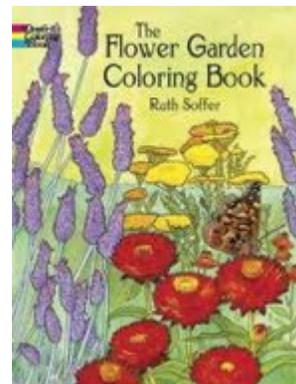
If you are in the dreaming and traveling mode, *1001 Gardens You Must See Before You Die* by Ray Spencer Jones is a wonderful tour de force of public and private gardens throughout the world. This book truly highlights man's universal and enduring love of the garden in its many sizes, styles and forms.



In addition, I found several fun children's books. What is more natural than introducing your love of gardening to the kids in your life? These also would make great gifts:

*The Curious Garden* by Peter Brown is an inspirational story about a little red-haired boy, named Liam, who gradually transforms a drab, lifeless city into a beautiful and vibrant city of gardens. Liam learns to tend a neglected garden, and as his garden grows and becomes beautiful, he inspires others in the city to care for their gardens. Liam shows us how important commitment and community are in shaping our neighborhood and the world at large. Humor and whimsy make this a thoroughly delightful and engaging story about a very successful little gardener.

If you are looking for a fun way to while away a winter day, Ruth Soffer's *The Flower Garden Coloring Book* is perfect. Ruth has created 30 full pages of realistic flowers and fauna to color or paint to your heart's content



### RECOMMENDATIONS FOR OVERCOMING THE WINTER DOLDRUMS

○ Get out and explore our larger backyard or learn about gardening in our area. One of my favorite places to visit, especially in the quiet of winter, is the Effie Yaew Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park ([sacnaturecenter.net](http://sacnaturecenter.net)). It is a peaceful sanctuary to visit and explore on your own, or check out the lectures, classes and self guided tours.

○ Learn more about local gardening and garden events: On Sunday Mornings if you aren't in the garden try listening to our local garden gurus; Farmer Fred (Fred Hoffman) hosts KFBK (1530am) Garden Show from 8:30 a.m-10:00 a.m. or Get Growing on KSTE (650 am) from 10:-noon. Bob Tanem hosts In the Garden on KSFO (560am) from 7-10:00a.m.

○ Explore the UC Davis Arboretum.

December 3, 2012 2:00 p.m. Planting for Pollinators and Other Beneficial Insects (Meet at the Arboretum Teaching Nursery)

December 14, 2012 12 p.m. Walk with Warren  
Explore the pleasures of the winter garden. (Meet at the Gazebo)

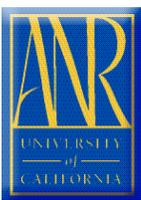
December 17, 2012 2:00 p.m. Under the Redwood Canopy (Meet at Wyatt Deck)

For more information visit <http://www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu> or call 530-752-4880

○ Enjoy a Master Gardener Class at Davis Central Park Gardens (<http://www.centralparkgardens.org>).

January 21, 2012 9:30 a.m. Dormant Pruning  
11:00 a.m. Rose Pruning

Perhaps one of the best New Year's resolutions is to spend more time in the garden, especially in the winter months. The time and care we put in now, will reward us with a beautiful and healthy garden through the coming seasons. Expand your horizons and visit parks, gardens, arboretums and nature preserves in our area. Winter has its own amazing and often missed beauty. ❁



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 Gardener  
 Winter 2011*

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