



# THE YOLO GARDENER

Winter 2013

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

## Living Christmas Trees

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

Advocates of living Christmas trees tout the fresh, naturally-shaped, aromatic, and air-freshening nature of the trees, as well as a feeling of being more environmentally responsible. Living trees, once no longer viable as a Christmas tree, can be planted in the yard, a neighbor’s yard, or donated to organizations or schools. A living tree can provide about two years’ worth of seasonal inside joy before it needs to be planted. They then become part of the environment: freshening the air, beautifying the yard, and providing a place for wildlife to hang out.

Around thirty two million Christmas trees are cut down every year. After the holidays the trees can be composted, sent to the landfill, or used in the yard as mulch. Silver Bells Forest Products notes, “Every acre of Christmas trees grown produces the daily oxygen requirement for 18 people,” and “Many Christmas tree growers plant one to three new seedlings for every tree harvested.”



Living Tree

Living Christmas tree rental companies are sprouting up all over the place, though I could not find one in our area. These trees are alive and arrive in pots with their roots intact. The trees are then picked up and returned to the nursery. Depending on the business line, some are replanted into larger pots for use next year, and other trees that have outgrown the container world are then planted, donated to organizations or urban reforestation projects. The life cycle continues.

When purchasing a living tree, make sure the type of tree you buy will survive in our elevation and climate. Several years ago I purchased a white fir after Christmas at a deep discount. The tree was beautiful, and I felt that it needed a home and a life. While not suitable for our climate, the tree has slowly grown and the beautiful soft green new growth is a delight to see.



Vol. VI,  
No. iii

University of California  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Cooperative Extension

Living Christmas Trees.....	1
The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug.....	2
Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden.....	4
Collecting Memories.....	5
Wiggle Worm Composting.....	7
Decorating for the Holidays From the Garden.....	8
Garden Walk Buffalo.....	10
Kill Your Lawn: Not Your Trees.....	11
UC IPM Update.....	11
Winter Gardening Tips .....	12
Free Master Gardener Classes.....	16

When choosing a living tree, consider the following:

- Does it look healthy?
- Has it been heavily pruned and shaped?
- Select a tree with a large root ball.
- Consider the weight and how you will get the tree in and out of your home.
- Where will the tree go after the holidays?
- Choose a variety that will thrive in our area, or identify a location where it can be transplanted.

Bringing the tree home:

- Acclimatize the tree by leaving it on the porch or in the garage for a few days.
- Inspect for unwanted insects and remove any you find.
- Avoid placing near heat vents.
- Keep the home on the cool side.
- Water regularly.
- Protect your floor or carpet from water damage.
- Do not use snow or paint on the living tree.
- Use newer low-watt or LED lights (cooler).
- Leave inside for nineteen days or fewer.
- Reverse acclimatization by leaving the tree on the porch or in the garage for a few days.



A living Christmas tree isn't for everyone. Because of the intact root ball, they are heavier and could be more difficult to move in and out of the home. If a planting space hasn't been identified, there is the possibility the tree may not live once it has outgrown the pot in which it was planted. Living Christmas trees shouldn't be in the house for an extended period, and may not fulfill someone's need for a month-long tree in the home. For many a cut tree is more appropriate.

Consider this: A living Christmas tree for a special occasion, such as the birth of a first child. The tree can then be planted after the holidays. As the child grows, so does the tree, creating a lovely lasting memory. After this year's devastating fires, could your living Christmas tree then be donated and planted on private or public property aiding the rebuilding process? 🍅

## *The Brown Marmorated Stink Bug*

*Chuck Ingels, U.C.C.E Environmental Horticulture Advisor*

The brown marmorated stink bug (BMSB) (*Halyomorpha halys*) is now in Sacramento Midtown area. The infestation area is bounded (for now) by about O Street to the north, V Street to the south, 11th Street to the west, and 17th Street to the east, and includes the Fremont Community Garden. Two adults were recently found in a home at 11th & D Streets, and there have been three confirmed finds in Davis. Sacramento has the first reproducing population in California outside Los Angeles County. The BMSB is one of the worst invasive pests to arrive in California. A true bug, it is native to eastern Asia and is often confused with the similarly-colored consperse stink bug. The bug gets its name because of the pungent odor it emits when squashed.



BMSB feeds on several dozen crop species, including apples, pears, cherries, peaches, melons, corn, tomatoes, peppers, berries, wine grapes—just about any plant with a botanical fruit. It is also a pest of many ornamentals, especially the fruit-bearing trees, such as princess tree (*Paulownia tomentosa*), common Catalpa (*Catalpa bignonioides*), tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), and Chinese pistache (*Pistachia chinensis*).

Feeding on fruit creates pock marks and distortions that make the fruit unmarketable. In grapes, berries collapse and rot increases.

The pest doesn't typically bite humans, but there have been reports of mild stings. They can cause disturbing problems for homeowners in the winter. When the weather cools down, bugs migrate in droves to sheltered areas, including inside homes and buildings. It seeks out lights at night. These bugs aggregate in such numbers that there are reports of people using manure shovels and five-gallon buckets to dispose of them. The strong, unpleasant odor the insects emit when disturbed makes cleanup still more daunting.

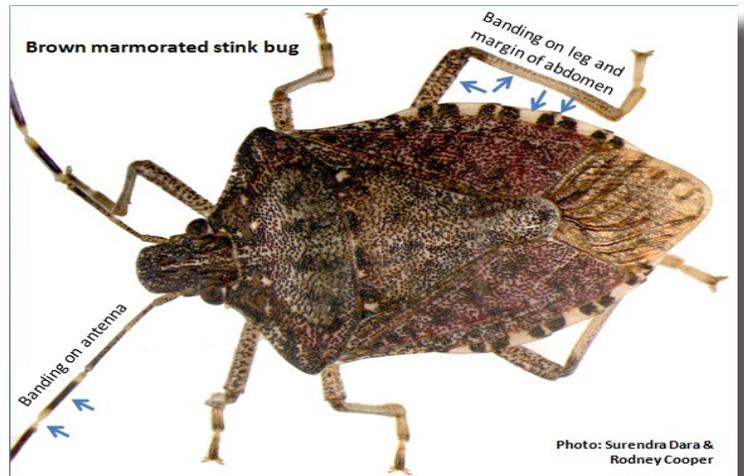
It moves around easily, and is expected to spread. It can fly up to a half-mile at a time, and also travels long distances by hitching rides in vehicles or inside furniture or other articles when they are moved.

### How to identify the pest and its characteristics

The pest can be distinguished from ordinary brown stink bugs (1/2 inch long) by its larger size (1/2 - 1/3 inch long), marble-like coloring on its shield, and white markings on the extended edge of the abdomen. BSMB also has distinctive white bands on the antennae and legs that ordinary stink bugs don't have. BMSB can be confused with the consperse stinkbug, which feeds on a variety of fruits and vegetables, from stone fruits to pears to beans to tomatoes.

Identification information is available at:

- YouTube video: three minutes, identification information, compares BMSB and consperse stink bug. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EHhtss8E7xM>.
- UC ANR News Release Blog: <http://ucanr.edu/blogs/blogcore/postdetail.cfm?postnum=11487>.
- UCCE Sacramento web site and Master Gardener page.



Eggs

### Management techniques:

Controlling the stinkbug poses a dilemma for scientists and farmers, given that its main natural enemy is an Asian parasitic wasp. The wasps control stinkbug numbers by feeding on the eggs. The parasitic wasp is not found in the United States. Collections of parasitic wasps (especially *Trissolcus*) have been made, but both the USDA for the United States and CDFA for California) want to make sure the wasp will feed only on the stinkbug species before approval for release in California. Testing will take two to three years for the California release. In the meantime, the stinkbugs will continue to populate—and feed. Parasitism is the best hope for reducing populations, although they are nonetheless a major pest in their native range.

**Winter 2013** There are several types of traps using sex pheromone. Trapping studies have been conducted by USDA-ARS in the Northeast states and at UC Riverside. Traps placed in Midtown by CDFA have resulted in swarming of the bugs around the traps, and hundreds have been caught.

The best way to keep them out of homes is to exclude them by sealing off any potential entry points, especially around window and door screens and window air conditioning units. Insecticides that have been shown to be effective in the lab are often less effective in the field. In and around the home, insecticides that have efficacy are mostly pyrethroids and neonicotinoids; however, both when sprayed outdoors may easily end up in creeks and rivers. Control for home gardeners will be most troublesome, and may involve the use of row covers, trap crops, pheromone traps, and predator insects.

The best monitoring method is to inspect foliage throughout the year, and larger branches in late summer and fall for aggregating bugs. A quick method is to beat foliage over a piece of cardboard or sheet, although some will fly before hitting the ground. If suspected BMSB are found, place some in a container and note where and when they were collected. Take the sealed container to the county agricultural commissioner or local UC Cooperative Extension office.

#### Important Links:

For more information, a key national web page is <http://www.stopbmsb.org/>. [YouTube video](#) for identifying BMSB. UC IPM has good photos on their [BMSB Pest Alert](#). BMSB has spread throughout [NW Oregon](#), and OSU has an informative [web page](#). Here is a good brochure from Oregon on [BMSB identification](#). The primary research leader in the United States is Tracy Leskey, and her [online presentation](#) is very informative. Also, I wrote an article on BMSB in my [Jan. 2011 Tree & Vine Newsletter](#) on this super pest. 🍅

#### HELP REQUESTED

UCCE's Environmental Horticulture Advisor, Chuck Ingels, needs your assistance in tracking the locations of BMSB in and around Sacramento and Yolo counties. View the map, register finds and learn more about the pest at: <http://ucanr.edu/sites/sacmg/>.

The map reflects the recent finds of BMSB in Citrus Heights and Curtis Park. It is suspected that the insects were transported out of the downtown area on vehicles. Since a large population of Yolo County residents commute to downtown Sacramento, BMSB is likely to spread throughout the Yolo area.

This winter, Chuck will be working with UC IPM to create a BMSB Pest Notes publication.

## Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Classical Chinese Garden

*Melissa Kelly, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

In the heart of Vancouver, British Columbia's bustling Chinatown, rests the tranquil Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Chinese Classical Garden. Light showers didn't dampen the time spent with our tour guide, Jonathan, while taking in the beauty of the architecture and garden within the walls of this treasured place.

Only four classical Chinese gardens exist outside of China, and this artistic garden was the first. It is an authentic representation of an age-old garden tradition, which reached its peak in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).





What makes the garden classical? When constructed in 1985, a team of fifty-three experts from Suzhou spent thirteen months using materials, tools and techniques nearly identical to those used centuries ago. Most of the architectural components were shipped from China: hand-fired roof tiles, carved woodwork, lattice windows, limestone rocks, and even the courtyard pebbles.

Ming Dynasty scholars, the elite of their time, lived and worked in their garden and shared these spaces with friends and family of all ages. Filled with energy, their gardens also offered quiet moments for contemplation.

This amazing garden did just that on this particular overcast Vancouver day. From the first steps onto the pebbled walkways, we strolled and heard about the philosophy and tradition within the garden. We learned about the symbolic plants that have a special role in the garden, such as pine and cypress used in the open spaces, and delicate bamboo and miniature rhododendron in the confined courtyards. While many plants found in the garden are native to China, local plants also are included to reinforce the bridging of cultures between China and Canada.



Reflecting the Daoist philosophy of yin and yang, light in the Garden is balanced by dark; rugged and hard balanced by soft and flowing.

The garden is easily a place to spend many hours noting the connection between plants, rocks, water and life. This special place encouraged me to bring its energy and calm to my own home garden. I recommend visiting the Dr. Sun Yat-Sen Chinese Classical Garden when in Vancouver, BC. 🍅

## Collecting Memories

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

*“This is to remind you of where you got me, not how.”* Ashtray from Little America, WY, c. 1950s.

*“Take nothing but pictures; leave nothing but footprints.”* California backpackers’ ethic, c. 1990s.

This began as a simple musing on a memorable trip and a rather ordinary plant I saw there. It quickly morphed into something very complex, like any weed or worry. Writing past my deadline, I realize that this simple desire—wanting to collect—put me in a long tradition that began with early explorers and only gets more complex with hard-learned lessons from our recent past about invasive species and preserving nature.

### What I Found:

This summer, I traveled with my extended family (all four of them) to visit my sister in Accra, Ghana.

One of the most meaningful stops on our trip was the visit to Cape Coast “castle” (more properly, a dungeon), the last point in the passage of many Africans to life (or death) in the new world, as slaves. Along with the articulate comments of our guide, one could not avoid noticing how the beauty of the location, on the Ghana coast facing Guinea Bay, contrasted with the evil of the slave trade and its perpetrators. I also noticed



*Asclepias procera*

something familiar, and benign, something that looked like a milkweed plant (*Asclepias* species), but larger in every way.

Remnants of the plant were dropped on the slate castle floor, along with various litter, including the ever-present single-serving bags that West Africans use for drinking water. Soon after returning home, I was able to identify the

plant as Giant Milkweed, *Calotropis procera* or *Asclepias procera*, a native of West Africa that is now naturalized as far as Australia, the Pacific islands, Mexico, Central, and South America. (More information about this plant can be found at [www.fs.fed.us/global/iitf/pdf/shrubs/Calotropis%20procera.pdf](http://www.fs.fed.us/global/iitf/pdf/shrubs/Calotropis%20procera.pdf)). I was able to identify it because I have seen many different species of milkweed in California and in the Midwest with similar features. The main difference in the Giant Milkweed is—it is giant.

As I suspected, this native plant of West Africa has traveled to Australia, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, South and North America. In California it is naturalized in Imperial County.

As gardeners, we might expect some general agreement that what is a rare plant in one locale and ecosystem might very well be a noxious weed in another. Similarly, the loss of habitat, especially in

rapidly-developing parts of the world that should give one pause about taking even fragments of plant material. So we need to resist the temptation to sample local plant specimens, and find another way to satisfy our collecting impulses. I thought about all of this as I noticed the plant on the balcony of a historic site.

What collecting tools lend themselves to world travel that won't have an environmental impact either here or there? Here is a short list that I found useful:

- A hand lens is small enough to pack, and can be used to study all sorts of small items, including flower parts and insects. If you wear glasses, take time to practice and become comfortable with the lens before you depart.
- A camera seems an obvious choice, but may be a mixed blessing. West Africans were resistant to being photographed, and sometimes the scene was so crowded that a camera was impractical, even if it could be operated with one hand. My nephew got much better pictures, including crowd shots, with the camera on his smart phone. The camera phone can be used one-handed, kept always at hand.
- A sketch book can serve multiple functions if you get one with graph paper. The grid permits quick size estimates of blossoms and bugs. Even if you lack skills at botanical drawing (a challenging but rewarding activity), the grid can also help as you sketch diagrams for future reference. I made crude drawings of Adinkra symbols with notes about meanings. I also jotted down place names and names of businesses, to help me remember later. Remember to bring pencils!
- Binoculars and field guides added pounds to our luggage, and weren't used enough. On my next trip, I plan to use the power of the internet and do electronic searches (whenever wi-fi is available) and leave the books at home. I haven't decided about the binoculars, but if travel involves the usual crowded buses, they may be more intrusive than useful.

More detailed information may be found at <http://plants.usda.gov/core/profile?symbol=CAPR>.



## Wiggle Worm Composting

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

I had an opportunity this past summer to attend a workshop on “Worm Composting” in Shelburne, Nova Scotia. Until then, this was a subject about which I knew very little. (I had observed worms in the compost bin at Birch Lane Elementary School in Davis, where I did some gardening activities with third and fourth graders.) In the Stonegate neighborhood in Davis where I live, composting is not allowed because of the fear of attracting rats. However, I learned in the workshop that rats and pests are generally not a problem if odiferous foods, such as meat, fish, dairy products, cooked and processed foods, and oils are avoided, and the compost is mixed with a good layer of brown leaves, wood shavings, and shredded paper to filter out odor. It was also recommended that the compost be kept in a bin with a tight-fitting lid.

When I think of worms, I think of fishing. I do only fly fishing, but when I was a kid I fished for brook trout with my dad in Michigan’s Upper Peninsula using earthworms, or nightcrawlers, as they are also called. These are different from the red wigglers that are most commonly used to enrich compost. The wigglers live in close, densely-populated conditions and don’t burrow deeply underground like earthworms. They are surface dwellers, and live in the top six inches of soil. Their scientific name, *Eisenia fetida*, is derived from the yellow liquid they release when stressed and exposed to light. It smells like garlic. The red wigglers are sold at worm farms and bait shops for about twenty dollars per pound. A pound is about one thousand worms. Since wigglers eat about half of their weight every day, you need to accumulate about eight ounces of organic waste per day to feed them. In other words, an ideal worm-to-organic waste ratio is two-to-one.



Using worms for composting is called vermicomposting. In this process, the worm eats food scraps and other organic matter, which become compost as it passes through the worm’s body and exits through its tail end producing worm castings. The decayed organic matter produces a dark, rich, and healthy soil or manure (called worm castings), which has a high saturation of nutrients. This mixture can then be used to grow plants. It generally takes from three to five months to obtain a harvest of finished compost.

Although worms are hermaphroditic, which means each has both male and female sex organs, two worms are still required to mate. Once you begin vermicomposting, you’ll know your worms are happy, healthy, and well-fed if they double their population every ninety days. Generally, worms in a worm bed live for one year; however, some live only a few months, while others live up to ten years. Since a worm is ninety percent water and shrivels up when it dies, its death usually goes unnoticed among the other worms in the bin. It just becomes part of the compost.

Worms need moisture, air, food, darkness, and warm temperatures to live. A worm bin is easy to set up. All you need is a five- to ten-gallon plastic, wood, or glass container, and some moist newspaper strips, food scraps, and/or leaves for bedding. Although worm composting is best done outdoors at home during the warm

seasons of the year, you can bring your worms indoors during the winter months when it is cold, and compost under the kitchen sink or in the basement or garage. The workshop instructor does her composting year-round in a Rubbermaid box in her office under her desk, where she has fun playing with the worms and watching their activity on a daily basis.

Since worms are fun to raise, you might consider giving a worm hobby kit as a Christmas gift to a gardener or an adventurous child who likes science

**BENEFITS OF VERMICOMPOSTING**

- IMPROVE SOIL'S PHYSICAL STRUCTURE
- IMPROVE SOIL'S WATER-HOLDING CAPACITY
- ELIMINATE USE OF CHEMICAL FERTILIZERS
- REDUCE GARBAGE AND LAND FILL
- ENHANCE PLANT GROWTH
- INCREASE CROP YIELD
- ENCOURAGE ORGANIC GARDENING
- ATTRACT WILD BIRDS
- SAVE THE PLANET!

projects. If you don't like the idea of vermicomposting, you can always put worms directly into a lawn, garden, or potted plant and let them burrow little tunnels that will allow moisture and nutrients to reach the plant roots. Your veggies will be bigger and tastier, your flower beds more colorful, and your lawns greener.

*For more information on vermicomposting, see the University of California Cooperative Extension publication entitled "Composting with Worms" by Ann Daniel and Steve Radosevich.* 🍅

***Decorating for the Holidays  
From the Garden***

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

The holidays are upon us once again, beckoning us to decorate. And if you are like me, there is never enough money to do all of the things I would like to do, especially making my home festive for the season. Never fear. Your garden and your imagination can come to the rescue. Not only is bringing the garden inside an inexpensive way to decorate, it's a reminder of the bounty of your garden and a way to brighten up



the interior.

A good way to start is to make a list of what is available, and what you would like.

Available from the garden:

- Pomegranate
- Persimmon
- Citrus branches and fruit
- Cousin IT (ground cover, green, lush, wonderful trailing habit)
- Cypress
- Rosemary
- Avocado, leaves, fruit
- Ming Fern
- Artemisia
- Flowers
- Ceanothus
- Tree branches
- Ivy

What I might like:

- Pine Cones
- Beautiful fall leaves
- Flowers
- Toyon
- Mistletoe

Check with the neighbors to see if they have anything you would like, and propose a trade. We all know or have seen people scavenge from the piles of street yard debris for beautiful leaves or other greens.

Pull ideas from your imagination, magazines, online sites, friends and family. Do you want a cohesive theme throughout your home, or do you want to pick a room, decorate, and move on to the next space?

Gather together different vases, bowls and pitchers that can serve as containers. Start pulling from the garden, either for a room at a time or everything at once. Shake everything off outside to leave any hitchhikers in the garden. Rinse your garden offerings off as needed. Any plant material brought in will need to be kept in water or monitored and replaced as it dries out. Dried plant material can be a fire hazard, so be sure to use candles wisely.

Ideas include:

- One to three white pitchers with greens
- Swag around the kitchen window
- A runner of greens down the dining room table
- Fireplace mantel gone crazy
- Wreaths, over pictures, mirrors, on shelves or on doors
- Banisters with tied greens
- Fill a clear vase with tiny pine cones
- Place bare branches in a vase and hang ornaments from the twigs
- Make napkin rings
- A bowl of winter fruit, add décor as needed
- Fill lanterns with berries, eucalyptus or other greens
- Evergreen centerpiece

Whether you make one beautiful centerpiece or decorate the whole home from the garden, enjoy the fruits of your labor. Your interior decorations will stand out and be unique, as they came from your yard. I love the feeling I get when my dining room table is decorated to the nines from my garden. Home for the Holidays. I'm smiling just thinking about it. 🍅



*Toyon wreath*

## Garden Walk Buffalo

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

Mention Buffalo, New York, in any conversation, and the images that you conjure up include frost, snow, ice storms, sleet, freezing cold, freezing cold, and more freezing cold. If you weren't reading an article in the Yolo Gardener about gardening, you wouldn't think about gardening in the context of Buffalo. To be honest and fair, this article lacks U.C. horticultural research, and it fails to teach much about gardening practices. However, it is about gardening and gardeners, and for hometown pride, hopefully, this may change your mind about Buffalo, and give you a reason to visit (besides the chicken wings).



On July 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup>, Buffalo held its annual Garden Walk. The walk includes more than 370 gardens in the urban core of Buffalo's old neighborhoods. Some of the houses date back to the Civil War. Many were built during the early part of the twentieth century. Some of the yards are spacious and others crowd into and overlap each other. Some gardens defy a property boundary.

The Garden Walk began in 1995 after two Buffalonians, Marvin Lunenfeld and Gail McCarthy, returned from an urban garden tour of Chicago and thought the idea could work in Buffalo. The first "Walk" showcased twenty-nine gardens, and Marvin and Gail's front porch served as Garden Walk headquarters. Today, the boundaries of the Garden Walk stretch over five miles and the 370-plus gardens include private homes, public gardens, church gardens, and parklands. Free shuttle buses transport walkers around a loop route with fourteen stops. There are three Garden Walk headquarters spread out to serve the east, center and west areas of the Garden Walk.

A ten-dollar donation to the Garden Walk organization gets you an advanced copy of the Garden Walk map, even though there were plenty of maps available at the headquarters. The Walk identifies each location with a sign in the front of the property. People wander around marveling at the creativity and work that some gardeners put into beautifying their yards.

Obviously, gardening in Buffalo differs dramatically from gardening here in Yolo County. They have their own challenges—like the freezing cold I mentioned before. When asked about keeping the fish from freezing in the winter, one water gardener explained that they built a dome-like structure over the pond and ran a bubbler to keep oxygen in the water. Pond fish generally reduce activity to a minimum during the winter, and hover at the bottom of the pond. With that in mind, another pond owner dug his pond deep enough to allow liquid water to exist at the bottom where the fish would stay.

One gardener proudly showed off tropical hibiscus. In answer to the obvious question, each plant is gently and lovingly carried up three flights of stairs to overwinter in a sunny, south-facing window. Yes the sun shines in the winter in Buffalo—a little.

One gardener put potted plants—annuals mostly, but some perennials—over spent spring bulb gardens to maintain a full, lush look through the summer. In the winter these potted perennials are stored in the basement, attic or garage.

It may be cold in the winter, but when Garden Walk time arrives in Buffalo, the city and its neighborhoods bloom with a riot of color, fragrance, and beauty. Happy Gardening. 

## *Kill Your Lawn: Not Your Trees*

*Bonnie Berman, Yolo County U.C.C.E. Master Gardener*

Are there trends in landscaping? Certainly. Recently, one popular trend is removing a front lawn by depriving it of water. These days, large swaths of brown covering a front yard is not a reason for embarrassment. This new brown color scheme is the mark of the water-conscious homeowner. Whether for monetary reasons (because of rising water rates), or for ecological reasons (to conserve water), homeowners are choosing to deprive their lawns of water and make brown the new green.

However, in this rush to remove a lawn, it is important to consider how water deprivation will affect your trees. All trees need water, especially young trees. A good rule of thumb is that if you have a landscape tree younger than five years you should water it regularly. Trees prefer fewer, deeper waterings, so by “regular,” this means every few weeks using a slow, thorough seep with the hose. Try to water to a depth of two to three feet to help promote a deep root system. But remember that the root zone extends at least as far as the drip-line.

But doesn't watering the trees in your lawn defeat the lawn-removal process? Yes, but only in small areas near your trees. Without compromising your trees, the lawn growing around them can be removed using layers of cardboard or newspaper covered by mulch. Be sure to keep the layers a few inches away from the trunk. Water passing through this cardboard/mulch layer will benefit your tree while preventing grass from growing.

The benefits of keeping your trees healthy are many. If monetary reasons are prompting the lawn removal, consider the increase in property value to homes with established trees. If ecology is your motivation, consider the cooling effects and habitat benefits of mature trees. Keep your old lawn trees healthy and watered while you remove your lawn, and set the trend of being a smart homeowner.

Spread the word! 

## *UC IPM Update*



If you have visited the U.C. IPM Home & Landscape web site <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.homegarden.html> lately, you may have noticed some major changes related to the invertebrate pest sections. In the “Some Common

Pests” section, the invertebrate pests link now goes to a page with buttons for different categories of insects, arachnids, and other invertebrates. <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.invertebrate.html>. The site now covers 380 species of invertebrates pests, plus an index sortable by common name, genus and species, family and order. You can find the index at the top of the “Insects, Mites, Mollusks and Nematodes” page <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/menu.invertebrate.html>.

Another new addition to the web site is a video library. Included are YouTube videos on spiders, snails, bed bugs, mosquitoes, pesticides, and other pests. Find the link to the Video Library in the box just above the large photo on the Home & Landscape page. 

## Winter Gardening Tips

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

We are a few weeks from the Winter Solstice, but our cooler temperatures are beginning to feel like winter. The days are shorter and the colorful fall colors are quickly fading.

This is the perfect time to begin preparing your garden for its nap, or for tending your winter veggies and planting spring bulbs. Our gardens may soon get some much-needed rain. The Farmer's Almanac is predicting a cooler and wetter winter due to a decline in solar activity. Cooler temperatures can damage tender plants and citrus trees. Prepare now for frost and freezing temperatures to ensure that your garden is protected this winter.

### 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.
- Properly dispose of any old or unneeded pesticides and herbicides. Contact Yolo County Waste Management for disposal guidelines.



### 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 evergreens and under the 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.
- Consider collecting rainwater during the winter months.

### 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.
- 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 it 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: Primroses, pansies, violas, snapdragons, calendulas and Iceland poppies.
  - \* Cool season perennials: Cyclamen, helliborus, daphne and iberis.
  - \* Annual vegetables: Peas, spinach, kale, chard, bok choy, 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 garden pests, including 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, calendulas, larkspur, lobelia, dianthus 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 four to six cups of sterilized chicken or steer manure and eight ounces (one cup) of plain alfalfa pellets for each plant. Sprinkle around the drip line. The manure improves the soil tilth and provides important nutrients. Steer manure contains 1.0-2.5% Nitrogen, 0.9-1.6% Phosphate, and 2.4-3.6% Potassium. Chicken manure contains 2.0-4.5% Nitrogen, 4.5-6.0% Phosphate, and 1.2-2.4% Potassium. 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 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

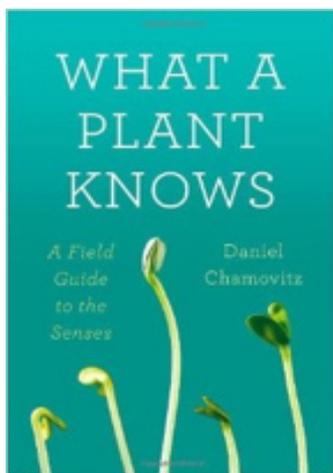
- Roses can be pruned in late December through early February. Prune according to the type of rose (*e.g.*, floribunda, hybrid tea, climbing).
- Deciduous fruit trees and ornamental shrubs and trees need pruning. Winter pruning stimulates more growth. Fruit trees pruned in early summer will require less winter pruning. (Except for apricots, which should be pruned in August.)

- Wait until February to prune woody plants, such as *buddleia*, *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. Prune spring- and summer-blooming vines after they have flowered.
- 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 compact your soil.



## FAVORITE THINGS

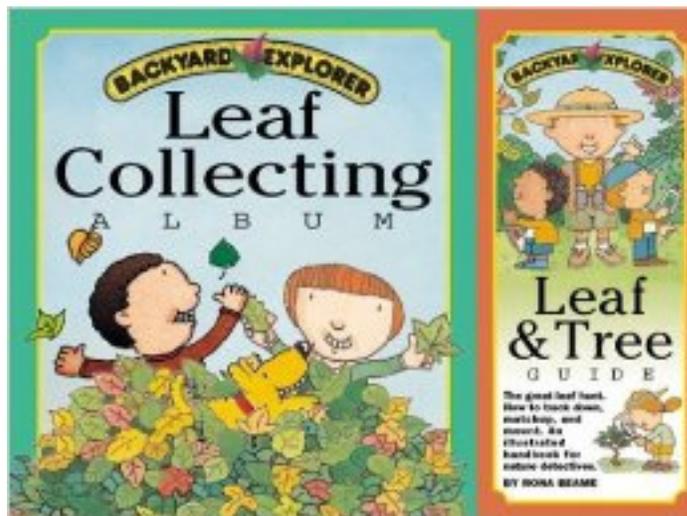
*The Garden of Invention: Luther Burbank and the Business of Breeding Plants*, by Jane S. Smith. One of my favorite gardens is the Luther Burbank Garden in Santa Rosa. This book explores Luther Burbank's life of breeding new plants, including the Elephant garlic, the Russet Potato, the Shasta Daisy, and the Santa Rosa Plum. He was the most famous horticulturalist and gardener of the twentieth century. This is not only a biography, but a view into the cultural and social history of his time.



*What a Plant Knows: A Field Guide to the Senses*. Daniel Chamovitz authors an intriguing and scientific look at plant behavior. If you have ever wondered how plants know which way is up, when to bloom, or shed their leaves, you will find these and many more fascinating plant tales in this book. This is a fun read for the truly curious gardener. You will have a new relationship with your plants after you read *What a Plant Knows!*

I also found several fun children's books. What is more natural than introducing your love of gardening to the kids in your life? Children are naturally curious and these books provide a wonderful opportunity to explore the world of trees.

*Christmas Farm*, by Mary Lyn Ray, is the story of Wilma and her five-year-old neighbor, Parker. Together they plant and raise Balsam Fir trees for Christmas. This is a beautifully illustrated story that shares the magic of raising a seedling to a mature tree. You and your young gardener will love learning about growing trees, and share the joy they bring to many families.



*Leaf Collecting: Backyard Explorer Kit*, by Rona Beame. This is the perfect book to encourage your budding naturalist to explore the world of trees. This kit comes with a tree and leaf guide, a collecting album, and a collecting envelope for your garden detective. The major leaf and needle shapes are matched to a list of common trees, and there is a guide for pressing and mounting a leaf collection. I plan to share this with the children in our

family.

## 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 Yeaw Nature Center in Ancil Hoffman Park. It is a peaceful sanctuary to visit and explore on your own, or check out the lectures, classes and field trips that are scheduled. In addition, there is the Winter Bird Festival hosted by the city of Galt on February 1, 2014. While this is not directly related to gardening, it fosters the love of nature and birds in our area.



\* 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 the KFBK (1530am) Garden Show from 8:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.; or catch Get Growing on KSTE (650 am) from 10:00-noon. Bob Tanem hosts In the Garden on KSFO (560am) from 8:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.

## GARDEN CLASSES AND EXCURSIONS

- Luther Burbank Holiday Open House.
  - December 7 -8, 2013, 10:00 a.m.- 4:00 p.m. Santa Rosa.
    - [www.lutherburbank.org](http://www.lutherburbank.org)
- Old City Cemetery.
  - Rose Pruning Class, December 7, 2013, 10:00 a.m. Sacramento. [www.oldcitycemetery.com](http://www.oldcitycemetery.com)
- UCD Arboretum.
  - Walk With Warren: Winter Wonders of the Westside Garden
    - December 11, 2013, 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. Meet at the Gazebo.
- California Duck Days: February 23, 2013, 9:00 a.m.- 5:00 p.m.
  - Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area.
    - [www.yolobasin.org](http://www.yolobasin.org)
- Capay Valley Almond Festival.
  - February 23, 2013, 9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m. Capay Valley.
    - <http://espartoregionalchamber.com/AlmondFestival.aspx>

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. How fortunate we are to have mild winters and many sunny days to enjoy the beauty of our winter gardens. Don't miss this beautiful and peaceful time in the garden.

“The love of gardening is a seed once sown that never dies.”

-Gertrude Jekyll



**Free Master Gardener Classes**

**GRACE GARDEN**

United Methodist Church, 1620 Anderson Road, Davis

- Fruit Tree Pruning: January 11, 2014, 9:00 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
- Selection and Care of Garden Tools: February 22, 2014, 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m.

**WOODLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE**

2300 Gibson Road, Woodland

- Care and Pruning of Roses: January 25, 2014, 10:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.
- Setting the Seeds for a Successful Summer Veggie Garden: February 8, 2014, 10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
- Backyard and Worm Composting, 10:00 a.m.- 11:00 a.m.
- WCC Plant Sale: April 5, 2014, 9:00 a.m.- 1:00 p.m.

**DAVIS CENTRAL PARK GARDEN**

3rd and B Streets, Davis

- Getting an Early Start on Summer Vegetables: January 4, 2014, 9:30 a.m.-10:30 a.m.
- Care and Pruning of Roses: January 4, 2014, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- Lawn Removal: March 22, 2014, 9:30 a.m.-10:00 a.m.
- Waterwise Irrigation for the Garden: March 22, 2014, 11:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.

**Subscribe to the Yolo Gardener**

download at:

[http://ceyolo.ucanr.edu/news/407/The\\_Yolo\\_Gardener/](http://ceyolo.ucanr.edu/news/407/The_Yolo_Gardener/)

OR

contact

The Yolo Gardener  
U.C.C.E. Office  
70 Cottonwood  
Woodland, CA 95695



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

UCCE OFFICE CLOSED FOR THE HOLIDAYS FROM DECEMBER 20TH TO JANUARY 7TH

**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

**Web Site** ..... <http://ucanr.edu/sites/YCMG/>



U.C. Cooperative Extension  
 Yolo County Master Gardeners  
 70 Cottonwood Street  
 Woodland, CA 95695

**University of California**  
 Agriculture and Natural Resources

Cooperative Extension

## The Yolo Gardener - Fall 2013

Send a Letter  
 to an Editor!

email: [mgyolo@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgyolo@ucdavis.edu)

Please put: *Yolo Gardener* in the subject line

or

Yolo County UCCE  
 70 Cottonwood St.  
 Woodland, CA 95695

### STAFF

Jim Fowler, Managing Editor  
 Willa Pettygrove, Editor  
 Celia Chang, Editor  
 Karen Wiesner, Layout

### WRITERS

Bonnie Berman, Jan Bower, Laura  
 Cameron, Chuck Ingels, Melissa  
 Kelly, Linda Parsons, Willa Bowman  
 Pettygrove, David Studer

### PRODUCTION

Yolo County Master Gardeners



The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (including childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or status as a covered veteran (covered veterans are special disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, Vietnam era veterans, or any other veterans who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized) in any of its programs or activities. University policy is intended to be consistent with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws. Inquiries regarding

This newsletter is a quarterly publication of the University of California Master Gardener Program of Yolo County and is freely distributed to County residents. It is available through the internet for free download:

[http://ceyolo.ucanr.edu/news\\_407/The\\_Yolo\\_Gardener/](http://ceyolo.ucanr.edu/news_407/The_Yolo_Gardener/)

*Judy*

Judy McClure, Master Gardener Coordinator

*Rachael*

Rachael Long, Yolo County Director