

Ear to the Ground

Bimonthly Newsletter of UCCE Master Gardeners of Monterey Bay (MBMG)

January/February 2015



MBMG Events

Join us for Training in our Demonstration Garden

January 17

Fruit Tree Basics - 10 -
11:30 am

Pruning - 11:30 am - 1 pm

Peter Quintanilla, MG

February 7

12 - 2 pm - Pruning - Grapes,
Wisteria, Roses - Art Nathan, MG

Classes are free of charge and held at
the UCCE, 1432 Freedom Blvd.,
Watsonville, CA

For information call 831-763-8007
or email Hotline@mbmgs.org

Garden Tour

August 2015



Who We Are

The University of California Master Gardener Program provides the public with UC research-based information about home horticulture, sustainable landscape and pest management practices. It is administered by local University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) county offices that are the principal outreach and public service arms of the University's division of Agriculture and Natural Resources."



Tina Heitzman
UCCE Program Representative,
Santa Cruz and Monterey Counties
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The Plant Doctor

By Steve Tjosvold

Environmental Horticulture Farm Advisor

UC Cooperative Extension

A column that describes and discusses the management of current plant diseases, pests, and disorders found in Monterey Bay Area landscapes and gardens.

Occasional frosts can damage citrus and other frost-sensitive plants that grow in Monterey Bay area gardens. It's always best, of course, to plant an adapted plant to suit your particular location, but for citrus or other shrubs and small trees that might be damaged by frosts, there are still a few things to do to try to protect them during frost conditions.

There are two types of frost conditions that might occur. The most common for this area is the radiation frost. This can occur when calm clear nights exist and night-time cloud covers do not hold in the heat stored in the daytime. Damaging temperatures (below 32 F) occur only for a few hours before and just after sunrise. The second type of frost condition is the advective frost. This can occur when a cold front moves into the area. Temperatures may drop significantly below critical levels for an extended period of time making frost protection of questionable use. However, our cold fronts are usually at temperatures above freezing and associated with rain.

Covering plants and trees with blankets or sheets may protect plants in radiation frost conditions. Cover them just before the sun goes down and uncover them in the morning. You want to allow as much sunlight to hit the soil and area around the plant. The energy that is stored in the daytime will be released at night, and the slight increase in air temperature around

Ask Master Greenjeans

Question: Can you provide me information about having my garden soil tested?

The beginning of the New Year is a good time to test your soil for nutrients before making a decision about what to plant in your garden. It is important to have your soil analyzed for its chemical properties and nutrients. Your amendments and fertilizer program will depend on the results of this test, and knowing the makeup of your soil will prevent you from adding unnecessary nutrients.

The UC Cooperative Extension does not test soil, but many

universities offer inexpensive soil testing. It is recommended you check with a university that has a soil science department and is familiar with the soil profile in your area. Prices are usually very reasonable though it may take longer for your results than if you go through a commercial lab. Your local nursery should be able to recommend a qualified commercial soil lab for testing. It is important to compare testing prices and know what information is provided in the test results.

Most labs have a basic package that at minimum, tests for pH, (acidity or alkalinity) and soil nutrient status (Nitrogen, Phosphorous and Potassium). You will also want to know about CEC (Cation Exchange Capacity) organic matter, Ca, Mg, Na, and Ca:Mg ratio. Some soil labs specialize in recommending nutrients that are organic rather than synthetic. It is important to know what information will be included in the test results.

Want to do your own soil testing? You can purchase a soil test kit at many retail garden stores, but the accuracy of the results can vary between manufacturers. An article in HortTechnology 17:358-362 (2007) details a variety of home soil test kits as they compare to analytical laboratories. Please read this article for more home soil test kit information.

Lastly, it is important to take the soil samples correctly. Most commercial labs will request your sample includes at least a dozen individual points in the sampling area. All samples should be consistent - each the same size and each core is uniform from the soil surface down to the sampling depth. It is important to remove all debris and rocks from the soil sample before sending it to be tested.

In each issue, Mel Crudge, who's been a Master Gardener since 2012, will answer one or more of your gardening questions. Please submit to hotline@mbmgs.org.

MBMG Hotline

Have a garden question, call or visit

the plant may be enough to keep plant cells from freezing. The most vulnerable part of the plant will usually be its top or any plant surface that is directly facing the night's clear sky. So make sure those areas are covered. The parts that are near or facing buildings will be warmer. Plastic sheets are poor insulators and thus not a good choice for covers. However, if a plastic cover is used, the plastic should be supported just over the plant so that it does not directly touch it, as would be done when building a cold frame or greenhouse. A "space" blanket available at camping supply stores is an excellent cover.

For additional protection, a 100 watt outdoor light or even a string of Christmas tree lights can be placed under the cover of a small to medium sized citrus tree. The extra energy produced by the lighting is trapped under the cover and just might add enough heat to prevent freezing damage. If frost-sensitive plants are in containers and can be moved, move them inside or near a south facing (sunny) house wall. The heat released at night from the wall may help the plant from freezing.

News from University of California UC Davis Arboretum, arboretum.ucdavis.edu

The horticultural staff of the UC Davis Arboretum have identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested in the Arboretum, are easy to grow, don't need a lot of water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants and support native birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California.

Learn about Arboretum All-Stars, arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx

- Use the All-Stars database to find the right plants for your garden
- Download the All-Stars brochure.
- Use the All-Stars planting plan from the landscape outside the west fence of the Arboretum Teaching Nursery as an inspiration for your home garden
- Browse through a list of the 100 UC Davis Arboretum All-Stars
- Watch an audio slide show about the All-Stars plants
- Learn about All-Stars irrigation and climate zone trials

What to Do in the Garden Now

By Paul McCollum, MBMG

Spring is coming soon and so is the 2015 garden season. I hope some of you are growing some of your own food. Here is a chart of germination times for a few of the most popular food crops.

Vegetable Seed Sow Times

The chart below gives an estimated amount of time that it takes to produce a transplant. Take the date that you want to transplant the seedlings to your garden, subtract the number of weeks it takes to grow the transplant and then subtract the number of days it takes to germinate the seed to figure the date you should sow your seed.

our Gardening Hotline
9 am to noon M-W-F
at UCCE, 1432 Freedom Blvd.,
Watsonville
831-763-8007
or
email your questions to:
Hotline@mbmgs.org

Myth or Fact

To prune or not to prune, that is the question!

A tree will grow perfectly without pruning.

Myth - Trees need pruning for good health, strong growth and a better appearance.

Summer pruning is not injurious to trees.

Fact - Summer pruning does not negatively affect trees. Get rid of dead branches and leaves and send water and nutrients to live and healthy parts of the tree.

Fruit trees and shade trees should be pruned in the same manner.

Myth - Fruit trees need a heavier pruning to encourage growth for fruit production.

Over-pruning is a common problem.

Fact - A light hand with the pruning shears is advised.

SPECIES	GERMINATE	TRANSPLANT
Broccoli	6-10	4-5
Brussels Sprouts	6-10	4-5
Cabbage	6-10	5-6
Cauliflower	6-10	5-6
Collards	6-10	4-6
Cucumber	6-10	3-4
Eggplant	7-14	6-7
Endive/Escarole	5-10	5-7
Kale	6-10	4-6
Kohlrabi	5-10	4-6
Leek	7-12	6-8
Lettuce	6-10	4-5
Melons	5-10	2-3
Mustard	6-10	4-6
Okra	7-14	6-8
Onion	7-12	5-6
Pepper	10-20	6-8
Pumpkin	6-10	2-3
Squash (summer & winter)	6-10	2-3
Tomato	6-14	5-6
Watermelon	4-14	3-5

Greetings from the Demo Garden

We had such a great 2014 in the Demo Garden. Our hard work and dedication paid off with great dividends ... we celebrated the UCCE Centennial in May, the graduation of the Class of 2014 in June, Fall Fest in October and now we are laying the groundwork for a year of classes. To say the least, it is so exciting.

Our next Training Class will be held on Saturday, January 17. MG Peter Quintanilla will be teaching us how to espalier fruit trees. The class will run from 10 am to 1 pm.

February 7th from 12 to 2 pm, MG Art Nathan will be teaching a class on pruning grapes, wisteria and climbing roses.

There will be more training classes as the year unfolds; we'll keep you posted.

The Garden is waiting for you,
Julie Lorenzen, MG 2014

Tina Heitzman, UC Master Gardener Program Representative

Steve Tjosvold, UCCE Farm Advisor

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