

# GARDENING ON THE EDGE

## Newsletter of the Monterey Bay Master Gardeners

Number 122

February/March 2007

### Getting Your Amaryllis to Bloom Again

Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

This is the time of year when nurseries and garden stores offer Amaryllis bulbs to plant in containers indoors. Placed in a nice container with soil and water they start to grow and with a little luck you have gorgeous blooms to enjoy in the gloomy winter months. This year we have had less gloom and more chilly bright winter days so far. But the blossoms love the bright light, so that works. Putting them in direct sun shortens the life of the flowers. Since I was the lucky recipient of an Amaryllis this year, I looked into what I should do after it blooms and thought I would share the results of my research with you. You will find some of the websites I visited at the end of this article. The current issue of *Fine Gardening* has an article on this same subject.



Photo by Kathleen Sonntag

Amaryllis are bulbs of the genus *Hippeastrum* that are native to tropical and subtropical regions. Their extravagantly beautiful flowers top smooth, hollow stalks with few or no leaves. Many species have been hybridized to produce today's hybrids, and most of these species experience warm, humid conditions with abundant rainfall for most of the year and a short, cooler dry season. To make your amaryllis bloom again, you simply have to mimic the conditions that nature provides.<sup>1</sup>

While it is blooming, water the Amaryllis only when dry and keep it in a cool but bright spot. This will prolong the life of the flowers. Once the flowers wilt, cut them from the top of the stalk. Now it is time to start neglecting the plant. Keep it in a south-facing window, but stop watering. Leave the stalk until it withers and droops, then cut it off right at the top of the bulb. Unlike daffodils, tulips and other bulbs that can be

forced indoors, Amaryllis are tropical plants and do not need a period of cold. They need to rest for two to three months in a warm, dry spot.

Waking up your dormant Amaryllis bulb is a simple process. First, apply water to start it growing. Now you want to keep an eye on it to water when it is dry and watch for new growth to emerge. When it starts to grow, move it to a sunny location. This will encourage both leaves and a stalk to grow. If it gets too little light, there will be a stalk,

but no leaves. That is what happened to mine – the stalk is 18 inches tall, but there are no leaves- but, hey, it bloomed again! You can apply a diluted liquid fertilizer or timed-release fertilizer at this point if you want to. Once the growth has started, move the plant to a sunny window. Water only when the soil is dry. Wait for it to bloom and move it out of the sun to a bright spot so the flowers will last.

If your Amaryllis bulb is a couple of years old, consider repotting before you start watering after the rest period. There may be little side bulbs that you can remove and plant separately. These will probably need a couple of years to grow before they bloom. Choose a pot one to two inches wider than the bulb and leave one-third above the surface of the soil. 🌱

<sup>1</sup> The United States National Arboretum. "How to Make Your Amaryllis Bloom Again." <http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/AmaryllisBloom.html>.

More Info:

The Garden Helper. "How to Grow An Amaryllis... It's not just a Christmas flower." <http://www.thegardenhelper.com/amaryllis.html>.

North Carolina State University. "Home Forcing of Potted Amaryllis." <http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8529.html>.

Taunton's Fine Gardening. "An Amaryllis Encore."

[http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/fg\\_113\\_053.asp](http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/fg_113_053.asp).

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## What's Blooming in Your Garden? Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

After many hours of work compiling contributions from MBMGs and doing research, the results of the Epoll will be available on the MBMG website. The plan is to develop a database of blooming plants for each month of the year for the Monterey Bay Area.

Annette Longuevan has been working on a monthly Epoll asking our MBMG membership "What's blooming in your garden right now." Thirty-nine different MBMGs contributed and over 270 plants from 18 different cities/areas in the Monterey Bay Area are listed. Annette created an Excel worksheet with the results of last year's Epoll. This will be posted on the MBMG website ([smartgardening.org](http://smartgardening.org)).

Annette says she did not list the specific location of the gardens. "The location of the gardens in the Monterey Bay area did not seem to make much of a difference in the blooming time, at least not a measurable-by-month difference. Micro-climates within one garden could probably make as much of a difference."

As Annette became involved in this exciting and ambitious project, she noticed that the internet searches she tried for blooming times brought up mostly retail sites, especially florists or nurseries, selling flowers or plants by season. She found calendars on some botanical garden sites, but then the blooming time was only for limited inventories. "For example, the San Francisco Botanical Gardens contain over 7500 plants, but they are not listed as to bloom time."

Once it is posted, you will have access to information about bloom time for plants that are grown in our geographical area to compare with your own gardening experiences and you will be able to submit your new additions to Annette without duplicating what has already been entered. Working together, we should be able to add to the database and develop a useful resource of garden information.

Annette used the USDA plant database <http://plants.usda.gov/> as a resource for compiling the information for the Bloomin' worksheet.

Annette says "I am excited about this Bloomin' Plants database for the Monterey Bay Area Gardener. It was fun putting it together; it will be fun incorporating all of your additions and utilizing your suggestions for improvement; and more than fun, I hope it will be useful for all of us."

Your comments, suggestions, additions, or corrections for the database can be emailed to [BloomingEpoll@gmail.com](mailto:BloomingEpoll@gmail.com) or feel free to give Annette a call at the number listed on our phone list. ☞



*Grape Hyacinth, Muscari macrocarpum 'Golden Fragrance' in Annette's winter garden. Photo by Christina Kriedt.*

## Happy 2007 From Your Newsletter Staff!

The New Year brings many changes to your *Gardening on the Edge* newsletter. First of all, we are now totally digital! The December-January online edition at [www.smartgardening.org](http://www.smartgardening.org) was beautiful indeed. Christina is a real pro! A few MBMGs requested hard copy editions. Anyone who wishes can print the online edition in black & white or color!

Secondly, we welcome Kathleen Sonntag, MG06 as our new editor, replacing Joan McLeod Mertz, MG99. Kathleen is excited about the opportunity to carry *Gardening on the Edge* forward in the digital age with the dedicated support of assistant editors Sharon Ettinger, MG00 and Christina Kriedt, MG06. The members of the newsletter staff and contributing writers continue to send in their work to keep us informed. Kathleen has some ideas for two new regular columns: What's Your Passion? will spotlight one or two existing volunteer opportunities in each newsletter. You will

be hearing more about this – your suggestions for projects to include are welcome. Tales from the Hotline will have stories and information about volunteer experiences answering hotline calls and email. We are grateful to Joan who served as newsletter editor for the past two and a half years. Joan has been responsible for keeping our newsletter continuing into our second decade and helping us move to our digital future, something we'd talked about doing for the past five years. Thanks, Joan, for your dedicated service to our group.

And finally, we commend Crystal Bertheau, MG01 who is winding up newsletter Circulation responsibilities. Crystal has served on the newsletter committee for the past five years, faithfully mailing out your newsletters each and every month. Jan Olafsson, MG01 has graciously volunteered to take over her duties for those master gardeners who still would like to receive the newsletter by mail. ☞

# January Freeze Damage in the Landscape

Steve Tjosvold, Environmental Horticulture Farm Advisor

Some freeze-sensitive landscape plants were hit hard in the recent prolonged freeze. But how do you tell how much of the plant is damaged and how do you manage these plants?

The extent of plant damage may not be completely apparent until this spring when growth resumes. That's why you should wait to prune out dead portions until you can more clearly discern active growing points (and their origins) from that of dead plant tissue. From your training class, "Basic Botany", you may remember the emphasis on plant "meristems". Plant meristems have the ability to initiate actively growing shoot growth. For example, adventitious buds (a type of meristem) resting in tissue of lower, thick stems might begin to grow in spring as a result of the shoots freezing in the upper, thinner portions. Frozen annual plants have a much poorer chance of recovering than perennials because they don't have significant carbohydrate reserves or adventitious buds to regenerate. If plants recover this spring, it will be because of surviving plant meristems.

I have read a garden column from one major newspaper where the writer recommends irrigating plants. The rationale implies that freeze damaged plants would benefit from irrigation because "plants that have been watered are less stressed". I would not recommend irrigating just because

plants have freeze damage. I would recommend irrigating, especially in the winter, only if the plants absolutely need it. That means that (1) the soil is really dry (such as in a container), (2) there is sunny weather that creates transpiration demand (yes, transpiration is another Basic Botany term), and (3) there is no wet weather predicted in the near term forecast. I'm emphasizing caution in irrigating now for several reasons. The *Phytophthora* root pathogens are promoted by wet soil conditions, and they can be infecting roots in winter and significantly develop later when temperatures warm. The more intervals of soil drying the better the chance the roots can fend off these root infections. In addition, when soil dries in the winter this gives roots a "breather". That is, oxygen diffuses into the open soil pores (pores that are not filled with water) and roots can respire (respiration is another Basic Botany term!) more efficiently. Finally, perennial plants can tolerate drying conditions when there is limited transpirational demand as usually occurs in the winter. One caveat is that this January appears to be going on record as one of the driest in recent history (1976) for the North Bay Area and I suspect the local records may fall too. If it does not start to rain again soon, irrigation might be something to do, but because plants need it, not because of freeze damage. ☞

*This is a snapshot of the first of 270 entries in The Bloomin' Plants Database. It will continue to grow with ongoing input from all of us. What other information would you like to have at your fingertips?*

Scientific Name	Common name	Family	A/P/B	Bloom Time												Form/growth habit		
				J	F	M	A	M	J	Jy	A	S	O	N	D			
<i>Abelia grandiflora</i>	glossy abelia	Caprifoliaceae	P	X		X										X		shrub
<i>Abutilon</i> species	Indian mallow	Malvaceae	P	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	shrub
<i>Acer japonica</i>	Japanese maple	Aceraceae	P	X														deciduous tree
<i>Achillea</i> species	yarrow	Asteraceae	P	X													X	herbaceous
<i>Aechmea</i> sp & hybrids	livingstone bromeliad	Bromeliaceae	P		X	X	X	X	X	X								tender perennial
<i>Aesculus hippocastanum</i>	horse-chestnut	Sapindaceae	P						X									deciduous tree
<i>Agapanthus</i> hybrids	lily of the Nile	Agapanthaceae	P	X		X			X	X	X							herbaceous perennial
<i>Agastache foeniculum</i>	anise hyssop, licorice mint	Labiatae	P						X	X								herbaceous perennial
<i>Alcea rosea</i>	hollyhock	Malvaceae	B								X							herbaceous perennial
<i>Aloe vera</i>	Barbados aloe	Asphodelaceae	P					X										succulent perennial
<i>Alstroemeria</i> hybrids	Peruvian lily	Alstroemeriaceae	P	X			X	X	X	X			X					much-branched shrub
<i>Alyogyne huegelii</i>	Blue hibiscus, lilac hibiscus	Malvaceae	P													X		shrub
<i>Amaranthus cruentus</i>	Polish amaranth, red amaranth	Amaranthaceae	A														X	herbaceous

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# Confessions of a Reluctant Gardener:

If You Can't Beat 'Em, Eat 'Em Christina Kriedt, MG06

I consider myself a gentle person, tolerant of virtually all critters, human and otherwise. I have peace, humility, and compassion in my heart –

– except when it comes to *Helix aspersa*, the common European brown garden snail. I have zero tolerance for that voracious mangler of favorite plants; cannibalistic, hermaphroditic layer of clusters of deceptively beautiful pearl-eggs; ubiquitous vermin of my gardens of past.

I lived on E. 16th Street in Oakland for 18 years until the summer of 1989. There in my backyard I cultivated my budding interest in gardening with the help of my old (I mean really old) neighbor and inspired mentor, Nick Jurgens. He could coax cooperation out of any plant, and was, as I recall, very patient with my attempts to understand his gentle but barely intelligible Polish-English advice. I don't recollect any conversations about the local snail population, or maybe I just didn't understand him, but I never witnessed him killing even one of them. I, on the other hand, spent my spare time devising new and more devious ways of snail-icide. Metaldehyde was out of the question, as I had many children and pets, and the iron phosphate option didn't exist in it's current form in my world. So I tried beer-drownings, brick-bashings (colorful with tomato hornworm innards), street-slings (I swear they produce a little *screeeeeeeam* as they fly spinning through the air), sole-squishings, and duck-feedings. My husband "fondly" recalls regularly wondering where the promised cup of coffee was, and, after a search, finding me outside in my robe on an early morning expedition, coffee mug in one hand, stack of slow-motion snails in the other. My neighbors probably got used to it over time. Nick just sat in his second-story window and smiled a little. I'm sure my efforts had high amusement value.

Then one morning I had an epiphany. I would attempt the ultimate snail-depopulator – *escargot*, as in: Eat Them. We invited family and friends over for Fathers' Day. Our guests (and my courageous husband and children) were skeptical (or shocked) to say the least, but civilly agreed to come for lunch. I promised back-up food for the terminally squeamish. I did all the things: "Get big fat ones and keep them in a dark box on a bed of cornmeal for several days and then wash them...." I sautéed them in their shells with crimini mushrooms, garlic, and a tad of drawn butter. I think they *squeeealed* a little.

Wonder of wonders, I had discovered a great new way to eliminate snails from my garden and add protein to our diet all at the same time! It kind of made murdering them more palatable. They taste deliciously beef-y. And they're nutritious: there are 300 calories per *pound* of meat (*one* East African *Achatina fulica*, Giant African Land Snail, can weigh



Imagine finding *THIS* in your lemon tree!

up to a pound). Snail meat has .5% to .8% fat, 1.5% minerals, 84% water and about 12% to 16% protein; 9 of the 10 amino acids needed by humans are in snail protein ([http://www.totse.com/en/technology/science\\_technology/snails.htm](http://www.totse.com/en/technology/science_technology/snails.htm)). And they're free. Maybe the Frenchman who brought *Helix aspersa* to America in the 1850s to fill his pockets with gold while trying to elevate the diets of ultimately uninterested gold rush-ers didn't do us such a disservice after all. (I understand that the hungry French will buy quantities of *H. aspersa*. Start a snail business: [http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC\\_pubs/srb96-05.htm](http://www.nal.usda.gov/afsic/AFSIC_pubs/srb96-05.htm).)

Nick died years ago. I often think about him and his enchanting intelligence. He said there are ten medicinal plants that should be in every garden – I can't remember one. And now, wouldn't you know, my garden in Santa Cruz has so few snails that you couldn't fill a handmade sprouted-wheat tortilla with them. Haven't seen any delicate fairy snail eggs at all. There are a handful of pitiful little slugs and the occasional bright yellow banana slug, but somehow they don't have the same gastronomic appeal. I swear I'm happy about my current mollusk situation, but I really wouldn't mind cooking up a few of those mucous-y marauders again sometime.

To further tempt you, here are some recipes for "cleaning" and cooking snails:

<http://escargot.free.fr/eng/cooking.htm>

<http://www.hertzmamm.com/articles/2004/snails/>

Afterthought: please don't bring me boxes of snails from your garden. Or from anyone else's garden. Thanks ever so. 🐌

Photo from Wildlife Action Group, MALAWI - AFRICA  
<http://www.wag-malawi.org>

# Smart Gardening Faire: Getting Started

Thomas Karwin, MG99 & Sheryl McEwan, MG03

We're at it again! The MBMG Board has approved the Smart Gardening Faire for 2007 and allocated startup funding, so we're on our way to establishing the Faire as an annual event.

Local garden-related organizations and businesses and the gardening public responded very positively to the 2006 Faire, as we reported in the October/November 2006 issue of *Gardening on the Edge*. Several garden groups have given us enthusiastic feedback and said they are ready to join in a future Faire.

With all that in mind, Smart Gardening Faire 2007 is scheduled for Saturday, June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the first Saturday of summer. Mark your calendar!

Last year, we learned that an early start on preparations would spread the workload and open new opportunities for sponsorships, so we made an effort to get into gear well before the holidays.

We have identified the earliest priority tasks, completed some before the end of the year, and scheduled others for



early in 2007. There's a lot to do! We welcome the participation of Master Gardeners on the Faire Planning Committee. If you would like to join in the fun of putting on this "good vibes" event, please contact me at [tom@karwin.com](mailto:tom@karwin.com). We've organized the project so that each job can be done with only a modest commitment of time and effort (but your creativity is always welcome). The early volunteers will have first choice from our list of key assignments!

Here's a rundown of completed tasks:

- Reserved Skypark in Scotts Valley for the site of the Faire
- Initiated discussions with Alexis Rentals for tents, tables and chairs for booths for participating exhibitors.
- This year, we are very pleased to announce that the Parade of Ponds will construct an aboveground pond at the Faire as the first stop on its tour of ponds in local landscapes. Last year the two events were in conflict – this year we will promote each other's event.

Other early tasks involve planning for publicity, contacting possible sponsors and non-profit groups with an involvement in sustainable gardening and landscaping. ☞

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## Roses in Containers Paul McCollum, MG04

I'm excited because it is almost time for my roses to start putting out new growth and shortly thereafter – flowers! If you have roses or want to start growing roses you might want to consider planting some of them in containers. Container-grown roses have a number of advantages such as placement, mobility, size control, nutrient control as well as the enjoyment of having more plants around your outdoor living areas. In this short, and by no means complete, article we will look at container size, growing medium, fertilizer, water, and a few plant recommendations.



### Containers

Depending on the rose, the size of container or pot can range from 3 gallons (for micro-minis) all the way up to large tubs. However, generally 5 and 10 gallon pots (minimum 16" diameter) will work for most roses suitable for containers. The most common pots these days are the black plastic ones. They work well but being black they absorb heat. These should be placed or grouped so the pots are shaded or the plant roots might cook in the hot soil. Half barrels work well as well as terra cotta and concrete containers. One consideration for larger (15 + gallon) pots is to put them on wheels so they can be moved around more easily. No matter what type of container is used, it should have drainage from the bottom. Holes are easily poked or drilled in plastic and masonry bits can be used for ceramic or concrete materials.



### Growing Medium

This is an area in which personal preference reigns. Some growers insist on a sterile soil less potting medium, with up to 50% Perlite added to lighten the mix and provide faster drainage. Others make up a mixture of, for example, 30% screened compost plus 30% Perlite plus 40% topsoil. To help root development, super phosphate is added to the mix (about 1/4 cup for large pots, 1 tablespoon for smaller pots). Many of us have our favorite soil mix, but if you don't, just go to one of the gardening centers and buy their potting soil. For potted roses it is also beneficial to add a 1" or 2" layer of compost on top of the soil – this will help retain water and supply nutrients to the plant as it continues to decompose. No matter what soil is used it should be changed every year for small (3-5 gallon) pots and at least every 3 years for larger containers.



### Fertilizer

This is also a subjective area, but for roses alfalfa tea, fish emulsion, alfalfa meal, worm castings, or a teaspoon of Epsom salts seem to work well. A little amount of any of the above can be applied every two to four weeks during the growing season. If you grow repeat bloom roses, then also fertilize after you deadhead. I believe in the benefits of compost tea made with worm castings and good quality compost so I use it every month or two during the growing season. To me, it helps keep my roses remain disease free and looking healthy as well as producing outstanding blooms. For those who use non organic fertilizer, there are a number

of commercial products available – just keep in mind to follow the directions on the bag or package and as a general rule use a little less for your potted roses.



#### Water

Water and frequency of watering should be carefully monitored with potted roses because most containers will lose water faster than those planted in the garden. The primary consideration for growing roses in containers is the amount of water they need. To determine if your roses are receiving enough water, stick your finger in the soil once a day and see if the soil is dry 1/2" to 1" below the surface. If the soil is dry then it is time to water. Where I live in Aromas that means watering every two days or so. If the temperatures go to 85-90 degrees watering may be required every day. Even during relatively warm 20-40 degree winters, I water once or twice a week unless we have rain.



#### Rose Plants for Containers

One of the sites that I will reference has listed over 70 roses that they recommend for containers. My experience has been that many of the mini roses do well in smaller containers because of their mature size but some of the Austin roses grow too large here in Aromas unless I plant them in a very large pot and then they would be next to impossible for me to move without help. No matter which plant you choose, do some research and ask a rose person. Come to one of the Monterey Bay Rose Society meetings and ask one of our very knowledgeable rosarians. (See <http://www.montereybayrose.society.org/> for details.) Plan an

outing to the San Jose Heritage Rose Garden (<http://www.heritageroses.us/>) in the spring and make note of the roses you like and are of the right size for your needs. You are also invited to arrange a visit to my garden and see my selection – a number of them would do well in containers. ☞



Sites and nurseries to research and visit:

<http://www.ars.org>

<http://www.ashdownroses.com>

<http://www.vintagegardens.com/index.html>

Bokay Nursery in Salinas

Sierra Azul Nursery in Watsonville

FezQ in Carmel Valley

Hidden Gardens in Aptos

San Lorenzo Lumber in Santa Cruz

The Potting Shed in Aptos

The Garden Company in Santa Cruz

Aladdin Nursery in Watsonville



A sampling of rose plants for containers (catalog photos):

Old Blush -1789

Sophy's Rose - 1997

The Dark Lady -1991

Francis Dubreuil - 1894

The Prince - 1990

Molineux - 1994

Ducher - 1869


Cramosi Superieur - 1832

## Al's Corner: Building the Primrose Path Al Derrick, MG95

Over the years I have made several garden paths and have always struggled when a tight corner was required. When I was asked to landscape a tiny garden for an historic cottage belonging to the local museum, tight corners were absolutely necessary for paths in the limited space. Fortunately, new material for “bender boards” is now available, made by more than one company. The first I tried was made of a plastic composite that was strong – too strong; it would not bend any shorter corners than traditional redwood, although it was impervious to soil moisture. The next brand from a different source was a red color and a little thinner but remarkably flexible and I was assured the color would soon fade. Both brands were about the same price, a dollar per foot for the four-inch high size. Bending the plastic material was much easier, maintaining a constant curve better than was possible with the redwood which varied in flexibility.

When the cottage was landscaped in its present location 25 years ago, no paths were included and garden maintenance has always been a problem. Since all the landscaping had to be removed due to its overgrown condition, I insisted on paths before replanting, to facilitate maintenance. A “square” path would not improve a square cottage surrounded by a square iron fence. Whenever I could make a curve and avoid a straight run in the path I did so. The shortest bend is seen in the photo (below) of the back gate where a sharp turn to the left is required to avoid a tree. It was necessary to keep the path at the same level as the city sidewalk, which required hauling away about a cubic yard of soil.

The 12 inch plastic stakes were easy to drive into the ground and were fastened to the bender board by deck screws. Each stake cost \$.67 and was well worth it over using wooden ones which soon rot away in the soil. This

cottage is attached to the museum and is entered from the museum. The gates to the garden are kept locked so there is no foot traffic but mine on the paths. About 3 inches of soil was removed from the path area, then the bender board was staked in place. Landscape fabric was pinned to the ground on the path surface to prevent the decomposed granite (DG) surface material from mixing with the garden soil. As the garden was recently dug up to remove the old plant material, there will be some settling of the path which will require the surface to be leveled with additional DG over the next month or two. Total material cost for 100 feet of path was \$400. As plant material is added, the edges of the path will soften and be less noticeable. 



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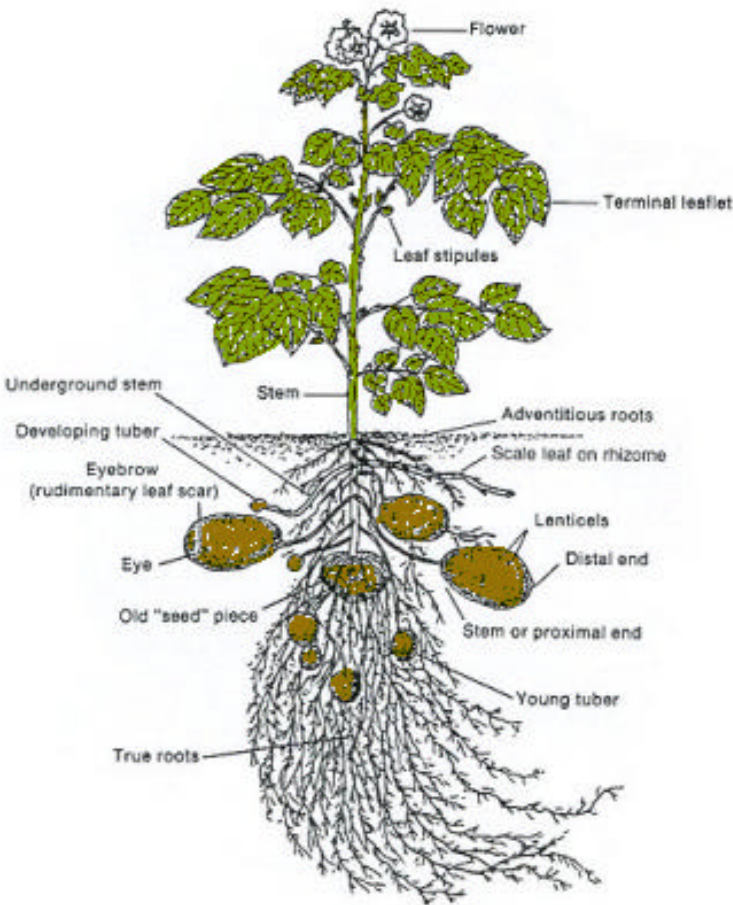
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## Potatoes: Preparation and Planting CASFS, UCSC

On the Central Coast, March is an ideal time to plant potatoes—except when there's been a lot of late rain. Potatoes do poorly in soggy soil, and can be subject to disease problems such as rot or blight. It's better to prepare and plant beds after the wettest period has passed in order to avoid potential setbacks and establish vigorous growth.

Loose, well-drained soil high in organic matter is ideal for potatoes. Potatoes also thrive on large quantities of both nitrogen and potassium, and love acid conditions—a pH between 6.0 and 6.8 is ideal. Double digging (or at least deep



cultivation) will help create optimal growing conditions, especially if the seeds are going into heavy, clay-rich soil. Beds should first be cleared of weeds by scraping with a sharp spade. Loosen the first foot or so of soil with a fork, then top-dress the beds with an inch or so of aged horse manure or finished compost. When worked into the soil, these amendments will add organic matter and nutrients to your potato beds.

To form the planting rows, dig trenches approximately 10" wide and 6"-10" deep, spaced about 2 feet apart. Pile the soil to the sides of the trench—it will be used later to "hill up" the plants. Two rows placed within a four- to five-foot wide bed is ideal. You can add a little extra aged manure or compost to the bottom of the trench to ensure adequate fertility.

### Recommended Varieties and Sources

Orin Martin, who has managed the Alan Chadwick Garden at UC Santa Cruz for more than 15 years, has found that the following varieties perform well in the Central Coast region:

*Yellow Finn* - The hands-down best for taste. This slow-to-mature (100-120 days) and less-than-beautiful spud is the only potato that tastes pre-battered. A moderate yielder and excellent keeper. Light yellow flesh.

*Red Norland* - This adaptable red-skinned potato yields well (2-4 lbs./plant) and can be ready as early as 70 days after planting. Earlier plantings may produce slightly lower yields.

*Yukon Gold* - A slight notch below the Yellow Finn in taste, Yukon Gold outyields the Finn (3+ lbs./plant) and matures earlier (90-100 days). Spuds tend to become oversized, reaching 8-16 oz. each if left in the ground too long. Offset this by spacing seed close together (9"-10" between) and harvesting early.

*Bintje* - This is the yellow wax spud of choice. Bintjes are good keepers and grow well under a wide variety of conditions. This high yielder has produced up to 5-6 lbs./plant at the UCSC Farm & Garden.

*Red LaSoda* - The classic blush-red potato with a pure white interior. A tried and true performer in our area, yielding well year in and year out. Disease resistant, maturing early- to mid-season.

*Rose Finn/Ruby Crescent* - These fingerlings are very similar to one another, maturing in 100-120 days. Fingerlings produce lots of tubers per plant, although the overall yield in pounds is fairly low (around 2 lbs.). Both varieties have rose-colored skin with yellow flesh.

*Russian Banana* - An early, high-yielding fingerling variety. Yellow skin and flesh, firm-textured and disease resistant.

All of the varieties mentioned can be ordered from Ronniger's Seed Potatoes, a reliable mail-order company. You can write for a catalogue to:

Ronniger's Seed Potatoes  
Star Route, Moyie Springs, ID 83845

Another mail order source with a good varietal selection:  
Peaceful Valley Farm Supply  
PO Box 2209, Grass Valley, CA 95945  
(916) 272-4769

This material was prepared by the staff of the Center for Agroecology and Sustainable Food Systems at UCSC and is based on a paper written by Dave Hollingsworth. Full version:

<http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/casfs/publications/gardenideas/potatoes.html> ☞

*Did you know that the Indians in Peru were the first people to cultivate the potato over 4000 years ago?*

## Tales from the Hotline Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

Our major mission is to support UCCE by manning the hotline. Three mornings a week one of us needs to be there. Martye said that there were only three days last year that it went unstaffed. A few dedicated MGs made that possible by being on call. Last year the new class had a 3-shift obligation so the calendar was filled by those folks too. Thanks to all for stepping up – most of us are glad we did.

Sometimes there is little activity. When someone does contact us, the MG invariably learns something along with the caller. Of course, we must take questions seriously and either offer our knowledge or offer to find the requested information. “I don’t know but I will find out and let you know” is an appropriate answer if one is stumped.

Then there are the especially memorable encounters.

Today’s tale is from Debra Van Bruggen, MG06.

### Termites bugging you?

It was September, 2006. A specimen had been left the previous day at the UCCE office. When she got in for her shift, Debra called the “customer” to let her know that the specimen, a 1/2” pile that she found on a window sill, was termite frass (poop, pardon the expression). The customer wanted to know if it was from subterranean or dry wood

termites – her tone was not pleasant. A quick inspection of the frass under the microscope determined that it was from subterranean termites. Next question: “How badly infested is my house?”

When told that she would have to contact a professional for a full evaluation, the woman really lost her temper. *Since we are a state run university program supported by her tax dollars, we should have the most current and sophisticated equipment and we should be able to determine the amount of damage the termites were doing to her home.* Again she was told she needs to have a professional exterminator examine her house. The encounter ended when she asked to speak to the “manager” and Debra let her know that she would pass the specimen and her request on to him (Steve) and that he would get back to her.

Debra says this was her only difficult experience on the hotline. As a rule our callers are pleasant and grateful for any assistance we can give them. The hotline shift is time well spent – you may even be surprised at how much you know, especially the ’06 grads.

Got a story to share? Knowledge you gained from a hotline encounter? Next time I can tell you about the Motorcycle Rider from Aromas. Email [ksonntag@yahoo.com](mailto:ksonntag@yahoo.com). ☞

## Board Meeting Report Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

The Board meeting was held on Jan 12 at the UCCE Conference Room in Watsonville. President Martye Lumpkin led the discussion of agenda items.

- Certification Volunteer and Advanced training hours
- Participation in MBMG Projects – reports will detail level by project
- Possible new project supporting school gardens
- Youth Garden issues
- Committee reports- Garden Tour, Smart Gardening Faire

Minutes of the meetings are posted on our website ([www.smartgardening.org](http://www.smartgardening.org)) after all board members review them. The next Board meeting will be on March 24 at 9 a.m. at the UCCE conference room in Watsonville. ☞

## Etcetera: Relevant Internet Miscellany Christina Kriedt, MG06

Amaryllises like to be slightly root bound. When potting, add enough soil so that 1/2 to 2/3 of the bulb neck is above the soil surface. Leave 1/2 -1” of space between the soil surface and the rim of the pot to facilitate watering. A thorough watering is essential immediately after potting. Keep the soil slightly moist until flowering. When flowering starts, increase watering to prolong. ☞

When planting your potato sets, put some wilted comfrey leaves or pine needles in with them to prevent scab. ☞

Scientists discovered the effects of caffeine on mollusks by accident while using it to control a different pest of potted plants. They found that a 2% solution of caffeine sprayed onto the coconut husk-chip material -- called coir -- on which orchids were being grown, killed nearly 95 percent of snails infesting them. ☞



Cauliflower Rice Recipe:

- 1) Process, shred, or hand-chop fresh, washed cauliflower until it is the size of rice.
  - 2) Microwave in a covered dish. *Do not add water*; cauliflower absorbs water like crazy, and it could become gummy. To keep it fluffy, just let the moisture in the cauliflower do its work. Mix with your favorite cooked or raw veggies.
- OR--2) Sauté your favorite veggies in olive oil till tender; add a little more oil, some seasoning, the uncooked cauliflower 'rice' and continue to cook until the cauliflower is tender. Low in calories, high in fiber! Yum! ☞

According to Orin Martin, heavy January pruning of roses is followed by "finger-pruning" in February and March to control new growth and shape the plant. The more you prune, the more flowers you get. Winter pruning should be followed with a liberal 2” layer of organic compost, topped by 1” of mulch. Also: provide good drainage, regular watering, and tidy surroundings. ☞

## December Quarterly Meeting Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

The quarterly meeting was held on Dec. 2 at the UCCE Conference Room in Watsonville. Alicia Molina, Tammy Tahara and Gina Strup put together a wonderful presentation and cooking demonstration. It is easy to see why Alicia is so passionate about school gardens. When children know where food comes from and grow it themselves, they will eat that food and change their eating habits.

The morning started with a presentation by Mike Pippi about the Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Principles (HELP) program. ([www.helpunited.org](http://www.helpunited.org)) This program is not just for school children. They reach out to agriculture workers and Healthcare groups. They have a National Pilot Program to produce Serve Smart Vending Machines that offer healthy snacks. These would be placed in schools, community centers, etc. There is an outreach program for Head Start families along with the programs for the children in Head Start classes. The core message, Mike says, is for people to understand they have the personal power to make good food choices.

Martye conducted the business meeting which included discussions about the Statewide Master Gardener Conference held in October, the difficulty working MGs have in meeting requirements to monitor the Hotline at the UCCE facility, the next Garden Tour, and the need for each MG to find his or her passion and get involved in a project.

Alicia brought lots of free samples – pistachio nuts and broccoli slaw. The cooking demonstration samples which supplemented our pot luck dishes were delicious. Fresh produce and quinoa were the stars. Nice work ladies!

*Alicia adds: If any MGs are interested in joining the development team researching ways to collaborate with HELP and our local schools on a consulting project, please contact Alicia Molina at 763-0201 or [nmnalicia@sbcglobal.net](mailto:nmnalicia@sbcglobal.net).*

Photos by Alicia Molina



*Gina Strup, MG04 demonstrating how to cook healthy whole food meals. Posters in the background feature the Anzar School Garden.*



*Left to right, Tammy Tahara, MG06, Martye Lumpkin, MG President, Mike Pippi, President, Healthy Eating and Lifestyle Principles (HELP), and Alicia Molina, MG04*



*Bonnie Gillooly, MG06, Diane Norrby, MG06, and Diana Huang, MG04 enjoying a moment together at the meeting.*



*Mike Pippi, HELP, guest lecturer discussing their school garden projects. Poster in background featuring Anzar School Garden.*



*Tammy Tahara, MG06 cooking a HELP recipe, "Cauliflower Rice." It was yummy!*



*Cheri Callis, MG04 sampling the cauliflower rice.*

## Training, Volunteering and Events Kathleen Sonntag, MG06

### UCSC Arboretum

Sunday, March 4, 1:30 pm

#### Gardening With Succulents

Patrick Anderson of San Diego, whose gardens have been featured in Sunset Magazine, will give an illustrated talk on designing gardens around succulent plants.

\$15 general public, \$10 for Arboretum Members

<http://www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum/calendar.html>

### Workshops

**Monterey Bay Certified Farmer's Market (MBCFM)** at Cabrillo College, Aptos, "Can You Dig It" Gardening Workshop Series

<http://www.montereybayfarmers.org/news.html>

Judith Taylor, UCCE Certified Master Gardener will present a hands-on workshop on gardening tool care and maintenance. Under her expert guidance, you will learn how to disassemble your hand tools (if applicable), sharpen, oil, and ensure that they are ready for a new gardening season. Every gardener knows how expensive it is to replace good hand tools. Judith will show you how to care for your gardening tools after each use and how to perform that major, once-a-year maintenance. So bring your hand pruners, tree loppers and shovels with you for an educational experience not to be missed.

Also planned: Basics of Landscape Design, Heirloom Seed Saving, Organic Pest Control, Propagation for the Home Gardener, Garden Art

#### Free Hands-on Wormshop

Sunday February 18, 2007, 1:00 PM

[http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org/Workshop\\_Classes/index.php](http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org/Workshop_Classes/index.php)

Set Up Your Own Worm Bin! Free workshops on composting with worms are scheduled throughout the year. Participants can purchase a worm bin and worms for \$20 or worms only for \$10. Call the Worm Doctor 831-427-3452 to reserve materials.

### Events

#### UCSC Arboretum -- Hummingbird Day

Saturday, March 10, 10 am to 4 pm

Come to the Arboretum's annual celebration of the Hummingbirds that feed, mate, and nest in our gardens. Experts in both bird and plant life will be on hand to give lectures and tours. Plenty to do for children and adults alike. FREE!

<http://www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum/calendar.html>

#### San Francisco Flower and Garden Show

March 21-25 at the Cow Palace [www.gardenshow.com](http://www.gardenshow.com)

**Filoli Opening Event 2007 – Camillia Treasures, Trees to Teas**  
February 27 through March 3

Filoli's opening event will be a week long event that will include garden demonstrations, Camellia tours and displays all celebrating the beauty and splendor of the winter and spring garden. The event will be FREE with paid admission to Filoli. There may be a minimal cost for some of the talks. <http://www.filoli.org/calendar.html#opening>

#### Beach Garden Project

Details: 623-9048


February 3; 10 a.m. – noon; Marina State Beach, Reservation Road

February 10; 10 a.m. – noon; Fort Ord Dunes State Park, 8<sup>th</sup> street overpass

February 17, 24; 10 a.m. – noon; Marina Dunes Preserve

#### Annual Cutting Day, Friendly Plaza, Monterey

March 17<sup>th</sup>

Plant a little bit of Monterey in your own garden. Gardening buffs are invited to exchange softwood cutting materials, seedling plants, bulbs, potted plants, etc. The Parks Division will have free seedling trees available. Participants are encouraged to bring cuttings and plants for the exchange. 831-646-3860 



## GARDENING ON THE EDGE

Newsletter of the Monterey Bay Master Gardeners

For 6 issues, send \$15 to:

#### Master Gardeners Newsletter

1432 Freedom Blvd.

Watsonville, CA 95076

<http://www.smartgardening.org>

Ad rates: \$25 bi-monthly

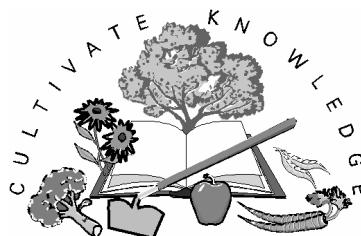
from gardening-oriented businesses

Address change: contact Robin Sanders  
at 726-1942 or [robinsanders@redshift.com](mailto:robinsanders@redshift.com)

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## Sources Christina Kriedt, MG06

### Our Sponsors--

Sierra Azul Nursery	<a href="http://www.sierraazul.com">http://www.sierraazul.com</a> , 763-0939
San Lorenzo Lumber Company	<a href="http://www.sanlorenzolumber.com/santacruz.html">http://www.sanlorenzolumber.com/santacruz.html</a> , 423-0223
The Garden Company	<a href="http://www.thegardenco.com/">http://www.thegardenco.com/</a> , 429-8424
FezQ	Carmel Valley, 659-1268
Bokay	Salinas, 455-1868
Hidden Gardens	Aptos, 688-7011
The Potting Shed	Aptos, 685-1626

### Getting Your Amaryllis to Bloom Again

The United States National Arboretum. "How to Make Your Amaryllis Bloom Again."

<http://www.usna.usda.gov/Gardens/faqs/AmaryllisBloom.html>

The Garden Helper. "How to Grow An Amaryllis... It's not just a Christmas flower."

<http://www.thegardenhelper.com/amaryllis.html>

North Carolina State University. "Home Forcing of Potted Amaryllis."

<http://www.ces.ncsu.edu/depts/hort/hil/hil-8529.html>

Taunton's Fine Gardening. "An Amaryllis Encore."

[http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/fg\\_113\\_053.asp](http://www.taunton.com/finegardening/pages/fg_113_053.asp)

### If You Can't Beat 'Em, Eat 'Em

Escargot Passion

<http://escargot.free.fr/eng/cooking.htm>

Escargots

<http://www.hertzmamm.com/articles/2004/snails/>

Wildlife Action Group, MALAWI - AFRICA

<http://www.wag-malawi.orghttp://www.ars.org>

### Roses in Containers

Ashdown Roses

<http://www.ashdownroses.com>

Vintage Gardens

<http://www.vintagegardens.com/index.html>

San Jose Heritage Rose Garden

<http://www.heritageroses.us/>

Aladdin Nursery, 2907 Freedom Blvd, Watsonville

### Potatoes, Preparation and Planting

Ronniger's Seed Potatoes, Star Route, Moyie Springs, ID 83845 <http://www.ronnigers.com/>

Peaceful Valley Farm Supply, PO Box 2209, Grass Valley, CA 95945

[http://www.groworganic.com/cgy\\_354.html](http://www.groworganic.com/cgy_354.html)

CASFS

<http://zzyx.ucsc.edu/casfs/publications/gardenideas/potatoes.html>

### December Quarterly Meeting

Healthy Eating Lifestyle Principles

<http://www.helpunited.org>

### Training, Volunteering, Events

UCSC Arboretum Calendar

<http://www2.ucsc.edu/arboretum/calendar.html>

Monterey Bay Certified Farmers' Market

<http://www.montereybayfarmers.org/news.html>

SC County Workshops and Classes

[http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org/Workshop\\_Classes/index.php](http://www.compostsantacruzcounty.org/Workshop_Classes/index.php)

Filoli Events

<http://www.filoli.org/calendar.html#opening>

Earth is here so kind, that just tickle her with a hoe and she laughs with a harvest.  
~Douglas William Jerrold, *A Land of Plenty*