

Livermore Drought Resistant Garden Trail
By Shari Wentz, Master Gardener

It all began with a trip to New Zealand. My husband and I were traveling to the Waipara Grape Growing Region when I discovered that the wineries had a garden trail demonstrating plants that thrive in dry, arid conditions in a climate much like Livermore's. While my husband tasted the wines, I visited the gardens, which largely contained native flaxes and tea bushes. Some were much more beautiful than others, but they were all planted to educate the public, adults and school children alike, about the importance of responsible gardening.

Soon after I returned, the Alameda County Master Gardeners received a note from Chris Chandler, director of the Livermore Valley Winegrowers Association, requesting the services of a Master Gardener who would be willing to help local wineries in need of what she called "curb appeal." Master Gardeners are trained nationwide by state



Bright red 'Altissimo' climbing roses are the hallmark of Cedar Mountain Winery garden. Below the roses are various types of salvias and grasses. 'Rose of Sharon' complements the red roses. Photo by Don Wentz

universities to become heralds of responsible gardening. In California, that means educating the public about being aware of the careful use of water and chemicals: little water and virtually no chemicals. Inspired by what I had seen in New Zealand, I replied that I would be happy to work with Livermore's wine makers! Thus, the Livermore Drought Resistant Garden Trail was conceptualized and two years later is ready for your visits.

This Garden Trail is anchored by the Alameda County Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden at the Martinelli Center. There, property given to the Master Gardener Program by the county in 2000 now provides an example of beautiful landscaping in a dry summer garden. This garden is divided into several demonstration areas, but all plants thrive in the local climate.

Five wineries, each with a very different garden, complete the trail at this time. More gardens will be added to the project as more gardens are developed. A map of the trail is available online at

<http://www.lvwine.org/pdf/MasterGardenMap.pdf>

Cedar Mountain Winery used the Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden as inspiration for its drought resistant garden. Bright red 'Altissimo' climbing roses

are the hallmark of this garden. Below the roses are various types of salvias and grasses. The owners are partial to Rose of Sharon (*Hibiscus syriacus*) which complements the red roses nicely.

At Wente Winery, a former parking lot now greets visitors with trees and perennials such as New Zealand flax (*Phormium spp.*), lavender (*Lavandula spp.*) and autumn sage *Salvia greggii*). The winery has not only made an effort to plant drought resistant plants, but also plants that provide a habitat for beneficial animals and insects. Large manzanitas (*Arctostaphylos spp.*) are pruned to show their beautiful branching structure and lovely, smooth reddish bark. Outside the winery along Tesla Road, repeated plantings of white oleander and olive trees underplanted with rosemary (*Rosemarinus spp.*), lavender and *Agastache spp.* provide interest. Coffeeberry (*Rhamnus californica*) and sunrose (*Heleanthemum spp.*) highlight a corner garden.

The Rodrigue Molyneaux Winery is surrounded by several gardens developed by avid gardener and winery owner Nancy Rodrigue including a vegetable garden and a quiet sitting garden bordered with honey bush (*Melianthus major*) and Oregon grape (*Mahonia aquifolium*). Various colored-leafed *Heuchera spp.* add color. Tree mallow (*Lavatera maritima*) dances with a chorus of *Salvia greggii* in the background. Ms. Rodrigue had been challenged by the lack of sun in her landscape that features many garden “rooms.” With the advice of master gardeners, she has replaced some ground covers with *Ceanothus spp.* and native deer grass (*Muhlenbergia rigens*).



At Las Positas Winery, drought resistant grasses are used with *Teucrium lucidrys*, a beautifully hardy little purple flowering perennial. Succulents and color are used at the winery entrance. Photo by Don Wentz

The landscaping at Las Positas Winery, too, was planned with drought resistance in mind. A variety of grasses are used along with a beautifully hardy little purple flowering perennial germander (*Teucrium lucidrys*). Succulents are used closer to the winery entrance. The most striking feature is a wall topped with horsetail (*Equisetum*

hyemale). Many drought resistant grasses, including California fescue (*Festuca californica*) and Mexican feather grass (*Nassella tenuissima*) are planted in this extensive landscape.

Visit the Livermore Valley wineries and taste our delicious wines and follow the trail to explore our beautiful, drought resistant gardens!

All of the gardens on the Drought Resistant Garden Trail are open to the public and the Master Gardeners Livermore Demonstration Garden hosts monthly classes. Join them on September 8 at 10:00 am for a talk on “Selecting Shade Trees that Cope with Livermore Valley Soil” and on October 13 for “Cleaning up Your Garden.”

The Master Gardener program is part of Cooperative Extension, the outreach arm of the University of California through its Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who provide residents of Alameda County with information to help them garden in schools, backyards, nursing homes and other locations. Visit

http://acmg.ucdavis.edu/Demonstration_Gardens/ for more information.