

April 13, 2016



Sustainable Gardening
By
Deborah Nicolls
UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado Country

What does it mean to say you garden sustainably? The Master Gardener Handbook definition says it is design and maintenance practices that reduce demand for all types of resource inputs, use renewable resources, and protect environmental quality. That covers a wide territory and could be a little daunting to somebody who is considering heading in that direction. You may already be following some sustainable gardening practices, but if not, you can start simply by doing some of the things listed below.

One way to design sustainably is to plant the right plant in the right place. Putting a plant in an inappropriate location guarantees the plant will require extra attention to stay alive. It will be disease prone, and will probably eventually die and have to be replaced. It will cost you time, energy and money to keep that wrong plant alive. Buy plants suited to our Mediterranean climate, such as those from Chile, South Africa, Australia, and, of course, the Mediterranean. They will take less water and fewer pesticides to stay alive. Consider native plants as they require little summer water, no fertilizer and little pruning. Plus they attract beneficial insects to your garden.

Maintenance practices that are sustainable are incorporated into Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines. This includes preventing pests by planting disease resistant varieties, not over-watering or over-fertilizing and keeping your yard debris free so that destructive pests can't hide in your garden. Properly dispose of diseased produce, leaves and branches. Tolerate some pest damage and clearly identify pests before considering pesticides. Try the least harmful methods of pest control first. Some bugs can be easily hand-picked off plants; aphids can be hosed off. If you must use a pesticide, read the label and follow the

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directions. Even more benign controls, such as soapy sprays, will kill beneficial insects, so only use them in a targeted manner. If you don't use pesticides at all, you may get all the help you need in your garden from beneficial insects, frogs, lizards and other creatures.

Composting is a sustainable garden practice because you are reusing stuff you might normally send to a landfill, such as kitchen waste, paper, and yard waste. Rather than sending pruned tree limbs and whips to a landfill or burning them, use them to define garden beds or make trellises. Capturing water from your shower as the water warms up and using it on your potted plants would be a simple step to reusing water.

Protecting environmental quality is the third element of gardening sustainably, and many of the practices mentioned above contribute to that. By not heavily fertilizing or using pesticides those products don't wind up in the air, soil, or water, or in those insects and animals that are further up the food chain. Planting natives encourage native beneficial insects and animals to visit your yard and make it a livelier place.

Following any of the practices mentioned above will get you started in sustainable gardening. Many of our classes incorporate various sustainable strategies. Go to <http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/> and search on "sustainable gardening" to get more ideas.

Today, Wednesday, April 13, join UCCE Master Gardener Deborah Nicolls for a free Master Gardener class on Sustainable Gardening. Learn how to save resources, money and time as you garden. Class is from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, in Cameron Park.

Join UCCE Master Gardener Steve Savage on Saturday, April 16 for a free class on Landscaping with Trees and Shrubs. Learn about basic landscaping concepts, how to get started, trees and shrubs that work best in the foothills, and how to bring this altogether to create a pleasing, survivable landscape. Class is from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Court in Placerville.

Plan to come out to the annual Master Gardener Plant Sale, April 23, from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Vegetables, perennials, flowers and more at great prices. The sale is at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, located behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.