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Mediterranean Gardens
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A Mediterranean garden brings to mind a bright sunny space scented with rosemary, sage and lavender. A garden shaded with citrus and olive trees near the coast. There are actually five regions in the world that have similar climates, and ecosystems, to the Mediterranean region itself. The Mediterranean climate refers to areas with mild, wet winters and warm or hot summers during which little or no rain falls. The plants that grow in these areas have drought tolerant properties that enable them to tolerate hot, dry conditions. The use of these plants can lead to a significant reduction in landscape water use once they are established.

Mediterranean region plants have certain characteristics that allow them to thrive.

Mediterranean evergreens, such as lavender and rosemary, have thin leaves that limit their surface area to keep evaporation to a minimum and therefore reduce water loss. Grey leaves, that may also be woolly or velvety, trap any moisture in the air as well as limiting moisture loss from the plant. These leaves also protect the plant against the hot sun and may also act as a deterrent to browsing animals like deer. Silvery foliage plants provide a reflective surface that can deflect some of the sun's intensity.

The Mediterranean Garden, at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, clearly showcases the plants that grow in the five Mediterranean regions of the world. The first is the region that borders the Mediterranean Sea. The second is the region of Southwestern Australia and a small portion of New Zealand. The third is part of South Africa and the fourth is in central Chile in South America. The fifth region includes most of central California and the Southern California coast. The plant list of all the plantings in this garden that encompasses all five of these regions is online at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden website,

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http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden/. A visit to the garden clearly illustrates how these plants thrive in western El Dorado County.

Lavenders are from the Mediterranean and are perfectly adapted to our climate of hot, sunny days and dry summers. *Lavandula dentata*, French Lavender, is a good choice. Two Australian plants are especially well adapted to our California rainfall cycle, Callistemons and Grevilleas. The Callistemons are commonly known as Bottlebrush. *Callistemon viminalis* 'Little John', a dwarf variety, is a tight, slow growing shrub with a long bloom season and mixes well with lavender, rosemary and sages. Hummingbirds and bees love the flowers of all Callistemons. The showiest Australian flowering shrubs are in the genus *Grevillea*. They are also notable for a long season of bloom and heavy production of nectar that draws many pollinators. *Grevillea lanigera*, 'Jade Mound' is planted in the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, as is *Madevilla laxa*, the Chilean Jasmine.

A South African shrub, *Leonotis leonurus*, Lion's Tail, bears dense whorls of downy orange flowers from summer into fall. Lion's Tail is sensitive to frost, as are many Mediterranean plants. Cut the plant back to live growth in the spring if damaged by frost.

Mediterranean garden plants are sun loving and mostly easy care. Few Mediterranean plants can tolerate prolonged or severe freezes, but many can handle occasional frost. The colder areas of El Dorado County should look to plant only frost hardy species.

The Sherwood Demonstration Garden is free and open to the public on Wednesdays, Fridays, and Saturdays from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. weather permitting (the garden is closed when the temperature is 95 degrees or higher). It is located behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville.

There is no Master Gardener public education class scheduled this weekend, come see us at the garden.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions at local Farmers Markets and 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://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.