

# Seeds For Thought

Solano County Master Gardeners

Summer 2019 Vol. 14 Issue 3



Photo by Melinda Nestlerode

## GROWING UP: VERTICAL GARDENING

Tina Saravia, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Watermelon Vine

All photos in this article by Tina Saravia

Vertical gardening is a good thing. It saves space and can save water. If growing edibles, fruit and vegetables stay cleaner and easier to harvest, it saves your back, provides vertical interest, acts as a good windbreak, gives shade, helps in cooling: the advantage list goes on.

When I started researching on vertical gardening, I was bombarded by a lot of information, which led me to confusion about how to write this article. In the interest of

organization, I will classify vertical gardening into two major categories: 1) gardening with plants that can climb on their own or vines, and, 2) gardening with plants that can not climb or have shorter stems.

The first category requires growing on a trellis, arbor or similar vertical structure while allows the plant to climb. The structure can be as simple as a tall stick, a teepee made with bamboo, or as elaborate as a redwood arbor.

Anyone who has a grown a tomato or two knows that having a structure like a “tomato cage” saves a lot of space compared to letting the plants sprawl everywhere. The plant is healthier because of better air circulation, and harvesting is easier as the fruits are off the ground.

Grapes are another prime example of growing above the ground. We’ve seen them in vineyards in perfect alignment up and down the hills as far as the eye can see. They’re also grown

in arbors where they hang down in clusters inviting everyone to pick them and enjoy their juicy sweetness.

Any vining or long stem plants can be grown upwards, even plants that we don’t normally think of growing upwards, like the humongous watermelons (*at left*) hanging on a cattle panel bent into an inverted U-shape to make an arbor.

The same is true for vines being grown for purely ornamental reasons. A well-pruned wisteria, or a climbing rose can be stunning when grown on a trellis; sweet peas are better enjoyed when you can smell the sweet fragrance of the flowers as you brush against them or walk by them.

Now, let’s talk about the second category — plants that cannot climb or have shorter stems—the shrubby plants. To grow these plants vertically, a vertical structure is needed. These structures can be as simple as hanging a number of pots to a wall or setting a recycled pallet upright, or as elaborate as a sophisticated wall growing system. The main idea is to grow each plant off the ground.



Recycled 50-gallon barrel

The recycled 50-gallon barrel (*at left*) outside the kitchen can grow multiple vegetables and herbs in a very small space. There’s very little wasted water as the water trickle down from the top to the rest of the plants down the barrel.

Vertical gardens can be used for privacy and windbreak, and help with cooling the house by insulating the wall. It can also give a plain wall, like the side of a garage, more interest.

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If there is one take-away from vertical gardening, it requires some **advance planning** to be successful.

Figure out the appropriate structure for the plant. Sweet peas and pole beans can climb on a trellis made with strings, but the stems of a squash or watermelon need to be tied to a stronger structure, like cattle panel, or a lattice.

A convenient way to water is extremely important with a vertical structure, especially if growing plants in separate containers, like the small pots of herbs hanging on the 50-gallon drum shown on Page 1, as individual pots will dry quicker.

Regular hand watering may be sufficient, but not always possible. A drip system can be installed.

As with any style of planting, find the appropriate climate exposure for the plants. Plants that need sun should be placed in sunny spots and shady plants in shady areas. Vertical gardening makes it easier to do that. If grown on a trellis, there’s more sun up above than in the ground and for vertical structures can be placed virtually anywhere.

As they say, the sky is the limit. Happy Vertical Gardening! ☺

## UC MASTER GARDENERS WILL ANSWER QUESTIONS AND PROVIDE INFORMATION THROUGHOUT THE SEASON

### FAIRFIELD CIVIC CENTER LIBRARY SENSORY GARDEN

Second Saturday of the Month  
10:00am to 11:00pm  
1150 Kentucky Street

Come and share in the fun of gardening in the Library’s Sensory Garden. The UC Master Gardeners will be there every 2nd Saturday to do normal maintenance and answer questions

General Topics:  
July – Deadheading  
August – General Cleanup  
September – More Deadheading  
October – Prep for Winter

### DUNNELL NATURE PARK AND EDUCATION CENTER Dry Creek Installation

October 19th – 10:00am to 12:00pm  
3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield

The public is invited to this free talk and hands-on event! Master Gardeners will be creating a dry creek bed planted with succulents and cactus. We will demonstrate planting techniques, talk about several types of succulents, explain why each plant was selected for the site, and answer questions



### DUNNELL NATURE PARK AND EDUCATION CENTER



3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield  
10:00am to 12:00pm



SEEDS, BULBS, PLANTS: Finding, Dividing, Sharing, Increasing, Replanting: July 13th  
TILANDSIA (AIR PLANTS): August 10th  
FERTILIZERS: How to Read the Label, What You Need to Know: September 14th  
SUCCULENTS AND HYPERTUFA: October 12th



# SPICY SUMMER SEASONINGS

*Pearl Eddy, U.C. Master Gardener and U.C. Master Food Preserver, Solano County*



In our mild climate here, we are so fortunate that we can grow assorted herbs much of the year.

Herbs such as thyme, marjoram and basil are so easy to start from seeds or cuttings and from transplants.

Parsley and cilantro are available in markets year-round at reasonable prices and keep well with their stems in jars of water in the refrigerator; however if you want the flavor of fresh basil in mid-winter it can be quite costly in the markets. There are many ways to preserve basil and other fresh herbs that are easy and fun to grow ourselves.

A great place to learn about culinary herbs is at the Morningsun Herb Farm on Pleasants Valley Road. They host an annual open house on the day before Mother's Day with free classes, samples of many foods and beverages made with herbs, and pages of free recipes. (I never miss this event each year.) Owner Rose Loveall-Sale gave me permission to pass the following few recipes on to you.

Pesto's can be made with a variety of herbs, including mint, chives and rosemary. Fresh pesto can be kept in the refrigerator for quite a few days, but I like to freeze it in small containers or packed flat in re-closable plastic bags. When some is needed for a recipe I use a small paring knife to remove the desired quantity. Try freezing some in an ice cube tray. Frozen pesto keeps very well for a year.

Freezing herbs is an easy way to preserve their flavor. Remove the leaves from the stems, and lay them flat on a cookie sheet in the freezer. After several hours place them into plastic bags and store them in the freezer. Another easy method is to gently mix 2 cups of basil leaves with 1 Tbsp. of olive oil, place in a reclosable freezer bag, press out as much air as possible and freeze flat. Another method, which keeps basil leaves looking green, is to blanch them in boiling water for only three seconds and then immediately place them in a container of ice water. (I use large leaves for this method.) Use a strainer to make this easier. Then lift leaves from the ice water and spread each individually on paper towels and

blot the top with more towels. When dry, layer the leaves on wax paper or parchment paper, slide the flattened leaves into a reclosable freezer bag and seal as airtight as possible.

This summer I hope you will try out some new fresh herbs and that you find them as exciting as I do. ☺

## DILL PESTO

Place in blender or food processor 2 cups fresh dill leaves, 1 cup garlic cloves, 1/2 cup parsley, 1/2 cup walnut meats and 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese. With machine running, slowly add 2/3 cup olive oil and blend well. (Try this as a dip or served with fish.)

## SAGE PESTO

In a blender or food processor place 1/2 cup fresh sage leaves, 1 1/2 cups fresh parsley leaves, 2 cloves garlic, 1/2 cup pine nuts or walnuts, 1/2 cup parmesan cheese. With machine running, slowly add 1/2 cup olive oil. Season to taste with salt and pepper and blend well. (Try this tucked under the skin of chicken breasts or mixed with fresh bread crumbs and stuffed into game hens.)

## OREGANO PESTO

In a blender or food processor place 1/2 cup fresh oregano leaves, 1 1/2 cups fresh parsley, 6 cloves garlic, 1/2 cup parmesan cheese, and 1/2 cup walnuts or pine nuts. With machine running, slowly add 1/2 cup olive oil. Season with salt and pepper and blend well. (Try this with summer vegetables, especially tomatoes, zucchini and eggplant.)

## BASIL PESTO (My favorite)

In a blender place 2 cups firmly packed fresh basil leaves, 3 or more peeled garlic cloves, and 1/2 cup walnut meats. With machine running, slowly add 1/2 cup olive oil (or a little less). Blend well and season with salt and pepper. I usually include 1/2 cup grated parmesan cheese but may omit it and then add it later when serving a recipe. (You can also use blanched almonds or pine nuts instead of the walnuts.) I use this pesto to flavor pasta sauces.



# CRESTED SUCCULENTS ON THE GARDEN TOUR

Trishae Rose, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

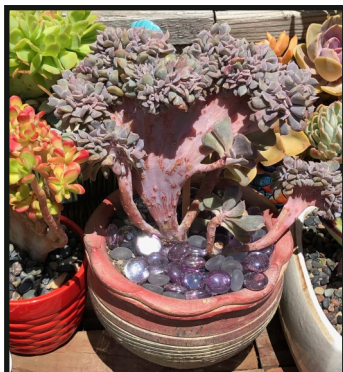
During the past 10 years I have volunteered as a Master Gardener docent for the annual Vallejo Garden Tour. My assignment this year was in support of a home garden and cottage nursery specializing in succulents. My own garden has morphed from a traditional lawn with many rose bushes to a drought tolerant garden with many different succulents.

Given my choice to use succulents in my own garden, I am usually assigned as a docent

to a home on the tour with succulents. This year, amongst the many succulents on display, were a group of rare and uncommon “crested” succulents. The homeowner’s display of mutated succulents was quite distinctive. The familiar *Aeonium* succulent had transformed in a fascinating manner. In fact, the term “fasciation” describes the process that creates the resulting “crested” phenomenon in a plant that had grown in a normal manner before the mutation occurred.

I needed to learn more about this fasciation process and how it would occur in a normal plant. As is usual in many plant processes, there are special terms used to describe this phenomenon. Fasciation is the process whereby the meristem tissue in a normal plant becomes directed to form plant tissue in a very different manner. In general, the stem of the mature plant flattens out with new growth emanating from the top edge of the newly formed wedge. Normal apical dominance gives way

to meristem tissue initiating multiple growth sites. The resultant new growth results in multiple smaller plant forms. As an example, in a normal *Aeonium* the plant head is large in comparison to the stem, with side growth supporting separate plant heads. In a fasciated example there will be dozens of plant heads along the top edge of



*Fasciated Aeonium*

All photos in this article by Trishae Rose

the now widened ridge of the plant’s stem. The result is a very broad flattened stem with dozens of plant heads.

In my limited research, I found multiple causes of fasciation including hormonal changes, bacterial or fungal infection, or genetic mutation. Although intentional fasciation has been attempted, experimentation continues in the quest to create these rare and unusual plant forms.



*Fire Pit Succulent Garden*

Many other plant types are susceptible to the fasciation process. I will now be on the look out for more examples of these interesting plant forms. More information about crested succulents may be found on the University of Wisconsin Master Gardener site—<https://wimastergardener.org/article/fascinating-fasciation/>.

In other areas of this garden, the homeowners had repurposed fountains, chairs, fire pits and building walls to house beautifully designed succulent homes.

As a group of plants, succulents enjoy a reputation as a group of plants that are easy to care for and are easier than most to propagate, making them a good choice for a plant exchange. The UC Master Gardeners in Solano County host an annual plant exchange in September.

The exchange is a public event whereby plants, including many succulents, are donated from the public and brought in from the Master Gardeners’ own private gardens. This annual event is well attended and the plants are exchanged free of charge.



*Succulent Fountain*

The success of the annual exchange has prompted a separate, very successful succulent-only sale in late spring April or May (see article on Page 6 for a recap of the 2019 Succulent Extravaganza). Visit [solanomg.ucanr.edu](http://solanomg.ucanr.edu) for event dates and announcements. ©



*Hanging Succulent Garden*

# UNDEMANDING ROSES

Darrell g.h. Schramm, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



'Fortune's Double Yellow' Covering a Tree

All photos in the article by Darrell g.h. Schramm

"Roses are just too much trouble to grow!" That is a comment I have heard time and again. On hearing it, I realize the speaker has very little knowledge of roses or may be aware of only two or three classes of garden roses: Hybrid Teas, Floribundas, and the class vaguely designated as Shrubs, the three kinds most available to the public in Big Box stores and most generic nurseries.

although the plants would be grateful if provided. As for diseases and pests, though some Heritage roses may host them, rarely are they damaged, especially if the garden is healthy with bees, birds, butterflies, praying mantis, and dragonflies. Once the blooms are spent, you may deadhead them or not. Doing so does encourage them to bloom more, but not deadheading will still provide flowers. As for pruning, Teas, Chinas, Noisettes, and Portland's do not require it. Except to shape the bush if it looks ungainly or to remove dead or damaged twigs and branches, you do not need to prune.



'Duchesse de Brabant'

Yes, Hybrid Teas and Floribundas as a whole require water water and frequent fertilizer and annual pruning and special care when prone to disease and pests, as many of them are. Shrub roses, which have varied parentage, unlike the twenty or so other major classes of cultivated roses—like those of David Austin's English group—vary their requirements. Yes, they can be labor-intensive. In fact, I know several rose growers who plant and fuss with Hybrid Teas and Floribundas primarily to exhibit them at shows and then eight or ten years later remove them because their productivity declines and so replace them with newer roses.

Such diminishing returns is not the case with most Old Garden Roses (AKA Heritage, Historic, or Vintage roses). Furthermore, they require considerably less work; some of them even resent being pruned or sprayed.

But before we consider a few of them, understand that after these plants have been established (usually a year or two after planting), the Tea roses, the Chinas, and the Noisettes are drought tolerant. That does not mean never to water them. An occasional deep soaking goes a long way. Mulch three or four inches deep around the base retains moisture. Constant winds will dry out any woody plant, so do irrigate them if the winds have been unrelenting for days. And as a whole, those old roses—and here I include the Portland class—do not require fertilizer,



Skagg's Island Noisette

Consider the Tea roses (NOT Hybrid Teas). Again and again this class of roses has been found in Gold Rush towns, ghost towns, abandoned farms and lots, and pioneer cemeteries, still growing and blooming ninety, a hundred years or more later, with only Mother Nature to care for them despite heat waves, drought, and high winds, and in certain locations, winter snow. Tea roses such as 'Duchesse de Brabant', 'La Sylphide', 'Le Pactole' and others have been discovered growing quite "alone and palely loitering" but alive in such locations. 'Bon Silene', 'Devoniensis', and 'Safrano' were also popular with California pioneers.

The same is true of Noisettes, whose spicy flowers (often of a clove scent) crowd in thick clusters, mostly of pink, pale yellow or white. Once biking with a group on Skagg's Island off Highway 37, several of us spotted a huge rose bush some distance off the road, again "alone and palely loitering." Apparently a house had once stood nearby. Yet this neglected rose, its cluster washed in palest pink, had withstood "the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune." Making my way on foot toward it, I recognized this scented rose—because I grow it: 'Blush Noisette'. Another time, in an empty, secluded lot near me, I

(Continued on Page 6)



(Continued from Page 5— *Undemanding Roses*)



'Comtesse du Cayla'

came across the Noisette 'Fortune's Double Yellow', covering what seems an old apple tree. Not all Noisettes grow so huge. I grow one discovered years ago tentatively called "Roseville

Noisette" for the town where it was found; it seems to be the same as "Placerville Noisette" discovered in 1985. Its height is a mere three feet and not that wide, dense with white flowers that form their own bouquet. This past winter I planted 'Lamarque', its huge white blossoms tinted lemon, and am already training a quickly growing cane over an arch that will take it into my fig tree.

Like the Teas and Noisettes, most Chinas are drought tolerant. 'Old Blush' is the most venerable, introduced to England from China in 1793, the first rose used to create repeat-flowering roses in the West. As its name suggests, it's pink. I also grow 'Eugene Beauharnais', one of few Chinas with a strong delicious scent but a low grower though profuse with red roses—good in a pot. 'Fabvier' is also small and red but with a white center, growing eagerly from spring until Christmas or later. 'Comtesse du Cayla' is fickle, showing off loose flowers pink with apricot or sometimes coppery red-orange.

I end with my favorite of recurrently blooming historic roses, the Portlands (also called Damask Perpetuals). 'Jacques Cartier', strongly perfumed, shows off its many-layered, luscious pink

petals, nestling the exquisite flower in elongated healthy foliage. Often the petals exhibit scalloped edges. It tolerates heat with aplomb. 'Comte de Chambord' sends forth roses of a similar pink with petals rather emblicated. They, too, emit a pleasant perfume. The leaves, however, are smaller, of a light, almost yellow green. Partial shade suits it well, as does full sun. A rose from 1849, 'Duchesse de Rohan' is somewhat less generous with its recurrent flowering, yet it is, in my view, the most beautiful of the Portlands. Its strongly scented flower displays deep pink petals, often paler at the outer rim. It rests among luxuriant, large leaves, attractively textured, like embossed leather. Other beauties are 'Indigo', 'Rose de Rescht', and 'Yolande d' Aragon'.

Because most general nurseries do not carry these classes of roses, the public is by and large unaware of them. Many of them can be bought from Greenmantle Nursery, Burlington Rose Nursery in Visalia and occasionally from Regan's Nursery in Fremont. HelpMeFind/Roses online offers other sources for roses such as these, which are very little trouble or work. ☺



'Duchesse de Rohan'



## UC MASTER GARDENERS ARE IN THE COMMUNITY



### MORNINGSUN HERB FARM

6137 Pleasants Valley Rd. Vacaville  
 Fourth Saturday of the Month  
 March through September  
 9:00am to 1:00pm

### VACAVILLE PUBLIC LIBRARY

1020 Ulatis Drive  
 "AEONIUM (The Giant Velvet Rose)"  
 August 15th  
 7:00pm to 8:00pm



# ART IN THE GARDEN

*Beth Wells, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

As our indoor living spaces extend to our gardens, we look for inspiration that can provide color and intrigue and enhance our surroundings. When creating areas of interest to display art in your garden, consider color, sound, movement, verticality, comfort, relaxation, atmosphere, humor, suspense, and whimsy. What is art in the garden? It can be almost anything you can imagine, from sculpture, recycled or repurposed objects, metalwork, ceramics, rocks, pathways, arbors, seating, lighting, water features, mobiles, and even paintings. Art is individual and personal. It represents your own viewpoint.

A good way to start bringing art to your garden is by creating a focal point, some object to draw the eye in. The size of the object depends on the distance from the viewer. Small art should be close in, easy to view. But if you view the art from a window, size and placement amongst plants needs to be considered. Vertical elements such as a pergola can provide a framework and structure to hold a chandelier or climbing clematis vine. A natural rustic arch, copper gridwork, wood ladders can be used to display potted flowers, glass globes, or a climbing bougainvillea or rose bush. Shelving on a fence can highlight that collection of seashells, small rocks from your travels or glass transformers. I use a ladder to display a collection of galvanized watering cans.

Utilize an old tree stump to feature statuary such as a rabbit on a mossy pad. I love to hide small ceramic animals, stones, and colorful objects under big leafy plants where children can see them. Fairy gardens have become quite popular and they are not just for children. The miniature garden is grown in a small space or pot. It is like a fairy tale brought to life. Along with small plants, it contains accessories such as pebbles, sea glass, marbles, tiny cottages, small fairies or gnomes. It is a creative, imaginary space in which to play. On a larger scale, using rocks to create a spiral element leading the eye to an aloe plant or other succulents is a fun way to add pattern and dimension. Pathways can lead the viewer through



*All photos in the article by Beth Wells*

your garden to the next element or vista and can be painted cement, tile, or flagstone. Creating your own cement stepping stones with inlaid ceramics or glass can add color and interest for a spatial element.

A stucco wall might be your canvas for a mural or to attach wire in a lattice design in which to grow ivy. An ornate trellis provides a backdrop for a honeysuckle or climbing hydrangea. A living plant wall can be achieved through small metal or wood framed boxes, or funky discarded objects mounted vertically and planted

with small trailing succulents. Mirrors, windows, and frames can be used to break up the expanse of a fence or brick wall. Even a painting can take on a new life in the garden. It can be the unexpected... that work of art that never quite fit in over the couch. Of course, it will need to be waterproofed.

Do not hesitate to use strong, bold colors. Repeating colors already displayed in your garden through plantings can help unify and add rhythm and movement. It can tie in objects of art, plantings elsewhere in the garden. Use of statement-making



containers like the animal themed Mexican pottery is fun coupled with brightly hued perennials. Bright colors can draw attention away from unsightly area such as the garbage cans or a storage area. A monochromatic scheme makes a statement as does white or silver foliage plants to brighten a dim area. Mobiles, whirling pieces moved by air or water are fun to watch and are relaxing. Even the judicious but artful pruning of small trees and bushes can create a sculptural element to your garden. For instance, I have a 15-foot manzanita which I gradually pruned out dead and crossing branches to reveal a pattern of twisted limbs and space. As we enter summer, the burgundy surface peels back, revealing a cinnamon coloring. It has a certain beauty that no man-made object can reach. A space beneath the tree is open in which to hang birdhouses, glass bulbs, or mobiles. Make art in your garden space fun and colorful. Use your imagination, experiment, and set out to enhance your own outdoor space. ©



# GOT A SUCCULENT EXTRAVAGANZA? YES, WE DID

Sherry Richards, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



All photos in this article by Tina Paris

“Aloe” everyone! On May 4, 2019, the Solano County University of California Master Gardeners (MG’s) had a very successful educational and fundraising event at our office on North Texas Street in Fairfield. The event was inspired and coordinated by MG Tina Paris with help from other

MG’s. Planning and planting for the event began last fall. About 120 people from the public attended the event, while 30 MG’s helped in numerous ways to support the event. For example, by greeting people as they arrived; volunteering to be a speaker; cashiering; helping to tally plant sale tickets; or, working in the plant holding, silent auction, or succulent starts areas. MG’s helped by answering succulent questions from the public and providing information about anything gardening related.

Our goal was to have an educational and fun event for the public and our MG’s, and to raise funds for the MG program by offering an assortment of succulents and succulent dish gardens for sale. Thank you to everyone who supported us by buying succulents and dish gardens, and to the MG’s who made donations. It was so appreciated!

Highlights of the Succulent Extravaganza included well-attended succulent educational classes. MG speakers shared information about succulent propagation, succulent soil, and after-care, including pests and diseases that might affect succulents.

Three take-aways for me from this event, working as a co-coordinator, were: first, the great enjoyment of watching people peruse all of the succulents and dish gardens we had for sale. Everyone seemed to have a great time. The interaction between the public and MG’s was terrific, as usual, and that was my second take-away. Third, I realized how great the interest in succulents is these days. No wonder, as they are a terrific and interesting group of plants!

The funds from our fundraising events, such as the Succulent Extravaganza, Christmas Wreath Workshop, and craft sales are used for various public activities. For example, we are currently using a small amount of funds for a new public educational project at the Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center in Fairfield, where MG’s are installing a “dry creek” bed. The City

of Fairfield’s Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center is located at the corner of Hilborn Road and Hillcrest Drive.

The City allows UC Master Gardeners of Solano Co. to use the center for monthly public education classes covering many gardening topics. We also have access to a small enclosed area where we have composting bins, and three raised beds for various kinds of demonstrations. One raised bed is being used for the dry creek bed of succulents and cactus. Another raised bed is used to demonstrate water-wise plants, and the third is for vegetable plants and other demonstrations.

The Succulent Extravaganza, and her love and knowledge of succulents and cactus, inspired MG Tina Paris to design the dry creek bed of succulents and cactus. The dry creek bed’s initial installation is nearly complete.

On Saturday, October 19, 2019, the public is invited to attend an educational event at the Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center, where MG’s will plant succulents into the dry creek bed and explain why these succulents were selected. You can’t beat succulents and cactus chosen for easy gardening, with no watering needed except seasonal rain water. We hope to see you there!



Before and After Dry Creek Bed

For updates on MG educational events throughout the year at Dunnell Nature Park and Education Center; Vacaville, Fairfield, Benicia and other libraries; children’s activities at some libraries; Farmer’s Markets in Benicia and Vallejo; and information tables at other locations, please check our website: <http://solanomg.ucanr.edu/>. Our website also includes links to our blog “*Under the Solano Sun*” (<https://ucanr.edu/blogs/uss/>). You can also find gardening information and access to current and previous “*Seeds for Thought*” newsletters ([http://solanomg.ucanr.edu/Seeds for Thought/](http://solanomg.ucanr.edu/Seeds_for_Thought/)).

*Seeds for Thought* newsletters include information about upcoming classes and events. ©



# AN INTERVIEW WITH BETSY BUXTON

*Kathy Low, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*



*Betsy Buxton*

*Photo by Melinda Nestlerode*

The three most precious metals in the world are rhodium, platinum, and gold. In the last newsletter I profiled Gold Badge Master Gardener (MG) Teresa Lavell. Gold Badge MGs are individuals who have provided more than 1000 volunteer hours in the program. There are currently 15 Gold Badge MGs in Solano County. Platinum Badge MGs are individuals

who have provided more than 2500 volunteer hours in the program. There are only two Platinum Badge MGs in the County; one of them is Betsy Buxton.

If you're lucky to have met Betsy at a MG information table, she immediately comes across as a people person, knowledgeable and eager to help you with your gardening problem. But who is Betsy Buxton? She graciously let me interview her to find out.

**KL:** Tell me about your background.

**BB:** I'm the only child of a single mother who was from Minnesota, but fell in love with California and decided to stay in the state when she got out of the military. I was born in San Francisco at the Stanford University Hospital back when it was located in San Francisco. We lived in the Mission District before it diversified, then moved to Candlestick Cove. I loved going to the museums and the aquarium as a child growing up in the City. But, then my mother moved us to Cloverdale, since it was a better place to raise a child. In sixth grade, my mother took a job with a radiologist in Santa Rosa so we moved there, where I lived until I met and married my first husband in high school. Since he attended Fresno State, we moved to Fresno. Upon my divorce, I moved to Eureka, and then back to Santa Rosa where I met my current husband, Bruce. We moved to Vallejo, but wanting a larger home, we subsequently moved to Suisun where we've been for the past 28 years.

I got a degree in Textiles Clothing from Santa Rosa Junior College because I initially wanted to work for Levi Strauss in their fabric testing lab. But then they moved the company and testing lab to the East Coast.

I subsequently got a degree in Ornamental Horticulture from Solano College. While I there, an individual in the student career center told me of an opening in the California State Parks. I

applied for and got the job as a Park Aide. I later retired from the State.

**KL:** What motivated you to become a Master Gardener?

**BB:** Initially I never thought about becoming a Master Gardener and had not even heard about the program. But then one day an aunt, who lives out of state, called my mother bragging about how proud she was that her daughter had become a Master Gardener. Not to be outdone by her sister, my mom immediately got on the phone to me and told me if my cousin could become a Master Gardener, so could I. And she even offered to pay for the coursework. So I became a Master Gardener in 1998.

**KL:** What do you enjoy most about the program and what are your favorite volunteer activities?

**BB:** I like that you can choose to volunteer for a lot of different activities. And because life happens, if you volunteer for an activity and something comes up and you end up having to cancel your planned participation, you're forgiven because life happens. I love volunteering at information tables at the farmer's markets and at the table Vallejo Garden Tour because you have the opportunity to not only help other gardeners, but to learn from them as well.

**KL:** Do you have a piece of advice for trainees undergoing the current training program?

**BB:** I have to two pieces of advice. The first is when you graduate from the Master Gardener Program, don't assume you know it all. The second piece of advice is "Plants can't read." Plant can't read the gardening book that says they are supposed to grow with so many hours of sunlight, water, soil type etc. If you have a plant that isn't working for you, try growing it in three different locations in your yard before you give up on it.

**KL:** If there was one practice you wished every gardener would follow, what would it be?

**BB:** Measure before you plant. Don't depend upon someone saying what size the tree or plant will grow to be when it matures. Be sure you investigate/research the full grown size of a tree/plant. And if you are uncertain about planting something in your yard, grow it in a pot.

**KL:** If you could have your dream garden, what would it look like and what would be in it?

**BB:** It would be a typical English Cottage Garden with deep long borders and lots of color, like those depicted in English Horticulturalist Gertrude Jekyll's books.

*(Continued on Page 10)*

*(Continued from Page 9 - An Interview with Betsy Buxton)*

**KL:** Do you have a favorite gardening book, and if so, what it is and why is it your favorite?

**BB:** I don't have a single favorite book, because I have tons of favorite books: books on vines, clematis, roses and so much more.

**BB:** I love visiting nurseries, museums and other places where I can see something and learn something new. I love to network with other gardeners, and I love reading newsletters and blogs from other gardening groups, societies, and nurseries. 😊

**KL:** Besides volunteering for the MG program, what else do you enjoy doing in your free time?

## UC MASTER GARDENERS AROUND YOUR TOWN

### HOME DEPOT

#### Fairfield

2121 Cadenasso Drive  
Every other Saturday  
Beginning March 23  
April through October  
9:00am to 1:00pm

### HOME DEPOT

#### Vacaville

510 Orange Drive  
Third Saturday of the Month  
April through October  
9:00am to 1:00pm



### FARMERS MARKETS

#### VALLEJO FARMERS MARKET

Saturday's 9:00am to 2:00pm  
Georgia and Marin Streets

#### BENICIA FARMERS MARKET

Thursdays 4:30pm to 7:30pm  
April 25th through October 24th  
End of 1st Street



### ACE HARDWARE

#### Pacific Ace Hardware

627 Merchant St., Vacaville  
Second Saturday of the Month  
April 13 through October 12  
9:00am to 1:00pm

#### Dixon Ace Hardware

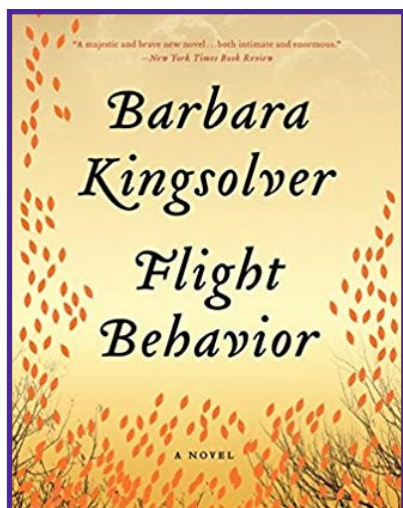
1505 N. 1st St., Dixon  
First Saturday of the Month  
April through October  
9:00am to 1:00pm



# GARDENING BOOKS FOR FREE!! VISIT SOLANO COUNTY LIBRARY TO ACCESS E-BOOKS VIA HOOPLA - YOUR LIBRARY CARD AT WORK...



Winona Victory, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Gardeners love plants and books about plants but purchase another book? No, no, and no! At my age, I can't find an inch on any bookshelf and being a Master Gardener (MG) means I love to read gardening books of all kinds. Does that sound like a familiar refrain? If so, let me share a special MG tip. I have owned several e-reader devices over the years and love the convenience of getting

my hands on the latest book by Barbara Kingsolver, by purchasing an e-copy from Barnes and Noble. This is relatively expensive, but how many times will anyone read *Flight Behavior* by Barbara Kingsolver? It is a novel about monarch survival and well worth reading.

Now, I know, every reader loves to feel the paper of a real book, but sometimes you just want something to read. On a subject you don't know about. "Hoopla" is available to all Solano County residents, and most mobile devices including smart phones, laptops, and e-readers are perfect for this.

This month I have downloaded several books focused on wildlife in the home garden, pollinators, insects, and birds, especially songbirds. Let me tell you how to share the pleasure. Hoopla is a digital media service to access e-books, audio books, music and films. You download the app from Hoopla Digital Mobile on Apple apps or Google apps and establish a free account. This requires a current library card, and establishing an account with password. Read about it on the Solano County Library website: <http://www.solanolibary.com/ebooks-and-more>, and Hoopla's website: <https://www.hoopladigital.com/>.

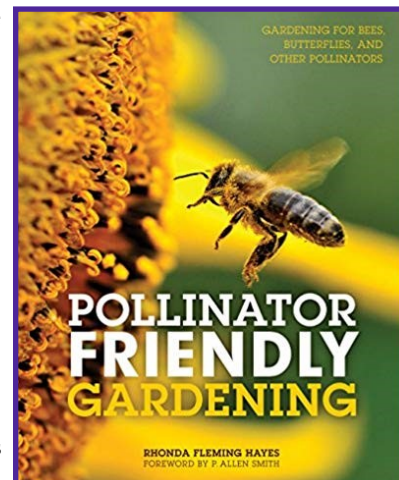
Searches depend on knowing where to look. For subject matter topics, find the link to "Genre" where there are categories on self help, cooking, and gardening, among others. If you know the author or title, use that. Don't expect to find the latest best seller, but there are many books from you to choose from. So far, you are still in your pj's and it can be 2:00 am in the

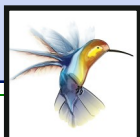
morning. This is a great time for serendipity. Remember, you haven't used any resources and there is much to discover. Borrow up to six titles per month, and return or renew if you want to get rid of a book or keep it a little longer. No penalty, no rush back to the library to avoid a fine.

*Wildlife in Your Garden Planting and Landscaping to Create a Backyard Sanctuary* by Karen Lancer caught my eye as a perfect start. This book, written by a park ranger, gives me inspiration to improve my yard for all types of living creatures. She shares knowledge of the importance of keeping your yard pesticide free, providing access to native species that keep nature as a sanctuary for visitors of all kinds; bugs eat bugs, birds eat bugs, bugs digest plant material and keep the soil brimming with all kinds of life. If you provide shelter, food, and water, your garden will show improvement with more bird species, butterflies, bees, small invertebrates, mammals, and will you will find it pleasurable to watch all the life it contains. Pull up a chair and observe.

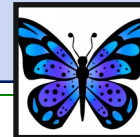
*Good Bugs for your Garden* written and illustrated with careful line drawings by Allison Starcher in 1995 may be out of print, but is wonderfully helpful in identifying those tiny little dots on your plant. Take your hand lens outside and keep searching for something new. I loved this easy to turn pages book.

Xerces Society published a volume called *100 Plants to Feed the Bees*. So far, this is still in my pile but will merit attention soon. Another recommendation is *Pollinator Friendly Gardening for Bees, Butterflies and Other Pollinators*, Rhonda Fleming Hayes, Voyager Press, 2016. If you haven't quite figured out pollination, this will take you a long way. The author is a MG and explains the role of insects in keeping a healthy garden. Much information is research-based and written by field biologists and plant scientists. This is the one I will buy! It is only \$15 and a perfect text for a MG class on pollinators. Keep on reading! It does a body good. ☺

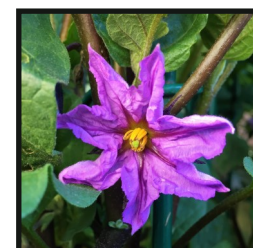




# SUMMER GARDENING GUIDE



|  | JULY  | AUGUST  | SEPTEMBER  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <b>P<br/>L<br/>A<br/>N<br/>T<br/>I<br/>N<br/>G</b>                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ For summer-to-fall color, choose ageratum, celosia, coleus, marigolds, and zinnias</li> <li>◇ Continue planting warm-season vegetables until midmonth: beans, corn, tomatoes</li> <li>◇ Start perennials from cuttings: dianthus, geraniums, verbena</li> <li>◇ Sow seeds of columbine, coreopsis, forget-me-nots and foxglove</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Start seeds of cool-season crops: broccoli, cabbage, lettuce—to set out in August</li> <li>◇ Direct-sow edibles: carrots, onions, peas, radishes</li> <li>◇ Start sowing seeds of cool-weather bedding flowers in flats now: calendula, candytuft, pansies, snapdragons, stock</li> </ul>                            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Seed: try a selection of colorful salad greens, which are easy to grow at home</li> <li>◇ Time to start thinking of what tree to buy. Consider fall color and shop when the leaves color up</li> <li>◇ Shop for bulbs now to get the best selection</li> <li>◇ After midmonth, sow seeds of California poppy and clarkia</li> </ul>   |
| <b>M<br/>A<br/>I<br/>N<br/>T<br/>E<br/>N<br/>A<br/>N<br/>C<br/>E</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Control weeds—pull or hoe them as soon as they appear</li> <li>◇ Deadhead (remove old flowers) from dahlia, rudbeckia, rose and other perennials</li> <li>◇ Fruit trees: brace limbs that are sagging with fruit. Clean up any fallen fruit</li> <li>◇ Continue to irrigate plants, especially when hot and windy weather is forecast</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Deep-water trees. Use a soaker hose and place at drip line of tree</li> <li>◇ Fertilize warm season annuals</li> <li>◇ Deadhead spent blooms</li> <li>◇ Refresh hanging baskets with new transplants. Succulents work well</li> <li>◇ Continue to harvest vegetables for maximum production</li> </ul>               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Get flowering annuals and perennials as well as fall-planted vegetables off to a strong start by incorporating a high-nitrogen fertilizer into the soil before planting. Fertilize again in 2—4 weeks, or follow label instructions</li> <li>◇ Later this month is one of the best times to rejuvenate bluegrass, fescue, and rye grass lawns. Rake and reseed. Be sure to irrigate and keep moist</li> </ul> |
| <b>P<br/>R<br/>E<br/>V<br/>E<br/>N<br/>T<br/>I<br/>O<br/>N</b>       | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Budworms—inspect plants for holes in buds and black droppings. Use organic pesticide, such as Bt (<i>Bacillus thuringiensis</i>), to control</li> <li>◇ Deep water trees. Midsummer heat can cause drought stress. Deep water citrus, fruit and flowering trees once every week or two. Water less thirsty trees once a month</li> <li>◇ When foliage dries completely, dig up spring-flowering bulbs and tubers. If daffodils and Dutch iris appear crowded, dig them up too. Store bulbs in a cool, dry place until fall planting</li> <li>◇ Dig and divide overcrowded bearded iris clumps. Share with friends and neighbors</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Continue to deep water all plants to avoid sunburn and other damage from hot weather</li> <li>◇ Continue garden clean up. Remove fallen fruit and garden debris</li> <li>◇ Inspect plants for signs of spider mites. Apply a blast of water spray to undersides and tops of leaves to dislodge dust mites</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◇ Use a selective pre-emergent herbicide on lawn to keep winter weeds under control</li> <li>◇ Clean up fallen fruit and leaves to keep diseases at bay</li> <li>◇ Clean up old vegetables to prevent over-wintering of insects and disease</li> </ul>  |





**Seeds For Thought is produced by  
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**SEEDS FOR THOUGHT**



**SUMMER  
2019**