



Mediterranean Climate Gardening?

By Merry Campbell

UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Why does anyone living in El Dorado County need to know about Mediterranean climate gardening? What does that have to do with us?

Depending on where you live in El Dorado County, it could help you understand how to be a more successful gardener. Anyone gardening in Placerville West has to deal with aspects of Mediterranean climate. For me, living in Pollock Pines, it is interesting to know but not as relevant. I'll explain why.

First, just what does the phrase mean? It comes from the coastal areas around the Mediterranean Sea which all experience the Mediterranean climate. Its characteristics are:

- Wet, mild winters
- Dry, hot, or warm summers.
- Westerly sea breezes

These two seasons are influenced by the ocean currents and water temperatures that are found around the coastal areas. In all, there are five regions that are considered to have a Mediterranean Climate. In addition to the countries around the Mediterranean Sea, there are southwest and southern Australia, the Western Cape of South Africa, central Chile, California, and the northern Baja Peninsula.

In northern California, the San Francisco Bay Area is a classic example of this climate. In the regions closest to the bay, summer temperatures rarely exceed 72 degrees and winters fall between 30 and 65 degrees. The hills around the Bay Area do trap some of the westerly winds

November 21, 2019

that keep temperatures moderate in the summer months, so places like Walnut Creek and Pleasant Hill have summer temperatures that are much, much higher than the coastal Bay Area, but these locations are still predominately dry.

Further northeast, Sacramento and El Dorado County have the first two characteristics listed above but are not subject to the sea breezes.

Now to answer the question we started with: Why do El Dorado County gardeners need to know about the Mediterranean Climate? Simply put, to garden in most of the westerly area of El Dorado County means you deal with long periods of drought in the hotter months and your plantings must take that into consideration. This doesn't mean you can't grow fruits, vegetables or ornamental plants. It does mean you have to have a good understanding of the water needs of the plants.

If you choose plants that require regular water, you will need to provide more water than for plants that are considered drought tolerant. There are several references for determining the water needs of plants but the UCCE Master Gardeners recommend WUCOLS (Water Use Classification of Landscape Species), which can be found online here: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS>, and as a secondary resource the Sunset Western Gardening Book.

If you wish to take full advantage of the climate in which you live and garden, then you may want to look for many of the drought-tolerant plants listed below. All of them do well in USDA zone 8-11. This is only a small list of plants that will do well in a Mediterranean Climate.

Rock Purslane (*Calandrinia spectabilis*)
Debregeasia edulis (*Yanagi Ichigo*)
Chinese Dregea (*Dregea sinensis 'Variegata'*)
Smoketree (*Cotinus coggygria*)
Canary Island Foxglove (*Isoplexis canariensis*)
Anchor Plant (*Colletia paradoxa*)
Viper's Bugloss (*Echium Vulgare*)
Bugle Lily (*Watsonia pillansii*)
Pouch Flower (*Calceolaria tomentosa*)
Kangaroo Apple (*Solanum laciniatum*)
Lizard Plant (*Tetrastigma voinierianum*)
Cunco Rojo (*Colletia ulicina*)

Whether you decide to plant drought-tolerant, regular, or high-water use plants, there are two things to remember: (1) Any plant, even a drought-tolerant one, needs regular water for at least two years to get established, and (2) Clustering plants with similar water needs into one hydrozone eliminates problems of over- and under-watering, which can occur when planting drought-tolerant, and regular to high water-use plants on the same drip-irrigation line (or sprinkler).

For more information about the Mediterranean climate, check the UCANR series of videos at <https://www.uctv.tv/search/?keyword=Mediterranean+climate>.

November 21, 2019

There are no Master Gardeners classes scheduled for the upcoming weekend, but the Sherwood Demonstration Garden will be open and public tours will be available until 9:15 AM, Saturday, December 7, at 6699 Campus Dr. in Placerville. We have a lovely example of a Mediterranean garden,

http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden/Individual_Gardens_Gateway/Mediterranean_Garden/.

For more information on the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County, see our website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512), or send us an email using the Ask a Master Gardener option on our website. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. We also encourage you to visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College, El Dorado Center. See http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden for more information and days and hours of operation, or call us to schedule a tour. To sign up for notices and newsletters, see http://ucanr.edu/master_gardener_e-news. Master Gardeners are also on Facebook and Instagram; we hope you enjoy our postings and will share them with your friends.