



Photo by Melinda Nestlerode

# Seeds For Thought

Solano County Master Gardeners

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## “SHELTERING-IN-PLACE” GARDENING

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



All Photos in this Article by Sherry Richards

Weeks of “sheltering-in-place” provided more time for garden tasks and to see if my efforts at following good gardening practices were working.

First, I pulled weeds, which were taking

nutrients and water from desirable plants, and multiplying quickly. I replenished rock and added organic mulch in my landscape, to help control weeds.

Were the right plants still in the right place? Matching plant needs to the proper location in your garden is important for a plant’s survival and health. Conditions change and a once sunny location may have become shady. Things looked fine except for a *Lagerstroemia* (Crepe Myrtle) shrub. I looked up high, and the branches, with only a few leaves at the top, were over the fence, stretching to reach the sun through a neighbor’s massive tree. The crepe myrtle - no longer the “right plant in the right place” - was removed.

It’s surprising how much water it can take to penetrate an inch of soil, or, how easily overwatering damages plants and its roots. I checked irrigation lines looking for thirsty or overwatered plants or irrigation leaks, and adjusted or repaired as needed.

I checked for insect damage and plant diseases, and used University of California (UC) Integrated Pest Management (IPM) guidelines to resolve. I followed IPM policies to eliminate snails and aphids, using the least toxic methods. Lots of

beneficial insects, bees, butterflies and hummingbirds were fluttering here and there, so the plants I selected to attract them had worked.

Soil was next. I checked potted plants and raised beds, and added soil if needed. Digging around unhealthy looking plants to see the condition of the soil helped me determine if the problem was a watering issue. I amended with organic compost, and, if needed and the time was right, added fertilizer following label instructions.

My garden seemed happy with the additional attention; alive with colorful blooms, bees, butterflies, other garden inhabitants, and birds “stealing” coir from hanging baskets for nests. Delighted with a bottle tree given to me by a friend, I made a second one for my garden. Sitting in my garden gave me time to play “catch-up” by phone or social media with friends and family, or to read a book.

Gardening doesn’t take 100% of my concentration. Like many gardeners, weeding, raking, deadheading, hand-watering, harvesting, and many gardening tasks are automatic. Sometimes its “garden-inspired” meditation for me. Other times, I think about this or that...



Looking at beautiful spring flowers, I thought of a quote by British poet, Lord Alfred Tennyson (1809-1892), who became the Poet Laureate of Great Britain in 1850. “If I had a flower for every time I thought of you...I would walk through my garden forever.” Although meant for romantic love, it also reminds me of

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cherished memories of people I loved who are now gone, and happy thoughts of family and friends.

My garden is quiet company except for the sounds of insects, birds, wind chimes, and me, its noisy companion. Happily working in my garden, I talk to plants, birds and butterflies, and sometimes, to myself. I swear war on tomato hornworms (*Manduca quinquemaculata*), "thinking" about eating my tomato plants. This spring, I had time for a few more dance steps and singing a favorite garden song, learned as a child, about a singing owl who loved the "Spring-A". With all the singing, dancing and talking, I wondered how my plants were "feeling" about all this commotion. And then the "this and that" started...

Here's a "this": The theory that plants benefit from human conversation dates back to 1848, when German professor Gustav Fechner published his book *Nanna (Soul-Life of Plants)*. The idea has been a popular one, with several books published over the years. In 1970, it was possible to buy a music album for your plants called "*Music to Grow Plants By*". There is interesting scientific research online about this subject, which has been studied for many years.



And, here's a "that": Doctors Heidi Appel and Rex Cocroft, scientists at the University of Missouri, researched plant reactions to predators. They found the tiny *Arabidopsis* mustard plant detects its predator as chewing vibrations reverberate through leaves and stems, and it reacts with chemical defenses. Aren't plants smart?!

I am a backyard gardener talking to plants, singing and dancing in my garden. It gives me such joy! I try to

follow good gardening practices - the usual things we gardeners know are important to plant health. But, surely a little singing, dancing and chatter can't hurt!

After weeks of sheltering-in-place, I was more grateful for my garden, and for my dad, who taught me the love of gardening as a small child. Its been many years since Dad left this world. "*If I had a flower for every time I thought of you...*" ❧

## A MESSAGE FROM THE UCCE STATEWIDE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

### Covid-19 Impact

To reduce the rate and risk of community spread of COVID-19, the UC Master Gardener Program, UC ANR, and UC Cooperative Extension locations are working remotely.

**UC Master Gardener volunteers are still available to support your home gardening questions by e-mail, telephone, or ZOOM. Please note that many UC Master Gardener Program public education events statewide are being rescheduled, postponed or moved to a later date.**



Click <http://mg.ucanr.edu/FindUs/> to 'Find a Program' and be directed to your local county based program. You will be redirected to your local county website and contact information. The health and safety of UC Master Gardener volunteers, staff and our extended community is our number one priority. Thank you for your understanding.

Since 1980, the University of California Master Gardener Program has been extending UC research-based information about home horticulture and pest management to the public. The UC Master Gardener Program is a public service and outreach program under the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources, administered locally by participating UC Cooperative Extension county offices.

The UC Master Gardener Program is an example of an effective partnership between the University of California and passionate volunteers. In exchange for training from the University, UC Master Gardeners offer volunteer services and outreach to the general public in more than 1,286 demonstration, community and school gardens across 52 California counties. Last year 6,154 active UC Master Gardener volunteers donated 446,237 hours, and 6.8+ million hours have been donated since the program's inception.



# A HONEY OF AN IDEA

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

The honeybee is a very important pollinator for many of our crops, and many people believe that honey possesses special properties for nutrition and health. It contains many minerals such as calcium, copper, iron, magnesium, manganese, phosphorus, potassium, sodium and zinc. It contains antioxidants and supposedly can aid digestion. Honey must not be given to infants under the age of one year because it can cause a form of infant botulism which can cause serious problems in the digestive tract of babies.

Honey is slightly sweeter than sugar so less can be used in recipes. One teaspoon contains 22 calories as compared to 16 calories per teaspoon of table sugar. Honey acts as a humectant and provides and retains moisture in a variety of foods and can even extend the shelf life of baked goods. Honey also acts as an emulsifier, and as a binder and thickener for sauces, dips, dressings and marinades.

Honey is different from cane sugar in several ways: It adds moisture that table sugar does not have; it is much more dense (weighs more per cup); it adds its own flavor to the finished product; it can cause baked foods

to brown more quickly, and it adds acid to a recipe. Since most canning recipes prefer acidity, it is safe to use in place of sugar in canning. Flavors and colors differ in varieties of honey which can affect the final product. For instance, blackberry honey is very dark and intense in flavor in comparison to the pale, more mild-flavored clover honey. My bees enjoy not only the summertime star thistle but also year-round assorted citrus blossoms.

To use honey in baking use ¾ cup of honey to replace one cup of sugar. Reduce other liquids by one-half cup for each cup of honey you add to the recipe. To counteract the additional acid in honey, it is advised that you add 1/8 teaspoon of baking soda per cup of honey. Also, lower the oven temperature about 25 degrees F.

To use honey in jams, jellies, preserves, fruit, etc., you can substitute 7/8 cup of honey for each cup of sugar, and don't change the other liquids. Suggested syrups for canning fruits are as follows: A thin or light syrup uses 1 cup mild flavored honey to 3 cups water, yielding 4 cups; a medium syrup uses 2 cups honey to 4 cups water, yielding 5 ½ cups. For fruit leather you can use ¼ cup mild flavored honey for each 4 cups of fruit puree. ✕

### Tomato Catsup with Honey: Yield: 4 pints

Combine the following ingredients in a large kettle:

- 8 cups ripe peeled tomatoes
- 2 medium onions, peeled and chopped
- 1 large green pepper, seeded and chopped
- 4 small garlic cloves, minced
- 2 large celery stalks, diced
- 1 cup cider vinegar
- ½ cup honey
- ½ tsp. cloves
- 1 tsp. dry mustard
- ½ tsp. mace
- 1 tsp. allspice
- ¼ tsp. Tabasco
- 2 Tbsp. lemon juice
- 1 Tbsp. (or less) salt
- ½ tsp. black pepper.

Cook very slowly over low heat until vegetables are very soft, preventing them from boiling. Remove from heat and put through food mill or food processor. Return to heat, bring to a boil, pour into hot clean ½ pint or pint jars, leaving 1 inch at top. Seal with 2-piece lids and process in boiling water canner for 10 minutes. Once the processing time is completed, leave the jars in the canner's hot water for 5 more minutes. Then remove jars to rack or towel to cool. Cool for 12-24 hours. Check to see if all the jars sealed. Wash the sealed jars, especially under the ring band, dry, label and store in a cool, dark location.

### Peach-Honey Jam

This recipe is from the California Honey Advisory Board.

You will need:

- 4 cups peeled and sliced fresh ripe peaches
- 1 box powdered pectin
- 1 1/3 cups mild flavored honey
- ¼ cup lemon juice

In a large saucepan, mash the peaches and stir in the pectin. Bring to a boil and boil hard for 1 minute, stirring constantly. Add honey and lemon juice. Bring to a full rolling boil (a boil that cannot be stirred away) and boil hard for 2 minutes, stirring constantly. Skim off foam. Ladle into 4 hot, clean ½ pint jars, leaving ¼ inch headspace. Add prepared canning lids and ring bands. Process in a boiling water canner for 10 minutes. Once the processing time is completed, leave the jars in the canner's hot water for 5 more minutes. Then remove jars to rack or towel to cool. Cool for 12-24 hours. Check to see if all the jars sealed. Wash the sealed jars, especially under the ring band, dry, label and store in a cool, dark location.

**Please Note:** Processing times and instructions change over the years, so it is important to use up-to-date information such as described in reliable canning books such as those by the *USDA Complete Guide to Home Canning, 2015 Edition*  
[https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications\\_usda.html](https://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html)  
[http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications\\_usda.html](http://nchfp.uga.edu/publications/publications_usda.html)



# TEN DELICIOUS ROSES

*Spring Tseng, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

I stop for roses. Roses are the most noticeable plants, with their showy flowers, abundant varieties and mysterious fragrances. They have never failed me.

A few years back, when I visited Central Park in San Mateo for the first time, I was surprised to have found ‘Ketchup and Mustard’ in its rose garden. With its flower petals so “ketchup” and its center so “mustard”, it amused me. At the time, I thought, what a brilliant name for this rose! And, I couldn’t help wonder if there were any other roses that bear names of edibles.



*‘Ketchup and Mustard’  
All photos in this article by Spring Tseng*

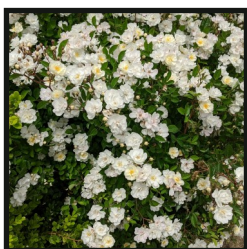


*‘Apricots n Cream’*

And yes, over time I found nine others that joined the banquet. Each of these roses brought me excitement and joy. They are: ‘Apricots n Cream’, ‘Brandy’, ‘Candy Cane Cocktail’, ‘Cinnamon Dolce’, ‘Gingerbread Man’, ‘Gourmet Popcorn’, ‘Hot Cocoa’, ‘Rainbow Sorbet’ and ‘White Licorice’.

These roses, based on their growing characteristics, can be classified into: Hybrid Tea, Floribunda and Miniature. The plant of a Hybrid Tea is usually upright and can grow up to 6 feet tall with large flowers suitable for cutting. Floribunda is bushy and it produces multiple flowers in clusters. They make a magnificent display in a garden. Miniature roses are usually 1-2 feet tall. Their flowers are about 1-2 inches in diameter; nonetheless, they are as fascinating as any others.

‘Gourmet Popcorn’ is a miniature rose. However, with careful training, it can grow into a hedge, like those in the Woodland Library Rose Garden. Surrounded by thousands of white flowers with buttery highlights while in the garden, you can almost hear the lovely popping sound of popcorn in the making! In May, ‘Brandy’ is in full bloom in the San Jose Municipal Rose Garden. At sunset time, bring your blanket and picnic basket. Let’s find a shady area and have some Brandy! Oh, did you hear the music from the ice cream truck? Let’s order some ‘Rainbow Sorbet’ for the kids. They have been so well-behaved and it’s time for a treat!



*‘Gourmet Popcorn’*

It seems only natural that many roses were named based on how they appeared to us. ‘Apricots n Cream’ has a creamy

apricot color, and ‘Cinnamon Dolce’ is brownish red like the cinnamon we know of. ‘Cinnamon Dolce’ also has a sweet scent and is therefore “dolce”. You will find this flavor in some coffee joints. As for ‘White Licorice’, it sends a soft licorice aroma into the air when the flowers are young.



*‘Cinnamon Dolce’*

Naming a new rose is, in general, the responsibility and privilege of the marketing department of its developing company. However, it is possible for people like you and I to name a new rose of our choice! For instance, one of the rose growers charges interested individuals a fee of \$6,500 to acquire a new rose. The package includes 10 own-root roses and the rights to additional plants at \$10 each with the registration, naming, and marketing the responsibility of the new owner. Well, do you have a favorite food you want to use to name a new rose? I am dreaming of flan...



*‘Brandy’*

Three of the 10 roses mentioned here made it to the All-America Rose Selections (AARS). They are: ‘Brandy’, ‘Hot Cocoa’ and ‘Rainbow Sorbet’. Since 1940, AARS was the highest honor given to a rose in the United States. The contenders would first be planted in 6 different regions in the US: north-west, north-central, north-east, south-east, south-central and south-west. During the 2 years that followed, qualities such as disease resistance, flower, form and ability to grow in multiple climates were evaluated. Each year, the judges would get together, and only one rose was selected to award this honor. A rose tagged ‘AARS’ gave customers confidence to make the purchase. Therefore, its impact to marketing was invaluable. After running successfully for 74 years, the AARS was replaced by American Garden Rose Selections (AGRS) in 2014. Roses are now evaluated by the region they grow. The reason for this change is simple. The growers want to offer roses that are carefree and can do very well in your backyard. Under this new guideline, multiple roses can obtain an AGRS award each year.

The ‘Candy Cane Cocktail’ in my backyard is making a splendid show at this time of the year. It should be fun to offer such a drink at my next garden party. ☺



*‘Candy Cane Cocktail’*

# A PROFILE OF JUDY HAGAR: GOLD BADGE VOLUNTEER

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



wanted to learn more about California gardening and plants (versus those in Wisconsin) she began taking horticulture courses at Solano Community College. There, she met a number of enthusiastic Master Gardeners. Enjoying both the courses and her classmates, and hearing more about the Master Gardener Program, she thought it would be a good volunteer opportunity to pursue. So she took the plunge and graduated from the program in 2013.

Her favorite Master Gardener (MG) activity is staffing a MG information table because it's a two way information exchange. She's not only providing gardening information, but she's learning what is growing, or not growing well in people's gardens. She also enjoys the MG plant exchanges. She enjoys these activities so much, that five years after graduating from the program, she earned her Gold Badge (volunteers contributing more than 1000 hours to the program are awarded Gold Badge status).

When questioned as to whether or not there were specific plants she enjoyed growing, she replied she LOVES to grow vegetables. She starts all her vegetables from seed so she looks forward to receiving those annual seed catalogs in the mail every January. In fact, when I asked her what her dream garden would look like, she said she always dreamed of having a really large vegetable garden with a small garden tractor to till the soil. But she said now her more practical goal is simply to have something in bloom at all times. It's no wonder that she'd like to see everyone grow edibles in their garden so that they can enjoy their fresh harvested taste.

And I couldn't help but ask her to name some of her favorite gardening books. She replied she enjoys Jeff Gilman's books as he examines garden myths, and Linda Chalker-Scott's book *How Plants Work* because she discusses the science behind the amazing things plants do. And she always has her *Sunset Western Garden Book* nearby! ☺

If you've met Judy you know she's youthful in both appearance and spirit. But believe it or not, she's a great grandmother to eleven great grandchildren! That saying that gardening keeps you young must be true. Her great grandmothers and grandfather gardened well into their nineties!

Judy grew up in rural Wisconsin near Alma, situated along the Mississippi river, with a population of 800. It was there she developed her passion for gardening. She fondly remembers working in the family vegetable garden, the size of a house plot, with her mother and sisters starting at age four. Half the garden was planted with a variety of vegetables, and the other half with potatoes. She loved working in the garden, be it planting, weeding, harvesting, or hand picking away nasty potato bugs!

She worked at Travis Air Force Base for thirty seven years in both military and civilian positions, retiring in 2011. Since she





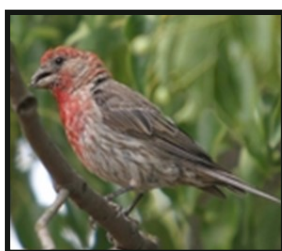
# WHAT BIRDS HAVE YOU SEEN OR HEARD IN YOUR GARDEN?

*Paula Pashby, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

Often, we are so busy with “to do” lists and chores in our garden that we miss out on some of the unexpected pleasures that our efforts can bring. When was the last time you took a moment to enjoy some of the spectacular nature that is attracted to the fruit of your hard work? We may see or hear some common birds in the area - scrub jays, mourning doves, finches or sparrows, but how much do we know and understand about why they are visiting our little piece of paradise?

I have discovered that there are many positive aspects to slowing down and learning about the birds in our gardens. There have been several studies that show how people who are exposed to nature (wildlife, birds, plants, trees) have significantly lowered feelings of stress, depression, and anxiety. Whether you’re simply investing in a bird feeder and setting it up in your garden, or you’re going for a walk in nature to view birds, the process is beneficial to your mind and body... even if you don’t get to see any birds! All you need to do is become mindful and watchful for their existence, and you will begin to see the rewards. Birdwatching is renowned as a meditative exercise and can help nurture your connection with nature.

Listed here are a few of the many birds that may be visiting your own garden in Solano County and the surrounding areas, along with some ideas on how to attract them to your setting:



*Male House Finch  
Photo by Tom Greer/CalPhotos*

The **House Finches** are small birds with a conical bill. They have a notched tail with a streaky brown back, belly and tail. The males typically have a vivid red head and upper breast. These little beauties usually stick around all year, but you will see them less at certain times of the year, like summer, when their food sources are limited or more

available in other areas. They sing many sweet songs which depend on the time of year, or whether they are male or female, adult or juvenile. The males sing a long, jumbled warbling composed of short notes.

What are the house finches looking for in *your* special garden? Water is always on their list; also, they are seeking different types of seeds (the bird seed bag will usually list the types of birds the food will attract). They also eat plant buds, fruits, berries, and insects and love to eat from suet and finch feeders.



*Lesser Goldfinch  
Photo by Al Alvarado*

In the Spring, the male **Goldfinches** are an intense yellow with shiny black and white streaks. The female’s colors are somewhat muted, but still easy to identify by their conical bill, pointed, notched tail, wing-bars, and lack of streaking. Similar to the house finches, these gorgeous birds usually stick around all year, their appearance will change slightly, and you will see them

less at certain times of the year due to food availability. According to The Cornell Lab of Ornithology, “It sounds like the bird is quietly saying po-ta-to-chip with a very even cadence! They also sometimes give harsh threat calls when in feeding flocks or at the nest. Males make a tee-yeé courtship call upon landing near a female in spring or early summer, often followed by a burst of song.”

What are the goldfinches looking for in *your* special garden? Water is always on their list. Depending on the type of goldfinch, they can be found at feeders any time of year, but most commonly during winter. They eat seeds from plants like sunflowers, thistle and asters. They are not too picky about their feeders; their favorites seem to be tube feeders, screen feeders and finch feeders.

There are many different types of **Sparrows**: house, song, chipping, etc. Most sparrows have a stout body, covered with brown, black and white feathers, and rounded wings. Males and females can be distinguished by the feather coloration: males have reddish backs and black bib, while females have brown backs with stripes.

Some types of sparrows live in California year-round, while others appear each winter over much of North America. Male and female house sparrows make single “cheep” notes to indicate submissiveness in flocks, or between pairs as part of courting.

What are the sparrows looking for in *your* special garden? Water is always on their list. They will go for most types of feeders and eat mostly seeds of weeds and grasses, along with grains such as oats, wheat, barley, and corn, and fruit, including

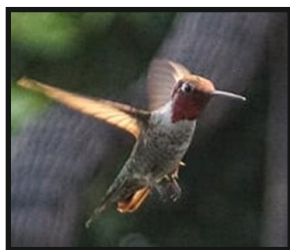


*White Crowned Sparrow  
Photo by Joyce Gross/CalPhotos*

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elderberries and blackberries. They also enjoy some of the garden insects, such as wasps, caterpillars, and beetles.



*Anna's Hummingbird*  
Photo by Al Alvarado

There are a few different types of **Hummingbirds**, such as Anna's, Rufous, Allen's and more. Anna's hummingbirds are the most common in Solano County and surrounding areas. Anna's are medium-sized hummingbirds, around 4 inches in length. They have a brilliant iridescent green back and grayish-white underparts. The

colorful adult males have an iridescent rosy-red crown and gorget that extends to the sides of the neck. When the sunlight hits the vibrant rosy-red color, it is a breathtaking sight! Anna's have a distinctive song that sounds like a succession of buzzes, followed by a more tuneful whistle, and then followed by a firm "chip" sound. They are very curious and may hover near you with a loud buzzing sound.

What are the hummingbirds looking for in *your* special garden? Water is always on their list, of course. Also, they visit our gardens each spring to breed and are looking for nectar from our gardens and feeders. The large amount of sucrose in nectar gives hummingbirds the necessary energy for their high metabolism, rapid flight, and energetic lives. They eat a variety of other items to get adequate nutrition, including insects, sap, and pollen. When providing food in hummingbird feeders, make sure that the feeders are cleaned often.



*Northern Mocking Bird*  
Photo by Al Alvarado

**Northern Mocking Birds** are medium-sized songbirds with gray to brown body coloration and a lighter underbelly. Their wings are rounded with white patches on the upper and lower surfaces, which are visible when the wings are outstretched. These birds are mainly permanent residents, but northern birds may move south during harsh

weather. Adult male mockingbirds can emit up to 200 distinctive noises. They mimic sounds, but still have songs of their own, and are capable of learning new sounds throughout their life, unlike many birds.

What are the mocking birds looking for in *your* special garden? Water is always on their list. Also, they eat mainly insects in summer, but switch to eating mostly fruit in fall and winter. Among their animal prey are beetles, earthworms, moths, butterflies, ants, bees, wasps, grasshoppers, and sometimes small lizards. Although it's uncommon for northern

mockingbirds to stop by seed feeders, you can entice them to your garden with a suet feeder or with sliced fruit, like oranges and apples.

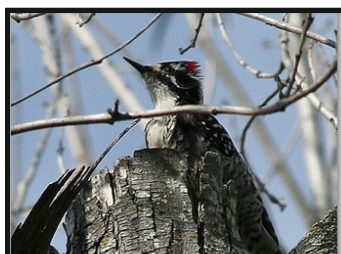
I hope I was able to spark some curiosity about our feathered friends, and the information in this article serves as a launching point for your own quest for gardening delights. Here is a list of other birds commonly seen in Solano County so you can look them up and compare them to what you might see in your garden! There are also many resources available to help identify the birds by sight or sound (see Sources listed at the end of this article). ☘



*European Starling*  
Photo by John White/CalPhotos



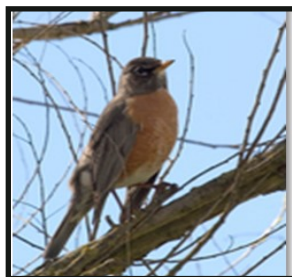
*Black Phoebe*  
Photo by John W. Wall/CalPhotos



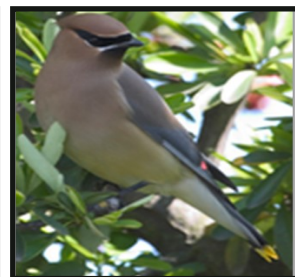
*Nuttall's Woodpecker*  
Photo by Al Alvarado



*Dark Eyed Junco*  
Photo by Nathan DeBoer/CalPhotos



*American Robin*  
Photo by Tom Greer/CalPhotos



*Cedar Waxwing*  
Photo by Tom Greer/CalPhotos

Sources

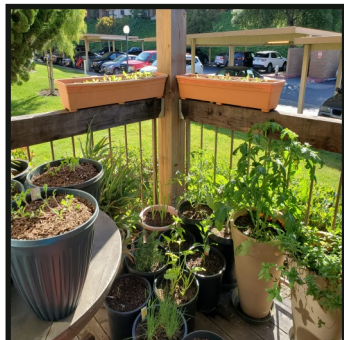
- American Horticultural Therapy Association: <https://www.ahta.org>
- Bird Watching HQ: <https://birdwatchinghq.com/finch-feeders/>
- Celebrate Urban Birds: <https://celebrateurbanbirds.org>
- iNaturalist, Solano County, CA: <https://www.inaturalist.org/places/solano-county>
- Napa Solano Audubon Society: [www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Monitoring/Hummingbirds/solano](http://www.napasolanoaudubon.com/Monitoring/Hummingbirds/solano)
- The Cornell Lab: All About Birds: <https://www.allaboutbirds.org/guide>



# NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS: MASTER GARDENER STYLE

*Amalia Rehman, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

Every winter you start to hear people talk about how they are going to make a fresh start with the new year. All these resolutions about getting a beach-ready body during the cold rainy season. How can you get inspired to wear a bikini for the summer when it's still so dreary outside? I guess I am just wired differently. It is not until the sun starts to warm my back and penetrate my bones as I am walking outside, that I begin to feel enlivened; and a small tingling of my spirit ensues. One may say that makes me simply sound like a cold-blooded creature, but I prefer to attribute it to my affinity for the birthing season: Spring.



*All Photos in this Article by Amalia Rehman*

So here it was, the beginning of Spring and I was looking at that tiny deck I have off my living room. It spent the winter as a storage space for folding chairs, empty containers, and bags of industrial electric cords. It was dusty, uninviting and barren. As I looked at it and longed for my dream permaculture food forest, my heart felt defeated. What surprised me was when I stepped out onto the deck and felt the warm sun on my face and the breeze wafted across my chest. I closed my eyes and felt a memory of my youth come over me. It was the summer in Massachusetts in a small town called Nantasket. The ocean only five blocks away with the cool breeze and bright sun of a summer's day. It pulled at me and reminded me to not lose hope and to remember that a single flower can bring joy. (I have quite a passion for orchids).

So, I went online to order a few seeds. None available. I tried Amazon. They were available, but no set date to expect a delivery.

With that kind of determination that we have with the onset of any new diet, I pulled on my rubber gloves and my face mask and ventured out to Home Depot. I maintained my 6 foot social-

distancing in the long line outside of the store while I waited for the greeter to be informed that a customer could come in as another exited the store. I was so impressed with my grit and determination to get on with my New Start. Why, I was ready to risk my life for this promised happiness.

I went home with a few promising plants and a few packets of seeds. I was determined to surround myself with green glory. I wanted to walk out onto that deck and feel surrounded by life. I wanted to take my focus off the dumpster alcove straight across from my apartment, only separated by the street and parking spaces that made up my aspect for the last several months.



And, 3 weeks later, there it was.... Beautiful.... That folding chair is my favorite morning spot where I sit and look at the sun reflecting off all the promise in the blossoms. As they sweat under the hot sun, the leaves give off the most pleasant form of body odor and I am greeted by the perfume of spearmint, oregano and cilantro. I count the blossoms on each plant and feel a sense of anticipation for the satisfaction of eating a self-grown tomato, hot chili chutney, pickled okra...



It may be that Master Gardeners are wired a bit differently than the rest of the world. We see all these people thinking that the dead of winter is the time for a new start in their lives? But I think we know better. We are wired into a more natural cycle that recognizes the beginning of Spring as the time for new starts. Pun intended. ☘

*"If you have a garden and a library  
you have everything you need"*

*-Cicero*



# COVERING THE GROUND WITH EDIBLE CALIFORNIA NATIVE STRAWBERRIES

Alex Russell, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



All Photos in this Article by Alex Russell

A groundcover is like the background in a studio portrait. At it's best, the subject is all you see. In one corner of my garden, the sprawling California gray rush (*Juncus patens*) and clumps of Dusty Miller (*Senecio cineraria*) are the subject. It's easy to miss what's underneath.

But these days, it's the groundcover of California strawberry (*Fragaria vesca* L. ssp. *californica*) I enjoy the most. It looks good, green and lush even in the hot, dry Vacaville summer, and any day in spring I can go outside and clear aside the leaves to pick my fill of tiny, sweet berries.

## Growing California Strawberry

California strawberry is a subspecies of strawberry native to California and Oregon. The plant is clay tolerant. It forms a mound about eight inches high with marble-sized berries throughout the spring—unlike some of its wild cousins, those berries are sweet and very tasty when you can find them hanging just underneath the leaves.

This strawberry is a forest understory plant and drought tolerant in its native range along the coast and in the Sierras. In the hot Central Valley, California strawberry will definitely not survive that hot, dusty hillside with your Cleveland sage (*Salvia clevelandii*) and California buckwheat (*Eriogonum fasciculatum*).

For where California strawberry will grow best, think more like under the deck, or in that shady nook beside the eastern or northern wall of the house. In my garden in Vacaville this hardy groundcover stays fresh and green in afternoon sun with weekly water. Realistically, there's nothing wrong with trying California strawberry out in different spots around the garden. The leaves get scorched pretty fast but also recover fast with new growth, particularly from runners.

## New California Strawberry Plants for Free Forever

What surprised me most is the economics of planting California strawberry. Like all other strawberries, this one spreads by runners. It seems like all year long these plants have been pushing out runners in every direction. At the end of those runners a new plant forms while the runner itself keeps pushing out, probably forever.

Runners are not stolons. Runners reach across the surface of the ground. At each point where the leaves form above a new crown, roots will start to push down. Stolons, like the kind you find in invasive grasses and clover, push out more slowly either just above or just below the surface and root at just about every point, which makes them much harder to root out.

I'd describe California strawberry, as an assertive spreader. From a single plant in a four-inch pot it's managed to grow over about everything less than a foot high, including Black Mondo Grass (*Ophiopogon planiscapus*), as well as a Creeping Raspberry (*Rubus calycinoides*) that's just now starting to break through by growing up a rock I put next to it for that purpose.

My California strawberry has been so prolific that in January I cut away some of the new crowns that were starting to root across the concrete patio and put them in pots. After a month of rain keeping them rooting, I planted them along a margin in another part of the garden and as we speak they're making themselves completely at home.

The dense green cover plays an important role beyond just looking good. A good groundcover like California strawberry acts like a living mulch. It shades out weeds with a thick, green mat. It also pushes down roots into that intractable, undiggable clay, creating space for water to infiltrate while adding organic matter with a regular topcoat of dead leaves.

Background or focal point, California strawberry is worth a try. It only took a handful of those sweet red berries to convince me. ✕



**UCCE MASTER GARDENERS OF SOLANO COUNTY**  
**SUCCULENT EXTRAVAGANZA 2**

**OUR SECOND ANNUAL PLANT SALE WILL TENTATIVELY BE HELD ON**

**Saturday, October 3, 2020**  
**9:00am to 1:00pm**  
**Master Gardener Office Parking Lot**  
**501 Texas Street, Fairfield, CA**




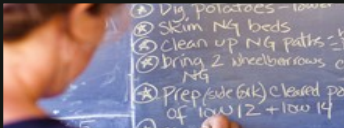

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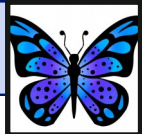
Please check our website at: <http://www.solanomg.ucanr.edu> for event updates and, as October 3rd nears, for current COVID-19 information (such as whether masks are required) for those who attend the event  
 For more information contact Jennifer Baumbach: 707-389-0645 or [jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu](mailto:jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu)

We hope to see you there! Master Gardeners will be available to answer gardening questions

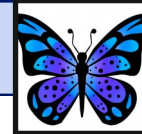
**MASTER GARDENER RESOURCES**

 <p>The California Garden Web &gt;&gt;&gt;</p>	<p>The <u>California Garden Web</u> serves as a portal to organize and extend to the public the University of California's vast collection of research-based information about gardening.</p> <p><a href="http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/">http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/</a></p>
 <p>The California Backyard Orchard &gt;&gt;&gt;</p>	<p>Visit <u>The California Backyard Orchard</u> to learn about the home orchard and understand that it is, in fact, a living expression of genetics interacting with soils, weather, tree spacing, pests, and many other factors.</p> <p><a href="http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/">http://homeorchard.ucanr.edu/</a></p>
 <p>Integrated Pest Management (IPM) &gt;&gt;&gt;</p>	<p><u>Integrated pest management</u>, or IPM, is a process you can use to solve pest problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment. IPM can be used to manage all kinds of pests anywhere—in urban, agricultural, and wildland or natural areas.</p> <p><a href="http://ipm.ucanr.edu/index.html">http://ipm.ucanr.edu/index.html</a></p>
 <p>ANR Publications &gt;&gt;&gt;</p>	<p>Find quality peer-reviewed products produced by UC Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) at the click of a mouse. Whether you're looking for advice on crop production, pest management, study materials for Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) exams, nutrition, or gardening, you'll find it in the <u>ANR catalog</u>.</p> <p><a href="https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/">https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/</a></p>
 <p>Arboretum All-Stars &gt;&gt;&gt;</p>	<p>The horticultural staff of the <u>UC Davis Arboretum</u> has identified 100 tough, reliable plants that have been tested, are easy to grow, require little water, have few problems with pests or diseases, and have outstanding qualities in the garden. Many of them are California native plants that support native birds and insects. Most All-Star plants can be successfully planted and grown throughout California.</p> <p><a href="https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars?id=4">https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum-all-stars?id=4</a></p>





# SUMMER GARDENING GUIDE



	JULY	AUGUST	SEPTEMBER
<b>P L A N T I N 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 A I N T E N A N C 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 R E V E N T I O 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>
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**Seeds For Thought is produced by  
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**SEEDS FOR THOUGHT**



**SUMMER  
2020**