

Seeds For Thought

UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano County

Winter 2023 Vol. 18 Issue 1

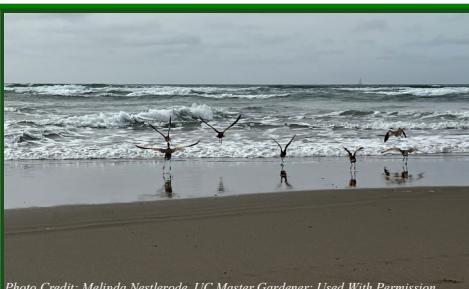


Photo Credit: Melinda Nestlerode, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

SALVIA ROSMARINUS: THE AROMATIC HERB

Michelle Krespi, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Photo Credit: All Photos in This Article By Michelle Krespi, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

If I look right out of my backdoor slider I have a straight-on view of an old, well established *Salvia rosmarinus*, commonly known as Rosemary. It is an evergreen, perennial shrub from the *Lamiaceae* (mint) family, known for its ornamental foliage, fragrance and use in cooking.

Even though the plant is pest resistant, there are climatic conditions (like warm, wet weather) that can result in powdery mildew and or leaf spot, especially on the lower leaves of the plant, as well as cultural conditions (like irregular watering) that can cause these diseases. To prevent powdery mildew prune your plant for maximum air circulation and water them at the base of the stem. As you can see from the pictures, mine is pruned so that the bottom part closest to the soil is cleared of foliage. Consequently, I have never had issues with powdery mildew. But if found, remove and dispose of the infected areas and, if necessary, use a fungicide. Leaf spot, which begins with the appearance of small brown spots, if untreated can grow into yellowing and color fading. The same treatment applies here—the application of a fungicide followed by a follow up treatment a week later. As with most plants overwatering is the most common cause of plant decline or death.

Salvia rosmarinus has many distinctive physical qualities making it easily identifiable. The first is it’s unique smell. It is by far one of the worlds best known and most often grown herbs. I have had this prolific herb growing every place I lived for the last forty years so I can attest to this plants ability to thrive in varying conditions.

In my research for this article, I was confused at the difference between *Salvia rosmarinus* and *Rosmarinus officinalis*. As it turns out, the father of binomial nomenclature, Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus (1707-1778) gave rosemary the name *Rosmarinus officinalis*. The second name “*officinalis*” was a standard name as ancient apothecaries were called “*oficinas*” in his time. In 2017, this *Salvia*’s name was changed to its current name after research showed that rosemary is in fact a *salvia*, or a sage!!

Being a native of Africa, Europe, Western Asia and the Mediterranean, they thrive in dry rocky areas, which is exactly where it has lived in all of my houses. This shrub loves to grow in light, dry to medium, slightly acidic, well-drained soil in full sun. It will however, tolerate drought, partial shade, salt, heavy pruning and most soil types except for clay. It has a low tolerance for wet, humid environments so placement is important. Keep in mind that certain varieties love to cascade, which it did in my last house. In my current house, my rosemary has been trained for many years in bonsai fashion, as you can see by the structure in the pictures accompanying this article. It is easy to grow and pest-resistant, reaching heights of 4’ to 6’ tall and 2’ to 4’ wide in areas where it is winter hardy, according to [The National Gardening Association Plants Data Base](#). It has opposite leaf arrangement with sessile (lacking stems) leaves that have green tops and a white underside that is tomentose (covered with densely matted wooly hairs). Other identifying characteristics are their square stems and axillary purple, blue or white flowers that are whorled around the stem.

Regardless of its name, if you love both the smell and taste of rosemary growing in your garden, it is also beneficial as it attracts both bees and butterflies. I hope I have given you many reasons to grow this herb both for your health, your gardens health, your nose and your tastebuds. Enjoy! ©



Salvia Rosmarinus: The Aromatic Herb	1	Dog Urine Spots On Your Lawn	5
Preservation Pointers: Kiwifruit	2	Rainwater Harvesting	6
Don't Let Them Drift By Your Window: A Word About Leaf Mold	5	Norfolk Island Pine	7
Get Ready Get Set, Go—Spring Soon!	6	Master Gardeners in the Community	9
		Winter Gardening Guide	10



KIWIFRUIT

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

Kiwifruit (*Actinidiaceae*) had a rather inglorious start here in the states, but many decades ago some enterprising farmers in the Sacramento Valley decided to try their luck with this new crop. They had problems because many local consumers had no idea what to do with the fruit. The growers finally formed an aggressive marketing group, the California Kiwifruit Commission, which provides information and recipes.

For those interested in growing kiwifruit here, there is information available from UC Davis at the following site: sfp.ucanr.edu/pubs/brochures/Kiwi/. When selecting kiwi vines, you will need one male vine for 8 female vines. Fruit will ripen on the vine, but can be picked while still hard, placed in cold storage (32°F) and removed to room temperature for final ripening. They will keep for up to 6 months.

Kiwifruit vines are frost-sensitive and require plenty of heat to mature the fruit properly. They do well when grown in warm sites on a trellis or arbor protected from the wind. Poplar trees are often used for windbreaks. Soil must be well drained, but kept moist at all times. They can tolerate temperatures as low as 10°F in January, but only if hardened off properly. Vines leaf out in March, bloom in May, and the fruits are ready for harvest in October and November.

Kiwifruit are very low in calories, an excellent source of antioxidants, and are very high in nutrients such as vitamin C, potassium, magnesium, lutein, folate, zinc and vitamin E.

The raw fruit stores well in a cool place and can be ripened on the kitchen counter. It is ready to use when slightly soft (or softer as preferred), and peeled with a sharp paring knife. Also, you can cut the fruit into halves and scoop the flesh out of the “shells” with a spoon. Kiwis lose their bright green color when cooked into jam, but retain the beautiful color in fresh salads and desserts. Fresh, raw kiwifruit cannot be used in gelatin dishes because it has a tenderizing effect (like fresh pineapple) and will not permit jelling to occur. To tenderize meat, pureed kiwi pulp can be rubbed on the surface 30



Photo Credit: Steve Buissine from Pixabay. Free to Use; No Attribution Required.

minutes before grilling. Also, kiwi may cause curdling in some dairy based recipes.

Kiwis can be preserved in jams and chutneys and also sliced and dried. But I prefer using them fresh. Pavlova, with kiwifruit and other fruits is a favorite dessert. It is easy but time-consuming to make because the egg white meringue takes time to bake properly. I often make “trifle” instead because it is easier to make with layers of angel food cake or

sponge cake. Alternate layers of cake with layers of sliced kiwis, assorted berries, and other fruits such as sliced peaches. Top with a layer of whipped topping, cover and chill for an hour or more before serving.

A beautiful fresh fruit salad is so easy to make with layers of sliced kiwis and other fruits such as sliced mangos, blueberries, strawberries. I make a dressing from equal parts of mayonnaise and apricot jam, thinned slightly with orange juice and with a sprinkle of nutmeg or ground mace. An easy salsa, to accompany meats, can be made from peeled and diced kiwis, mango, papaya and chopped mint leaves, and moistened with orange juice. You might add some chopped sweet or red onion or avocado.

A variety of golden kiwi is sometimes available. They have a delicious, honey-like flavor. There are many recipes using kiwifruit such as in custards, sorbets, jam, kiwi-fish kebobs, and a chicken and red onion sauté. Actually, the fruit can be prepared quite a long time before use as it doesn't discolor with exposure to the air. It is such an easy fruit to store and use, so I hope you will try new ways to use this interesting and valuable food. ©



Photo Credit: Photo Mix from Pixabay. Free to Use; No Attribution Required.

DON'T LET THEM DRIFT BY YOUR WINDOW: A WORD ABOUT LEAF MOLD

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

Having read many a book from the 1840s to 1920s on rose health and rose planting, I became aware several years ago of leaf mold. So as my forefathers did before me, I would toss a layer of leaf mold into the hole I had dug for the planting of a new rose. Without really knowing why, I did it because it had been done. I respected my elders and believed they understood what they were doing. And they did indeed.



Photo Credit: Melinda Nestlerode, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

Leaf mold is decomposed, deciduous leafage, autumn leaves, of shrubs and trees that grow in full or partial shade. Now, as a whole, autumn leaves contain low levels of nitrogen, their cellulose and lignin resisting decay. That means the leaves break down far more slowly than most compost products. But it is mold, not bacteria and not fungi, that produces enzymes which decompose the more complex constituents into forms that enrich the soil. (The main difference between molds and fungi, in case you're wondering, is that a mold is multicellular while a fungus is unicellular.)

This foliar litter decomposition creates organic mineralization excellent for the soil. In short, micro-molds convert the leaves into humus, home for millipedes, and earthworms.

Deciduous tree and shrub leaves contain not only a healthy amount of calcium but also some portion of potassium, phosphorous, magnesium, sulfur, trace minerals, and, as dry leaves, a hint of nitrogen. These minerals provide a moist, enriched medium for growing young plants. The slow rate of

leaf decay releases nutrients which gradually resupply the earth and are then used by the new plants.

Although leaf mold is not high overall in these nutrients, it becomes an excellent soil conditioner and offers a fine growing medium for the roots of seedlings and young plants. It also improves water-holding capacity, an especial advantage during drought-challenging times. Moreover, leaf mold improves plant health, increases disease resistance in plants, and improves crop yields. In addition, again an important drought feature, it not only aids water retention but also reduces evaporation. Bring on the leaf mold!

How does one acquire and produce leaf mold? The easiest way would seem to be to visit and roam a shady woods lacking evergreens and just shovel years of compressed leaf mold into buckets and bring them home. But let's be realistic. Few of us live in the woods, and most of us would be reluctant to drive to such a woodland for fear of bears or Big-Foot. So? First, do not let the autumn leaves drift by your window. Gather them. From your yard, garden, or farm, collect fallen deciduous leaves and pile them into a pit or container (a wire compost bin is best). Moisten the leaves—do not soak them—to provide moisture which will stimulate the creation of mold. Remember, it's a slow process. Turn the pile occasionally. Then allow the pile of leaves to mold for at least a year, even two, before using. (You can get a lot of knitting done or even write a novel while you wait.)

When the leaf litter decomposition is ready, add it to the soil by tilling, or lay a two-inch deep leaf mold as mulch onto the soil. As I mentioned earlier, you might also add some to the hole in which you are about to plant a new, small shrub. This seems to be especially effective when the soil is clay. In all cases, micro-organisms and worms incorporate the humus into the soil. And voilà! You now have buried treasure. ☺



Photo Credit: Yves Bernardi from Pixabay. Free to Use; No Attribution Required.



Photo Credit: No Name 13 from Pixabay. Free to Use; No Attribution Required.



Photo Credit: Roland Steinmann from Pixabay. Free to Use; No Attribution Required.

GET READY, GET SET, GO—SPRING SOON!

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



Photo Credit: All Photos in This Article by Sherry Richards, UC Master Gardener. Used With Permission

Quarterly Seeds for Thought newsletters have a monthly guide with maintenance, planting, and prevention recommendations. The guide can help keep your garden in “tip-top” shape! Here is other information that may be helpful to get ready for Spring gardening:

1. Stroll Around Your Garden

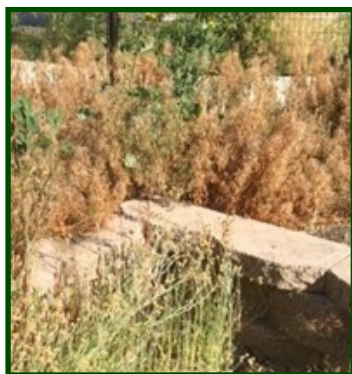
Does your garden need repair, new additions, replacements: gates, fencing, pathways, hoses and nozzles, patios, sheds, greenhouse, trellises, chairs, tables, or benches? Irrigation repairs or restocking of irrigation supplies needed? Do garden tools - lawnmowers, pruners, shovels/hoes need sharpening, maintenance, or replacement? Need mulch or soil for spring planting? Are there hazards in your garden to take care of such as broken tree branches, uneven pathways, or broken gate latches?

2. Soil Testing

Before spring planting is a good time for soil testing. Inexpensive home soil test kits are available online and in garden centers to evaluate pH soil levels - acidity or alkalinity - and nitrogen, potassium, and potash. Ideal pH for most plants is between 6.5 to 7, but there are exceptions such as blueberries. The correct range of pH level means the plant can absorb nutrients from the soil to grow healthy! More in depth soil testing is available through professional labs. Google: University of California (UC) “*List of Laboratories for Tissue, Soil, Water – Central Sierra.*”, or visit https://ucanr.edu/sites/Small_Farms_and_Specialty_Crop/files/300627.pdf. UC does not have soil test labs. Please call or send an email to [UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano](mailto:UCCE_Master_Gardeners-Solano) for the names of labs of particular interest to homeowners or if you have soil questions.

3. Clean Up

Weeds... a year-round pest! Drizzles of rain, or lack of rain does not keep weeds from gardens! Pulling weeds while small and before blooming helps them from spreading. Check into preemergent weed killers following all the instructions for correct use and timing. Mulching helps with weed control.



Remove dead branches/stems on plants unless they help protect tender new growth underneath from frost/freezes. Rake leaves, clean up flower beds and pathway debris.

Any **pest prevention** you can do now? Reminder: Use dormant sprays on deciduous plants for over-wintering insects. Snails and slugs – in February after their winter dormant season – they begin looking for food – little hungry pests they are! Stop them! Try handpicking to reduce population!

Inventory and clean pots, saucers, and other garden growing containers. Does your potting shed or garden cabinets/shelves need cleaning? Donate extras or share with friends!

4. Pre-Planning

Time to buy seeds for spring plants/ flowers and seeds for summer veggies and flowers. Check seed packages for germination times, when to start seedlings or direct sow in garden. Note any plants having persnickety roots if seedlings are transplanted and you need to wait until the soil warms and direct sow seeds in the garden.

5. Right Plant in Right Place

Did a plant “pout” or frustrate you trying to keep it healthy and alive? Need to change a plant’s sun/shade exposure, soil, or watering needs? What grew well, what did not? When selecting seeds and other plants be certain its for your gardening zone – **not too hot, not too cold but “just right!”**

6. Bare Roots

An Early Start for Spring Planting: In January and February buy ready-to-plant bare root fruit/ nut trees, berries, and roses at nurseries.

7. Home Composting

This is a good time to get things ready: choose the location and decide which composting method - garden/kitchen waste or vermicomposting aka “worm composting” you want to try – maybe both! Contact UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano (information referenced below) and we will help get you started!

8. Lawns

Good lawn maintenance = healthy lawns! Google: “The UC Guide to Healthy Lawns” (Mowing, Irrigating, Fertilizing, Dethatching and Aerating), or visit <https://ipm.ucanr.edu/TOOLS/TURF/MAINTAIN/index.html>.

(Continued on Page 5)

(Continued from Page 4—Get Ready, Get Set, Go—Spring Soon!)

9. Seeds and Bulbs

These charts from the Master Gardeners of Sacramento have year-round information about flowers, vegetables and bulb planting schedules including seedling start times:

Bulb Planting Schedule...
https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/Sacramento_Bulb_Planting_Schedule/

Flower Seed Planting Chart...
<https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/Flowers/>

Vegetable Plant Schedule...
<https://sacmg.ucanr.edu/files/117117.pdf>

10. Easier Gardening and Fun Ideas

Use a “Garden Journal” or notebook to keep track of ideas; plants that worked; plants you want (oh so many!) - for all your garden notes/reminders about everything in your gardening world you want to remember!

Add garden benches or chairs to rest on while gardening; replace worn-out garden stools, carts, and buckets. Do not forget

knees, hands and back – kneeling pads, gloves, ways to avoid back strain, sun hats, sunblock, sunglasses, and gardening aprons.

New things to try: a salsa, herb, strawberry, or other container garden; consider vertical gardening; make decorative garden items; design a garden room and take time to sit and listen to the beautiful sounds in gardens – birds, insects or the quiet.

After spending hours in my garden, I love to sit on my patio in “comfy” dirt-covered garb sipping a refreshing drink...it’s like being a child again playing in the dirt...crawling and flying creatures, and me! ©

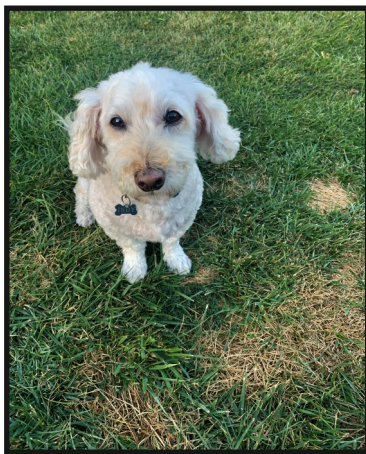
REFERENCES

- ◆ “What is a Garden Room” Sharon Rico, Solano County Master Gardener, *Seeds for Thought* - Spring, 2009
- ◆ “Gardening in the Winter: Try Bare Roots” Gay Wilhelm, Placer County Master Gardener, *The Curious Gardener* - Winter 2011
- ◆ *Seeds for Thought*, UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano County - Fall 2022; Spring 2022

DOG URINE SPOTS ON YOUR LAWN

Jennifer Ward, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

On our lawn there is a small area our two dogs have chosen as their bathroom. It’s convenient for them as it’s close to the back door. Unfortunately, it’s also the first area any humans step on as they walk into the yard. Our grass there is getting browner and drier in patches as the dogs continue to use it.



Indy With Lawn Spots

Photo Credit: All Photos in This Article by Jennifer Ward, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

We are a country of pet owners--there are 69 million U.S. households that own a dog, according to the American Pet Products Association. That’s a lot of dog urine deposited on the lawns across the US!

Dog urine is high in uric acid, which is primarily nitrogen and salts. According to Dr. Ali Harivandi, an Environmental Horticulture Advisor for the UC Cooperative Extension in Alameda County, the nitrogen compounds in urine pull water from the grass blades, killing them through dehydration. The groups of dead blades then show up as brown spots in the grass. Some of the brown spots also can be surrounded by a

darker green grass ring where the grass is thriving due to the extra nitrogen in the soil.

Dr. Harivandi reports that the damage and brown spots are worse depending on the volume of urine applied. Therefore, large female dogs that squat and deposit a large volume of urine in one spot can cause more damage than male dogs that are marking territory with tiny drops of urine or spraying it over a larger area.

So what to do?

One answer is to build an area for the dogs to urinate in. My friends have a 4 ft x 4 ft section of pea gravel in their backyard that their dogs use. They dug out the grass and an inch or two of soil. Then they surrounded the area with low edging and put a 2-3-inch layer of pea gravel directly on the soil. They finished the look with a couple of medium-sized rocks artfully arranged in the center. To train the dogs took a couple of weeks as the owners brought the dogs to the zone on leashes and used a lot of encouraging praise. Their dogs are larger and don’t seem to mind the gravel.

If you can’t create a pea-gravel zone, Dr. Harivandi at the UC Cooperative Extension simply recommends flooding the area

(Continued on Page 6)

(Continued from Page 5—Dog Urine Spots On Your Lawn)

with water as soon as the dog urinates to wash the nitrogen and salts off the grass blades and dilute the liquid as it enters the soil. He recommends keeping a hose or watering can nearby and watering as soon as the dog urinates. In our yard, I noticed more spots during the summer when the grass was already stressed from the hot, dry weather. Whereas, there were no brown urine spots in our yard during the rainy season.

A quick internet search will return several home remedies for correcting urine spots on the lawn, such as dish detergent, gypsum, or baking soda, but these don't work and may make the lawn and soil condition worse. In addition, giving a dog supplements to change their urine pH also will not work and may harm the dog, according to Alison Stoven O'Connor, Colorado State University Extension Horticulture Agent. Simply use water!

The dried areas will re-grow or the spots can be dug out and re-seeded or planted with new sod. Dr. Harivandi reports that warm-season grasses that grow from horizontal creeping

rhizomes or stolons -- such as bermudagrass, kikuyu grass, and St. Augustine grass -- will fill in faster than cool-season or non-creeping grasses. In addition, tall fescue tolerates urine better than Kentucky bluegrass or perennial ryegrass.

In our lawn, we couldn't build a pea-gravel area since one of our dogs refuses to walk on gravel or mulch. So we've started watering the spots after our dogs urinate. It seems to be helping, but it does make sending them out into the yard slightly more time-consuming. ©



REFERENCES

- ◆ <https://anrcatalog.ucanr.edu/pdf/8255.pdf>
- ◆ https://www.americanpetproducts.org/press_industrytrends.asp
- ◆ <https://cmg.extension.colostate.edu/Gardennotes/553.pdf>

RAINWATER HARVESTING

Nanelle Jones-Sullivan, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Photo Credit: Janelle Jones-Sullivan, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

Growing up on the East Coast, rain seemed like a drag, but here in Northern California, every bit of precipitation seems exciting. During trips to Tahoe in the winter, my children said life without snow was unfair. When it rained here, we headed outdoors and explored. We live near Encinosa Stream, and we would make our way there to see the rushing water. Some

years that water was rushing into our neighbor's homes. We noticed the water rushing downhill, from our yard to our neighbor's below.

The city added a catchment basin, and we added French drains, which collect water, and dissipate it so it can absorb into the ground. Later, we consulted with a permaculturist, who educated us about "earthworks"; collection systems like berms and swales that redirect water across the slope, rather than down it. All of these might be considered water harvesting; "the practice of planting/infiltrating or tanking, utilizing, and cycling of free on-site waters—rain, stormwater runoff (such as street runoff), greywater, dark greywater, condensate, snow, & fog—in a way that maintains or improves their quality, maximizes their availability and accessibility over time (even in droughts),

reduces on-site and downstream flooding in wet times, and helps grow more life and fertility". (Brad Lancaster; Author of "Rainwater Harvesting; for Drylands and Beyond".) Within this set of principles falls rainwater harvesting.

Rainwater Harvesting is "the collection and storage of rain water that runs off from roof tops, parks, roads, and open grounds. This water can be stored for use during periods of dry and intense heat. "

A system like this generally consists of:

- ◆ A way of collecting the water (catchment)
- ◆ A way of transporting it (conveyance)
- ◆ An inlet where the water is filtered of debris and enters the storage
- ◆ A way to store it (barrel or cistern)

An obvious concern is climate. Solano County features:

- ◆ A lot of rain in January, February and December
- ◆ Dry periods in May, June, July, August and September
- ◆ The average amount of annual precipitation is: 25 inches (636 mm)

The most used catchment from which rainwater is collected is a roof. The most commonly used formula says that for every 1000 feet of catchment area, from 1 inch of rainfall, you can collect 600

(Continued on Page 7)

(Continued From Page 6—Rainwater Harvesting)

gallons of water.

The storage unit should be on a stable, level surface, preferably near where it will be used, and raised to take advantage of gravity. A typical upcycled 55-gallon barrel weighs 400 pounds when full and is difficult to move if it starts to tip over. Cisterns can hold thousands of gallons, and would probably require professional installation. Conveyance generally happens by tapping into an existing downspout, usually with a screened diverter.

It's often recommended that you start with something small and sustainable. It's important to balance between the potential water to collect, and the water that can be stored, comfortably maintained and accommodated in a given setting. Keeping that in mind, I decided to start with a few recycled barrels.

Using Google Earth, I was able to find a section of my roof approximately 400 square feet, that drained into two downspouts on 2 flat areas of my yard.

I found an amazing source that offered a DIY kit with a customized a modular design using locally sourced upcycled food safe barrels. It included the parts usually needed including the plumbing located underneath the barrel, and the downspout diverter. I hope to collect enough water to supply the self-watering planters on my deck. ☺

REFERENCES

Harvesting Rainwater:
<https://www.harvestingrainwater.com/water-harvesting/water-harvesting-principles/>

A Homeowner's Guide to Rainwater Harvesting:
<https://www.hermosabeach.gov/home/showpublisheddocument?id=15483>

Stormwater Management:
http://agwaterstewards.org/practices/stormwater_management/

NORFOLK ISLAND PINE

Patricia Brantley, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Every year I am surprised to see the plethora of different trees out during the holidays. I especially like the look of the Norfolk Island Pine (*Araucaria heterophylla*). Its feathery branches are generally deep shades of green and more feathery than, say a spruce or fir. Walking into a big box store or garden center, there are literally hundreds sitting around, from little 4-inch pots on up to 12-inch and 5-gallon containers. These “stands” of “pines”, usually right inside the front doors, are often brightly decorated with sprinkles of glitter, tinsel and the random ornament or two. Noticeably missing though is that fresh tree/forest scent.



Norfolk Island Pine Store Display

Photo Credit: All Photos in This Article by Patricia Brantley, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission

Why you may ask? Because these trees are more closely related to the Monkey Puzzle Tree (*Araucaria araucana*) than your true pine (*Pinus*). They originate from Norfolk Island, an external territory of Australia. The temperatures there don't fall below 42°F and don't rise above 86°F. Yep, that's right—they like warm-ish and humid places. Like all those other plants that show up this time of year...you know the ones...Poinsettias (Mexico), Christmas Cactus (Brazil), Amaryllis (South Africa), and Anthurium (Columbia/Ecuador). Mostly grown in Florida now, for use and shipment during the holiday season, it seems that this tree can do well in the home as a houseplant or outdoors all year round in the right temperature with some care.

Now, I hear a few of you gasping and saying, “but the tag says they'll grow to 100 or 200 feet tall”. Well, yes and no. In Florida, their home away from home and home to several commercial growers, they do grow them outside. There, they've got the sand and the humidity, but even there they generally only get to 60-80 feet tall. In California, they're okay in the Southern areas like San Diego, Zone 10 at least, and may slowly grow up to that height, maybe a bit more. In Hawaii they do well and are often called “Hawaiian Christmas Trees”, but here in NorCal we're not being overrun by gigantic Norfolk Island Pines.

After reading about Australia, San Diego, and Hawaii, you're probably getting the idea of the climate and area in which these beauties thrive. In Northern California, if you plant it in just the right spot, with sandy soil, don't let it freeze, don't let it fry in the California dry heat...it would probably take a very long time to get anywhere near their maximum height— more like 10-12 feet in a decade ...maybe? It's not an overnight thing like Audrey 2 in *Little Shop of Horrors*. It's not going to be that huge overnight, or even in a decade here (and definitely won't eat you.) For us, it is probably best to make these little “Christmas Trees” enjoyable additions to our everyday indoor flora. Indoors and potted (how else would they be indoors?), they slowly grow to between 3-8 feet over many years. In all my time looking at these I've never seen one over 6 feet tall. You can even bonsai them if you'd like!

After Christmas you can get great bargains on these. One year I

(Continued on Page 8)

(Continued From Page 7—Norfolk Island Pine)

even found some in 4-inch pots for 10 cents! They were in great condition...I thought. Unfortunately, at that time, I didn't do my research and they were left out in the rain and cold in late January early February...so sad. They started to change color. Some of them, I found out later, had been spray painted to make them brighter shades of green. I didn't think legitimate plant growers would do this. I guess I should know better as every Easter I've



all seen the dayglo painted Cacti! Well, you know what happens if you spray paint a plant and choke off its air supply by clogging all of its stomata. Eventually the paint washed off, and they turned brown. Another group just turned brown indicating they were too cold. Yet, another group (yes at 10 cents I had purchased quite a few) turned yellow, from too much water. They did end up in the compost pile though...so my dollar fifty (15 trees at 10 cents each) was not totally lost.

Well, so what ARE we to do? How should these perennial favorites be treated? Turns out it's not that hard. First, select for yourself a healthy specimen. Try to see that it doesn't have paint on its leaves. This is hard to do, you may need to scratch a needle or two with your fingernail to see if there is a different color underneath. If the trunk is also all green, it's pretty much a dead giveaway...literally. Try to make sure it doesn't have brown needles. If the needles are showing a little yellow we can manage as it has probably just been overwatered in the store.

Once chosen and safely at home, decide on its pot and place. It's okay to leave it in the pot it came in with the roots a bit tight; this is one way to slow the growth of your Norfolk Island Pine. Remember, these trees have often been bonsaied. If you want to put it in a different pot, then gently remove it from the existing one and place it in a pot that is only a couple inches bigger than its original home. Use loose sandy soil, not just to make it feel like it's at home on the beach, but to give it water retention and drainage. An equal mix of potting soil, sand, and peat/coconut coir/perlite works well for these. Be sure to put in something to weigh the pot down if the planter with the lighter soil is not heavy enough to stay upright. Rocks in the bottom work, allow for drainage, and provide weight as well.

These plants do like full sun outside in their subtropical climates. Inside, they prefer nice bright light, not over, under, or in front of a heater vent though. Because they like humidity, plant lovers often think of that and have a tendency to over water. However, even though they live in coastal areas, they don't like soggy roots. The Norfolk Island Pine does well with just semi-moist soil obtained by

once weekly or every other week waterings. You will need to adjust for your particular indoor climate. For humidity, place the tree on a drainage tray of rocks and a small amount of water to slowly evaporate. Don't forget, water more if it's kept in a bright spot that causes quicker drying and less water in spots that are a bit shadier. If you want your Norfolk Island Pine to retain its conical shape, you may need to rotate it from time to time to adjust for brighter and shadier areas.

So, as winter wanes on and turns toward spring, when you see those crumbling displays of little trees that remind you of Christmas, you might try picking one up and giving it a home. I can't guarantee you'll find the 10 cent deal like I did, but you may find a good deal and want to give it a try. ☺

Ode to a Norfolk Island Pine
By Patricia Brantley

My little Norfolk Island pine
with your needles feathery and fine
You really like the warmer climates best
but you've been transplanted like the rest
of the "Christmas flora" that we hold dear
at that special time of year.

I say stand strong
you never know when someone might set you free
to reach your potential, that 200-foot towering tree
Until then my friend you'll be just fine
Living indoors with me
my little Norfolk Island Pine.

SOLANO MASTER GARDENERS IN THE COMMUNITY



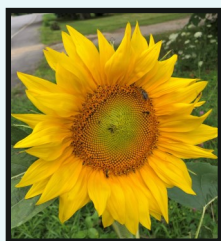
For Tips and Updates, Follow [ucmastergardenerssolano](https://www.instagram.com/ucmastergardenerssolano) on Instagram



MASTER GARDENERS ARE A RESOURCE FOR YOUR GARDENING NEEDS

UC Master Gardeners of Solano County are located at 501 Texas Street, First Floor, Fairfield, CA 94533-4498

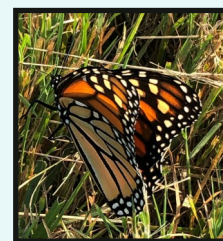
For more gardening and event information, visit our website <https://solanomg.ucanr.edu/>. UC Master Gardeners staff a Helpline serving Solano County which is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Call 707-784-1322 or email: mgsolano@ucanr.edu. Our message center will take your questions and information. Please leave your name, phone number, a description of your problem, and your address. A Master Gardener will research your problem and return your call/email. With email, you can attach pictures of the problem, which may aid in the diagnosis of your plant question.



VALLEJO FARMERS MARKET

Saturday's 9:00am to 1:00pm
Corner of Georgia and Marin Streets

FREE parking
(Rain cancels)



Please come and discuss your gardening with us, problems or not. We are there to help with suggestions of reading material, handouts on various subjects, both plants and insects, and subjects related to gardening. We learn so much from your experiences in your landscapes!

Stay Tuned!

We are working behind the scenes to gear up for all our fabulous SPRING EVENTS! Master Gardeners will:

- ◆ Staff tables at the Vallejo, Benicia and Fairfield Farmers Markets
- ◆ Host a Plant Exchange (April)
- ◆ Provide monthly information-packed presentations at the Vacaville Library
- ◆ Present monthly seminars at Dunnell Nature Park



Children's Garden

275 Beck Avenue, Fairfield, CA, 94533

Master Gardeners work monthly at the Children's Memorial Garden. This might be a great place to visit or to stop by for some gardening inspiration.

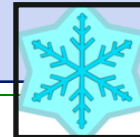
The Sensory Garden

Behind Fairfield Civic Center Library

Drop by The Sensory Garden anytime at 1150 Kentucky Street near the Civic Center pond. There are an abundance of interesting plants to see, touch, and smell!



WINTER GARDENING GUIDE



	JANUARY	FEBRUARY	MARCH
P L A N T I N G	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Sow California poppy (<i>Eschscholzia californica</i>) seeds for spring color ◇ Sow indoors cool-season edibles such as chard, kale, and lettuce ◇ Plant winter blooming shrubs; purchase now while in bloom to see what you are getting ◇ Harvest citrus as it ripens—taste for flavor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Plant summer bulbs such as gladiolus, cannas, ranunculus, anemone, dahlia, lily, tuberous begonia and delphinium ◇ Plant leaf crops like lettuce, cilantro, beets, carrots, chard, peas, and spinach directly in the ground ◇ Indoors, start seeds of eggplant, peppers, and tomatoes. Transplant outdoors in 6 to 8 weeks ◇ Plant berries: raspberry, boysenberry, and blackberry 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Almost any plant (except tropical) can be planted now. Start seeds of old-fashioned favorites such as apricot foxglove, bachelor's button, blue flax and Oriental poppies. Summer sizzlers like cosmos and zinnias also grow more vigorously from a seed start and catch up fast to nursery-started plants ◇ Plant warm season annuals like ageratum, marigold, petunia and sunflower ◇ Switch out cool-season vegetables for corn, beans, peppers and tomatoes
M A I N T E N A N C E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Prune deciduous plants while dormant to keep grapes, roses, fruit and shade trees shapely ◇ Check mulch. Add more to paths and beds for weed suppression ◇ Protect tender plants when cold nights are predicted. Water well—dry plants are more susceptible to frost damage ◇ Fertilize azaleas after bloom; cymbidiums with 1/2 strength fertilizer every week or so ◇ Collect rain water to use on your garden 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Pinch fuchsias through March; for every stem you pinch, you'll get 2; for every 2 you'll get 4 ◇ Fertilize: citrus and fruit trees, cane berries, roses (only after you see new growth begin) ◇ Fertilize fall planted annuals and perennials, and established trees and shrubs with an all-purpose fertilizer. Wait on azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons until after bloom ◇ Mulch exposed areas to prevent weed seeds from germinating ◇ Repot cymbidiums if necessary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Fertilize almost everything ◇ Flowering and fruiting plants need phosphorus-rich fertilizer ◇ Green leafy plants such as lawns and lettuce require nitrogen ◇ Root plants such as potatoes, beets, and bulbs appreciate a handful of potassium. Read the labels. ◇ Once soils have dried out, give your irrigation system a tune up. Then set to water deeply and infrequently to encourage deep root growth
P R E V E N T I O N	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Control snails and slugs by eliminating hiding places, or hand pick ◇ Use a dormant spray to control over-wintering insects on deciduous plants. Control peach leaf curl with lime sulfur or fixed copper. Follow directions for proper application ◇ Spray roses with dormant oil to control over-wintering insects such as aphids, mites and scale. Thoroughly coat trunk, branches, and twigs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Snails and slugs are dormant two times a year, during the hottest part of summer and during the coldest weeks in winter. This is about the time they head out for feeding. Get out early and hand-pick ◇ Don't prune out any frost damaged growth for another month or so—the outer dead foliage may protect healthy growth beneath from further frost damage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◇ Now is the time to get a jump on insect infestations; check for signs of aphids (distorted new growth and tiny, often green or black insects) and spittle bugs (under white foam on stems). Both can be effectively sprayed off with a garden hose ◇ Handpick snails at night, or use bait—follow all directions

**Seeds For Thought is produced by
the UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano**

EDITOR

Melinda Nestlerode

FEATURE WRITERS

PATRICIA BRANTLEY, PEARL EDDY,

\NANELLE JONES-SULLIVAN, MICHELLE KRESPI,

SHERRY RICHARDS, DARRELL G.H. SCHRAMM,

JENNIFER WARD



Have a comment or question about *Seeds For Thought*?
Contact us!

By email: mgsolano@ucdavis.edu

Please put '*Seeds For Thought*' in the email Subject line.

U.S. mail:

UCCE-Solano County
501 Texas Street, 1st Floor
Fairfield, CA 94533

The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (including childbirth, and medical conditions related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or status as a covered veteran (covered veterans are special disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, Vietnam era veterans, or any other veterans who served on active duty during a war or in a campaign or expedition for which a campaign badge has been authorized) in any of its programs or activities. University policy is intended to be consistent with the provisions of applicable State and Federal laws. Inquiries regarding the University's nondiscrimination policies may be directed to the Affirmative Action/Staff Personnel Services Director, University of California, Agriculture and Natural Resources, 300 Lakeside Drive, 6th Floor, Oakland, CA 94612-3550 (510) 987-0096.

References in *Seeds For Thought* to trademarked products, commercial websites, and businesses are provided as a courtesy for the reader's consideration and do not constitute the endorsement of any products or services by the U.C. Master Gardeners.

Seeds For Thought is a quarterly publication of the University of California Master Gardener Program of Solano County and is freely distributed to County residents.

It is available through the internet for free download:

https://solanomg.ucanr.edu/Seeds_for_Thought/

Jennifer M. Baumbach
Master Gardener Program Coordinator



**U.C. Cooperative Extension
Master Gardeners-Solano County**

501 Texas Street, 1st Floor
Fairfield, CA 94533

SEEDS FOR THOUGHT



**WINTER
2023**