



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

# Seeds For Thought

## A GIFT OF KNOWLEDGE

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

Recently, I picked up some gardening books that were donated by Carolyn Allen to the UC Master Gardener office in Fairfield. These books are in mint condition, full of colorful photos, and they cover a wide range of gardening topics. For example, outdoor stonework, trellises, small trees, groundcover, and garden design using succulents.



Gardening Books Donated by Carolyn Allen

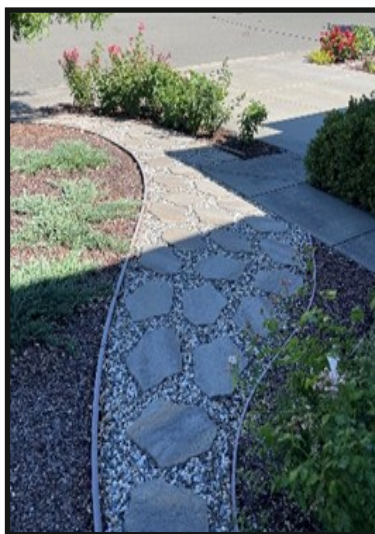
Photo Credit: All Photos in the Article by Spring Tseng, UC Master Gardener, Used With Permission

After I had a chance to browse through these books, I thought to send a thank you note to Ms. Allen, only to find out that she was a Master Gardener, and that she has passed away. Not expecting this news, I felt lost, empty and yet deeply grateful. I am grateful because I have gained so much from her gift.

To maintain my home garden, I have learned that stone is an integral material to use for the infrastructure. Stones come in many forms, such as pebbles, slates, and bricks, etc. They also have different shapes, sizes and colors. And, unlike organic material, stones do not rot. Therefore, once they are installed, the gardener can rest and enjoy for a long, long time. Stones can be used in making retaining walls, rock gardens, walking paths, focal points, and many other applications. The book Outdoor Stonework written by Alan and Gill Bridgewater has two parts. Part 1 introduces techniques such as tools of different purposes, how to mix mortar, etc. Part 2 includes 16 unique projects that one can try. The step-by-step explanations with photos are very useful. After reading the work involved in completing a project

using stones, I can really appreciate the beauty in the design and the hard work that it entails.

The book Trellises, Arbors, and Pergolas is a Better Homes and Gardens publication. Many gardens we visit demonstrate a 2-dimensional design, where plants stretch along the flat ground everywhere. A trellis or an arbor introduces a 3-dimensional impression, and all of a sudden, the garden is an AWE. This book includes 4 chapters: Find Your Inspiration, 20 Examples of Various Designs, Plants that Grow on Structures, and Building Basics. Among the 20 examples, I am most interested in the “Build-to-Suit Pergola” project. I have a sun-drenched side yard that is always crying for shade. Perhaps it is time to consider a pergola that attaches to the wall. Anyway, it was so fun to see all the possibilities in one book.



The Pathway in The Authors Front Yard is Constructed With Slate and Pebbles. Many of Her Neighbors Admire It

Once the stone work is “set in”, and the main attraction of a trellis or arbor is determined, it is time to pick up some trees for the garden. I personally like smaller trees because they don’t require climbing a ladder and are therefore easier to maintain. The book Choosing Small Trees by Peter McHoy serves the purpose! With stunning photos and very organized information for each sample, I found this book a treasure.

Trees are like stones in that once installed, it is better to leave them in place. Hence, before acquiring a tree, one should think carefully about the purpose of having this tree, the climate

(Continued on Page 2)

A Gift of Knowledge.....	1
The Leftover Wreath.....	3
Deliberate Acts of Kindness.....	4
A Personal Garden for You or Someone Very Special.....	5
Thorns, Spines and Prickles—Ouch, That Hurt!.....	6

Tips on Flower Drying or Everlastings .....	8
Pumpkins—The Squash That Just About Everyone Loves.....	9
UCCE Master Gardeners This Summer.....	11
Summer Gardening Guide.....	13

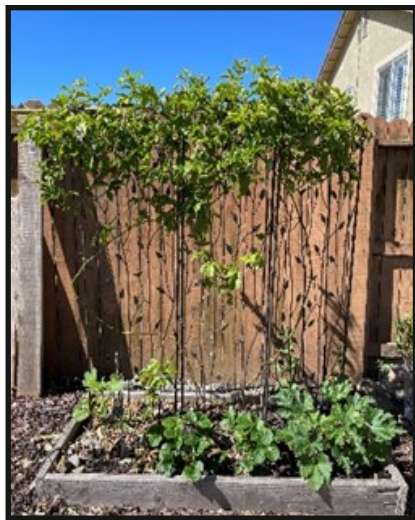
(Continued From Page 1—A Gift of Knowledge)

zone, location to plant, and definitely the mature size of the tree. The purposes of growing a tree can be for its flowers, seasonal color of the foliage, fruit, shade, and even the pattern of the bark.

Most of the trees in our yard are fruit trees. We have one each of Gala apple tree, navel orange, Bearss lime, fig tree, cherry tree, persimmon, etc. They are mostly dwarf so it has been easy for us to prune and harvest. In my neighborhood, I have seen some fun trees like a mimosa tree with pink flowers, magnolia with huge milk-white flowers, and an odd tree—*Ulmus glabra* ‘Camperdownii’. If I have room, what kind of tree should I plant?

Like many gardeners, I love plants that are beautiful and also useful. And then as a lazy gardener, I prefer plants that require little or no care after they are planted. It is also very important for me to minimize the water usage. How do we achieve these almost impossible goals? The books Ground Cover by John Cushnie and Designing with Succulents by Debra Lee Baldwin come to rescue.

The book Ground Cover lists plants that require minimum care. Yay! The recommended plants are based on the characteristics of the local soil and micro climate, such as dry shade, full sun, alkaline sites, heavy clay, etc., so that a gardener can make a wise decision about what to grow. I am very happy to find out that my use of juniper as a year-round ground cover agrees with Cushnie’s advice. In the section on using vegetables as ground cover, the book includes brassica, rhubarb, artichoke, etc. However, I can’t seem to find fava bean in this section. Did I miss it?



A Metal Trellis in The Authors Backyard Supports a Passion Fruit Vine. Below in the Bed Are Strawberries (Groundcover), a Summer Squash, and Hollyhock Seedlings

I have been growing fava beans as a winter cover crop since the year 2020. In the Bay Area, because winter rainfall takes care of the water needs of plants, fava beans require no watering for several months. Fava bean has many admirable qualities. The plant enriches soil by adding nitrogen to it. From April to May, we harvest the beans for food, and

then in June, we harvest the dried seeds, and store them away for the coming winter.

For many years, succulents have not been my thing. They just seem so serious and stiff. The few succulents in my garden are either cuttings from my neighbors, or from a \$5 per pot yard sale. However, since being thrown in a pot or ground, they did surprisingly well. Not

only are the leaves of exotic texture and shades of green or brown interesting, time and time again, they produce colorful flowers that light up the yard and attract honey bees. Here at home, I have *Calandrinia* (rock purslane), *Crassula tetragona* (miniature pine tree), *Echeveria pulvinata* (plush plant), *Lampranthus spectabilis* (trailing ice plant), and jade plant, to name a few. Sorry I am still learning your names! But I promise I will unleash your power.



Succulents in The Authors Garden – They Are Beautiful and Super Easy to Care For

In a time when the internet controls a big piece our lives, we use it more than often to find answers to our questions. This method, because it is usually quite fast, certainly has its value. But the drawback is that sometimes the information is not validated, not reliable, or not complete, and it can misguide us. While a book, at least these gardening books, somehow hold a quality that I can trust. From the front cover to the last page, and everything in between, I can sense the organized thoughts and the sincere mood of the writers and editors. They put in great effort collecting and validating the information, and they take pride in their production.

I have never met Ms. Allen and I will never be able to. However, I can imagine her sitting next to a window, with lush greens in the background yard, sipping a cup of milk tea, and flipping through the pages of these books for inspiration. I am grateful for her generous gift.

I think of those who share their wealth, knowledge, time and love. That is what makes this world a better and beautiful place. When my time comes, there will be gifts left to those who come after me. ✨

# THE LEFTOVER WREATH

*Torie Kury, U.C. Master Gardener Trainee, Solano County*

The 2023 annual Master Gardener’s Wreath Workshop provided much merriment. The food was overflowing, the guests were excited, and the provided materials sublime. The Master Gardener’s were elves in super drive, with much to get ready for our guests. There were purple feathers and red bobbles and bows of every shape and color; there were chocolates and brownies and meatballs, too.

This year was special for me because my granddaughter was attending for the first time, and making a wreath for her home. How exciting for us both as I stood watching—but not too close - I wanted her own creativity to shine. When the event was over she had created a very large wreath, which was stunning. She took that wreath back to Carson City, NV, and with much pride, and hung it on a post near her front door. Being a busy woman, her wreath hung there for many months after the holidays. The cold winter preserved some of the greenery. The feathers remained, and I believe there was a bobble nestled in that wreath.

My granddaughter observed a bird taking notice of this greenery. She only thought about that little bird as she stepped onto the front porch and it would fly away. For a month, she watched as the bird came and went.

Winter passed and spring arrived. My granddaughter had forgotten about the activity of the bird and the nest building of months ago. In March of this year, she decided that it was time to remove that dry wreath from the post by the front door. To her surprise, when she attempted to move the wreath, she was greeted by several pairs of eyes. She’s a big animal lover, and being this close to three hungry baby birds excited her very much.

The wreath still hangs on that post as she anxiously waits for the babies to take flight. My granddaughter looks forward to our 2024 wreath workshop and wonders if another family will move into her next creation. ✨



*Eggs Laid In A Nest Made In a Wreath Created at the Master Gardener Wreath Workshop*

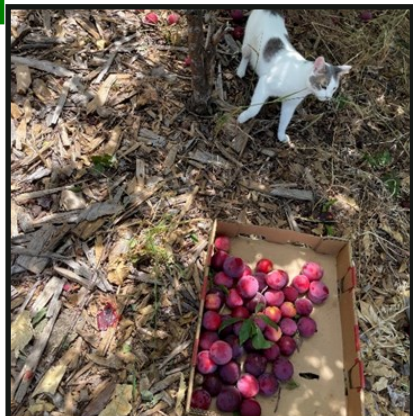
*The Baby Birds!*

*Photo Credit: All Photos in This Article by Cecilia Morton; Used With Permission*



# DELIBERATE ACTS OF KINDNESS

Brenda Altman, U.C. Master Gardener Trainee, Solano County



Snugs the Cat Supervises Pluot Collection

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

We have all experienced random acts of kindness. Your hands are full and some one opens the door for you. You stop a child from running into the street. You hand a hungry person your take-out food from the restaurant. You feel good; the person you helped feels good. This is how life should be.

What about “deliberate acts of kindness”? That’s where you plan and make

extra efforts to be kind. Examples of these are: donating money to a charity, volunteering to help adults read; and volunteering to drive people to medical appointments. As home gardeners, and Master Gardeners, we are in an excellent position to do a deliberate act of kindness by growing, harvesting, and donating our excess harvest.

These days, there are so many people striving to make ends meet. Do I pay the rent, how about gas for my car, is there any money left for food? No, you forgot the utility bills. In Solano County, between 11% to 12.6% of adults in Solano County, and 9% of children, are food insecure. Food insecurity does not impact everyone equally. It unfortunately falls among racial and gender lines with Black families making 15%, and Latino families making 20% less than white families.

The nice thing about donating fruits or vegetables is that it does not need to all be the same size or the same shape, it just must be fresh. You can combine your donation by including whatever happens to be ripe at that time. For instance, a dozen tomatoes, five pounds of potatoes, a couple of giant zucchinis, and a pumpkin. Another thing you can do is get together with your neighbor or friends and combine your gift.

Don’t just drop off your food in a food barrel, because it may get smushed or sit there too long. The best way to deliver your gift is to drop it off at the organization where it will be distributed. There are several churches and organizations throughout Solano County who provide this service. If your local church or community center doesn’t have a food drive, encourage them to start one.

Two established entities in Solano County are the Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano County, and Faith Food Fridays in

Vallejo. The latter doesn’t have a warehouse or refrigeration for storage. Faith Food Fridays gives out food on site. The Food Bank delivers food to other organizations and has trucks that make the rounds on a scheduled timetable. I have seen the Food Bank trucks at the JFK Library parking lot behind Vallejo City Hall on Saturdays.

I personally have been donating food to the Food Bank for four years. I have three wonderful, giving trees that produce hundreds of lemons, pluots (plum apricot), and pears. Even in winter the lemon tree will give a crop. I plan for this bounty by collecting cardboard fruit boxes from Costco. Each box can hold up to 40 pounds of food. So, save those boxes.

In addition to the lemon, pluot, and pear trees, I have planted three apple, two peach, an avocado, and a persimmon tree. I have relatives and neighbors who have dibs on the apples, but if they aren’t claimed they’re off to the food bank. The avocado tree is only three years old so I have to wait before it produces avocados.

The latest Food Bank newsletter talks about the need for fresh food: *“This year, 65% of the food you help provide to our community is fresh fruits, vegetables, dairy products, and proteins. That’s a five percent increase from last year. And these fresh foods aren’t just good to eat – they are preventative medicine.”*

Continue with your “random acts of kindness” and add some “deliberate acts of kindness.” Donate your excess harvest to your neighbors. The Food Bank and Faith Food Fridays also need volunteers to distribute food, deliver food, and sort the food. Of course, money donations are greatly appreciated.



Ready to Go to the Food Bank

For further reading visit the Feeding America Website:

<https://feedingamerica.org>.

“At-the-table” Summer 2024 newsletter, Food Bank of Contra Costa & Solano County ✨

(Continued on Page 5)

*(Continued From Page 4—Deliberate Acts of Kindness)*

**Food Bank Locations:**

Fairfield • 707-421-9777 2370 • N. Watney Way (next to Jelly Belly) • Bay 11 (marked for donations)  
M-Th 9am -7 pm • Fri-Sun 9am-3pm

Concord • 925-675-7543 • 4010 Nelson Ave. (off Hwy 4)  
M-Th 9am-7pm • Fri-Sun 9am-3pm

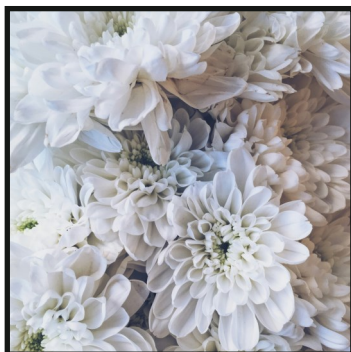
**Faith Food Fridays Location:**

826 Solano Ave., Vallejo, CA • 707-557 7933 (call for when to drop off donations or volunteer)  
Food donation times: Tuesdays 11 am- 2 pm, Friday 11 am – 5 pm, Sunday 11 am- 1 pm

# A PERSONAL GARDEN FOR YOU OR SOMEONE VERY SPECIAL

*Dottie Deems, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*

I must admit that I have wanted to create a “theme garden” for a long time. Do you have one? Well, maybe you do, but you call it by another name. Maybe it’s your “memory garden”, “family garden”, or even your “friendship garden”. Maybe you never gave it a name.



*Photo Credit: Photo by [Yulia Mostova](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

What is a theme garden? You could create any type of theme that pleases you. It could be a garden planted with a monochromatic display of annuals, perennials, bulbs, and flowering shrubs, all bearing flowers and even foliage of a single color. You might want to create a “white garden” like the Carolee Shields White Flower Garden at the [UC Davis Arboretum](#)? Just as the name indicates, all the flower bearing plants have white flowers. No other color, just white. It’s a sought-after locale for weddings all year round.

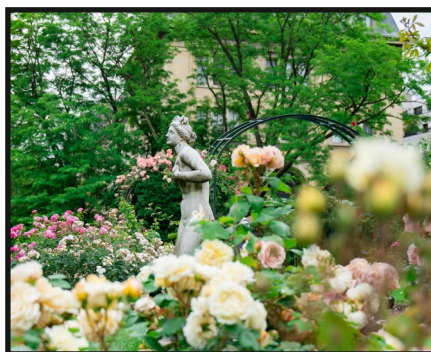
Or a rainbow of eyepopping flowers like candytuft, bidens, zinnias, poppies, lavender, and dwarf iris. Call it an “Over the Rainbow Garden” if you like. Some of these are annuals that would make them relatively inexpensive and easy to alternate each year.

Another type of theme garden is one you may have overlooked completely. That’s a rose garden! A garden with only one type of flowering plant in it. The White House has one, why not you? After all, a rose garden is just another type of theme garden. Choosing roses as the theme of your garden gives you thousands of possible choices that fall into three categories, Old

Garden Roses, Wild Roses, and Modern Garden Roses. There are subcategories and varieties in each of these three.

There is a department of the American Rose Society (ARS) that serves as the official International Cultivar Registration Authority - Roses (ICRA) by appointment of the International Society for Horticultural Sciences.

The naming of roses is explained online at the website of the ARS. Submission of a newly hybridized rose to the ICRA can now be done online by filling out a form. It can easily be ten years from when a grower begins the process of creating a new rose and when the form is filed for consideration. It’s just the beginning of the registration process. Once registration is approved, the name of the newly approved rose cannot be used by any other rose.



*Photo Credit: Photo by [Daphné Be Frenchie](#) on [Unsplash](#)*

If you haven’t looked at a catalogue of registered roses, you may be in for a treat. It’s simply amazing who has a rose named after them. My sister even has one named after her!! Yes, roses are frequently named after real people whether they are members of royalty, movie stars, or recording artists. Obviously, my sister must share her name with someone a little more noteworthy than she is! I’ll have to continue my research in that regard.

*(Continued on Page 6)*

(Continued from Page 5—A Personal Garden for You or Someone Very Special)

Did you know that Elvis has a rose named after him and Sir Paul McCartney has two. Book characters, authors, historical figures, and even songs have been honored with roses named after them.

Memory gardens, family gardens, and friendship gardens can be planted with any sort of plant that bears the name of someone special to you. Why not start with a list of flowers named after people who share their name with people who are special to you, male or female, it makes no difference.

Today, the American Rose Society's Modern Rose database lists more than 37,000 registered roses. That means you may have



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one named after you already! Well, at least your first name anyway.

Several years ago, I started the holiday season by buying rose bushes that bore the first name of each of the new babies in the family and sending them to the new parents describing the process for planting and caring for the shrubs. I explained to them that I hoped they would enjoy selecting roses for other family members to create a "family rose garden". They have all been delighted to start this new family

tradition. I enjoy my time in my personal garden, spending the time caring for the beautiful plants I've chosen to represent family members that mean so much to me. ✨

## THORNS, SPINES AND PRICKLES—OUCH, THAT HURT!

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

My aunt and family lived in an older home in the Pacific Northwest with a forest as a backyard. As a child it was fun on visits to wander with my cousins through the forest, looking at things and filling buckets with wild blackberries for desserts, jam, or ice cream. The wild blackberry plants had "sharp" things on them which we avoided (mostly!) when picking the berries.



Thorns in the axil of a *Citrus limon* 'Meyer' Leaf

Remembering these summer vacations of long ago, I thought why DO some plants have thorns, spines, or prickles? Researching the subject, here are a few things I learned:

- 1) Many plants protect themselves with thorns, spines, or prickles to keep deer, rabbits, goats, or other herbivores from eating them.
- 2) Know what a thorn, spine, or prickle looks like; what plants might have them; where they are located on the plant and decide if you want a plant in your garden bearing them, for example, if you have children or pets.
- 3) Many gardeners (include me!) tend to call any "sharp" thing on a plant a thorn. However, the proper "botanical"

classification depends where a sharp projection originates on a plant.

### Thorns

True thorns are modified branches that grow from a plant stem at a leaf axil. This is where a normal branch might have developed but instead it ends in a sharp, hard, woody, point.

Examples of plants with thorns:

- Most citrus trees have thorns (Some thornless varieties are available.)

Note: Root stock used for grafting commercially grown citrus trees may produce "suckers" (growth) below the graft. The growths should be removed for several important reasons including that they may have very sharp pointed "things" growing on them!

Examples of landscape plants with thorns:

- *Pyracantha* (firethorn) and *Bougainvillea*.

### Spines

Spines are sharp and slender growing from a leaf, stipule (the growths at the base of a leaf stalk) or leaf part.

- Many *Berberis spp* (barberry) have spines.
- Most cacti and some succulents have "spines" – leaves transformed to spines. Leaves have larger surface areas for water evaporation. The lesser surface of a spine means the

(Continued on Page 7)

(Continued from Page 6—Thorns, Spines and Prickles—Ouch, That Hurt!)

cacti can save more water it needs for survival in hot climates.

- Spines defend plants against thirsty, hungry birds and other animals who want to eat them or “drink” the stored water.



*Opuntia 'Prickly Pear' - Developing Fruit Called "Tunas" Are on Top of Pad*

*Photo Credit: Tina Saravia, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission*

Examples of landscape plants with spines around leaf edges:

- *Ilex* spp. such as American holly and English holly.
- *Mahonia* (Oregon Grape)

**Note on Glochids:** *Opuntia* spp, prickly pear and cholla cacti have tiny hair-like barbs called glochids on them. Glochids easily detach and get into skin.

**Prickles**

Prickles are sharp, woody growths developed from the plant’s skin tissue – extensions of the epidermis and cortex. If you find a sharp, pointed outgrowth on a plant where a branch or leaf would not normally be located you have likely found a prickle.

- Roses have prickles not thorns.
- The *Rubus* species is large, diverse and has prickles. Examples include: blackberries, raspberries, boysenberries, olallieberries and many other berries.

**Other Places You Might Run Into “Sharp” Things on Plants**

**Leaf Tips:** Certain plants, such as agave, may have sharp tips on the ends of leaves.

**Weeds:** There are prickles on many weeds such as *Tribulus*

*terrestris* L., (puncture vine) and *Sonchus asper* (L.) Hill (spiny sow thistle), the spiny pods of California burclover (*Medicago polymorpha*—*M. hispida* Gaertn), and there are many “pokey” thistles.

**Vegetables:** Select varieties of eggplant, yellow squash, cucumbers, or other vegetables you grow may have “bristly” things on leaves, stems or fruit that might feel a little sharp.

Please contact UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano (707-389-0645, or [jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu](mailto:jmbaumbach@ucanr.edu)) if you have any questions about thorns, spines, prickles, or other gardening questions! ✨

**REFERENCES**

- Solano County Mgs – 707 784-1322 or email: [mgsolano@ucanr.edu](mailto:mgsolano@ucanr.edu)
- “Of Thorns Spines and Prickles”, David Trinlein, Adjunct Associate Professor Division of Plant Sciences & Technology University of Missouri January 3, 2013
- “Plants with Prickly Personalities” November 2021-Vol 7, No. 11, Pat Chadwick, Piedmont Master Gardeners, Virginia Cooperative Extension, University of Virginia
- “Plant Safety in Drought-Tolerant Landscapes” 2024 Regents of University of California. Click on: *Opuntia* spp – common names: Cactus, Prickly Pear, Cholla, Indian Fig
- “Weeds of the West” 2002 – The Western Society of Science in cooperation with the West United States Land Grant Universities Cooperative Extension Services.
- North Carolina State Extension – Botany Exercises, Dr. Alexander Krings unless otherwise noted, Updated July 2018.



*Rose Prickles*



*Stems of Zucchini Plant – “Bristly”*



*Spines: Barrel Cactus Spp*

*Photo Credit: All Photos in This Section by Sherry Richards, UC Master Gardener; Used With Permission*

# TIPS ON FLOWER DRYING OR EVERLASTINGS

Torie Kury, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



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

If you have attended the annual Master Gardener Wreath Workshop event, you know of the dried goods. This is the table laden with our years worth of flowers, fruit and greenery - dried to perfection. As our new volunteers hit the wreath workshop this year, I thought information about drying flowers might be helpful. How do you harvest and when do you harvest and how do you make everlastings?

There are several ways to dry flowers but I've chosen the air drying method. I find it to be quick, efficient and it produces colorful dried materials.

Supplies: Flowers, rubber bands, paper clips, cutters; and a good drying location is essential. Your drying location should be one that is as dark as possible and dry. Light tends to fade the flower color. I use my laundry room and a shed in my yard. An attic is also an option for drying your material. I use old curtain rods as my hanging structure in my shed. Anything you can hang the flowers from is fine.

How and When To Cut: I like cutting fresh flowers at their peak. I cut the stem at a 45 degree angle, remove all the leaves and



plunge them into water, where they stay for 24 hours. This is conditioning the flower for air drying. They are then bunched together with 10-15 stems ( you want good airflow). Wrap stems with the rubber band; do this as tight as possible because as the flowers dry, the stems shrink. Use the paper clip to fasten a hook through the rubber band.

Your flowers are ready to hang.

## Flowers I Like to Dry with Good Results:

Roses, hydrangeas, lavender, strawflowers (Strawflowers dry slowly so be patient), amaranth, larkspur, cocks comb, baby's breath and artichoke.



Flowers like *Nigella* (aka Love in the Mist) stay in the ground until the flowers fade. Once flowers are gone the seed pods emerge with lovely purple stripes. This is the time to harvest the *nigella*. I bunch quite a bit of this material together as it promotes good air flow because the plant is sparse. Air flow is essential in drying flowers or mold will develop. *Nigella* dries super fast. I would suggest placing a tarp under the *Nigella* to collect the fallen seeds. The seed collection of the *nigella* flower is a great start for your plant exchange contribution. And don't forget to save a few for yourself for next year's harvest. Have fun, and remember anything can be dried. ✨

SAVE THE DATE  
FOR  
UCCE MASTER GARDENERS-SOLANO  
ANNUAL

Wreath  
Workshop  
and  
MarketPlace

Saturday  
December 7, 2024  
1:00-4:00 pm  
Community United  
Methodist Church  
1875 Fairfield Ave





# PUMPKINS—THE SQUASH THAT JUST ABOUT EVERYONE LOVES

*Dottie Deems, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County*



Photo Credit: Creative Commons, Pumpkin.jpg (3008x2000) (wikimedia.org), No Attribution Required

The harbinger of fall, corn mazes, corn stalks, and pumpkins on the vine or on a front porch carved into a jack-o-lantern. Some are small and some are large when they ripen, but they all are planted the same way and are cared for the same way.

We can decorate the inside and outside of

our homes for Halloween and right through the Fall and Thanksgiving by buying and planting a packet or two of pumpkin seeds. It's not hard to do and it's not expensive, but it does take a sunny area and a dedication to watering.

Pumpkin seeds are available in packets in any garden center. There are lots of varieties and sizes, plus they are sold on the internet. Some are small enough to fit in your hand and others, well, they are much larger. They can fill a flatbed truck! I'm not suggesting that your first attempt should be anything that huge.

Most pumpkins are orange, but there are hybrids that are ghostly white, deep green, or even multicolored. Some are smooth skinned, and others have bumps all over them. If you share packets with a friend or neighbors and mix the seeds up, you'll have a variety of sizes, colors, and skin types. That sounds like fun to me!

Most varieties of pumpkins will take 100 to 110 days to mature and be ready for picking. They will also need a week to ten days to dry after being picked. So, you better get busy if you want them ready for Halloween! Count 110 to 120 days back from October 31 and you'll arrive at your planting date. The fourth of July would be just about right. That would be your planting date or somewhere that week or so.

## PREPARATION:

By July there should be no problem with the air temperature here in Solano County, a minimum of 65 degrees is appropriate. Growing pumpkins requires six to eight hours of sun a day so make sure you are not starting off in the shade. You can grow a row of pumpkins within a foot of a wall or with your neighbors

OK, within a couple of feet of a wooden fence you share. Pumpkins grow on vines that may end up being fifteen or twenty feet long. The vines can be held up by a sturdy trellis. They can grow through a narrow space between fence boards with ease. Make sure your neighbor is aware of this and maybe offer them a couple of your pumpkins when you pick them.

Level ground that has been turned over and supplemented with some topsoil and compost is a good way to start. I generally add perlite to my vegetable garden area to make it light and fluffy. Heavy clay soil can be lightened in this way. I add a two cubic foot bag of each at the beginning of the season to my 10' X 15' vegetable garden. Not enough to make my back ache, but enough to make the soil diggable and porous.

Make sure you have a faucet nearby with hoses long enough to reach your planting area. Pumpkin seeds need watering daily to germinate, usually seven to ten days. Don't let them dry out.

Create a row or two down the length of the garden. Multiple rows should be a minimum of five feet apart. At five-foot intervals down each row build up a mound that is 6-12 inches high and across. Then level off each mound and tamp down the soil. No, don't pack it too much, but you do want the mound to hold together.

Using a hose and nozzle, spray the row of mounds with a gentle spray. Don't create a lake at the bottom of each mound. You need to moisten the soil, especially each mound, but not enough to make mud pies. If you water to the point of the water creating puddles, stop and let the water penetrate and then repeat. Check the mounds poking your index finger into the center of each mound. It should feel damp down to your fingertip.

Poke four holes in the flattened area of the mound a couple of inches apart. Drop two or three seeds pointed end down into each hole and cover the holes with the soil mixture and tamp it down firmly.

Water like this each morning until you notice greenery poking through the soil. You just germinated pumpkin seeds! Congratulations!

## MAINTENANCE:

Once the seeds have germinated, remove the nozzle from the hose and replace it with a soaker hose. The soaker hose should be laid out alongside the row of mounds. Lay it down about six

*(Continued on Page 10)*

*(Continued From Page 9—Pumpkins—The Squash That Just About Everyone Loves)*

inches from the mounds, from one end of the row to the other and back again. It's encircled the row now.

Water in the morning when it is still cool. Use a soaker hose so you don't get the foliage wet which will cause mildew. I can't tell you exactly how many minutes it takes to run the hose or if it has to be done daily. You'll be the judge of that. Checking moistness with your index finger is the way to do this. Moist is good. Soggy is not. Dry is not going to get you any pumpkins at all.

Turn on the hose and start timing the watering. After about five minutes turn off the water, allow any excess to penetrate the soil, and then test for soil moistness with your index finger. Check the area between the hose and the base of the plant. Is it moist at the tip of your finger? If so, you're done watering for the day. Mark your calendar with the number of minutes you watered. As your vines get longer, you'll need to add time to watering. Bigger plants need more water. As the temperature gets warmer, you'll need to increase your watering time also. Any time you notice the leaves become limp, increase watering time. Pumpkins need frequent watering.

Once you see the leaves and vines growing you need to start fertilizing. Use a balanced granular fertilizer with the numbers 10-10-10 on the label. Those numbers indicate the fertilizer is a balanced one, ten parts nitrogen (10), ten parts potassium (10), and ten parts phosphate (10). The directions on the box of fertilizer will provide the amount of fertilizer to scratch into the area around the new plants. If not, sprinkle a teaspoon or two around the base of each plant and scratch it into the soil. Then turn on your soaker hose to moisten the soil thoroughly. Mark the date you fertilize on your calendar and every two to three weeks after that to remind you to fertilize again.

When the seedlings are about a foot tall you need to thin the plants. Select the smallest of the seedlings growing from each of the holes on each of the mounds and gently remove it. This is called thinning. You are removing a seedling to give the others more space to grow.

As the plants grow, the vines will become thicker and longer. Bright orange flowers will develop along the vines. Some of the flowers will be female and some male. Bees deposit pollen from the male flowers onto the female flowers and if the female flowers are fertilized tiny pumpkins will develop. As the pumpkins grow, they will ripen meaning they will develop colorful skins, mostly orange. As this happens you can cut the water back, but not off. Cut back from watering every day to five days a week. The plants should be watered fewer days a week, but for a longer time. Check the soil moisture just to make sure the soil is not bone dry or turning into mud.

#### HARVESTING:

Pumpkins are ready to be harvested when the skin is uniformly bright orange and has become tough. If you planted some pumpkins that are meant to be colors other than orange, check the color of the vines. The vines will begin to turn brown, shrivel, and dry out. Check the skin of the pumpkins too. It should not be soft. You shouldn't be able to press your thumbnail into the skin and indent it easily. If you can do that, leave the pumpkin on the vine for a few more days and check again.

When the pumpkins are ready to harvest use a garden shears to cut the stem about four inches from the top of the pumpkin. Cutting the stem too short causes the pumpkin to rot prematurely.

As soon as you cut the pumpkins from the vine, they're ready to be removed from the pumpkin patch. I put mine on dry ground for a couple of days, after which I start decorating my porch, around my fireplace, etc. Rinse them off (you might need to scrub the dirt off the bottom) and dry them. You can use the pumpkins indoors or out as holiday decorations. You could carve them into jack-o-lanterns or make pumpkin pies. If you store pumpkins in a cool, dry place they'll keep for several weeks.

I hope you enjoy growing pumpkins and share some of them with friends, family, and neighbors. 🌿



*Photo Credit: Aaron Burden aaronburden, CC0, via Wikimedia Commons: Used With Permission*

## HERE’S WHERE TO FIND OUR UCCE MASTER GARDENERS THIS SUMMER



By Ruth Clawson, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County  
Follow our SOCIAL MEDIA ACCOUNTS on Instagram

([ucmastergardenerssolano](https://www.instagram.com/ucmastergardenerssolano)) and Facebook ([UCCE Master Gardeners of Solano County](https://www.facebook.com/solanogardeners)) to see what we are up to and to get local gardening tips! This is an easy way to stay up to date on all of our events and opportunities!

<https://www.instagram.com/ucmastergardenerssolano>

<https://www.facebook.com/solanogardeners>

**Dunnell Nature Park Monthly Talks** are on the second Saturday of each month at 9:00am. You’ll find Master Gardeners sharing great information there—3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield. Upcoming talk topics include:

- ◆ **JULY 13th- Gardening for Fire Safety**, 9:00am. Join Maureen and Jenni to find out how you can make your yard and property fire-safe.
- ◆ **AUGUST 10th- California Native Plants**, 9:00am. Thinking of removing your lawn? Want to lower your water bills? Master Gardener Maureen will show you a wide variety of low-water and native plants to choose from.
- ◆ **SEPTEMBER 21st- Landscaping with Trees**, 9:00am. Join Melissa to learn about selecting, planting, and maintaining your landscape trees. Help create, enhance, and maintain our urban forest for the next 50 years. Landscape trees aren’t just beautiful, they also keep our homes and neighborhoods cooler, they sequester carbon, and they provide shade and wildlife habitat.
- ◆ **OCTOBER 12th- Rain Water Catchment**, 9:00am. Want to know how to build a rainwater catchment system? Even with only 23 inches of rain a year here in Fairfield, thousands of gallons of water are going out our downspouts. Maureen is ready to show you how and why to harvest rainwater and all about rain barrels and rain gardens.

### Vacaville Library Talks

NOTE: OUR VACAVILLE LIBRARY TALKS WILL MOVE TO THE TOWN SQUARE LIBRARY IN SEPTEMBER (EVERY FIRST WEDNESDAY NIGHT, 6-7 PM) DURING THE CULTURAL CENTER RENOVATIONS. ADDRESS: 1 TOWN SQUARE PLACE, VACAVILLE. IN THE MEANTIME, STOP BY THE VACAVILLE LIBRARY, 1020 ULATIS DRIVE, ON THE THIRD THURSDAY OF EACH MONTH, 6-7 PM, FOR AN INTERESTING GARDENING DISCUSSION. DEB GORDON AND CHRISTINA RUARK WILL BE PRESENTING ON THE FOLLOWING TOPICS:

- ◆ **JULY 18th-SHADE GARDENING**, 6-7pm What are the different types of shade? What grows in shade? Learn all about these including indirect lighting and sun sources.
- ◆ **AUGUST 15th- PLANT PROPAGATION PART 1**, 6-7pm (Cultural Center Library) Here’s a chance to learn to propagate starting with succulents and other easy plants to divide. Learn about choosing the right pieces and parts, and using the right medium and tools.
- ◆ **SEPTEMBER 4th- PLANT PROPAGATION PART 2, \*\*Wednesday, Sept 4 at Vacaville Town Square Library\*\***, 6-7pm. This is about Cuttings and Grafting. Why is this done? Learn about choosing the right places to cut, and staying clean to avoid disease transfer. This will include a hands on activity: grafting together two plants.
- ◆ **OCTOBER 2nd- FALL IS FOR PLANTING!**, **\*\*Wednesday, Oct 2, at Vacaville Town Square Library\*\***, 6-7pm. Learn about why we plant perennials and bulbs now (just when most plants are going dormant). Other topics will include preparing your garden for dormancy, cover crops, and fertilizing the soil.

### City of Fairfield Composting Event

City of Fairfield Composting Event is on September 14, 2024, at Dunnell Nature Park, 3351 Hillridge Drive. 8am -2pm. Master Gardeners will be available at this city-sponsored event with both an information table, and to help local residents (bring proof of residency) load free compost.

Come learn about the power of COMPOST!

## HERE'S WHERE TO FIND OUR UCCE MASTER GARDENERS THIS SUMMER, CONTINUED...

### AS ALWAYS, WE WILL SEE YOU AT:

**The Farmer's Market in Vallejo** is every Saturday from 9am to 2pm. The Market is located at 400 Georgia Street. Bring your gardening questions to our experienced Master Gardener's table.

### Home Depot, Fairfield

Our information table is available July 6, 20, August 3, 17, 31, September 14, 28, and October 5. 2121 Cadenasso Drive, Fairfield

### GARDENING FOR FIRE SAFETY

A free talk with UCCE Master Gardeners—Solano  
 July 13, 2024  
 9am  
 Dunnell Nature Park,  
 Fairfield

Learn all about preparing your property to be fire-safe with Master Gardeners Jenni and Maureen.



A free talk with UCCE Master Gardeners—Solano

### Landscaping with Trees

September 21, 2024

9:00 am

Dunnell Nature Park,  
 3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield, CA

Help create, enhance, and maintain our urban forest for the next 50 years! Join Master Gardener Melissa to learn about selecting, planting, and maintaining your landscape trees.



### STOP BY ANYTIME:

#### Children's Garden

Master Gardener's work monthly at the Children's Memorial Garden, 275 Beck Avenue, Fairfield, CA, 94533. This might be a great place to visit or to stop by for some gardening inspiration.

#### The Sensory Garden

is behind Fairfield Civic Center Library at 1150 Kentucky Street near the Civic Center pond. Teresa coordinates gardening efforts here. There are an abundance of interesting plants to see, touch, and smell!

#### The Willis Jepson Memorial Native Garden

is at 4699 Pena Adobe Road in Pena Adobe Park, Vacaville. Master Gardeners have undertaken a significant renovation and included many native plants. Plants include signage with QR codes connecting you to the Calscape website <https://calscape.org/>

#### Our Pollinator Pathway

Come take a look. The UCCE Master Gardeners of Solano County Office is located at 501 Texas Street, Fairfield, and our Pollinator Pathway runs through our parking lot and is accessible at any time.

JOIN US FOR A FREE UC MASTER GARDENERS-SOLANO TALK

### SHADE GARDENING

JULY 18, 2024  
 6-7PM

VACAVILLE CULTURAL CENTER LIBRARY,  
 1020 ULATIS DRIVE



Join UCCE Master Gardeners—Solano for this free talk:

### GARDENING WITH CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANTS

Removing lawn?  
 Need lower water bills?

Learn about the beautiful native plants that can transform your yard.

August 10, 2024  
 9am  
 Dunnell Nature Park,  
 3351 Hillridge Drive, Fairfield



# SUMMER GARDENING GUIDE

<p>P L A N T I N G</p>	<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>
<p>M A I N T E N A N C E</p>	<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>
<p>P R E V E N T I O N</p>	<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  
the UCCE Master Gardeners-Solano  
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Please put '*Seeds For Thought*' in the email Subject line.

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[https://solanomg.ucanr.edu/Seeds\\_for\\_Thought/](https://solanomg.ucanr.edu/Seeds_for_Thought/)

# SEEDS FOR THOUGHT



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SUMMER  
2024



*Jennifer M. Baumbach*

Jennifer M. Baumbach  
UCCE Master Gardener Program Coordinator