

University of California
Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener News

Amador County

APRIL 2006



Your Co-Pres' Speak

Hi to
We had a
meeting on
missed it, you will
some of the
Scott brought to



Everyone.
wonderful
3/21. If you
regret not getting
chocolate cake
celebrate

Janice Johnson and Jackie Tarchala 1000-hour mark. We are all very proud of this major milestone in their MG careers. Please use the UC MG website to keep your hours up to date.

March was a very good month for us. We had two public education classes. Janice's Square Foot Gardening class was a big success. Almost as many MGs turned out as participants. After the class, they all planted the demo garden at the Food Bank. Big thanks go out to new MG Lou Ohls, who single-handedly weeded the beds. John Otto and his weeders had a surprise when they showed up!! The grapevine pruning at Bernice Honeychurch's was very well attended. This was the last year Donna Hirschfelt will teach the class for us. Any ideas for a replacement for Donna in this class?? There were two public events with good exposure for the MG program. The first was a program by Diane Ferrell & Jackie Tarchala at the Mother Lode Newcomers with over 100 woman in attendance. The other was Dandelion Days. Scott would like your input as to whether you think it is worth the \$90 to rent a space at Dandelion Days and use all the volunteer hours it eats up. Please e-mail him if you have an opinion.

Thanks to all who participated in the March activities and to those who support the MG on-going programs, phone clinic, home visits, TSPN and Home Town Radio, etc.

April is loaded with the Expo, classes and special events. Volunteer if you can. Call or e-mail Emily for Nursery Clinics and Marie for Public Education. Also if you need potting soil for the Plant Expo please contact Marie. The April meeting will be an evening event at Larry Jones'. It will start at 5:00 with a Bar B Que about 6:30. If you did not sign up at the March meeting, call or e-mail Larry if you (alone or with spouse) will be able to attend. Larry will give us a tour of his wins and losses in the yard/garden. Pick a favorite dish to contribute. These evening meetings are designed so that MGs who cannot attend the day meetings can come and enjoy a fabulous meal and time to chat with other MGs.
Sayonara **Marie and Jerry**

APRIL CALENDAR

4/8, Saturday – **Spring Expo**, 9am-noon, at the Ag Office.

4/13, Thursday – Field trip to Morningsun Herb Farm, 8:00 am. Details inside.

4/18, Tuesday – **MG Monthly Meeting, 5:00 PM, Larry Jones' home.** Details inside.

4/22, Saturday, 10am-noon, **Organic Gardening & Herbs**, at the Ag Office.

4/25, Tuesday, 6:30pm-8pm, **Ants** at the Ag office.

Secretary's Notes

MARCH 21, 2006

President Jerry Trottier opened the meeting at 1:05 PM. Jerry and Jim Harrington were the speakers. They utilized the DVD on Weed Control they received from the UC Davis "Train the Trainer" program they attended.

Jerry and Jim discussed the various components of the UC presentation package, One program is the one that was presented and the second is a Power Point presentation with a script to work from. Jim emphasized you can customize the Power Point program. He also stressed that there is a weed photo gallery and weed key on the UC website. 20 Pest Notes that pertain to weeds are available in the MG files and UC Website.

The presentation began with the premise that weeds are any plants that you don't want in your garden. A wet or over watered garden is a haven for weeds. The types of weeds that invade landscaped areas can vary from season to season and need to be controlled so they don't take over cultivated areas.

Weed control is a necessary strategy They can crowd out desirable plants, can be hiding places for pests, can be tripping or fire hazards, and can be the source of burr problems for people and animals as well.

UC Davis recommends an IPM approach to weed control based on a combination of methods that provide long-term management. Pesticides should be utilized as only a last resort.

The first step is to identify what type of weed. When you identify the species of weed you can determine the best management strategy. The UC IPM website can help you access both.

Weeds are highly competitive and highly invasive species. They thrive in poorly maintained areas where soil is compacted; overwatered; low areas; thin areas in lawns;

waterlogged zones; bare patches; and lawns that are mowed too short.

The best time to manage weeds is before planting. It is best to deal with weeds before they emerge and mature. To prepare a new planting bed existing weed plants should be removed making sure to eliminate the entire root system. The area can then be cultivated and irrigated. When new weeds sprout, the plot should be cultivated again and then will be ready to plant. Other methods of preparation can also include soil solarization and the use of a non-selective herbicide.

If you choose vigorous plants that establish quickly and then mulch with material that blocks light you can effectively suppress the growth of weeds. There are organic, rock and synthetic mulches available that have various sized particles. When properly applied and maintained these mulches assist in keeping areas relatively weed free. There are pros and cons to all the various mulch materials but all of them must be applied to the correct depth and kept away from direct contact with the base of plants. If you choose a landscape fabric you should avoid the plastic products that do not allow air and water to pass through to the soil below.

Various tools are available to assist in the task of hand weeding. The common tools include: the dandelion knife; the hand tine; the garden hoe (for annuals), and a variety of tools adapted for use by the disabled.

Other methods used to eradicate weeds are hot water and flaming. These methods are most successful with annual and young perennial weeds. The flaming method should be applied when annual weeds are young and not when weeds are high.

Weed eating animals such as geese and goats are sometimes employed to control weeds.

Herbicides can be applied to provide weed control in very specific problem areas and

should not be relied upon exclusively. There are selective, non-selective, pre-emergent and post-emergent types of herbicides. Glyphosate (Roundup) is the most commonly used non-selective herbicide. If the directions on the product labels are not followed it can result in damage to desirable plants due to drift or if the roots of these plants are buried beneath the treated areas. When applying any type of herbicide make sure the product is recommended for the type of plant you are trying to eliminate and the product is registered for the area where it will be used. Wear protective clothing when applying herbicides and treat small areas.

When planting a lawn the basic site preparation steps should be followed. The proper grass plant that is adapted to your particular growing conditions is an important consideration. If you already have an established lawn the proper watering, fertilizing and mowing will reduce the weeds.

The basic steps of cultivation, irrigation and cultivation again when new weeds appear apply to preparing annual beds and other landscape applications as well. Hand weeding, mulching, planting cover crops, fabric barriers and eliminating bare ground all deprive weeds of the opportunity to establish themselves.

To keep the base of trees weed-free plants and weeds should be kept away from the area. Two inches of mulch can be applied over a base of wet newspapers around the drip line of the tree to keep the area clear of weeds.

In hardscape areas careful weeding with a knife or screwdriver can keep the area clear. Applications of less toxic methods such as the flaming or hot water methods can assist in keeping weeds at bay. Sealing with fillers can remove areas where weeds can invade concrete driveways, walkways and patios.

Jerry Trottier and Jim Harrington spoke after the presentation. Both attested to the ease of use of the UC training programs and discussed the customization options available to the user. They offered to assist any of the

Master Gardeners who might want to utilize one of the programs to conduct training in the future, just contact Jerry or Jim.

After brief refreshment break Jerry Trottier convened the business meeting.

Chris Taylor can use people to help in the planting/education program at the Plymouth Elementary School Garden. Contact Chris is you are interested.

There will be an evening meeting/pot luck at Larry Jones' home at 5:00 PM on April 18th. It's a "bring your own chair" event. Larry will provide the meat portion of the meal along with non-alcoholic beverages. Spouses are welcome at this event. Larry cautions that no small sports cars should attempt the trek to his country retreat as the roads can present certain challenges to a small vehicle.

Scott Oneto announced that the MG computer appears to been infected by a virus and that all the files have been wiped off of the system. The UC Davis system appears to be intact, as does the new MG database. There is currently no email available. Scott will be working to restore/rebuild the system as his schedule allows.

Bernice Honeychurch spoke about the Grape Pruning class held at her vineyard. The training was attending by more people than ever before at this class. UC advisor Donna Hirschfeld conducted the training. There were lots of questions from the attendees but, unfortunately, there was no time left to do the hands-on portion of the program.

Janice Johnson presented her "Square Foot Gardening" class along with John Otto who participated in the hands-on section of the class. After Janice's class John Otto brought the participants over to the Food Bank Demonstration Garden to put theory into action. The entire event was educational for both the MG attendees and the members of the public. John asked about providing more identification tags for the plants in the Demo Garden. Rita Martin announced that somebody left a weeder at the Food Bank Garden. Contact Rita for the "missing"

weeder. The work party at the Food Bank was successful and those who participated spread gravel and mulch on the area.

Jackie Tarchala and Diane Ferrell spoke before the Newcomers group at their February meeting. They discussed the MG program, fielded gardening questions and distributed brochures to the over 100 ladies present. It was a very successful presentation.

Scott Oneto talked about the Dandelion Days event. He wondered if the response the MG booth receives is worth the \$90 cost of participating in the event? No consensus was reached on the subject.

Jerry Trottier discussed some excellent articles about native plants he has seen in the "Upcountry Times" newspaper. Jerry also lauded the article that appeared in the Ledger that profiled our Lifetime Master Gardeners Janice Johnson and Jackie Tarchala.

Susan Harrington said the Ledger Dispatch welcomes articles from Master Gardeners. If you want to submit an article run it by Scott Oneto and he'll direct you to the proper contact person at the paper. Judy Marks, also wrote a fine article on the native oak trees that appeared in the Ledger Dispatch.

The Spring Expo will be held on April 8. Bernice Honeychurch and Cathy Koos Breazeal will be at the Ag Office on the afternoon of the 7th to receive plants for the sale from 1:00 PM throughout the afternoon. Bernice also offered to transplant plants for the Expo if you can just bring them to her home.

Bernice Honeychurch and Ann Schieding have been working with the children at the Plymouth Elementary School on their Butterfly Garden. They are teaching the children to weed, deadhead and prune. The next step will be to buy plants and to put them in the ground. Bernice and Ann are enjoying working with the children and welcome anyone who would like to help them with this program. The children who learn gardening this year will then teach what they've learned

to the group that will be working in the garden next year.

Bob Allen is working on the field trip schedule for the coming months. The Duarte Gardens trip is planned for May 5th. The sign-up sheet will be available at the April 18th meeting at Larry Jones' home. Bob is also planning a trip to Morningsun Herb Farm in Vacaville on April 13th. Mates are always invited to accompany MGs on field trips so just let Bob know how many plan to attend.

Marie Loretta distributed Supersoil to those MGs who are growing plants for the Expo. She reiterated that 3 and 4-inch pots are needed for the Expo. If you have any appropriate pots just bring them to the MG office. Plastic bags and boxes are also needed to transport the purchased plants. Marie needs someone to take over a class on soils for container plants scheduled for May 13th. Jim Switzer has compiled the information for the program but will not be available to teach the class. Jim will be happy to share his information if you are able to teach the class.

Sue Harrington announced that the theme for the 2007 MG calendar would be Amador County native plants. She's proposing a MG photo contest for the color cover of the calendar. Anyone can submit up to 3 photos for selection. Details will follow in the newsletter.

Lucy Martin asked that you please contact her with information about any projects or classes you may be teaching. Lucy wants to track and acknowledge your contributions but she needs you to provide her with the information.

Dennis Miller brought an example of Bacterial Blast from his orchard. He will leave the branch in the MG office for you to study. Dennis also highly recommends the "Garden Gate" magazine. He said that the publication does not carry any advertising and is filled with interesting ideas and information.

Jerry Trottier adjourned the meeting at approximately 3:10 PM.

Announcements

MG APRIL EVENTS

What: Spring Expo

When: Saturday, April 8, 2006, 9 AM to 12

Where: Ag/UCCE office

This popular gardening event includes the sale of seeds, plants and publications, as well as classes on spring and summer vegetable gardening and the planting, care, pruning and dividing of perennials.

What: Organic Gardening and Herbs

When: Saturday, April 22, 2006, 10 AM to 12

Where: Ag/UCCE office

Don't miss this opportunity to learn all about the benefits of organic gardening and how to apply organic methods in your own garden. The presentation will also include the topic of herbs: varieties, uses, growing your own.

What: Ants!

When: Tuesday, April 25, 2006, 6:30PM-8PM

Where: Ag/UCCE office

Although, as a group, ants are important natural enemies of many insect pests, some species can pose problems. This presentation includes information on identification, habits, and control of ants with ample opportunity to have questions answered.

Patti Stalder

FIELD TRIP

A field trip to Morningsun Herb Farm in Vacaville and Jepson Prairie Preserve south of Dixon is scheduled for Thursday, April 13th. We will meet at Ag office at 8:00AM to car pool. We visited this place a few years ago and they had a diverse variety of native plants & herbs. See their website at www.morningsunherbfarm.com. We will also visit on the way home the Jepson Prairie Preserve south of Dixon CA. It should be a perfect Vernal Pool area at this time of year. Bring a lunch as there are picnic areas at Morningsun Herb Farm. If you are planning to go please sign up with Bob Allen either by email at rmallen@volcano.net or phone 296-7442.

DIRECTIONS FOR APRIL POTLUCK

April's meeting is a potluck at Larry Jones home. He is providing meat and beverage. Bring a dish to share as well as your own chair. Spouses are welcome. You must RSVP to Larry.

Our Address: 12677 Quartz Mountain Road East, Sutter Creek, CA. Our phone number is 267-5674, but there is no cell service within 3 miles of our home.

From the West and North (Sacramento, Plymouth, etc.):

Take Hwy. 49 South to Drytown, turn left on Main St (across from 'Old WellGrill'). Main Street turns into New Chicago Rd. after approx. 150 yds. Stay on New Chicago for approx. 5 miles. Cross thru Rancheria Creek at Quartz Mountain Rd. (North/East). Stay on Quartz Mountain Rd. East for approx. 1/4 mile, we'll be on the left.

From the East and Up Country (Pioneer, Volcano, Daffodil Hill): From Volcano, take Charleston Rd. or Rams Head Grade to Shake Ridge Rd. Go South on Shake Ridge. Turn right on Quartz Mountain Rd. East. Bare right at mail boxes and continue on Quartz Mountain Rd. East for approx. 3.2 miles. We'll be on the right.

From the South (Jackson, Martell, Sutter Creek):

Take Hwy. 49 North to Amador City. Turn right on Water Street/Amador Creek Road. Bare to the left at the 'Y', that will be Turner Road. Cross thru Rancheria Creek, then turn right on New Chicago Road (going East). Stay on New Chicago for approx. 3 miles. Cross thru Rancheria Creek again at Quartz Mountain Rd. East. Continue on Quartz Mountain Rd. East for approx. ¼ miles, we'll be on the left.

GPS; N 38deg 27' 38"

W 120deg 47' 47"

Larry Jones

AAUW HOME TOUR

The City of Lone, "The Undiscovered Gem" will be highlighted on the 34th annual Home Tour sponsored by the Amador Branch of the American Association of University Women (AAUW). Saturday, April 22, 2006 from 11AM to 4PM. Tickets: \$15 in advance and \$20 the day of the Tour. Highlights: Wine tasting, tea & cookies. Tour of landmark church, art show of members' work. Lunch at Castle Oaks Country Club: \$12. Must have reservations. Handmade opportunity quilt tickets: 6 for \$5.00 or \$1.00 each. Quilt ticket orders: 209-296-5357, eljay10@volcano.net. Also available at Sewing Cottage in Martell. Tour tickets available March 25 at The Squirrel's Nest, Home Sweet Home, Lone Pharmacy, Twice Sold Tales and 49er Trailer Village in Amador County. Or order by mail: AAUW Home Tour, P.O. Box 611, Sutter Creek, CA 95685 and enclose a check for the correct amount. Mail order deadline is April 12. For more information call Lani Chapman 209-245-6052, chapman@volcano.net.

VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION CORNER **March 2006 By: Lucy Martin**

Thank you:

Diane Ferrell and Jackie Tarchala for your talk on "Challenges of Foothill Gardening" to the Newcomers Club. Janice Johnson for the public education class on "Square Foot Gardening" --- and to: John Otto for assisting with the hand-on portion of the class. The Food Bank Garden got planted. Marie Loretta, Bernice Honeychurch, Ann Schieding and Larry Jones for planting roses and daylilies at the Plymouth playground. Bernice Honeychurch for hosting a public education class on grapevine pruning. Chris Taylor for her work with Plymouth Elementary garden. To ALL who worked the MG booth during Dandelion Days. Acknowledgement to Marie Loretta for the fabulous job she does with public education.

*If you make an extra contribution of your time and knowledge to or in behalf of Master Gardeners please let me know so that it can be acknowledged. This article will appear monthly

CONTACT SHEETS PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS By: Lucy Martin

End of February through March 20th. ---- very slow period.

Problem: Wants info on plants that grow in Pine Grove area especially those that are cold tolerant and deer resistant.

Resolution: Sent handouts – she may come in to get Vegetable Planting Guide.

Problem: Interested in companion planting – tomatoes and soybeans? She caught end of a garden news spot on channel 7/13 and thinks it was about planting – or maybe not planting tomatoes with soybeans.

Resolution: Still pending Did a few Google searches and didn't come up with that combination.

Problem: There is a row of incense cedar by the animal shelter. The past year one of them died. They are all well established. Any ideas?

Resolution: Most likely is "Seiridium Canker" which was prevalent last year (2005). Attached description of Seiridium Canker. Affected branches need to be cut out and destroyed.

INTERESTING SPEAKER ON BUGS

Don't miss this! The Mother Lode Rose Society invites Master Gardeners to come to their meeting Tuesday April 4 1:30pm at the Senior Center to hear Baldo Villegas speak on "The Good, Bad, and the Ugly." He is an entomologist with the Calif. Dept of Food and Agriculture, an entertaining speaker who illustrates his talk with the best slides of insects and disease you will ever see!
Bernice Honeychurch

PHOTO CONTEST!!!

The Master Gardener Calendar for 2007 will feature plants native to Amador County. The inside will include line drawings for the plant

featured each month. We would like to have a color photograph on the cover of the calendar, so we are offering all the Amador Master Gardeners an opportunity for a free calendar and a few minutes of fame (including your name in the calendar as the photographer). Here are the guidelines for the contest:

Subject: Amador County native plants – oaks, wildflowers, etc.
Format: 4x6 or 5x7 print
Number: No more than 3 photos per person – Please put your name on the back of each photograph.
Deadline: Friday, May 5, 2006
Submit to: Janice Johnson

If you have any questions please ask Janice Johnson or Sue Harrington.

HALIBUT DIP OR ENTREE

2 lb. Halibut, cooked and flaked
2 or 3 – 4oz. Cans green chilies, depending on taste preferences
2 cups mayonaise
8 oz. Softened cream cheese (cut into small cubes to facilitate blending).
1 tsp. minced (or powdered) garlic
1 cup grated Cheddar cheese
1 cup grated Monterey Jack cheese

Mix thoroughly all ingredients into a crockpot for a dip. Or mix in a bowl and then place in a casserole dish. Heat to your liking (warm or hot).

John Otto

GARDENING ARTICLES NEEDED

The Ledger-Dispatch welcomes gardening articles. Do we have any writers out there? Several years of past articles by Polly Chapman are in the office for review and updating so you don't have to start from scratch.

RESEARCH PROJECT

I would like to encourage you to participate in a research project being coordinated by UCCE Advisor Steve Quarles. Steve is a Contra Costa County Advisor, based at the Richmond Field Station. He has been working with the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC) to develop a sampling procedure to collect samples of lumber treated with the new non-arsenical preservatives currently sold in lumber yards throughout the state. These preservatives replace CCA (chromated copper arsenate) treated lumber, which was voluntarily withdrawn from use in residential applications in January 2004. DTSC wants to determine whether or not these new treated products should be considered a toxic waste at the time they come out of service. The first step in this process is to obtain and evaluate new treated products. Steve would like the help of Master Gardeners (one or two per county) to help in this effort. This would be a great opportunity for Master Gardeners to participate in a UC research project.

Details of what is requested can be found at the following website -

<http://cecontracosta.ucdavis.edu/Wood%5FDurability/>, then click on 'MG Volunteer - Treated Wood Study'

Please take the time to review this document. If you are willing to participate, or have any questions, please contact me and I can get you in contact with Steve.

Scott Oneto

A NEW BOOK

"California Native Plants for the Garden" by Carol Bornstein, David Fross and Bart O'Brien is a serious reference book for those serious about native plants in their home landscapes. Plant profiles with color photographs. Also listed, each plant's natural habitat and range. Lists at back of book for specific plants for specific uses such as aromatic foliage or fall color.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU By: Lucy Martin

Judie Marks made her Master Gardener debut during our January meeting with a power-point presentation on a rather unusual topic, "Albino Redwoods". She has researched and written about these mutations in cooperation with reputable botanists and scientists. These "ghost trees" are a rather uncommon occurrence and not known to many of us. Her photographs were beautiful and the presentation was very interesting.

Judie lives with her husband, Jim, on Sutter Crest in Sutter Creek. They share their home with Bobby, a 9-month-old Sheltie and Samantha, a tortoiseshell cat. Judie has a son, Johnny, who lives in Anchorage, Alaska; he and his wife have two children. Her daughter, Jenny and her husband are in New Jersey; they have one child. Judie grew up in Sacramento and is a fifth-generation Sacramentan. She graduated from Hiram Johnson High School, and then earned a B.A. and M.A. in journalism from U.C. Berkeley. She spent 32 years as a reporter – 13 years with the San Jose Mercury and 19 years with the Monterey Herald. Mostly she covered local government but her favorite years were those she spent as a science writer. She now works part-time for our local paper reporting on the Board of Supervisors and other county news.

Judie had visited Volcano for many years so she was quite familiar with the area. Jim is retired from the Marine Corp and when she retired in 2004 they chose Amador County as their retirement destination. In her words, affordability was a major factor as well as aesthetics. She knew about Master Gardeners through previous contacts and when she read the class notice in the local paper she signed up to join the class of 2005. She is currently faced with getting control of St. Johns Wort that is deeply rooted in her yard. It is a difficult task but it is key to her primary gardening interest, restoring and growing native plants. Her favorite plant though, is a fig tree ... but not just any fig tree! It is a cutting that was given to her by her sister from the original Mission fig that was in her great-grandmother's yard at the turn of the previous century. The cuttings have been passed down through the generations. Giving this tree continuity within the family is a great source of pride.

She is a lovely lady; casual, self-confident with a beautiful smile and clear, sparkling blue eyes. She is a person of many interests and an enviable background. Through her work she met many interesting politicians and high profile people including California Governor, Pat Brown. She loves to travel and lived for two years in Thailand. While there she learned to speak Thai. She also traveled to India, where she attended a conference presided over by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, who was assassinated in 1984. She also lived in China in 1988-89. She was an observer at Tiananmen Square in Beijing in the days before China's leadership cracked down on the pro-democracy demonstrators. She quit her job and left China three days after the horrifying events, to return to the security of home.

There are so many conversations, so many memories – many interviews --- but two are etched in her memory forever. She recalls the quiet dignity of Tenzing Norgay, the famous Sherpa who accompanied Sir Edmund Hillary on his climb to the top of Mt Everest in 1953. Norgay was humble, but also kind and gracious. When he died in 1986 the obituary that ran throughout the U.S. was one Judie had written (in advance), at the request of the Associated Press bureau chief in Delhi, based on her interview with Norgay. She also met and interviewed, His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet at his temporary seat of government in Dharamsala, India. His sense of humor, his philosophy and his quiet presence were calming and peaceful. When the interview concluded, she said, he took her hand in his and held it against his heart --- creating in her a moment of intense "connection". It was a soothing, peaceful experience and one that remains with her to this day. Her career has been abundant and fascinating and though her life now moves at a much slower pace, her adventurous spirit has not diminished. She and Jim are booked for an 18-day trip to Turkey that includes cruising the "Turquoise Coast" and a week on the Greek Island of Chios. She is in her second year of watercolor classes at Folsom Community College and is enjoying learning about the formerly unexplored world of art. While she enjoys cooking and does some Asian dishes - she yields most of the culinary tasks to Jim who is quite an accomplished cook.

Words of encouragement that she would like to share with fellow Master Gardeners,
"Enjoy learning. Take courses that are available and seek out experts who will advise you or guide you."

THE SOIL FOODWEB By Emily Beals

Every now and then something comes along that changes one's perception of life. A few weeks ago my life as a gardener turned a corner when I attended a workshop entitled, "The Soil Foodweb", led by Dr. Elaine Ingham. For a day and a half we were immersed in the fascinating and little understood world of soil microbiology and who would have thought such a topic would have been so interesting. I hung on every word. To put it simply, understanding what goes on in the soil beneath our feet is the beginning of truly intelligent gardening. Exploring the world of bacteria, fungi, et al, understanding the complex inter-relationships between the microorganisms that live in soil is the beginning of understanding how plants grow, die, stay healthy and thrive or why they do not.

Dr. Ingham is a superb lecturer who is able to take the complex and make it understandable. She is presently President and Director of Research at Soil Foodweb Inc., a small business that grew out of her Oregon State University research program. Her area of expertise focuses on what organisms are present in the soil and on the foliage of your plants, which organisms benefit which types of plants, which organisms harm plants, and how these organisms can be managed to maximize plant growth and health with the least expensive inputs into the system, while maintaining soil fertility. She is concerned about grower-related issues, focusing on the expense of intensive chemical use as well as the damage these chemicals inflict on beneficial organisms in the soil and on foliage, and the secondary damage to surrounding ecosystems, especially native habitat and riparian systems.

What is the **SOIL FOOD WEB**? It is basically an amazingly diverse group of organisms from the tiniest one-celled bacteria, algae, fungi, and protozoa, to the more complex nematodes and microarthropods, to the visible earthworms, insects, small vertebrates, and plants. As these organisms eat, grow and move through the soil, they make it possible to have clean water, clean air, healthy plants, and moderated water flow. The **SOIL FOOD WEB** is an integral part of landscape processes. Soil organisms decompose organic compounds, including manure, plant residue, and pesticides, preventing them from entering water and becoming pollutants. They store nitrogen and other nutrients that might otherwise enter groundwater, and they fix nitrogen from the atmosphere, making it available to plants. Many organisms enhance soil aggregation and porosity, thus increasing infiltration and reducing runoff. Soil organisms prey on crop pests and are food for above-ground animals.

Where do soil organisms live? They occur wherever organic matter occurs, mostly in the top few inches of soil. Different organisms live in different places within the soil but all plants – grass, trees, shrubs, agricultural crops – depend on the soil food web for their nutrition. To the extent that these organisms are present and in what ratio, determines the health of your soil.

How do you know whether or not you have healthy soil? One way is to send a soil sample to the lab for analysis for a nominal fee. Testing will tell you the structure of a food web, the numbers or biomass of organisms in the soil. The effectiveness of organisms doing specific activities such as decomposition or nitrification are the unique characteristics or "fingerprints" of your soil community. That's critical first step information. Great food web complexity means greater biodiversity which means healthier soil thus healthier plants.

After you learn more about what's going on in your soil, the real work begins. You learn to make "good" aerobic compost and compost tea, carefully monitoring the temperature and moisture content, and use it on everything you grow. You thought you knew how to make compost, well you might want to take another look. Do you have a 4' compost thermometer? You need one. Does our county have a Master Composter Training Program? We need one. Some counties have them.

Go to www.soilfoodweb.com for more information. If there is interest, certified SOIL FOOD WEB Advisors are available to present a program. I hope I've perked your interest and you'll come along on yet another adventure into the fascinating world of gardening. Emily Beals.

Yard Calendar-April

PLANT SEED:

If weather permits, perennials and annuals. If not, start seeds in greenhouse or cold frame. Start new lawns from seed or sod.

SET OUT PLANTS:

Summer blooming bulbs, corms, rhizomes and tubers (callas, dahlias(sun), glads, begonias(shade))

Above 2500': Cool weather bedding plants: violas, stock, snapdragon, primrose, calendulas. Set out bare-root plants and flowering shrubs/vines.

Below 2500': Plant bare-root perennials (usually mail ordered). Carefully untangle roots and spread over a cone of soil in the planting hole. Refill hole burying roots to just below the crown.

After all frost danger, **protected location**: citrus, bougainvilleas, hibiscus.

Plant shrubs and perennials NOW before it gets hot. Consider drought tolerant species.

FERTILIZE:

Young shade trees (at first leaves if not done in March).

Cool season turf grasses. Spring blooming shrubs, ground covers, conifers.

Roses - a combination systemic insecticide and fertilizer (wards off aphids).

Feed spring blooming **after** they bloom (azaleas, rhododendrons, camellias, need acid type).

Feed spring bulbs after bloom with 0-10-10 or 5-10-10.

Tall Bearded Iris – 0-15-15 in early spring.

Below 2500': If plants show signs of chlorosis (yellow mottling between leaf veins), spray leaves with a foliar fertilizer containing chelated iron and zinc. Also apply a chelated iron or an acid-forming fertilizer containing chelated iron. This is the only kind of iron plants can absorb.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Pinch chrysanthemums back to 6 inches every month through July.

Divide and replant crowded clumps of perennials.

Pull Snap off faded rhododendron blossoms (be careful not to damage tiny leaf bulbs below blossoms).

Prune spring flowering shrubs/vines/trees immediately after bloom, if needed.

Prune off any frost damaged limbs/branches after last frost date.

When pruning, carry a bucket of a weak bleach solution to sterilize shears between cuts.

If rains have slowed, set up water basins around trees/shrubs to promote deep watering.

Trim off flowers on spring bulbs. DO NOT cut off or tie up leaves of bulb plants.

REMEMBER:

Don't let newly planted plants dry out! As weather heats up, mulch.

To check/flush drip irrigation. Install or repair old line or emitters as needed.

If Pyracantha branches look like they've been scorched with a blow torch, that's fire blight.

Prevent it by spraying with 50 % copper now.

When cutting roses, leave a lot of leaves on the stems to make food.

SUGGESTIONS:

When shopping for new plants, consider unthirsty ones: coreopsis, dianthus, echinops, gallardia, bearded iris, Mexican evening primrose, penstemon, salvia, yarrow

Grow cosmos, marigold and zinnia from seed.

Some heat lovers are: annual salvia, asters, celosia, dwarf dahlias, periwinkle, petunias, Portulaca.

When replacing plants in your garden, check to see if there is a drought/frost tolerant species
Shrubs to consider: wild lilac, crape myrtle, oleander, rosemary.

Easy care perennials: bearded iris, coreopsis, dianthus, echinops, gaillardia, penstemon, salvia, yarrow.



Master Gardener Volunteers Events Calendar

April

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sunday

monday

tuesday

wednesday

thursday

friday

saturday

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2	3	4 -Phone Clinic M Loretta A Schieding	5 -Phone Clinic	6 -Phone Clinic	7 -Phone Clinic J E Otto	8 -Annual Spring Expo
9	10	11 -Phone Clinic J Ferrell D Ferrell	12 -Phone Clinic A Schieding P Stalder	13 -Field Trip to Morning Sun Herb Farm -Phone Clinic V Bonkowski P A Smith	14 -Phone Clinic L Smith	15
16	17	18 -MG Monthly Meeting & Potluck at Larry's house -Phone Clinic J Lyall E Beals	19 -Phone Clinic S Collins	20 -Phone Clinic L Breesch B Honeychurch	21 -Phone Clinic J Marks P A Smith	22 -MG Amador Class: Organic Gardening & Herbs
23	24	25 -MG Amador Class: ANTS -Phone Clinic L Martin	26 -Phone Clinic R Allen	27 -Phone Clinic J Trottier	28 -Phone Clinic C Rosson D Rosson	29
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