

University of California
Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener News

Amador County

SEPTEMBER 2006



Your Co-Pres' Speak

August weather allowed us as well as our gardens to recover from the hot July. The August meeting and potluck at Penny Smith's was a great success. The group once again showed that it knew its way around the kitchen as well as the garden. The tour of her ranch was a great success as well as Phil's impromptu tour of his auto garage. We thank you both! It was Martha Jones' birthday and Larry brought a cake to celebrate the occasion.



Once again thanks go out to Bernice Honeychurch and the other Master Gardeners whose efforts won a gold ribbon for our garden at the Amador County Fair!

We have ended the summer months with two programs in August. The first was the Fall & Winter vegetable selection and planting public education class. The second was the tomato tasting and judging at the Sutter Creek Farmers Market. We need to thank Janice Johnson for her coordination of this popular event. We will start the autumn of the year with Annual Fall Expo on September 23rd. We will have sign ups for this event at the September meeting. We will also have clinics at the Amador Flower Farm in early October. Sign up for this event if you can.

The calendar committee is well on its way to the completion of the 2007 calendar. We hope to have this available at the Fall Expo. We will also have the calendars available for

sale at the Master Gardener conference in October.

At the August meeting Robin Ivanoff asked for help with the Master Gardener Minute show on Home Town Radio. She asked that we update or create new scripts for the program. This would also be true for TSPN programs and Ledger Dispatch articles. The old materials are available at the Master Gardener office. Remember that all scripts and articles need review by Scott Oneto before release to the public.

As it gets closer to the November sign up for the 2007 Master Gardener training it is important that we make ourselves known to individuals who would be interested in joining the Amador County Master Gardeners.

SEPTEMBER CALENDAR

Sept. 19 – Tuesday – **Beginning Power Point Class**, 10 am – noon at the Ag office.

Sept. 19 – Tuesday - **MG Monthly Meeting**, 1:00 pm at the Ag office. Board meeting at noon.

Sept. 23 – Saturday – **MG Fall Expo**, 8:30 am –noon at the Ag Office.

Secretary's Notes

AUGUST 16, 2006

Jerry Trottier opened the August meeting at 5:20 PM. The meeting/potluck dinner was held in the bucolic tranquility of the Plymouth ranch of Phil and Penny Smith. Jerry introduced Penney, the hostess of the event, and announced that she and her husband, Phil, would be conducting tours of the property, animals and shop areas after the business meeting was concluded.

Janice Johnson reminded everybody about the Tomato Tasting event held at the Sutter Creek Farmer's Market on Saturday, August 26.

Bernice Honeychurch announced that the Master Gardener garden won a well-deserved first prize at the Amador County Fair this year. This award was won due to the hard work of a group of dedicated volunteers and the outstanding leadership of Bernice Honeychurch. Kudos to all of you who were involved in the planning, planting, watering, decorating and maintenance of this lovely garden at the fairgrounds.

More computer training is planned for September and October. Power Point, Word and other computer classes will be conducted by Marie Loretta and Jim Harrington. Check the newsletters for the dates and times of the specific classes.

A reminder that the Master Gardener Conference will be held on October 5 and 6. Ten people from the Amador County group will attend and their fees will be sponsored in part from the MG Treasury. In the following months those members will discuss what they learned at the conference during the monthly meetings.

Sue Harrington hopes that the 2007 Master Gardener Calendar will be printed and available for sale sometime in September.

Jerry Trottier and Jack Lyall discussed the Home Visit program. Dave Andrews has not

been available to oversee the program lately because of an unusually busy work schedule and a personal tragedy that has befallen his family. Dave hopes to be back soon to participate in the program.

Larry Jones discussed the Bacterial blight that has infected some of the trees that were available for distribution at the County Fair. If the infection is not too widespread, the infected branch/branches can be pruned and destroyed. Other trees have just had to be discarded. Larry also found a cutter that he found very useful for cutting pipes for irrigation systems. He found his cutter at an Albertson's in Oregon. Larry has contacted the Albertson's in Martell and has requested that they carry this item for sale. Larry will notify the Master Gardeners if/when the item is in stock locally.

The fall event at the Amador Flower Farm is being held on October 7 & 8. Volunteers are needed to staff the MG booth and to do a demonstration of the correct method of planting bulbs. There are shifts available from 9 AM - 12 PM and from 12 PM - 3 PM. This will be the final event and demonstrations for the Flower Farm for this year. Please contact Emily Beals directly if you can volunteer to work at this event.

Robin Ivanoff has been recording the "Master Gardener Minutes" for the local radio station. She has been recycling the old scripts for her current shows but is sorely in need of scripts for some new and timely topics such as dealing with deer problems or planting winter vegetables. The scripts should be approximately 100 to 150 words. Submit the scripts directly to Robin and she will pass them along to Scott for his approval.

Jackie Tarchala passed around a device that she received for testing that is supposed to be a back saver for working with long handled tools. The device grips the handle of the tool so that a person can work without bending over. Chris Taylor volunteered to test the

product and provide a report on its effectiveness.

At 5:35 PM Jerry Trottier adjourned the business meeting. Penny and Phil Smith, our gracious hosts, then conducted tours of their ranch. Penny took her group over to the barn and grazing area of their long lashed Alpacas and Llamas. The alpacas are significantly smaller than the llamas but were a bit standoffish with the visitors. The llamas were more gregarious, especially the elder llama who has been with the Smith family for many years. Penny and Phil also have chickens in the barn and use the manure from the animals in their compost bins.

Penny brought the group to her "worm farm" area. Misters cool this area. When they want to harvest the worm castings, they put large mesh vegetable bags with vegetables inside them into the worm "farm". In a couple of weeks they remove the bags that contain the worms and harvest the castings. Then they sift the castings and used them in the garden areas.

Penny and Phil have a sizable vegetable garden interspersed with ornamental plants. Phil trenched the vegetable garden area and installed cement board to foil the indigenous gophers. Phil's ingenious solution to discourage these destructive pests seems to have worked as the Smiths have seventeen varieties of tomatoes growing in their garden along with fifth generation Italian beans and many other types of produce as well.

Phil is an amateur wine maker and utilizes the Zinfandel and Merlot grapes that the birds don't eat to make his wine. The Zinfandel grapes are grown on the Muscat rootstock of the grapes that Penny and Phil originally planted in their vineyard. Phil bottled approximately ten gallons of wine last year as the birds took about two thirds of the grapes. The vines are netted and the Smiths are hoping to save a higher percentage of their crop for themselves this season. In the spring, the Smiths invited the Master Gardeners to watch while an experienced grape vine budder grafted buds onto some of their plants. During the class both Jerry

Trottier and Dennis Miller tried their hands at budding and both their grafts are doing well.

The final stop in the tour was the lovely little pond area situation under the trees and above the shaded lawn alongside the Smith home. It is a charming spot and the pond is stocked with colorful goldfish from Wal Mart.

Phil conducted his tour of his auto restoration shop, which drew sighs of envy and admiration from many of the men in the group. After showing his shop and its surrounding areas Phil moved down to the garden and vineyard with his group.

At approximately 6:10 the tours were completed and the Pot Luck dinner commenced. Everyone filled their plates and glasses and settled down to a very interesting meal in the shaded lawn area near the house.

Towards the end of the evening John Otto passed around a plant sample for identification. It was brought into the MG office by an Amador County Resident. There were some guesses and discussion but finally John identified the plant as a "Velvetleaf" *Abutilon theophrasti* Medic. The plant has origins in Asia and has proven to be an invasive and pervasive plant in the Amador County area. The seeds of this plant can remain in the soil for fifty years or more and still be viable. John found information about this plant in the "Weeds Of California" reference book in the MG office. The plant flowers and sets seed pods from late June through October. John also found these two web links that provide additional information about the "Velvetleaf": 1) <http://www.agfgov.bc.ca/ccroppot/velvetlf2.html> and 2) <http://plants.usda.gov/java/profile?symbol=ABTH>.

People gathered up the remaining food and containers between 6:30 and 7:00 PM. Thank you and goodbyes were said to the gracious hosts, Penny and Phil Smith, after a memorable evening at their charming home.

Submitted by Donna England

Announcements

EXPO PLANT SALE REMINDER

Please have your plants tagged and delivered to the area behind the Ag office the day before the sale (Friday, 9/22). I will be there from 1-3 PM to sort and color code. Please send me an email with the name and number of plants you are bringing!

Thanks, Bernice Honeychurch

MASTER GARDENER MINUTE

Hey, Master Gardeners! How about getting a minute of fame and some volunteer hours?

The Home Town Radio Master Gardener Minute needs some new submissions for its weekly radio broadcast. If you have a favorite topic, or have been receiving questions from the public of late, why not write 100-150 words on that topic? Please send your contribution to Robin Ivanoff at volcanogirl@earthlink.net. Robin will work it into a script and have it approved by Scott for airing on the radio. Your name, as the author of the topic, will be mentioned during the Master Gardener Minute, and you will receive volunteer credit for writing the radio spot. Thank you!

Robin Ivanoff

WEBSITES TO CHECK OUT

www.monrovia.com is a great plant web site. Just go to the plant library section, select a plant and wonderful information is at your fingertips.

www.thegoldengecko.com is a nifty garden center site.

Marie Loretta

MASTER GARDENER 2006 FALL EXPO

On Saturday, September 23, the Amador County Master Gardeners will hold their annual Fall Expo from 8:30 AM to noon at the Ag/UCCE Office, 12200 B Airport Road in Martell between Jackson and Sutter Creek.

The morning will begin with the very popular plant sale at 8:30 AM. Seeds and books will also be available for purchase. The main theme of this year's classes, which will be held from 9:15 AM until noon, is Basic Landscaping Skills and Techniques. Specific topics will address creating year-round color in your garden, as well as landscape design. Classes begin at 9:15 AM.

This event is free and open to the public. Call the Master Gardener Office (209) 223-6838, 10 AM to noon, Tuesday through Friday, or email the office at mgamador@ucdavis.edu for more information

Patti Stalder

CONTACT SHEETS – PROBLEMS AND RESOLUTIONS

By Patti Stalder

July 19 – August 17, 2006

Problem: dried leaves on pear tree; cucumber plants die for no apparent reason – both tree and plants in southeast exposure.

Resolution: sunburn responsible for both problems.

Problem: Crape myrtle never bloomed.

Resolution: Client has never pruned her crape myrtles until this year. They haven't bloomed yet (July). Advised her that they might bloom yet this year and, in the future, to winter prune.

Problem: Client needs help with pruning plum and other trees.

Resolution: Mailed information on pruning fruit trees from file. Also advised him to watch

for information about an MG winter fruit tree pruning class.

Problem: On zucchini -- no fruits are forming on plants after blossoms. On gardenia – buds fall off before they can bloom.

Resolution: Zucchini is probably not setting fruit because of high temperature. Gardenia bud drop is caused by too little water, too much water, high temperatures or insufficient light. Since she waters daily, the solution is probably too much water.

Problem: Three camellias with no blooms this year. Two get morning sun; one gets less but has grown bigger. Moved plants from Buckhorn to Plymouth in spring 2004.

Resolution: Lack of bloom is due to plants being moved. They should settle in and be okay. Need good drainage and shade with 2 inches mulch. Fertilize with acid plant food.

Problem: Client wants to know if she should trim orchid stems after flowers drop.

Resolution: Important to know the type of orchid. This is dendrobium. After flowering (it will flower 6-10 weeks) cut off old flowers near the base of the stem but do not cut the cane. Flowers are on sprays that shoot from the side or top of fleshy stems, known as canes that are actually elongated pseudobulbs and act as storage organs for the plants. Dendrobium and phalaenopsis will re-flower and branch from old stems; don't cut unless it turns brown. For cymbidium it is okay to cut off stalks; they do not re-flower on old stalks.

Problem: Magnolia tree is dropping leaves and client fears it is dead. Tree is 30 years old, circled by concrete over its root structure except for a 2 ft. circle for the trunk.

Resolution: Tree looks fine. They tend to drop leaves throughout the year but might be heavier drop because of extreme heat and less water than it is used to. Deep water (slow for 6 hours) twice a week in July and August, once a week in 80-degree weather. Automatic watering system would be helpful. The tree is not being harmed by the cement but, since the water seems to disappear and never backs up, it may have loose or small

amount of soil underneath meaning that it needs water more often.

Problem: Sample of zucchini, patty-pan and crookneck squash. He is using Take Down (organic bug spray) once a week for two weeks. Waters at night and puts Take Down on at night.

Resolution: No bugs noticed on samples. Signs of sunburn, possibly magnified by use of oil spray during heat spell.

Problem: Pumpkins not setting much fruit. Some set but shrivel up and die.

Resolution: Possible insufficient pollination or nematodes. Sent pest note #7489 and copied pages 397 & 398 from Handbook and sent.

Problem: Sample grape leaves, same problem last year. Fruit looks okay.

Resolution: Thrips. Sent pest note #7429 (Thrips).

Problem: Rose canes turning yellow or brown. Starts out with brown spots, which get bigger and then spread to other canes. Some canes are hollow inside or rotting eventually.

Resolution: Asked for sample which client brought in. The problem is brown canker: cut out infected parts below infection; change to drip irrigation; when dormant, may spray with liquid calcium polysulfide.

Problem: Grape plants (Grenache, rootstock 110R and Durif, rootstock St. George) wilting and dying. Other grapes okay.

Resolution: Put him in contact with Lynn Wunderlich.

Problem: Sample: needs identification of wildflower that is 3-4 ft., with yellow lantern flower, forms pod which turns brown, bursts open and disperses seeds.

Resolution: Velvetleaf (malvaceae – mallow family). Page 380 in Weeds of the West; page 372 Sunset Western Garden Book. Sent pest note.

Problem: Tomato blossom end rot.

Resolution: Caused by irregular watering. Set schedule for watering.

ALASKA'S INSIDE PASSAGE, SPIKY MYSTERY PLANTS, CLIMATE CHANGE

To celebrate my son John's high school graduation, we took a trip on the marine ferry through Alaska's Inside Passage earlier this month. We noted a couple of plant oddities and had to wait til we arrived in Juneau to get some answers.

The first thing we noticed was dead tree carcasses on the various islands along the Inside Passage. These were not recent tree kills, but appeared to be pretty old – most of the trunks were weathered and silver colored. On each ferry during the summer, the Alaska Marine Ferry has Forest Service interpreters that give programs along the way. When we inquired on two different ferries, the interpreters did not know.

When we arrived at our final destination, Juneau, the first thing we did was drive "out the road". Juneau has only one main highway, 24 miles long, named "The Road", and for entertainment Juneau-ites drive out The Road for picnics and fishing. Along The Road, we saw a large shrub with huge maple-like leaves and bright red berries in conical cluster. When answering a call of nature I was able to get an up close look and saw sticker all over, so I knew this was a definite "no-touch" plant! Later that day in Juneau, we saw a Forest Service info center, so we stopped in to find out more about the sticker plant and the tree die-off.

The sticker plant is called Devil's Club and is a native medicinal. Our question sparked a heated debate in the office about which was worse, ad bad case of poison oak or one sticker from Devil's Club! Interestingly enough, two of the FS staff were from Auburn and Susanville, and the third was from Oregon, hence the poison oak comparison. The sticker works its way into your skin much like a foxtail, but much more painful. You can find this shrub mixed in with blueberries in the dense under story of the temperate rainforest. We did not see it in Ketchikan, so must only be further north, like in Juneau. You can get more information on Devil's Club at www.news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2003/09/0905_030905_tvdevilsclub.html

The tree die off answer is quite interesting, too. I will quote firth from the USFS publication entitled "Alaska's Inside Passage: Wildlife Viewing Guide" (AK Department of Fish and Game and the USFS): "Throughout the southern and western Tongass National Forest, thousands of yellow-cedar trees are dying, and the grayish-brown trunks of these standing dead trees contrast with the surrounding hemlock and spruce. Cedar wood is rot-resistant, and these trees may remain standing for up to 100 years after they die."

"The decline of yellow-cedar is not caused by disease or insects, and evidence indicates it began around 1890. Foresters suspect that gradual climate change is playing a role. Yellow-cedar tends to grow in wet, poorly drained soils, and has shallow roots that are vulnerable to frost damage. Ideally in midwinter, a blanket of snow protects the root systems from sub-freezing temperatures but the onset of the cedar decline coincides with the beginning of a warming trend in Alaska. Warmer winters mean less insulating snow at lower elevations to protect the roots from a mid-winter cold snap."

"In some areas, stands of partially defoliated Sitka spruce are also visible, under attack by spruce aphids. These aphids are different from the spruce bark beetle, which has kicked millions of acres of spruce trees on the Kenai Peninsula in South central Alaska. The aphids were introduced into the region in the early 1900s, probably on some nursery tree stock, and have since naturalized in the region. Their populations are usually held in check by late spring frosts and cool, wet weather. A string of mild winters has contributed to an increase in aphids in coastal areas of Southeast Alaska in recent years."

We drove home from Prince Rupert, BC along the Yellowhead Highway and the Caribou Highway and noticed a lot of recent dead and dying trees there too. These trees look a lot like our bug trees here in the Sierra, with a reddish, rust color to the foliage. There was no opportunity to ask about these trees, but if I find out anything, I will pass it along.

Cathy Koos Breazeal

September Vegetable/Orchard Calendar

PLANT SEED (all elevations):

Replenish the soil before planting cool season crops.

Sow seed for fall/winter harvest of vegetables (beets, carrots, leeks, onions, peas, radishes, turnips). See the August calendar. Sunset says to get lettuce and onions in by mid-September. Plant insectary seed mix.

SET OUT PLANTS:

Cool season crops (broccoli, brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower, spinach) need to be set out between mid-Aug and mid-Sept to get a jump-start and be ready to produce just as the weather cools.

Above 1000': See the August calendar. If onions are set out too early, they can bolt next spring.

FERTILIZE:

Start off any newly planted annuals, vegetables & perennials with a good fertilizer or compost in the soil. In 2-4 weeks, apply a liquid fertilizer.

Vegetables and flowers with liquid fertilizer.

PEST AND DISEASE CONTROL:

This is **mite month**. Check for spider mites which cause stippled leaves. Look for tiny white eggs on the under sides of leaves and possible fine webbing. Control by spraying the tops and bottoms of leaves thoroughly with a lightweight horticultural oil.

Powdery mildew if presenting a problem.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Save seed of your favorite vegetables and flowers (if they aren't hybrid).

Dig sweet potatoes.

Renew planting beds that are not going to hold fall/winter vegetables. Add the amendments you desire (compost, manure, rock phosphate, etc.) - whatever you need to enrich your soil. Mix some annual rye into your main cover crop (vetch, fava beans, clover, etc.), sow and water. A mix is better as it can attract more of a variety of beneficials. Plow the cover crop in next spring before planting.

Clean up under fruit trees.

September Yard Calendar

This is our peak wildfire month! Re-check all areas around structures.

PLANT SEED (all elevations):

Above 2500': Sow seeds for spring blooming annuals and perennials.

Plant wildflowers too but rid the area of weeds first!

As a planning item, the following plants will encourage beneficial insects to your garden: Yarrow, chamomile, coreopsis, sunflower, strawflower, black-eyed susan, tansy, dill, celery, caraway, coriander, fennel, candytuff, alyssum, nasturtium, radish, scabiosa, and alfalfa. Insectary seed mixes can be bought from many farm supply places. Let the flowers bloom as the nectar is what those little buggies want.

Plant cool season lawns toward the end of the month at the lower elevations. Higher elevations should wait until October.

SET OUT PLANTS:

Plant cool season annuals after mid September in cool areas and near the end of the month in warm areas. If it is hot, shade new seedlings and keep them moist. It is risky to plant inland before temperatures drop so you may need to wait until mid-October.

Perennials can be planted after the summer heat subsides. Fall bloomers include aster, chrysanthemum, gaillardia, gloriosa daisy, purple coneflower, Japanese anemone, & salvias.

For fall color, consider planting barberry, cotoneaster, holly, Oregon grape, pyracantha, & toyon.

Below 2500' : Shop for shrubs and deciduous trees but do not plant until late in the month when the weather cools off. For native plants, wait until the first rains arrive to plant.

If you plant new trees, give them 8-10 gallons of water every 8-10 days between 8-10 in the morning.

FERTILIZE:

Lawns (at the end of the month): Use 16-6-8 for cool season grasses. Warm season grass needs to be fertilized September, October, May & June. Deeply irrigate a few days before and immediately after applying.

Start off any newly planted annuals, vegetables & perennials with a good fertilizer or compost in the soil. In 2-4 weeks, apply a liquid fertilizer.

Vegetables and flowers with liquid fertilizer.

Ground covers and trees,

PEST & DISEASE CONTROL:

This is **mite month**. Check for spider mites which cause stippled leaves. Look for tiny white eggs on the under sides of leaves and possible fine webbing. Control by spraying the tops and bottoms of leaves thoroughly with a lightweight horticultural oil.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Lawns: remove thatch, aerate. Re-seed bare spots.

Save seed of your favorite vegetables and flowers (if they aren't hybrid).

Use pre-emergents must be used now to prevent winter germination of annual weeds like foxtail.

Prepare wildflower beds. You must get rid of all weeds.

Divide perennials when bloom ends. Bleeding heart, coreopsis, daylilies, hostas, iris, penstemon, Shasta daisy can be divided now through October..

Prune roses lightly.

Shop for spring bulbs.

Add green garden material and manure to the compost pile. Keep compost pile moist but not soggy, turn often.

Dig and store summer bulbs.