



Issue #15

March 2011

## My Garden – February Tasks

Glen Johnson, Amador County Master Gardener



Depending on the weather, late February and early March is the real start of vegetable gardening for me. I plant potatoes every year at this time. In addition to starting tomatoes for transplanting, I will start broccoli, Brussels sprouts, and leeks in my cold frame for transplanting later in the spring when the soil warms up. I normally do the broccoli in the fall but have wanted to try all of these in the spring.



There are a number of methods to grow potatoes other than directly in the garden, such as the cage or box method. I plant mine directly in the garden by loosening the soil that I dressed with compost in the fall and create a



shallow trench about 6" deep. I cut the seed potatoes in half or quarters depending on the size but make sure there are at least one or two eyes in each piece. I plant these about 12" apart in the trench and covered with soil no more than 4" deep. I find that using the back of a rake to cover the seed potatoes to about 2-3" deep works great for me.

Green leaves start to appear in about two weeks depending on the soil temperature. After the plants are about 6-8" high, use the back side of your rake to hill up the soil around the plants, leaving about 3-4" of plant exposed. Potatoes will develop at the seed potato level and above. Repeat hilling



up the soil around the plants again in another 2-3 weeks. Be careful not to damage the roots when hilling up around the plants. At any point you see potatoes exposed, add more soil to cover them. I add compost as mulch and to hill up around the plants.

Keep the soil evenly moist but not wet. Too wet will promote rot and ruin the potatoes.

Typically you won't need to irrigate until April or May, depending on the rains.



This year I will plant Red Pontiac potatoes as I have had good luck with them and like the flavor for boiled potatoes and potato salads. I have planted Red La Soda, Colorado Red, and Rio Colorado varieties in the past but prefer the Red Pontiac.

Some useful links are:

[http://www.mastergardeners.org/publications/growing\\_potatoes.html](http://www.mastergardeners.org/publications/growing_potatoes.html)

[http://vric.ucdavis.edu/pdf/organic\\_potatoes.pdf](http://vric.ucdavis.edu/pdf/organic_potatoes.pdf)

<http://potatoes.wsu.edu/links/hist.html>

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### Master Gardeners

Advice to grow by ...

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Tuesday–Thursday

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## My Garden – March Tasks

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The other important task for me in March is to put traps in my apple trees for codling moths. In last month’s newsletter there was an excellent article about controlling codling moths. I use a method described in the UC Cooperative Extension Integrated Pest Management (IPM) Pest Note for making traps and the mixture for the traps. (See: <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7412.html>.) It is described in the last paragraph under **Mass Trapping**. This hasn’t eliminated all apple damage but has reduced it significantly, and most apples are free of holes.



I can almost feel spring upon us!

*Glen’s garden is at 2700’ elevation on a south facing slope with full sun all day.*

## Roses from Hilde

Hilde Langlet, Amador County Master Gardener

If you haven’t pruned your roses yet, it is time to start. It will be hard to prune and not knock off the new growth, so do it soon. At 2000 feet we already have a few inches of new growth on some of the roses in sheltered areas.



Remember, it is too early to fertilize! We had snow on the ground this morning and that means all new growth is subject to freezing. You do not want to encourage this new growth by adding fertilizer. Wait until you are reasonably sure it will not freeze anymore. Also there should be at least 2 inches or more of new growth on the plant before you do fertilize. This means the plant is out of dormancy and starting to actively grow. If you live at a lower elevation

and have lots of new growth and don’t get freezing temperatures, go ahead and fertilize.



I wish you lots of flowers!

## Spring Plant Sales!

Mark your calendar for two fantastic Master Gardener plants sales! Choose from a variety of plants grown by local Master Gardeners and donated by local nurseries. Choose from beautiful selections of herbs, vegetables, natives, annuals, perennials, grasses, shrubs and trees.



### When Where

**April 16** Veterans Memorial Building in Placerville

**May 7** UCCE Office/GSA Building in Jackson

Stay tuned for additional details. Until then, save the date and start planning your shopping spree. All proceeds benefit your local Master Gardener outreach programs.

## Let’s Compare Notes



All gardeners—novice and expert—sometimes have a plant that just doesn’t work in their garden but we keep trying each year to make it grow, until we finally say, “I will never plant this again!”

Email us with your “I will never plant this again” experience at [mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu). We would love to hear your stories!

## Webinar: Guidelines for Managing Oak Rangelands

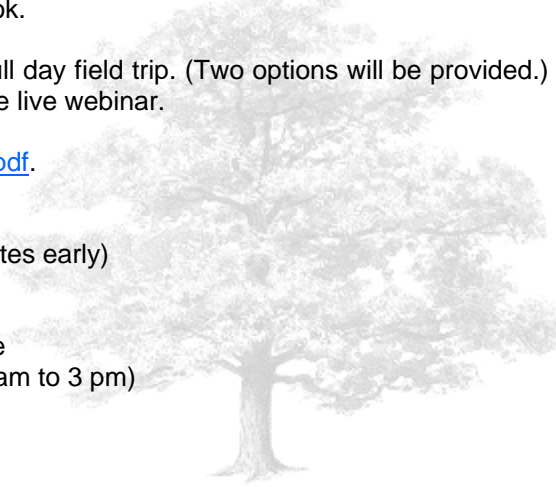
The University of California Oak Woodland Conservation Workgroup is hosting a series of webinars designed to create an awareness of the importance of managing oak woodlands and to present alternative management strategies for landowners to consider. (California’s oak woodlands cover 10 percent of the state and are its most biologically diverse broad habitat, with 80 percent in private ownership.)

The series will be presented around the concepts in the UC publication, “Guidelines for Managing California’s Hardwood Rangelands.” All registered participants will be provided a copy of this book.

There will be four two-hour long sessions broadcast on the web, and a full day field trip. (Two options will be provided.) The series will be taped to allow participation for those who can’t make the live webinar.

Download the event flyer at <http://ucanr.org/sites/oakwebinar/files/72912.pdf>.

- Dates:** March 15, 22, 29, April 5, 2011
- Time:** All webinar sessions start at 10am (plan to log on 15 minutes early) and run through noon
- Link:** To be announced to registrants
- Field Trip:** April 16, 2011, Sierra Foothill Residence and UCCE Office  
April 30, 2011, Hopland Residence and UCCE Office (10 am to 3 pm)
- Cost:** \$25
- Register:** Online at <http://ucanr.org/sites/oakwebinar/>
- Questions?** Contact Rick Standiford at [standifo@berkeley.edu](mailto:standifo@berkeley.edu)



## AAUW Amador Home Tour: April 16, 2011

The 39<sup>th</sup> annual AAUW Home Tour will take place in the charming Gold Rush town of Sutter Creek. The Tour will be April 16, 2011, from 11am to 4pm and will feature the “Polished Gems of Sutter Creek,” four unique homes that have been remodeled and restored to incorporate a respect for the past with the need for updated comfort and style. In addition to touring the restored homes and gardens, docents will guide ticket holders through several historic sites. Tea and cookies will be served in a historic church. An art show, special lunch venues and wine tasting will round out the Tour.

This annual event supports the Amador Branch scholarship program benefiting local girls and women. AAUW sends several seventh-grade girls to Tech Trek, a summer math-science camp and provides scholarships at the community college, upper division and graduate levels.

Tickets are priced at \$22 in advance and will be available starting March 11, 2011. Tickets are \$25 if purchased on Tour day. Visit the AAUW website at [www.aauwamador.org](http://www.aauwamador.org) or contact Lani at 209-245-6052 for more information about the Home Tour, how to purchase tickets by mail, the locations of the five ticket sales outlets throughout Amador County, and a list of restaurants in Sutter Creek that will offer lunch specials on Tour day.



## Hybrid vs. Heirloom

Linda Hagye, Amador County Master Gardener

The interest in planting seeds to grow one's own food or flowers is not only to save money but to be able to choose from a wider range of plants and varieties than you can find at the garden center. When choosing seeds the new gardener should know the difference between heirlooms and hybrids.

### Heirlooms

Heirloom seeds are handed down from one generation to another, saved because of their flavor, appearance, or their ability to produce or grow well.

Before hybrids were developed, plants were open-pollinated by insects, birds or the wind. The genetic makeup of the plant was fairly stable, producing young plants that most likely resembled the parents. This is not the case with cross pollination, where parents are of two different varieties. Planting the varieties at least 3' apart from each other helps decrease the possibility of cross pollination.



Heirlooms are favored by many because of their ability to produce seed that you can save and that will produce reasonably uniform results from their planting. Another reason is that many feel heirlooms produce better tasting crops. Tomatoes are an example of this. Some heirlooms are susceptible to a number of common diseases. Heirloom tomatoes, such as Brandywine, are susceptible to common tomato diseases such as fusarium and verticillium wilts.



### Hybrids

Hybrid seeds are a result from controlled cross-breeding of two different, but specific varieties of the same plant. The process begins with male pollen transferred to the female pistil. After pollination, a seed is formed which has the designation F1 Hybrid. Producing a new variety with more vigor than either parent improves disease resistance and better taste, which are the breeders' goals.

Note that hybrid seeds cost a little more than heirlooms, do not breed true in the next generation, may have a poorer yield, and may produce a different color flower.

### Decisions to make

If you need to maximize production in a small space, want your entire crop to mature at the same time, or have had problems with plant diseases, you should consider hybrids. If you want to save your seed from year to year or just simply remember some of the older varieties from your past, choose the heirlooms.

You can find lots of heirloom varieties available at the Master Gardener plant sales. Go early as everything goes fast.



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*Sympathy with nature is an evidence of perfect health.  
You cannot perceive beauty but with a serene mind.*

*Henry David Thoreau  
1817 - 1862, American naturalist, writer*

## Fennel

Jackie Tarchala, Amador County Master Gardener

On the next page is the recipe for a fennel soup that's a great winter dish. I found fennel when shopping in Sacramento this week. Of course this is not the season you will find it growing in our area but you might want to grow your own BULB fennel for next year.

*Foeniculum vulgare* - the botanical name, Finocchio in Italian, and just plain Florence Fennel for us regular folks, is a cool weather perennial grown as an annual. Orion is a variety that is recommended by UC Davis for its large fleshy bulb. It is also resistant to bolting and tip burn because you have to dig the plant to enjoy the "bulb" that is attached to the roots. The bulb fennel is a stocky plant. A taller version, called "sweet" fennel, is best used for its leaves and seeds. Fennel seed is used in rye bread, and all parts of the plant are edible, leaves, stalks and bulb. It has a slightly anise flavor when eaten raw, but when cooked it becomes mild and sweet.



Rumor has it that it was used in Roman times as an appetite suppressant! It was introduced into California 200 years ago by the Spanish.

You can sow it in the spring, 2-3 weeks before the last frost date, which for most people in our counties is May 15. Of course, the freeze up county in the foothills is several weeks after that and at lower elevations, like lone and Comanche, is several weeks earlier. You can also sow for a fall crop in mid-to-late summer, depending on your area. It requires 90-115 frost free days to harvest. The seasons can also be extended by using frost cloth. To obtain larger bulbs, grow a fall crop so that they mature in the cooler weather.



Sow directly in the ground 1/4 inch deep and 6-8 inches apart, then thin to 12 inches for less competition. When golf ball sized, blanch the lower stems by mulching around the base heavily. Fennel should be kept on the dry side, evenly moist but not wet. Mulch will help keep the soil evenly moist. In mid season side-dress (run a row of well rotted compost on each side of the row). Remove any seed stalks to increase production in the stems and bulbs. Fennel will self-seed if not watched.

Fennel has no serious disease problems but is sometimes visited by slugs, snails and parsley caterpillars. (But the caterpillars make beautiful butterflies!)

The bulb is ready to harvest when it is the size of a tennis ball. Cut the whole stalk just below the point where individual stalks join together. Fennel is best eaten fresh but can be kept in the refrigerator for at least a week. Do remember that veggies lose nutrients the longer they sit; that's why we like to grow our own...right?

To prepare, cut off the stalks as they are very fibrous. Cut the bulb into quarters and then slice. One cup of fennel supplies 20 percent of our daily vitamin C, 10 percent fiber and only 25 calories. (I like this already!)

The next page has my recipe for a hearty winter soup. Just add a salad and some crusty bread and dinner is served!



## Recipes for the Season:

### Caramelized Fennel and White Bean Soup

#### Ingredients

3-4 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for garnish  
2 fennel bulbs, julienne  
3 sprigs fresh thyme, plus more for garnish  
1 tablespoon unsalted butter  
1 cup dry white wine  
2 cloves garlic, minced  
1 gallon vegetable stock  
6 to 8 cups cooked white beans  
Sea salt  
White pepper

#### Directions

Heat a large sauce pot over medium high heat. Add 3 to 4 tablespoons of olive oil.

Once oil is hot, add fennel bulb, fresh thyme, and butter. Allow to cook until the fennel begins to turn golden amber brown, about 15 to 20 minutes.

Add white wine and garlic. Add vegetable stock and white beans. Reduce heat and allow soup to come to a gentle simmer.

Simmer for 30 minutes. Season, to taste, with salt and pepper.

Serve by ladling 5 to 6 ounces of soup into a bowl. Garnish with a few fresh thyme leaves and a drizzle of extra-virgin olive oil.

Cook's Note: You can add as many beans as you like. Or you can use your favorite bean if white beans are not your ideal beans.

Source: [FoodNetwork.com](http://FoodNetwork.com) on Fri Mar 12 2010



### Pan Roasted Brussels Sprouts with Toasted Pecans and Applewood Smoked Bacon

#### Ingredients:

1 cup pecan halves  
3 slices bacon, sliced into 1/4 inch slices  
1½ pounds Brussels sprouts  
1 teaspoon freshly picked thyme  
2 medium shallots, diced small  
A few good cranks freshly ground black pepper  
2 teaspoons good quality balsamic vinegar  
1/2 teaspoon Kosher Salt, or to taste

#### Directions:

Preheat oven to 400°F. On a small sheet pan, add the pecans and roast until lightly toasted, 8 to 12 minutes, stirring after 5 minutes to prevent burning. Remove from the oven, and allow to cool.

In a large sauté pan, add the sliced bacon, and turn the heat to medium. Cook, stirring occasionally, until nicely colored and most of the fat has rendered off. Pour off half of the bacon fat, and reserve for another use, or discard.

Meanwhile, bring a medium pot of salted water to a rolling boil. Trim and discard the bottoms off the sprouts and remove any yellow leaves. Add the sprouts to the boiling water, and cook approximately three minutes. Drain.

Carefully (hot!) quarter the very large sprouts, and halve the medium and small sprouts.

Add the diced shallots, thyme, black pepper, and Brussels sprouts into the sauté pan. Cook, stirring occasionally, until lightly colored, 3 to 5 minutes.

Stir in the vinegar, then chop the pecans, and add to the pan. Stir to combine. Season to taste, and serve.

Source: [GrowingAGreenerWorld.com](http://GrowingAGreenerWorld.com)





## Public Education Classes for Amador and El Dorado Counties – Free!!



Most classes are from 9am – Noon. Please call ahead to confirm locations, they may change.

### Amador County

#### March

##### Seed Starting and Asparagus

*(Was canceled and will be rescheduled)*

It's not too soon to plan your spring vegetable garden. Starting your own seeds is not only cheaper but gives you more choices of what varieties to grow. You can have top quality seedlings ready for your garden when you want them, not when the store decides to sell them. The best part is that it's fun and nothing gets you geared up better for gardening than to have a tray of little seedlings ready to grow!

Nothing says spring more than a juicy asparagus spear dripping with butter. Plant them once and they'll give you decades of enjoyment. Not only will you learn how to grow them, but we'll have some for you to buy at the class.

Join Amador Master Gardeners Janice Johnson and Bob Allen at the UCCE office, 12200-B Airport Rd, Martell for a free class on seed starting and asparagus growing. **Date to be announced.**

##### 19: Not Your Ordinary Vegetable Garden

*Location: GSA Building, 2200-B Airport Road, Jackson*  
Explore some fun and uncommon vegetables and gardening techniques to liven up your gardening experience this year. Several of the topics include artichokes and asparagus; planting in straw bales; and growing organic vegetables in raised beds. Have fun with your food this summer!

If you have questions about the Amador classes or have other gardening questions, call the Master Gardeners office at 209-223-6838 between 10am to noon, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. You can also contact us by e-mail at [mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu).

### El Dorado County

#### March

##### 5: Propagation I – Start from Seed

*Location: Bethell-Delfino Ag Bldg Time: 1-4pm*

Note change from previously published location & time.

The various methods of propagating plants will be taught by Master Gardeners Gail Fulbeck & Debbie Hillel. Discussion will be held about how, when and under what conditions seeds should be germinated, perennials divided and cuttings taken. There will be hands-on demonstrations.

##### 12: Backyard Chickens

*Location: Veterans Memorial Bldg*

You might ask, why raise chickens? Join Master Gardener Thorne Barrager as he talks about how easy and inexpensive it is to maintain chickens, how they provide chemical-free bug and weed control in a garden, and manufacture one of the world's best fertilizers.

##### 19: Organic Gardening I

*Location: Veterans Memorial Bldg*

Learn to create a healthy natural environment in your garden. Master Gardener Virginia Feagans will teach you how to have a productive garden without the use of inorganic fertilizers or synthetic pesticides. She will discuss how to group plants and how to encourage natural predators.

##### 26: Organic Gardening II

*Location: Veterans Memorial Bldg*

Master Gardener Virginia Feagans will continue the previous week's presentation on organic gardening methods. This class will cover how to take care of your soil organically.

For more information about classes in El Dorado County, contact the Master Gardener office at 530-621-5512 between 9am to noon, Tuesday through Friday. You can also email us at [ceeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:ceeldorado@ucdavis.edu).

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*There is just as much beauty visible to us in the landscape as we are prepared to appreciate - not a grain more. Henry David Thoreau (1817 - 1862, American naturalist, writer).*

### Foothill Vegetable Planting Guide

Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Seed ●●●●●●●●	Plants ●●●●●●		Brussels Sprouts		●●●●●●
Seed ●●●●●●●●			Rutabaga		●●●●●●
Seed ●●●●●●●●	Plants ●●●●●●		Savoy Cabbage		●●●●●●
Seed ●●●●●●●●	Plants ●●●●●●		Red Cabbage		●●●●●●
Seed ●●●●●●●●	Plants ●●●●●●		Broccoli	●●●●●●	

Need some help knowing when to plant your favorite vegetables?

Your county Master Gardener office has a great form called the Foothill Vegetable Planting Guide that breaks down the planting times for your elevation.

It's a great planning tool, is laminated and only costs \$5.00. Pick up a copy at either the Amador or El Dorado County UCCE office or at a public Master Gardener class.

### Pest Notes:

Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local Master Gardener office.



To explore the Pest Notes on the UC Integrated Pest Management (IPM) website, go to <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu>.

Amador & El Dorado Counties Master Gardener Newsletter  
 Editor: Linda Hagye  
 Assistant Editor: Janice Johnson

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**Amador:**  
<http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter3145.htm>

**El Dorado:**  
<http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter3286.htm>

### Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online

Don't forget about our great Master Gardener websites — they're loaded with gardening goodies:

- Information about Master Gardeners and even how to become one
- List of public classes
- Calendar of Master Gardener events
- Useful links to gardening websites
- Home gardening publications
- Information request form to get answers to your gardening questions

[http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/Master\\_Gardener](http://ceamador.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener)  
[http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master\\_Gardener](http://ceeldorado.ucdavis.edu/Master_Gardener)

**Got a specific question?** Just email us!

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