



## Proper Pruning Makes A Difference

On Saturday, September 17, Amador County Master Gardener Dennis Miller demonstrated how to summer prune a fruit tree. Dennis and other Master Gardeners walked through the process with the attendees, who did the actual pruning.

Pruning someone else's tree with skilled Master Gardeners is a great way to gain experience and confidence before tackling your own trees.



Before

You can ask lots of questions and get a lot of practical advice.

The trees in the before picture were pruned last year at a similar clinic. Last year the group needed ladders to remove about 8-10' from the trees, pruning them to a 7' height.

UC Cooperative Extension recommends keeping trees at a height that makes it comfortable for you to prune without using a ladder, eliminating the chance of dangerous falls. It was great to see that the pruning last year resulted in trees that were the right size for a home orchard and all pruning was done standing safely on the ground.

The group removed about 2-3' of new growth from the trees, keeping them at 7'.



After

The Master Gardeners will have a winter pruning class at the beginning of 2012 and another hands-on clinic next summer/fall. We'll announce it in this newsletter and on our website.

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### Master Gardeners

#### Advice to grow by ...

#### Amador County

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Office hours: 10 am–Noon

Tuesday–Thursday

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## My Garden - October Tasks

by Glen Johnson, Master Gardener



Last month I talked about a problem with my zucchini that had stopped producing or producing very little. At the time I was trying to figure out what was causing it. As it was getting the same amount of water and fertilizer as the crookneck squash in the same row that were doing pretty well I eliminated those as causes. I thought it could be pollination but again the crookneck were doing OK. One day in the garden I noticed that the plants were so healthy that they had a heavy leaf cover. Maybe the leaves were hiding the flowers from the bees. So I cut out several stems and leaves to open up the plant and expose the flowers. Within days there were new zucchini forming on all the plants that I had cut back the leaves. Now I can't be certain this is the reason as I didn't keep some plants with heavy leaf cover as a control group. I just suspect this may have been the problem and will watch this on next year's crop.

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## Master Gardeners in the Media

Jackie Tarchala, Amador Master Gardener

Did you know Amador Master Gardeners are on the radio and TV? Small as our county is, we **do** have local cable TV and radio! You don't get cable you say or live outside of the broadcast area? Just go to [www.TSPNTV.com](http://www.TSPNTV.com) and click on **Live Broadcast**. You will see me advertising our Amador County Master Gardener education classes usually one week before each class. The next times I'm scheduled are October 14<sup>th</sup> and November 4<sup>th</sup>. The AM Live show runs from 8-9am. I'm usually on toward the last part of the show but we never know for sure until that day.

Our other media is Home Town Radio where I do *In The Garden with Jackie* at 8:30am on the first Monday of each month. I try to address seasonal problems and a gardening time schedule but sometimes find myself answering questions from the hosts. Robin Ivanoff does the *Master Gardener Minute* which she records and then Home Town Radio replays it several times a week.

The radio station has recently become 1340AM (formerly side band) and you should be able to get it on any regular radio. I do know people who have bad reception. This can be solved same

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## Flea and Tick Control

Heidi Napier, DVM

*Ctenocephalides felis*, the common flea of cats and dogs, is an annoying pest and carries diseases. A cat or small dog may become anemic from a heavy infestation of fleas. The adults spend their lives on the host, feeding and reproducing. When the female lays eggs, they fall off the host into the environment to develop. They hatch in 1-3 days, depending on temperature. The larvae develop into adult fleas in a few weeks or months, depending on temperature and humidity. The adult fleas in their cocoons may be stimulated to hatch by movement (walking or vacuuming), warmth or carbon dioxide. Mammals are warm and give off carbon dioxide. *C. felis* prefers the taste of dogs and cats, but it will bite humans if hungry.



Adult Flea

The best way to control fleas is to treat ALL animals in the household for fleas, even if you only see fleas on one of them. A cat will remove many of its fleas by grooming within a week. Several types of products are available to control fleas on dogs and cats. The newer products are either applied topically to the body of the pet or provided orally. Products containing fipronil, permethrin, or amitraz also are designed to

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### My Garden - October Tasks, Continued from Page 2

**Pruning:** If you haven't done your pruning you still have plenty of time, but it is best if you can do it once the fruit has been harvested and before the rains. By doing this you will be ready for your first application of dormant spray sometime in November. I will talk more about dormant spraying next month.

**Clean-up Around Fruit Trees:** Now is the time to clean up around your fruit trees. You should remove and dispose of all the fallen fruit and any remaining fruit on the trees that wasn't harvested. This is a perfect place for pests to overwinter and be ready to infest your orchard next year. By keeping the areas around the trees clean, your pest control is much easier. Apples and grapes can go into your compost pile but peaches, plums and other stone fruits should not because the pits take forever to break down.



**Add To Your Compost Pile:** It is also a good time to remove any vegetable crops that are done producing and add them to your compost pile. Again, leaving them in place provides a place for pests to overwinter or lay eggs for the generation next spring. A little work now saves a lot later.

**Irrigation:** In October plant water needs are low. I again increase the interval between irrigations but continue to apply the same amount of water as the weather continues to cool. Deep and infrequent irrigation is the best practice. We are almost to the start of fall rains and once they start we can for the most part discontinue irrigation.

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## Flea and Tick Control, *continued from Page 3*

control ticks. Products containing the insect growth regulators (IGRs) methoprene and pyriproxyfen are designed to provide long-term control of flea eggs and immatures in the environment. Products such as Advantage or Frontline will kill fleas for one month and are very safe.



*Flea feces or "dirt"*

If you administer oral or topical products early in the year before flea populations begin to build, the products can prevent fleas from establishing themselves in your home. Contact your veterinarian for advice in selecting the best flea-control product for your situation. Supplement the use of these products with good housekeeping in areas where the pet rests.

Until recently, pet owners had to rely on products containing conventional insecticides (pyrethrins, permethrin, *d*-limonene, chlorpyrifos, diazinon, carbaryl, and naled) to control fleas on their pets. These over the counter products (OTC) were formulated as soaps, shampoos, powders, dusts, spray-on liquids, and dips. Although many of these products still are available, they aren't as effective to use as the on-animal treatments above. Many OTC products are labeled **only for dogs and can kill cats**. Unfortunately, one has to turn the package over and read the fine print to find out that it is unsafe for cats. Application of dog flea and tick control products is the most common poisonings in cats. Any product with permethrin or any other chemical ending with "-thrin" is not safe for cats. Organophosphates are also not safe for cats.

Thoroughly and regularly clean areas where you find adult fleas, flea larvae, and flea eggs. Vacuum floors, rugs, carpets, upholstered furniture, and crevices around baseboards and cabinets daily or every other day to remove flea eggs, larvae, and adults. Vacuuming is very effective in killing larvae in the carpet, picking up adults, and stimulating preemerged adults to leave their cocoons. Recent studies suggest that destroying the vacuum bags isn't necessary. Launder pet bedding in hot, soapy water at least once a week. Thoroughly clean items you bring into the building, such as used carpets or upholstered furniture, to prevent these from being a source of flea infestation.

Several insecticides are registered for controlling fleas indoors. The most effective products also contain the IGR methoprene or pyriproxyfen. Use a hand sprayer or aerosol to apply insecticides directly to infested areas of carpets and furniture. Total release aerosols, or room foggers, are of little or no value, in spite of what exterminators and insecticide manufacturers tell you. The eggs and cocoons are not susceptible to insecticides. Many of the immature fleas will be under furniture, under chair cushions and in cracks and crevices where foggers will probably not reach.

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## Yellow Starthistle

*By John E. Otto, UCCE MG*

In the California foothills, Yellow Starthistle is perhaps the most common and concerning "invasive" plant. It is impacting much of our open space, agricultural and rangelands as well as intruding into our neighborhood landscapes. The impact to large range and agricultural lands is primarily the concern and responsibility of ranchers, large property owners and the County Agriculture Department.

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## Flea and Tick Control, continued from Page 4

Spray carpets, pet sleeping areas, carpeted areas beneath furniture, baseboards, windowsills, and other areas harboring adults or larvae. Fleas will continue to emerge for about 2 weeks after treatment, because the spray doesn't kill pupae. Continue to vacuum, and don't treat again for at least several weeks.

Beware "natural" flea remedies. Garlic, B vitamins and Brewers Yeast are useless. You may think some of these work, but there is no scientific evidence that they do. Ask a vet. Most of us have seen live fleas on a pet that has received a natural remedy. Pennyroyal, eucalyptus, rosemary and citronella don't work and may be toxic. Dogs have died from Pennyroyal poisoning, and d-limonene is toxic to cats. Melaleuca oil is also toxic.

Many species of ticks bite cats and dogs, and the different species are not easy to identify. They nearly all carry some sort of disease. If you find a tick on your pet, pull it off with tweezers or your fingers or a "tick puller," and protect your fingers with gloves. Kill the tick with a hammer or flush it down the toilet. It is possible to get Lyme disease or other diseases from a tick if you mash it and have any cuts or abrasions on your hands. The diseases are passed by the tick's saliva.



Deer ticks, 3 stages

Just because you don't see ticks on your pet doesn't mean they don't have any. The immature forms of ticks are often very small and hard to see in fur.

Highly effective pesticide-impregnated tick collars are available to protect pets that are exposed to tick-infested environments. For dogs, the Preventic (amitraz) collar provides good control, but must not be used on cats. Don't use organophosphates, and if you have a cat near the dog, don't use permethrin on the dog.

For cats and dogs Frontline (fipronil) works well, and is the ONLY safe and effective product that kills ticks on cats. It must be used once a month religiously. Frontline also kills fleas.

### Other products

- Comfortis is an oral product for dogs only. It kills fleas. The active ingredient is spinosad.
- Vectra 3D makes a cat product and a dog product, but they are not the same, and the dog product must not be used on cats or on a dog that lives with cats.
- Promeris has been taken off the market. It was labeled for dogs only.
- Capstar is an oral product for dogs and cats. It kills fleas very quickly but only lasts one day.
- Advantix is for DOGS only; don't confuse it with Advantage, which is safe for cats and dogs. It kills fleas and ticks on dogs.
- Certifect is for DOGS only; it kills ticks and fleas.

Pesticides are poisonous. Always read and carefully follow all precautions and safety recommendations given on the container label. Store all chemicals in the original labeled containers in a locked cabinet or shed, away from food or feeds, and out of the reach of children, unauthorized persons, pets, and livestock. Consult your veterinarian for the best product for your pet and read the pesticide label to determine active ingredients and signal words.

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## Yellow Starthistle, Continued from Page 4

But more and more the individual homeowner is becoming the key to containing and eliminating this invasive plant, wherever it exists.

**IF YOU SEE YELLOW STARHISTLE, TAKE STEPS TO GET RID OF IT!** Talk to your neighbors and anyone else you come in contact with. Let 2012 be the year we stop the spread and begin to eliminate Yellow Starthistle.



**WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?:** Yellow Starthistle is a gray-green to blue-green annual plant with a vigorous taproot. The stems of mature plants are rigid, wing shaped, spreading and branching from the base. The plant has deeply lobed basal leaves (2 to 3 inches long), and short, narrow, sharply pointed upper leaves (0.5 to 1 inch), which allow the plant to catch lots of water. The leaves are covered with loose, cottony hairs that give them a whitish appearance. Yellow Starthistle produces bright yellow flowers with sharp spines surrounding the base of the seed head. The plant grows to heights varying from 6 inches to 5 feet, depending on sun exposure and moisture availability.

**WHY DO WE CARE?:** Yellow Starthistle currently infests more than 15 million acres of land in California and has a huge impact to recreational and agricultural lands. Not only does it prevent recreational use, like walking or hiking, but it chokes out the native grass and wildflowers. It is also poisonous to horses, causing a neurological disorder called "chewing disease" which can be fatal once symptoms develop. It provides minimal nutrition to livestock compared to native or other grazing grasses. For those of us who are concerned with water, Yellow Starthistle steals great quantities of water from other plant life, and its deep roots greatly diminish our ground water. It is reported that this invasive plant accounts for a loss of 15 to 25% of annual precipitation. It is estimated that in 2004 approximately 46,000 acre feet (1.5 billion gallons), of water was lost to the Yellow Starthistle within the Sacramento River watershed alone.



**PLANT GROWTH CYCLE:** Yellow Starthistle is an annual which flowers from mid to late summer and can produce up to 10,000 seeds per plant. Approximately 95% of those seeds are viable as soon as they

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## Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program



The University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) invites adults interested in helping others learn about gardening and landscaping to apply to train as a Master Gardener volunteer. UCCE Master Gardener volunteers learn University-based scientific information and then share that knowledge with the gardening community. Master Gardener volunteers are people of all ages and from all walks of life with a common desire to help others learn about gardening and landscaping.

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## Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program, Continued from Page 6

### Who Can Apply?

- Any resident of El Dorado or Amador County.
- Residents of Amador County will train in El Dorado County but will be Amador County Master Gardeners.

### How to Apply

- Sign up on our MG Training interest list at <http://ucanr.org/edmg2012>.
- Attend **one** of our two Master Gardener orientation meetings to learn about the Master Gardener Program, our community involvement, and your participation requirements. These meetings are scheduled for Monday, October 10 and 17, from 1-2:30pm in Placerville. RSVP at 530-621-5528.
- Submit an application by Friday, October 21, 2011. (Applications distributed at orientation meetings.)

### What We'll Do

- Review applicants. Main criteria for acceptance: 1) prior community service, 2) experience teaching, either by giving presentations, writing, or in one-to-one situations, 3) passion for helping home gardeners, 4) experience successfully gardening.
- Conduct interviews during November.

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### Yellow Starthistle, Continued from Page 6

disperse. Most seeds germinate within a year, but some can remain viable in the soil for more than three years. Yellow Starthistle seeds begin to germinate in the fall with the first rains. Seeds continue to germinate through late spring as long as there is adequate soil moisture. The first few months of growth is known as the seedling stage. During this period the plant focuses its growth on root development. As the plant continues to grow it begins to develop leaves (rosette stage), but can be hard to identify from other plants. By late spring to early summer, the plant will initiate the bolting stage of rapid growth

and fluted stalk. This bolting stage is followed by the flowering stage, usually late summer, when the plant produces its spiny head and yellow flowering seed head. The flowering seed head produces the seeds for the next year.

**HOW DO WE CONTROL IT?:** So how do we control it? There are several methods, including:

1. Mechanical: Hand pulling, hoeing, tilling and mowing.
2. Cultural: Grazing, burning and re-vegetation.
3. Biological: Releasing various insects and/or pathogens.
4. Chemical: Application of pre-emergence or post-emergence herbicides.

Of the above four methods available, many are not practical for the homeowner. It is not likely that most homeowners can apply grazing, burning and re-vegetation or purchase and release specialty insects and pathogens. Even large scale tilling is more appropriate for the large commercial agricultural farmers.

So, the best control methods for the homeowner are Mechanical and Chemical.

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### Yellow Starthistle, Continued from Page 7

**Mechanical Control:** Is most effective for small patches and correct timing is critical.

- Hand pull or hoe (cut off the roots), after bolting (May), but before flowering (June-July).
- Tilling can be done to detach the roots and is best done in May-June, before flowering and viable seeds are produced. This method may not give the best results because soil disturbance may bring new seeds to the surface.
- Mowing or weed wacking is best done after bolting (May), but before flowering (June-July).
- Cutting twice per year is recommended for best results.



**Chemical Control:** There are several herbicides available to the commercial agricultural operator, which are only applied under registration and not available to homeowners. These herbicides include active ingredients of either *Aminopyralid* (under brand name Milestone), *Triclopyr* (brand name Garlon), *Clopyralid* (brand name Transline), and several others.

There are currently only a few herbicide products which homeowners can obtain right off the retail shelves to kill Yellow Starthistle. The active ingredients to look for are *Glyphosate* found in many brand names including "Remuda" by Monterey, and "Round-Up" by Monsanto; or *Clopyralid* found in recently available "Star Thistle Killer" by Monterey.

**Glyphosate** is a post-emergent herbicide, meaning that it is applied to green growing plants. This herbicide is "non-selective", meaning that it will kill most plants that it comes in contact with. Follow the manufacturer's instructions but generally application is recommended at the bolting, spiny and early flowering stage. Apply spot treatments (individual plants), after the last spring rain (March-April). Apply broadcast / wide-spread treatment after annual grasses and other desirable annuals have died, but before the Yellow Starthistle flowers (June-July).

**Clopyralid** is a pre-emergent and post-emergent herbicide, meaning that it can be applied before the seedling emerges as well as when the plant is in the growing stages. This herbicide is "selective" meaning that it will kill only specific broadleaf plants, and not affect most grasses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions but generally application is recommended at the seed, seedling, and until early bolting stages (January-April).

**Attention when using herbicides:**

- Remember to read the label and follow all requirements.
- Wear personal protective equipment when applying.
- Avoid sensitive areas (water bodies, non-target plants).
- Avoid drift.

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Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program, Continued from Page 7

- If you are accepted, we will email you a Live Scan form and list of Live Scan locations. A background check, including fingerprinting, is required to become a Master Gardener.
- Teach you how to garden successfully. Topics and activities will cover basic plant science, propagation, fertilization, irrigation, soil, compost, vegetable and fruit gardening, trees, Integrated Pest Management (diseases, weeds, insects, vertebrate pests), research tools, and outreach techniques.
- Provide you with plenty of Volunteer and Continuing Education opportunities.



What You'll Do If Accepted into the Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program

- Pay course fee of \$185.
- Get fingerprinted.
- Attend 16 classes on Mondays, January 9 through May 7, 2012, from 1-5 pm in Placerville. (A morning class and field trips may occur. Schedule TBA.) Only one class may be missed.
- Answer gardening questions at farmers' markets, at the county fair and other local events, at the Master Gardener office, at the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden, or at public classes. Help with program activities offered through a variety of internal committees.
- Complete 50 volunteer hours your first year, then 25 volunteer and 12 continuing education hours annually.
- Log your volunteer and continuing education hours.
- Attend your county's monthly MG Continuing Education meetings as often as possible.

For more information, contact Robin Cleveland at 530-621-5528 or rkcleveland@ucdavis.edu.

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**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	●●●●●●●●	
	Seed ●●●●●●●●	Plants ●●●●●			

**Need some help knowing when to plant your favorites?**

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

A great planning tool, laminated and only \$5.00.

Pick up a copy at either the Amador or El Dorado County UCCE office or at a public Master Gardener class.

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



*Most classes are from 9 am – Noon. Please call ahead to confirm locations.*

### Amador County

*Unless otherwise noted, location for all Amador classes: GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson.*

#### October

##### 22: Erosion - Causes, Controls & Plantings

Learn why we should all be concerned with keeping water on our own sites, and how we can improve our property at the same time. Master Gardeners John Otto, Tim Jelsch and Roger Taylor will discuss using terracing, infiltration, mulching and plantings to control erosion. See examples of erosion problems, good erosion control techniques, and those that needed a little more thought put into the execution.

##### 22: Care and Maintenance of Garden Tools and Equipment **10-11:30 am**

*Location: Ridge Road Garden Center, 18815 Ridge Road, Pine Grove*

The right gardening tools can change the time you spend working in your garden to time spent playing in your garden. Learn how to keep your tools in good condition to make them last longer and work better for you.

#### November

##### 12: Composting & Worm Composting

Learn how to use your kitchen, yard and garden scraps to make compost, one of the best organic fertilizers possible. Compost piles and worm bins both produce excellent compost. Find out how to start and maintain each system. If you've already started composting and have questions, come and get answers.



### El Dorado County

*Unless otherwise noted, location for all El Dorado classes: Veterans Memorial Building, 130 Placerville Drive, Placerville.*

#### October

##### 8: Composting

Learn to create a healthy natural environment in your garden. Master Gardener Thorne Barrager will teach you how to be productive at composting. Learn what to put into your compost pile and how to manage it to generate compost the most effectively.

##### 15: Citrus in Marginal Locations

Would you like to grow oranges and lemons in your own orchard? With the right microclimate, variety and rootstock it is possible to grow citrus in the foothills. Join MG Julianne Melchor as she explores ways of becoming a successful citrus grower in our marginal climate.

##### 22: Propagation II

Different methods of plant propagation will be discussed by MG Gail Fulbeck. She will discuss how, when and under what conditions seeds should be germinated, perennials should be divided and cuttings should be taken and rooted.

##### 29: Holiday House Plants

Master Gardeners Kit Veerkamp and Rob Bietz will discuss plants that help make the holidays more festive.

#### November

##### 5: Roses: Selection & Planting

Bare-root roses are abundant at nurseries now and the time is right for planting. Plan to attend this class presented by Master Gardener Julianne Melchor to learn the types and varieties of roses, and how to care for them.



Check out the El Dorado Master Gardener Facebook page at <http://www.facebook.com/pages/El-Dorado-County-Master-Gardeners/164653119129>.

