

## In The Hen House - Choosing Backyard Chickens

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County



Polish

Last month I told you about my two most important traits in choosing the right chickens for your hen house: Size and personality. This month I'll give you a few more to help you pick the perfect chickens for your hen house.

If you live upcountry or if you aren't able to provide your chickens with a warm winter home you'll want to consider one of the hardier breeds. These chickens usually have a fluffy feather coat to keep them warm and smaller combs that won't get frost bitten when it's bitterly cold.

There are many chicken breeds that are considered hardy; some of my favorites are Brahma, Cochin, and Buff Orpington. If you are interested in preserving the past and enjoy growing heirloom vegetables and flowers, then you might want to raise heritage chickens. These are hardy long-lived birds that were popular until the mid 20th century. I love the names of some of these breeds, such as Jersey Giant, Buckeye, or Buttercup. You might not find these chicks at the local feed store, but there are many online sources for heritage chickens.

You'll find a more complete list of rare chickens at the American



Silkie

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### Contact Your Local Master Gardener

**Amador County**  
209-223-6838  
Office hours: 10 am–Noon  
Tuesday–Thursday  
[mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu)

**El Dorado County**  
530-621-5512  
Office hours: 9 am–Noon  
Tuesday–Friday  
[mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu)



**In The Hen House - Choosing Backyard Chickens** (Continued from page 1)

Livestock Breeds Conservancy at <http://www.albc-usa.org/documents/chickenbreedcomparison.pdf>.

Egyptian Fayoumi



Some people like exotic looking pets and when it comes to chickens there are many ornamental breeds to choose from. One of the most popular is the sweet Silkie, a bantam with not only a great personality but "bunny fur" feathers that make them huggable. Another popular exotic looking and good backyard chicken is a Polish which looks like it's wearing a Las Vegas showgirl's headdress (see photo at start of this article). Or maybe you'd prefer a graceful Egyptian Fayoumi, a breed relatively new to the US, with a perky upright tail and slender neck.

If you don't find what you are looking for in one of the purebred chickens you can make your own hybrid chicken by breeding two of your favorite breeds together. I did this by breeding Cochins to Easter Eggers, so that I would have chickens with the round body and feathered feet of Cochins, and laid blue and green eggs like the Easter Eggers. Or if you want a more exotic hybrid you can breed a very cute Silkie to a not so cute Turken, also known as a "naked neck" and end up with a Showgirl, which is just really, really odd looking if you ask me!

I hope that all these choices have peaked your interest in backyard chickens and that you find the perfect chickens for your hen house.



Showgirl

*No endorsement of products/companies is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products/companies that are not included.*

**Gardening Quote For The Day**





# Myths And Truths - Are We The Only Enemies Of Yellowjackets?

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County



Yellowjackets are often incorrectly called "meat bees"

Yellow jackets are often called "meat bees" which is wrong for two reasons. First is that they are not bees but one of two types of social wasps. Second is that their primary food is sugar in the form of fruit and flower nectar. They do forage for carrion which means they are attracted to meat, but this is primarily a food for their larvae.

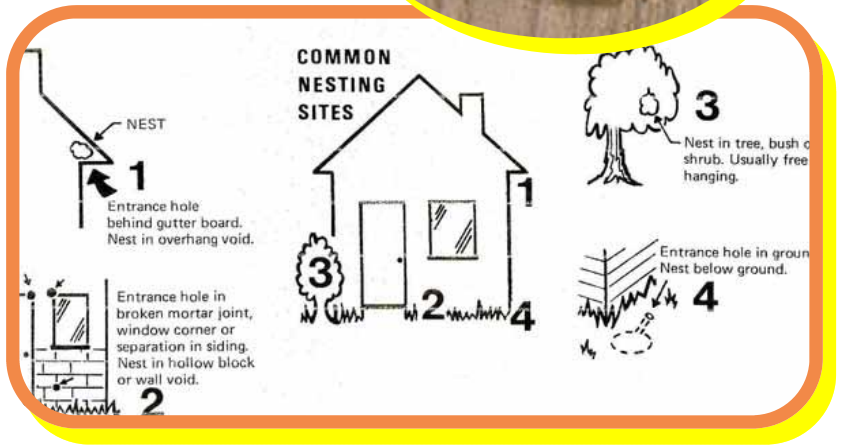
They pester us in the garden, take the fun out of eating on the patio, and if we are really unlucky, sting us. They are also able to make their nests in various areas of our home and surrounds both above and below ground.

want to eliminate them from around the house, but are we the only enemies of Yellowjackets?

Several years ago I was flagging my property line in preparation for some bulldozer work. I inadvertently disturbed a Yellowjacket nest and had to run for my life to avoid getting stung! I went back several weeks later to mark where the nest was so that the bulldozer driver could avoid it.

When I got to the nest, there was a hole in the ground with dirt and bits of Yellowjacket nest thrown five feet away.

At first I thought it was skunks as I know they will dig up nests to eat the larvae, but they would not throw the dirt so far. Later I found out it had been a bear!



Yellowjackets' nests are found both above and below ground

It turns out that Yellowjackets have a lot of enemies besides us, including birds, reptiles, amphibians, skunks, bears, raccoons, spiders, praying mantis, and bald-faced hornets. However, these natural enemies will not provide satisfactory biological control in home situations.

Now is the time to control them if they have been a pest around your home. To learn more about Yellowjackets visit <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7450.html>.



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## In The Kitchen - The “Other” Tomato Category

Janice Johnson, UCCE Master Gardener of Amador County



Most of us are familiar with hybrid and heirloom tomatoes, but did you know that there is a third category?

Most of us started out growing hybrid tomatoes in our kitchen gardens, because that was what was available and they are easy to grow, being both productive and disease resistant. Hybrid tomatoes are created by breeding two different parent plants, which means you have to buy the seeds or the seedlings. You'll probably be disappointed if you save the seeds of a hybrid, because they won't grow true.

As our interest in gardening increases, we like to try new things. In the case of tomatoes, many of us move on to heirlooms. There's some irony that heirlooms, which seem new to us, are actually old! Heirlooms are tomatoes that have been passed from generation to

generation and were grown in kitchen gardens because they taste so good. To be an heirloom tomato, it has to have been around for at least fifty years and be open-pollinated. The seeds from open-pollinated tomatoes can be saved because they grow true. Gardeners who grow heirlooms often have a stash of tomato seeds saved from their favorite tomatoes to grow in the future.

There has been a third classification of tomatoes around for a long time, but no one seems to know what to call it. These tomatoes are open-pollinated, but the varieties are not old enough to be heirlooms. So some people called them “new heirlooms” and other people incorrectly call them heirlooms. The tomato you might be most familiar with in this category is Green Zebra. I even have a set of "heirloom tomato" dishes and Green Zebra is on one of the plates. Green Zebra was bred by Tom Wagner, who was one of our judges at the UCCE Master Gardeners' tomato tasting in Sutter Creek. He now lives in Washington where he continues to breed tomatoes and potatoes <http://www.tomwagnerseeds.com/>.



Tom Wagner is not the only breeder selling new open-pollinated tomatoes. Many of us have grown the wildly colorful and tasty Berkeley Tie Dye or Black & Brown Boar, which are too new to be heirlooms. These tomatoes were bred by Bradley Gates of Wild Boar Farms in Napa <http://www.wildboarfarms.com/>.



Oregon State University is not only breeding pretty open-pollinated tomatoes, but they are breeding tomatoes that are healthier for us. Tomatoes like Indigo Rose are the color of eggplants and have high levels of antioxidants in its fruit just like blueberries. I'm trying them this year and I've read that they aren't tasty until completely ripe, which can take 90 days.

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**In The Kitchen - The “Other” Tomato Category** *(Continued from page 4)*

To make these "new" open-pollinated tomatoes, you cross two tomatoes with traits you like, which will make a hybrid. You save seeds from the hybrid, grow hundreds of plants from these seeds and then save seeds from the best of these tomatoes. Each year you grow plants from the best tomatoes from the previous year. In several years you'll have a stable open-pollinated tomato that is uniquely your own. I'm sure the tomato breeders would say I'm simplifying all their hard work, but you get the idea. To protect all their hard work, these tomato seeds have Plant Variety Protection (PVP). That means you can save seeds from the tomatoes you grow to use in your own garden, but you can't sell or give the seeds away. This seems fair, since a packet of seeds is only a few dollars and we'd like these breeders to continue to make more new varieties for us to grow.



So, what should this category of open-pollinated tomatoes that aren't old be called? My vote is "Artisan" tomatoes. Baia Nicchia Farm in Sunol, CA, <http://store.growartisan.com/> is breeding a collection of cute multi-colored striped tomatoes that they call Artisan tomatoes. I like this name and I hope that it catches on like "Kleenex" did for facial tissues.

*No endorsement of products/companies is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products/companies that are not included.*

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**Wives Tales - Myth Vs. Fact**

Wives tales or myths have been passed down from generation to generation. They range from being just plain silly or harmful to good common sense that has since been substantiated by scientific research.

As Master Gardeners, we must be vigilant in helping others from perpetuating any of those wives tales or myths that can be detrimental to plants, soil, and the environment by supplying them with the facts. Here are just a couple of examples we often come across:



- ◆ **Wives Tale/Myth:** If a plant is under stress, feed it.

Fact: Fertilizer is not the answer for many plant stresses. Typically, poor nutrition is not the culprit. Identify the cause of the problem before trying to resolve it. Often the cause of the stress is compacted roots, poor drainage, overwatering, and so on.

- ◆ **Wives Tale/Myth:** Organic materials - especially compost - are always good.

Fact: It's imperative that the source of the compost is identified prior to its purchase and use. This is important so that pesticides and toxins are not introduced into others' gardens which could result in unexpected and harmful outcomes.

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## UC Cooperative Extension Cottage Food Operations Workshop Series

*Calling All Farmers Interested In Making Value Added Products*



# University of California

## Agriculture and Natural Resources

The UC Cooperative Extension will present a hands-on workshop series in six different locations across Northern California designed specifically for farmers interested in making value-added products in their home kitchens.

These workshops will teach participants about the new California Homemade Food Act (AB1616) which allows individuals to prepare and package certain non-potentially hazardous foods in private-home kitchens referred to as “Cottage Food Operations” (CFOs). Here’s the scoop!

**Who should attend?**

This hands-on workshop series is designed especially for farmers of fruits, vegetables, nuts, herbs, and honey interested in making value-added products in home kitchens as Cottage Food Operations (CFOs). Workshop series is open to participants interested in making Cottage Foods.

**What is a Cottage Food Operation?**

The California Homemade Food Act (AB1616) allows individuals to prepare and package certain non-potentially hazardous foods in private-home kitchens referred to as “Cottage Food Operations” (CFOs). Processed meat, dairy, fermented foods, and juices are NOT legally acceptable cottage foods.

**Learn about:**

- Cottage Food Law
- Food science and sanitation
- Hands-on demos with jams/jellies, honey, nuts, dried fruit, and/or baked goods
- Packaging and storage
- Business operations for CFOs

**Attend a two-part workshop series near you!**

Workshops take place from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. both days. Lunch is provided.

- Fairfield, May 13 & May 20, 2014
- Ukiah, May 15 & May 22, 2014
- Eureka, May 28 & June 11, 2014
- Redding, May 29 & June 10, 2014
- Jackson, June 12 & June 16, 2014
- Sacramento, July 1 & July 9, 2014

**Cost:**

\$25 in advance / \$40 at the door, space permitting.  
 Register online: <http://ucanr.edu/cfoworkshops>



**For more information contact:**

Amador County UCCE Office  
 12200B Airport Rd. Jackson  
 530-621-5502  
[cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu)

Download flyer: at:  
<http://cesolano.ucanr.edu/files/189209.pdf>



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



Most classes are from 9 a.m. – Noon.

Please call ahead to confirm locations.

Click on the class title to go to our public website and schedule an email reminder for the class.

### Amador County

Unless otherwise noted, the location for all Amador County classes is the GSA Building, 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson. Questions? Call 209-223-6838 or e-mail [mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu).

#### June

##### 14: Controlling Weeds In The Landscape

UCCE Amador County Farm Advisor and well known weed expert, Scott Oneto, will be presenting this class from 9 a.m. - Noon. Please bring with you a fresh sample of any weeds (including their flowers, if possible) that you may have questions about. This class has not been held for several years so this is your chance to talk with the expert.

[UCCE Master Gardeners of Amador County Facebook page](#)

[El Dorado County Master Gardener Facebook page](#)

[Download the 2014 class schedules for both Amador and El Dorado counties.](#)

### El Dorado County Fair Master Gardener Free Mini-Classes, Floriculture Building

#### THURSDAY, JUNE 12

- 12:00 Garden Safety
- 1:00 Fire Wise Landscaping
- 2:00 Bees
- 3:00 Hummingbirds
- 4:00 Pruning Fruit Trees
- 5:00 Worm Composting

#### FRIDAY, JUNE 13

- 12:00 Edible Landscaping in Your Garden
- 1:00 Growing Olives in El Dorado County
- 2:00 Bees
- 3:00 Dividing Bearded Iris
- 4:00 Tool Selection and Care
- 5:00 Garden Safety

#### SATURDAY, JUNE 14

- 12:00 Container Gardening
- 1:00 Hanging Flower Baskets
- 2:00 Bees
- 3:00 Dividing Bearded Iris
- 4:00 Tool Selection and Care
- 5:00 Garden Safety

#### SUNDAY, JUNE 15

- 12:00 Pruning Landscape Bushes & Trees
- 1:00 Garden Safety
- 2:00 Bees

### El Dorado County

Unless otherwise noted, the location for these El Dorado County classes is Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fairlane Ct., Placerville. Questions? Call 503-621-5512 or email [mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu).

##### May 31: Mini-Series: Miniature Greenhouses- Bucket Cloning- & Compost Tea

This mini-series of three different classes in just one morning will examine the pros and cons of three topics which will assist the gardener in the propagation, cloning, and fertilization/maintenance of outdoor and indoor plants. We will examine the myths and the scientific realities of some current claims and practices.

Learn how to root cuttings in inexpensive miniature greenhouses throughout the year. Learn how to clone the more difficult plants like the professionals: hydroponic and aeroponics. Lastly, Examine the current research regarding compost tea benefits and dangers and learn which claims regarding compost tea are supported by science-based research.

#### June

##### 4: Its Showtime! How to Enter Your Fruit-Vegetables- Plant or Flower in the County Fair

Master Gardeners will present a free class for the public from 9:00 a.m. - 10:00 a.m. on how to enter the El Dorado County Fair in the “Flowers & Plants” and the “Fruits & Veggies” divisions. It’s fun. It’s easy and YOU can win! You can download a [step-by-step tutorial](#) to help you fill out the entry form.

Location: Floriculture Building, El Dorado County Fairgrounds, 100 Placerville Drive, Placerville.

##### 7: Myths about Garden Remedies: Do Miracle Remedies Really Work?

Learn the scientific information about “miracle remedies” that do or don’t work in the home garden. Should you plant egg shells with your tomatoes? Which deer repellants really work? What are the uses of beer in the garden? Does willow water help cuttings to root? Should you use HydroGel in your potted plants? Come and learn the answers to these and many more gardening questions from MGs Mike Pizza and Sue McDavid. You will be amazed by some of the research.

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## UCCE Master Food Preservers



UCCE Master Food Preservers offer classes in three counties: El Dorado, Amador and Calaveras. In El Dorado County the classes are twice a week, Tuesdays and Saturdays, July through October. In Amador and Calaveras counties classes alternate monthly between Jackson and San Andreas. [Download the 2014 class schedules](#) for both groups and join us!

### Have a Question for the Master Food Preservers?

Call the Master Food Preserver Hotline: (530) 621-5506. If you have a food safety or preservation question, please call and leave a message, or send a question through email, or fill out the [online information request form](#).

El Dorado Master Food Preservers  
email: [edmfpu@davis.edu](mailto:edmfpu@davis.edu), (530) 621-5506

Amador/Calaveras Master Food Preservers  
email: [acmfpu@davis.edu](mailto:acmfpu@davis.edu), (209) 223-6857  
Next class: [June 14, Preserving Early Summer Fruits](#)  
Location: 12200-B Airport Road, Jackson

### Pest Notes



Free Pest Notes are available on a variety of topics. For more information, call or email your local UCCE 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: Janice Johnson  
Layout Editor: Kim Cohen

*Not on our e-newsletter distribution list yet? Know someone who would like to receive our newsletters and notifications on classes and events? Sign up online at <http://ucanr.org/mgenews>.*

### Get Answers to Your Gardening Questions Online

[http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardeners](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners)

- Information about Master Gardeners and how to become one
- List of public classes
- Calendar of Master Gardener events
- Useful links to gardening websites
- Home gardening publications

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

Amador: [mgamador@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgamador@ucdavis.edu)  
El Dorado: [mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu](mailto:mgeldorado@ucdavis.edu)



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The University of California working in cooperation with County Government and the United States Department of Agriculture.