

Master Gardener News

Amador County

MAY 2005



Your Co-Pres' Speak

Well another busy month is almost over. The MGs gave demonstrations



and gave out garden information at the Amador Flower Farm on April 2nd and 3rd. The Expo on the 9th was a huge success. The lecture room was filled to capacity, and the plant sales exceeded our expectations. The plant choices and their condition were exceptionally good. Many thanks to the MGs who did the propagation, those who organized, helped set up and sell the plants.

The weather was perfect on the 14th for the field trip to Granite Gardens in Sonora (wild-flowers were in full bloom along the highway). The tour of the garden was exceptional. The drought tolerant native plants, from 1 inch high to large 7-8 foot shrubs were exhibited. Thank you Bob Allen for setting up this field trip. It was well worth the drive over there.

A BIG WELCOME to our new MGs. I hope each of you will take advantage of the continuing education offered from the field trips and the experience learned from home visits and phone clinics. Each of these will broaden your knowledge and will provide needed help to the community.

A quote from Will Rogers, "Good judgment comes from experience, and a lot of that comes from bad judgment".

Co- President Dennis Miller

This month started with a bang with the graduation of our new MGs. I had the pleasure of assisting with correcting their final examinations and these new MGs are really sharp. To all of you, Welcome Aboard! Our Spring Expo was outstanding. If it gets any better we will be looking for a larger facility. Our speakers Jim Harrington, Jim Switzer and Marie Loretta packed the room for each presentation. The plant sale was super.

Sorry to have missed the MG meeting and the field trip but as many of you know my mother in law passed away and that has required a lot of time. She was a great woman and we will miss her. "Science has never drummed up quite as effective a tranquilizing agent as a sunny spring day" - W Earl Hall.

Happy gardening. Jack

MAY CALENDAR

May 4 – Wednesday “**Celebrate Flowers**” class, 6-7:30 pm at the Ag office.

May 6 – Friday – Field Trip to **Duarte Nursery** in Modesto.

May 14 – Saturday – “**Growing Tomatoes and Peppers**”, 10am-noon at the Ag office.

May 17 – Tuesday – **MG Monthly Meeting**, 1pm at Ag office. Speaker Diana Waller, Rangeland Management Specialist, “**Native Grasses**”. Board meeting at noon.

Secretary's Notes

APRIL 19, 2005

Dennis Miller convened the meeting at 1:00 PM.

Jackie Tarchala introduced Susan Snoke of the Amador Firesafe Council. Susan announced that effective January 1, 2005 the California Public Resources Code 4291 requires that the minimum clearance (defensible space) around homes is 100 feet. The wording of the code will be finalized on June 1. This represents a significant amendment to the earlier laws that only required a 30-foot defensible space around homes. These modifications were enacted in an effort to both save more homes and protect the lives of firefighters. CDF will be writing citations this year for the 30-foot defensible space and next year they will be citing for the 100-foot requirement. Susan warned that 3 insurance companies have already pulled out of California and that some Amador County residents have had their insurance policies canceled without notice because of fire issues.

Susan discussed the effects of the Power Fire last year and emphasized the importance of neighborhood evacuation plans. Getting to know neighbors and discovering if they have children, elderly relatives or pets who may need assistance in the event of an emergency evacuation can assure that help is available to those who need it.

Susan stressed the importance of the Mt. Zion Lookout Tower Campaign. Keeping the tower staffed is a vital link in spotting fires in the area and a mere \$25, tax deductible donation can help to keep it staffed from dawn to dusk by a CDF worker this fire season. Your contribution also gives you access to webcam views of Amador County and a 911-Scanner Service to keep informed in the event of an emergency. Contact the Fire Safe Council to make your donations at (209) 296-6220.

Susan stressed that the time to clear grasses and brush safely is now through May. If you must mow during the summer and ea

months, do it before 10:00 A.M. Even string weed eaters can cause fires. No grasses should be left higher than 6 inches.

She emphasized that people should use common sense when selecting building materials and landscaping materials. Studies have shown that redwood decks are more fire resistant than those built with synthetic materials. There are fire resistant plants, shrubs and ground covers available. Local nurseries usually have lists of fire resistant plants. Trees should be trimmed up and well spaced. If you live on a slope fire dangers increase. Low growing plants are more fire-safe than higher plants. Keep areas under decks clear of debris. Lattice doesn't keep debris from under decks but fine metal screening will do the job.

A film titled "Fire Safe Communities" was shown after Susan completed her presentation. The film is available in the Master Gardener Library. It revealed how wildfires cause millions of dollars of destruction each year. To be safe you should assess your fire risk. What type of slope is your home on and what type of vegetation is in the area surrounding your home? Have you created a defensible space to protect your home? A green belt with a high moisture content and hardscape immediately adjacent to your home will protect your home. Maintain the landscape by pruning trees and vegetation and keep it well watered especially during fire season. Prune and thin trees and remember litter is fuel for fires. In conclusion, there are four primary concerns for fire safe landscapes: 1) planning; 2) spacing; 3) watering; and 4) maintenance.

After a break for ice cream and cookies the meeting resumed at 2:25 P.M. Dennis Miller spoke about the successful Spring Expo. There were full houses at the classes and the plant sales were brisk. The M G booth at Amador Flower Farm on April 2nd and 3rd drew a lot of people. The field trip to Granite Gardens was a perfect day filled with excellent information, beautiful plants, a delicious lunch afterwards and wildflower

displays going to and from the Sonora location.

Marie Lorretta presented plaques to Scott Oneto and Carolyn Scalabrino in recognition of their years of dedicated service above and beyond the actual requirements of their jobs. Carolyn's plaque displayed a photo of her and her years of service to the Master Gardener Program, 1986 - 2005. Carolyn did much of the initial work as the program got underway and remains an integral person in the program today. Scott's plaque also had a photo of him and his years of service, 1999 - 2005. It hardly seems possible that Scott has only been part of the Master Gardener Program for the past 5 years as it is difficult to remember when he was not at the center of every event and activity. Marie stated that we should not always wait until people leave the program to acknowledge their valuable contributions.

Scott announced the Upper Mokelumne River Watershed Festival would be held on Saturday, May 28, sponsored by the Central Sierra RCD. Water conservation will be the central theme of the festival. It will be a family event. Contact Scott for further details.

Scott also spoke about the UC IPM conference on Water Quality and Pesticides at UC Davis on June 22 from 9:00 A.M. through 4:00 P.M. This is a train-the-trainer type of program. The primary focus of the training will be how to educate the public about managing weeds, ants, etc.

Scott warned that Tomato Psyllids are in California. They are very tiny and a person would need a 16-20x hand lens to see the psyllids. These pests are new to California and appear to be staying here in the state year round. The only effective control seems to be good coverage with horticultural oil.

The Master Gardener shirts and lanyards have arrived. Contact Scott if you've ordered any of these items. There will be a few extra items available for purchase as well. May 6 will be the Duarte Nursery field trip. The demonstrations include cloning and budding plants. It is both an educational and entertaining outing. The participants will meet at the Ag office at 8:15 and carpool to

the nursery. Contact Jim Howard if you want to attend this event.

Bernice Honeychurch is looking for volunteers to assist with watering the Master Gardener demo garden at the Fairgrounds in Plymouth a couple of times a week. If you plan to be in the area or live nearby, please contact Bernice to offer your help. Bernice is also looking for some Santa Barbara Daisies to round out the planting bed so if you have some to spare, just give her a call.

Marie reminded everyone that Bernice is still compiling a list of preferred gardening websites, both informational and commercial. Please Email Bernice with your favorites. Marie also announced that the various soil products that are on hand at the Ag office could be yours for the asking if you agree to do a very casual study by planting some things with the products and others without. Then you just need to observe to see if you can detect a difference and report to Marie.

Charlie Thorp, Steve Collins and Huba Toth discussed a home visit where the lady of the house called for assistance because a variety of trees she had planted in the past few years were dying. She could detect no insects. To see the actual growing conditions Charlie and Steve made a trip to the home and even were allowed to dig up a couple of the dying trees. The homeowner had been trying to create a barrier between her property and the one next door by thickly planting new trees right under mature trees. The new trees could not compete successfully and many were root bound as well.

The final item on the meeting was for Scott to present the Master Gardener Certificates to all of the trainees from last year that have met the program requirements. These remarkable individuals have already made valuable contributions to the Program while still completing their training. Certificates were presented to: Jim Howard; Don and Crystal Rosson; Peggy Sullivan; Diane and Jim Farrell; and Steve Collins. We are all looking forward to working with this exceptional group of new Master Gardeners.

Dennis Miller adjourned the meeting at 3:15 P.M.

Announcements

FAIR DEMO GARDEN

This is our second year doing a demo "sun garden" at the Amador County Fairgrounds. The site is next to the covered bridge adjacent to the pond by Pokerville Hall. Last year we were told on July 1 about the possibility of creating a garden on the site vacated by 4 H and by July 5 after a great deal of work we had a very lovely garden in place. Unfortunately we did not place very high in rankings because demo gardens are supposed to be started in May, but that's politics. This year we are very definitely going to be a contender.

This year the location of the dry stream has been changed and a weed control project has been done. One side was sprayed with pre-emergent and the other, larger, side was covered with newspaper and bark mulch. The two areas will be watched to see which treatment proves most effective. One month later, not one weed was visible. So far a California poppy, ground cover rose and agapanthus have been planted. They are doing very well.

We will need plants donated (Ridge Road Nursery has been very nice about donating some larger plants). We have a planting plan and are trying to follow it as closely as possible with a little room for artistic expression. Look in your garden and pot up some of the following: Brightly colored yarrow in tones of red, terracotta (no pastels), various thymes (have a lot of existing lime thyme), erigeron/santa barbara daisy, blue verbena, groundcover roses. Cheryl Allen will collect plants at her home in Pine Grove and Bernice Honeychurch will collect plants at the north end of the county. Give them a call before dropping off donations. Commercial nurseries will be given credit on a sign at the fair.

The garden will be planted the first week of May. After that watering will have to be done on a regular basis and we would like everyone to water at least once. The

fairgrounds are only 5 minutes north of Hwy 16 so it should not be difficult to fit it into your schedule if you are going to Sacramento. It is possible to drive right up to the garden from the backside of the grounds across the grass. Please contact Bernice Honeychurch 245-3608. Thank you!

SPRING EXPO

This event was a fantastic success. We sold untold numbers of plants. We had the conference room seated to capacity. All of the MG workers/speakers were great. Jim Switzer did his first presentation and did a great job. Jim Harrington's Power Point presentation was very professional. Scott was there to help in every way.

Let's work to make this Fall Expo the best ever too. It's going to be on 9/24 and will cover Selection, Care and Maintenance of Landscape Trees and Shrubs. Get those plants going now!

Thanks Everyone – Marie Loretta

CELEBRATE FLOWERS

An evening public education class
Wednesday May 4, 6:00-7:30 pm at the Ag Office.

Topics at this evening's class will include:
Attracting Hummers and other Birds,
Butterflies and Bees; Cut Flowers, Cooking
with Flowers and Edible Flowers.

GETTING TO KNOW YOU

Correction to interview Jim and Diane Ferrell
... last paragraph should read:

"The path of love and the path of life lead to the same garden. Gardening is not just about providing food but it feeds our *soul* as well as our bodies."

FIELD TRIP

Field Trip to Duarte Nursery, Modesto, CA. Friday May 7, 2005. Duarte Nursery is the largest producer of grape rootstock/vines in California. Each year they have an open house to display their operation. Lunch is provided along with winetasting and a tour of their labs & greenhouses. For those who have not attended this has been a very enjoyable & educational trip. Contact Jim Howard if you have not signed up at last meeting. His email address is ford9erfan@internet49.com

Bob Allen

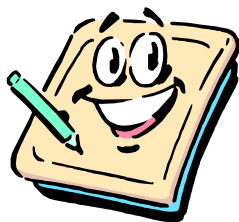
MENTORS

Be sure and contact your mentees and sign up for Phone Clinic together. This is the start of the busy season for problem solving for gardeners. There are always a variety of problems to be solved so be on hand to show your mentee all the available research sources. Encourage them to sign up at the various Nursery Clinics, Fair Garden Project and other events to gain their needed hours.

GARDEN LIBRARY

“**Homescaping**” by Anne Halpin. Rodale, 276 pages, \$35.00

What it's about: The harmonious marriage of your home's architecture with its landscaping. The result: great curb appeal, tremendous gardens.



Hits: This book fertilizes the imagination through color-coordinating house with garden. You'll begin nodding your head in agreement and mumbling, "Why didn't I think of that?" Abundance of useful lists and charts.

Misses: None

RECIPES FROM POTLUCK

BROCCOLI COUSCOUS SALAD

1 cup couscous
1-1/2 cup vegetable broth
1 cup water
1-1/2 cups broccoli chopped small
1 large yellow onion, chopped fine
1 cup dried cranberries
1 cup chopped pecans
about 1/2 cup light olive oil
about 1/4 cup apple cider vinegar
Salt and pepper to taste
Bring broth and water to boil, pour over couscous and cover for 5 minutes. Remove cover and stir in remaining ingredients. Add oil and vinegar to taste. Then salt and pepper to taste. Chill several hours.
Jackie Tarchala

FRITTATA

5 cups diced or sliced zucchini
9 eggs
1/4 cup canola oil
1 large onion, diced
1 cup grated Jack cheese
Salt and pepper to taste
1-1/4 cup Bisquick
2 cloves crushed garlic
1/2 cup Parmesan cheese
1 small jar marinated artichoke hearts (drained)
Preheat oven to 350 degrees.
Mix all ingredients together in large mixing bowl. Pour into a lightly greased 11"x9"x2" baking dish. Bake at 350 degrees about 45 minutes. It should be set in the middle and firm to the touch. May eat hot (for brunch served with salsa) or let cool and cut into cocktail size cubes.
Note: The great thing about Frittata is you can use whatever vegetables you like (or may have an abundance of in your garden). I wouldn't eliminate the zucchini completely, but you can replace part of it with green beans, cabbage, broccoli, or whatever you like. You can also add bell pepper and mushrooms as I did on Thursday.
Enjoy! Reita Miller

MEYER LEMON SWEET ENOUGH TO SQUEEZE

By Sophia Markoulakis Special to The Chronicle (Edited)

Growing up, I never knew the difference between a sweet Meyer lemon and an acidic Lisbon. All I knew was that on weekends, I was out of bed by 7 a.m. because there were fruit trees that needed tending. Thirty years ago, the fringes of Sacramento were still just a developer's opportunistic vision and my parents jumped at the chance to move to an area with a double lot so they could grow (what seemed like at the time) an orchard of fruit trees. They grew every tree imaginable, including an entire section devoted to dwarf Meyer lemons. Their bedroom sliding door was open almost year round, especially on warm evenings, so they could sleep with the intoxicating fragrance of the Meyer's magical blossoms. Never having to purchase a lemon until I moved away, I didn't realize that there was more than one variety.

Regarded by many as the favorite backyard citrus tree, the Meyer lemon was introduced to the United States from China by Dutch plant explorer Frank Meyer. Meyer traveled to China several times during the early 1900s and introduced this country to hundreds of new plant species. Thought to be a cross between an acidic lemon and a mandarin, this thin-skinned and slightly sweet cousin to the lemon settled in subtropical citrus-growing regions of the United States.

For many years, the Meyer lemon was considered more of an ornamental oddity and mainly thrived in people's yards. People living outside the citrus belt didn't have the chance to acquaint themselves with this new lemon variety because its thin skin and delicate structure made it virtually impossible to distribute commercially.

Around the same time, a man by the name of Floyd Dillon had moved to Northern California to try his hand at the dwarf wholesale nursery business, according to his great-grandson, Aaron Dillon, a fourth-generation grower at Four Winds Growers in Fremont. Fortuitously, a woman living in nearby Brentwood contacted him about a beautiful Meyer lemon tree that she had growing in her yard. And, with these buds, Dillon propagated the Meyer for several years.

In the 1960s, with the threat of eradicating all Meyers because of a citrus tristeza virus that could harm the commercial citrus industry, the California Department of Agriculture screened all supposed clean stock and concluded that Four Winds Growers had the only virus-free selections. Aaron Dillon says, "This plant, that can be traced back to Floyd Dillon, became the source for all bud wood used for the Improved Meyer lemon program."

Today, Four Winds Growers is California's, if not the nation's, leader in the selling and propagating of dwarf Improved Meyer lemon trees. Their nationwide distribution, coupled with the Improved Meyer's growing popularity in restaurants and home kitchens, will hopefully have a positive impact on its future. It also doesn't hurt that it's an amazingly easy fruit tree to grow.

Cultivation: The dwarf Improved Meyer lemon can be planted in the ground in warmer regions of California or in a large container where the threat of frost is present (so that it can be sheltered if necessary). As with other citrus, amend the soil with 4 to 6 inches of organic matter in the hole; or, use a high-quality potting soil for your container. Apply a 2-inch layer of mulch after planting to protect roots.

Meyers are hungry trees since they can bloom and fruit simultaneously. Feed monthly, year round, with a granular or liquid fertilizer specially formulated for citrus plants. Maximize the absorption rate by feeding a couple of hours after watering. And, don't forget to water thoroughly, possibly daily during the summer months if planted in pots.

Since the dwarf Improved Meyer typically doesn't exceed 8 feet, it's a great tree to espalier against a south-facing fence or wall. By growing on a trellis or similar structure, these sweet lemons can be harvested easily and can provide a screen from an undesirable view. Remove unwanted pests such as aphids and mealybugs with a blast of water or non-toxic insecticidal soap.

Improved Meyers have a compact growing habit and don't need to be pruned, but suckers growing below the bud union should be removed so that the tree can remain healthy and produce superior fruit. Ripening can take up to a year and the fruit will continue to mature and turn a deep yellow-orange color until picked.

VEGETABLE/ORCHARD CALENDAR - MAY

PLANT SEED:

Most Elevations:

Carrots, celery, cucumbers, corn (sweet), eggplant, snap beans, parsnips, *peppers, potatoes – Irish & sweet, pumpkin, radishes, summer & winter squash, *tomatoes and melons can be planted. Use a cold frame if temps stay cool. Rotate * from last year's location.

Melons like rich soil-amend it with compost, manure and bone meal. Then plant them with 3-4" high rows.

Below 2500': Soil should be warm enough to sow seed for summer veggies.

Above 2500': Check soil temperatures before you plant. Raised beds warms up faster. Use short season varieties in higher elevations.

SET OUT PLANTS:

Harden off transplants and cut back on fertilizer.

Set out heat loving herbs: basil, chives, cilantro, oregano, parsley, rosemary, sage, thyme.

Seedlings of eggplant, sweet potatoes, tomatoes, peppers and pumpkin can be planted when the soils warms up, if you are sure warm weather is here to stay. These plants are all heat lovers.

Use paper collars for cutworms.

Above 2000': Cover cole crops with shade cloth to prevent bolting when weather warms.

FERTILIZE:

For a healthy, productive garden, feed now with complete fertilizer. Be careful with N.

Work a good vegetable fertilizer into the soil when putting transplants into the garden.

Feed vegetables with a complete fertilizer

For citrus: 1 ½ lbs of N/year fed in 2 to 3 feedings, each 6 weeks apart. Water deeply.

Citrus may also need iron & zinc – use a spray with both.

SPRAY/OTHER GARDEN CONTROL (Dress Properly):

For aphids, use insecticidal soap or strong water spray.

For gopher or moles set traps. For snails, slugs, earwigs - bait or handpick.

If you see caterpillars on long threads hanging from vegetables or oak trees , use Bt.

Use sulfur dust on grapes to prevent powdery mildew when shoots are 6", 12" & 18" then every 14 days until temperatures reach 90.. You can make the dust into a spray – 3 to 4 TBS of wettable sulfur plus 3 to 4 TBS of household detergent/gal of water. See** below.

For walnut trees, spray 3-6 times with copper for blight depending on how long wet weather persists after pistillate bloom.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Check drip irrigation for emitter leaks. Clean and flush system & filters.

As the soil warms, mulch to suppress weeds and conserve moisture.

Set out ant stakes around fruit trees.

Weed, Weed, Weed (hoe or pull).

Thin fruit to 4 to 6" between each when it reaches marble size (apples, Asian pears, nectarines, peaches). Golden Delicious and Winesap tend to bear fruit every other year. This can be prevented by thinning early. Fruit will be bigger and disease/insect problems reduced.

Thin vegetable seedlings as needed.

Remove insect damaged fruit.

Prune woody herbs regularly.

**** Powdery mildew prevention tactics:** Plant grapes in full sun, provide enough water, avoid excess fertilizer, carefully prune & train to allow good air flow and exposure of fruit to sunlight.

YARD CALENDAR - MAY

PLANT SEED:

Below 2500': Soil should be warm enough to sow seed for summer plants (cosmos, marigolds, sunflowers, zinnias). Give zinnias lots of water. Portulaca is good for dry areas.

Above 2500': Check soil temperatures first. Plant seeds in all raised beds. Start in greenhouse or coldframe. Find out the date of the last frost in your area!

SET OUT PLANTS:

Below 2000': Plant perennials, annuals, shrubs. Plant drought tolerant species in time to get roots established before dry weather hits.

Gladiolas, dahlias and begonias can still be planted.

FERTILIZE: Rains leach the nutrients out of the soil!

Feed flowering annuals regularly with a complete fertilizer. Fertilize acid lovers.

Feed summer blooming perennials and all container plants.

Fertilize roses following bloom period. Continue to feed at least once a month.

Feed tall bearded Iris after bloom with low N.

Feed lawns once a month with 21-0-0.

Use iron chelate if acid lovers have yellow leaves.

SPRAY/OTHER GARDEN CONTROL (Dress Properly):

See Veggie/Orchard calendar.

GARDEN MAINTENANCE:

Check drip irrigation for emitter leaks. Clean and flush system & filters.

As soil warms, **mulch** 1 to 3" to suppress weeds and conserve moisture. Keep away from trunk.

Pinch back chrysanthemums to 12 ". Others can benefit too: fuschias, carnations, dahlias, mums

Deadhead fading flowers and bulbs. Do not cut off the bulb leaves until they turn brown.

Weed, Weed, Weed (hoe or pull).

Disbud peonies now for bigger blooms.

To encourage branching on shrubs and newly planted flowers, pinch back growing tips.

Tip prune evergreens to encourage compact growth.

Prune spring flowering shrubs after bloom, if needed. On lilacs, remove spent flower clusters just above points where leaf buds are forming.

Remove suckers from bushes/trees.

Water small to medium shrubs when the top 3-6" of soil is dry, large shrubs and trees when the top 6-12" is dry. Unthirsty plants (cotoneaster, rockrose) can go longer.

Rebuild water basins around shrubs & trees. Deep water each.

When rose blooms are spent, prune stems just above a leaf with 5 or more leaflets. If cut long stem roses, leave the same amount of stem. Use a systemic insecticide too.

If you have some white fuzzy stuff on plants in shady areas, it's powdery mildew.

Stake and tie delphiniums.

Don't let rhododendrons go to seed-remove pods after flowers finish being careful not to harm new growth below.

Poison Oak-do not burn plants or roots! You can manually pull it out but you must get all horizontal roots too. Dress appropriately-wear plastic gloves with washable cotton gloves over top. Wipe down boots with alcohol. Launder all clothes. Chemical control is good later this month when leaves fully develop. Tests at U of CA showed herbicides with triclopyr or glyphosate as most effective. Complete control usually requires several applications as new growth appears.