



University of California Cooperative Extension

Backyard Gardener

INYO AND MONO COUNTIES

SUMMER 2007

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Summer in Inyo and Mono Gardens

High Desert Regions (lower elevations of western Inyo County such as the Owens Valley)

Early **June** can still act like winter in our high desert, with freeze temperatures still possible till June 10 in Bishop, so it is a good idea to have plans to protect your young tomatoes and other ‘tender’ early plantings at a moments notice.

Plant seeds for cucumbers, corn, squash (try spaghetti squash for some fun), and melons. You can prepare vegetable or flower beds by solarizing them to reduce soil-inhabiting pests and weed seeds. To do so, wet the soil and then cover it with a clear plastic tarp for 4 to 6 weeks. Plant seeds for

your summer cutting garden and flower borders. Good bloomers include ageratum, asters, phlox, and sunflowers, as well as marigolds, portulaca, salvia, verbena, and zinnias. Also consider planting nastursiums, which if not sprayed with chemicals, can be added to your summer salads to supply color and spice. Remember that **June** can be a dry month, so maintain adequate irrigation.

During **June and July**, work to mulch every plant you can including vegetables, fruit trees, shrubs and flowers. Spread a 2 to 3-inch layer of compost or ground bark. Dig and divide overcrowded bearded iris clumps.



In **August**, begin to look towards October and spring plantings, by sowing seeds of bedding flowers in flats or other containers. Include such varieties as calendula, Iceland poppies, nemesia, pansies, snapdragons, stock, sweet alyssum and violas. Feed roses early in **August** with a nitrogen fertilizer and water thrououghly. Late in **August**, feed Bermuda lawns with a high-bitrogen fertilizer. And, if necessary, treat for chlorosis by adding iron chelates.

Low Desert Regions (lower elevations of eastern Inyo County including Death Valley)

In the low desert, hot weather arrives in **June**. Keep plants moist — leaves wilting in the morning mean water stress, while those wilting in the afternoon suggest heat stress. But don’t over-water — instead in the early morning, water slowly (to prevent run off), infrequently, and deeply (to prevent wilting, promote deep rooting, and leach salts from the root zone).

In early **June**, plant seeds for cucumbers, squash, cantaloupe and muskmelon, and eggplant; transplant sweet potatoes. Also, consider adding herbs to your repertoire. Drought-tolerant lavender, rosemary, and thyme will brighten your garden as well as your cooking (see page xx).

Pick early-maturing deciduous fruit to prevent bird damage, and let ripen in cardboard boxes at room temperature. Apply mulch to the ground around trees and shrubs to help keep roots cool and prevent evaporation during the summer. Apply chelated iron to bottlebrush, pyracantha, silk oak, and other plants prone to chlorosis. Prune bougainvillea and lantana to stimulate growth and bloom. You can transplant

palms, mesquites, palo verdes, and other arid species early in the summer with good results — however, they will need to be staked to protect against heavy winds and dust storms and watered on a regular basis until fall. Water mature trees deeply about every two weeks, and younger trees about every week.

In **June and July**, cut back on fertilizer to established roses to slow summer growth, and water deeply as temperatures rise. Fertilize roses at half rate every six weeks during the summer; watering deeply both before and after to prevent burn. Hose off roses, especially the undersides of leaves, in the early morning to increase humidity and control spider mites. Consider **June** the last call for planting annuals for summer color. Add some perennial color by planting red hot pokers, aloes, and scented geraniums. Don't plant in the heat of the day and be sure to shade young plants from heat. Irrigate flowerbeds every other day; and add ammonium phosphate to increase bloom. Stake taller flowers to prevent damage from summer winds.

In **June and July**, plant Bermuda lawns if you haven't already done so. If it is time to dethatch established turf (every two to three years to rejuvenate the grass), do so during the active growing season of May through August. Apply iron to your lawn once a month during the summer and fertilize using 1/2 pound of actual nitrogen per 1000 square feet.

August fosters in some of the hottest, driest conditions of the year, so increase water to shrubs and trees as it gets hotter. Reapply mulch around the base of heat sensitive trees to help maintain soil moisture, keeping mulch several inches away from trunks. In **August**, you can still plant Bermuda grass. Continue fertilizing lawns with nitrogen and applying iron monthly according to package directions. Raise mowing height to 2.5 to 3 inches to help prevent root sunburn.

If roses show yellowing from iron deficiency add an iron supplement. If you wish, continue to plant summer flowers in **August**, however, plan to keep them only through October, at which point you will need to replace them with fall and winter flowers. To prepare flower beds for fall plantings, you can use this time to kill weed seeds by solarizing them — irrigate the soil and then cover with clear plastic for six weeks.

Plant seeds of fall vegetables, including snap beans, bok choy, broccoli, Brussels sprouts, carrots, cauliflower, collard greens, corn cucumbers, kale, kohlrabi, lettuce, leeks, mustard, green onions, and summer squash. **August** is also a good time to replant another crop of melons in your desert region.

Mountain Regions (Mono County and higher elevations of western Inyo County)

While summer officially arrives in **June**, the mountain regions still have a high probability of freeze through the end of **July**, so be vigilant in preparations to protect delicate plantings. Also, do not neglect watering. Properly irrigated plants tolerate frost and wind better than plants that are stressed.

This is a drought year, and it is important to remember that water conservation is one of the most important methods of guarding the quality of our groundwater reserves. This is especially true in the higher elevation watersheds of the Sierra Nevada. With this in mind, plan watering schedules for early morning or late evening when you can be sure most of the applied water goes to plantings rather than evaporating into the atmosphere. For example, watering a lawn during the mid-day in our climate supplies half of the applied water to the atmosphere.

In **June and July**, continue to sow successive crops of beets, bush beans, broccoli, carrots, cabbage, kohlrabi, lettuce, onions, squash and other vegetables. In most years, you should be able to harvest these vegetables through fall. If the season warms early, you can take a chance on sowing corn, pumpkins, and watermelons, as well as planting seedlings of eggplants, peppers, tomatoes and strawberries. Consider planting these warm-season vegetables in large pots that can be moved under cover to protect against a sudden cold snap. Keep an eye on your seedlings, and thin beets, carrots, lettuce, radishes, and turnips as needed.

For your summer flower garden, plant seeds in **June** for late-summer transplanting of columbine, penstemon, and other favorite perennials. For late summer color, also consider planting cannas, dahlias, gladiolus, and tuberous begonias.

Feed lawns with a nitrogen fertilizer; repeat in four to six weeks. Even better, consider replacing all or part of your lawn at this time with a more natural, drought-

tolerant, easy care landscape. Fertilize vegetables after thinning, and flower beds. Treat chlorosis by applying chelated iron to the soil of affected plants.

After bloom, prune spring flowering shrubs such as forsythia and lilac. Then plant summer-blooming shrubs such as blue mist, butterfly bush, rose of Sharon, and summersweet. In **June**, transplant container-grown or balled-and-burlapped shrubs and trees. Protect your garden from spider mites in drought years, by spraying plants with water early in the day, especially on undersides. Mulch plants, or cover the soil with black sheet plastic around heat-loving vegetables. Continue a regular, but infrequent, deep-watering program for lawns, ground covers, shrubs, and trees.

In these high elevation regions, **August** is the time to prepare for early spring bloom. Sow seeds of annuals and perennials such as pansies, violas, snapdragons, delphiniums and foxglove, and wildflowers. (In the very coldest areas, plant wildflowers in **September**.) Be alert to the occasional need to cover vegetables overnight to protect from early frosts. Mid-**August**, prepare fruit trees and other woody plants for approaching colder weather. Discourage tender new growth by cutting back on watering. and hold fertilizing until spring.

Compiled by Yvonne Wood from: [Sunset Western Garden Calendar, 1990 Planner & Diary](#), and [Sunset Western Garden Book](#) (1997 Edition), Lane Publishing and Co, Menlo Park, California; [A Guide to High Desert Landscaping](#), Victor Valley Water District (<http://www.vvwater.org/guide/guide.pdf>); and data and first hand experiences of Owens Valley gardener, Pam Pasotti and Ridgecrest gardeners, West and Irene Katzenstein.

Some Summer Pests . . .

Squashbugs. Also consider bringing a bit of spring indoors by placing prunings (while they are still dormant) from flowering plants into containers located in a warm place and wait about 10 days. Good candidates are deciduous fruits – ornamental crabapples, cherries, peaches, and pears – or flowering dogwoods, forsythias, quince, redbud,

Mites — Spider and Otherwise. Also consider bringing a bit of spring indoors by placing prunings (while they are still dormant) from flowering plants into containers located in a warm place and wait about 10 days. Good candidates are deciduous fruits – ornamental crabapples, cherries, peaches, and pears – or flowering dogwoods, forsythias, quince, redbud, or pussywillows. Expect blooms to last about ten days

Vermicomposting – Worms can change your garbage into fertilizer!

A recipe to turn kitchen scraps and old newsprint into valuable compost, quickly, and to provide worms to all your fishing enthusiast friends...

Acquire, or build, a small box or bin, approximately one foot high, two feet deep, and three feet wide. If you build your box, use exterior grad plywood and construction grade lumber. Don't use pressure-treated wood, whose chemicals can be toxic to the worms. Leave the inner surface unpainted, and drill at least twelve 1-inch holes in the bottom of the box for drainage. Place the box in a location convenient to your kitchen. Find a spot to protect against heat and cold extremes.

Prepare bedding using shredded newspaper (not colored sections), old computer paper, or cardboard. Place about 10 pounds in the bin, along with a gallon of garden soil and four gallons of water. (Bedding should be moist but not soggy.) Prepare this moistened bedding at least two days prior to adding worms.

Add two pounds of worms for each pound of garbage your kitchen produces daily. An average household of four produces about one pound of garbage per day. Spread the worms gently over the top of the prepared bedding.

Then feed the worms at least weekly ...they'll consume things like potato peels, lettuce, moldy bread, spaghetti, orange peels, tea or coffee grounds, corn shucks, or pea shells. Avoid large amounts of meat or bones. To feed them, push back the bedding, add the food, and then cover it so it is an inch or so beneath the bedding surface.

For more information, go to xxx on the web, or phone our office to be mailed our brochure xxxxx.

Scent in the Summer Air— Herbs for your Garden and Palate

by Marianne Brettell-Vaughn
Guest Columnist

Why plant an herb garden, you might ask? There are many reasons, and the Owens Valley is an excellent place to grow them! For me, my home wouldn't be



complete without these lovely, fragrant, and flavorful plants adding their own special touch to my garden. And filling a basket with fresh herbs to use for an evening meal is a beautiful thing! Nothing rivals the smell of fresh herbs simmering in a pot of tomato sauce, ready to pour over a fresh

plate of pasta! Yum!

Most of the common cooking herbs – rosemary, sage, oregano, and thyme to name a few – love the sun and its warmth, and thrive in our summer and early fall climate with its limited rain. Most of these perennials go dormant in the winter, bursting forth in spring with new fresh growth and flowers! Rosemary is especially treasured because it stays green all winter and then, in late winter, produces lovely little blue flowers, providing bees and early migrating butterflies and hummingbirds with food when nothing else is available. There are many annual herbs to choose from, such as basil, dill, and parsley, which can still be transplanted into pots for your summer garden.

Herbs are not fussy plants. They appreciate moderate watering and quick draining soil, as they don't like soggy roots. You don't need to make a rich garden bed for them either – mix in some compost and they'll be happy as can be! Add some mulch to protect their roots for the winter and they'll come to life year-after-year to grace your garden with their special textures and fragrance!

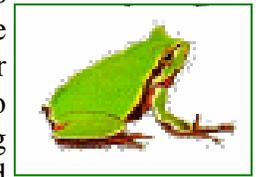
So find a place in your heart and garden for these lovely plants. They will reward you with years of beauty and flavor, asking only for a sunny place to live, moderate watering, and a bit of composted soil with mulch in the winter time. All your garden helpers will thank you too – bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds – and your backyard will thrive with all their activity! Herbs are a wonderful thing, so get out there and plant a few! Enjoy that fresh pasta dinner this summer! Bon Appetite!!

Song in the Summer Night — A Chorus of Treefrogs

Excerpted from an article by Marianne Brettell-Vaughn
Guest Columnist

Most of my garden beds are set up with drip irrigation, but I always leave some areas to be hand-watered. It's a really good way to stay aware of what's going on in the garden and with my plants. Best of all, it is a time to visit with the Treefrogs! They live here in my garden, hiding out by day in the moist darkness amongst the potted plants, and in the cracks and crevices created by all the stones that we've collected and turned into hardscape. Even the individual channels in the water wells I use to protect my tomato plants are utilized as private diving pools by these appealing frogs.

Pacific Treefrogs (or Chorus Frogs) can be a variety of colors; from pale gray or tan, to reddish bronze to a bright emerald or lime green. Their bellies are usually a pale cream color, and they always have a conspicuous black "mask", extending from their nostrils through the eye as far as the shoulder. The males are about an inch long; the larger females sometimes up to two inches long. Their legs are long and slender, and their toes end in round sticky pads that enable them to climb on plants and hunt for spiders and other insects at night.



These little frogs are found throughout most of the Pacific Coast states, including Inyo and Mono Counties. They are the most commonly heard frog on the west coast—and indeed, around the world! Their mating chorus is widely used in Hollywood films for a "tropical" background.

Eggs are laid in early spring in "ephemeral" wetland pools, away from deep permanent water where the eggs and tiny tadpoles would be eaten by fish and amphibians. The eggs metamorphose into tadpoles and then into froglets, which feed on small flying insects (including mosquitoes). The froglets in turn are eaten by birds, larger amphibians, reptiles and raccoons. Then the Treefrogs make their way to the woodlands, which is their natural habitat outside of the breeding season. Loss of wetlands threatens their populations, and as with all amphibians, they are especially sensitive to pesticide use and changes in water quality.

It's Fair Time in the Eastern Sierra!!

Now is the time to show off the results of your gardening efforts by entering them into the **Agriculture and Floriculture competitions** at the **Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair**. If you are multi-talented, enter items into **other departments** including: Poultry, Place Settings, Baked Foods, Preserved Foods, Decorated Foods, Clothing and Textiles, Quilting, Antiques, Fine Arts, Handicrafts, Photography, and Computers.

And don't forget the other great contests: Favorite Cookie; Coconut Cream Pie, Homemade Chocolate Ice Cream, Homebrewed Beer & Wine, Homemade Dips, and Barbecue.

TO ENTER, look-over all the class information in a **premium book**, which is available along with entry forms at our office, at the Fairgrounds, or in many businesses throughout the valley. Entry forms can be mailed or hand delivered **between August 6 to 18** to the **Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair, P.O. Box 608, Bishop, CA 93515**. Include fees as indicated below.

Exhibit Entry Fees, Adult Divisions:

First 5 entries:	\$1.00 per entry
Second 5 entries:	\$.75 per entry
11 entries or more:	\$.50 per entry

Example: If you entered 13 items you would pay \$10.25 using this formula: 5 @ 1.00 + 5 @ .75 + 3 @ .50.

Then, make sure to **DELIVER YOUR ENTRIES** according to the **receiving schedules** listed here:

Floriculture (Plants, Dry Silks):	Tuesday, August 28; 11:30 a.m.—7:00 p.m.
Agriculture ('Sturdy' Produce*):	Wednesday, August 29; 6:00 p.m.—8:00 p.m.
Floriculture (Fresh Items):	Thursday, August 30th; 7:30 a.m.—9:00 a.m.
Agriculture (All*):	Thursday, August 30th; 6:30 a.m.—9:00 a.m.

*You can wait and bring everything in Thursday if you want. However, it will speed things up for you if items that are not fragile like herbs and some vegetables are brought in Wednesday.

DELIVER Floriculture entries to the **Floriculture Building;
Agriculture entries to the **Douglas Robinson Building**.**

AGRICULTURE

<u>Division</u>	<u>Classes</u>
100. Fresh Herbs & Spices	10
101. Fruit & Pod Vegetables	
102. Leafy and Stem Vegetables	7
103. Root, Bulb and Tuber Vegetables	18
104. Vine Crops	18
105. Garden Goodies	
106. Deciduous Fruit	12
108. Eggs	5
109. Other Ag Products	4
110. Agricultural Gift Pack	1
111. Shorecrow (scarecrow with a beach twist)	2

FLORCULTURE

<u>Division</u>	<u>Classes</u>
119. Container Gardens	6
120. Potted Plants	11
121. Flowering Plants	11
122. Cacti & Succulents	13
125. Miniatures Arrangement —Beginner	3
126. Miniatures Arrangement —Amateur	3
127. Miniatures Arrangement —Professional	3
128. Petites Arrangement —Beginner	3
129. Petites Arrangement —Amateur	3
130. Petites Arrangement —Professional	3

(Continued on Page x.)

FLORICULTURE (cont.)

<u>Division</u>	<u>Classes</u>
131. Dry Arrangement —Beginner	3
132. Dry Arrangement —Amateur	3
133. Dry Arrangement —Professional	3
134. Silk Arrangement —Beginner	5
135. Silk Arrangement —Amateur	5
136. Silk Arrangement —Professional	5
137. Beginning Specialties	6
138. Amateur Specialties	6
139. Professional Specialties	6
140. Native American Designs	4
141. Fair Theme Arrangement —Beginner	3
142. Fair Theme Arrangement —Amateur	3
143. Fair Theme Arrangement —Professional	3
144. Professional Spotlight — Fair Theme	1
147. Fresh Design — Beginning	12
148. Fresh Design — Amateur	12
149. Fresh Design — Professional	12
150. Cut Flowers	51
151. Roses	23

When weeding, the best way to make sure you are removing a weed and not a valuable plant is to pull on it. If it comes out of the ground easily, it is a valuable plant.

~Author Unknown

Summer is a time of vigilance against the heat, weeds, and pests threatening our gardens. However, at the end of this season, make plans to enter the fruits (and vegetables) of your labor in the **Eastern Sierra Tri-County Fair** in August (see page xx for entry information). And, most importantly, make sure that you find time to sit back, take it all in, and enjoy the beauty of your gardens!

Sincerely,

Yvonne A. Wood
County Director
& Farm Advisor

