



University of California Cooperative Extension

Backyard Gardener

INYO AND MONO COUNTIES

MARCH 2007

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March and April in Inyo and Mono Gardens

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

Late winter can often be early spring in the high desert. This year, cold snaps prevented undertaking much planting in February, and now in **March** you can play catch-up. Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, cane berries, vines, bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes, as well as cool-season vegetables (beets, onions, cauliflower, and spinach). Cover seedlings and transplants with old sheets as needed to protect from night frosts, and with netting or wire screens to protect during days from birds. Also in **March**, finish major pruning of deciduous fruit and shade trees, grapes, and roses, and, while **March** weather is typically cool, do not neglect watering.



In mid to late **March**, enjoy the blooms of forsythia and tulips and other bulbs already planted in your yard, as well as the spring arrival of ladybird beetles. Unfortunately, aphids can also arrive and present problems to fruit trees and roses. Take care when treating for aphids that you do not harm your allies, ladybugs. Insure that fruit trees are fertilized by the end of **March**. In preparation to undertake major planting in **April** once the threat of frost is past, clean and organize garden tools, and make plans to attend our **Spring Gardening Workshop** on April 13 and 14 (see page 5).



Following the warmer weather usually common in **March**, expect to be surprised by frost and wind sometime during the first two weeks of **April**. 80° days can be followed by 24° nights. Properly irrigated plants tolerate frost and wind better than plants that are stressed. Keep new plantings watered and **be prepared** to cover them at a moment's notice. Also during late **March** and early **April**, put out feeders to welcome the arrival of migrating hummingbirds, and watch out for allergies due to the many flowering trees and shrubs (including lilacs).

Continue to sow beets, broccoli, lettuce, onions, and other cool season edibles. Near the end of **April**, sow warm-season beans, peppers, squash, and tomatoes. For your landscape, sow grasses such as bluegrass (*Poa pratensis*) or buffalo grass (*Buchloe dactyloides*). Local nurseries should have mixes specific to your area. And plant permanent, low-water-use trees and shrubs such as the Big Tree (or Sierra Redwood, *Sequoia gigantea*), California Sycamore (*Platanus racemosa*), the Strawberry Tree (*Arbutus unedo*), Toyon (*Heteromeles arbutifolia*), Western Redbud (*Cercus occidentalis*), or Mountain Mahogany (*Cercocarpus* species).

In late **April**, (once past frost and spring's heavy winds) check cold-sensitive plants for frost and wind damage; prune off dead branches. Replace badly damaged plants. As weather warms, deep-water plants to prevent wilting, promote deep rooting, and leach salts from the root zone. If you haven't done so, feed bulbs, annuals and perennials, shrubs, trees, vegetables, and vines. Lastly, sometime during the months of **March** and **April**, thatch (aerate) your lawn, and start fertilizing it.

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

In the low desert, you should be looking forward to warm weather starting in **March**. Plant bare-root trees, shrubs, cane berries, vines, bulbs, corms, tubers and rhizomes, as well as cool-season vegetables (beets, cauliflower, and spinach). Plant citrus and avocado trees, summer annuals (celosia and sweet alyssum), and sow seeds of warm-season edibles such as bush beans, melons, and sweet corn. If you have particularly salty soils, utilize containers for fruit trees, berries, and vegetables. Mow and water Bermuda grass lawns.

In **April**, continue to plant heat-loving annuals (cosmos, marigolds, petunias, verbena, and zinnias) and warm-season edibles (squash, cucumbers, melons, eggplants, tomatoes, and sweet potatoes). For your landscape, plant hybrid Bermuda lawns (when night temperatures > 65°) and permanent, low-water-use plants such as *Cassia*, desert willow (*Chilopsis linearis*), *Salvia*, and sumac (*Rhus*). As weather warms, deep-water plants to prevent wilting, promote deep rooting, and leach salts from the root zone. If you haven't done so, feed bulbs, annuals and perennials, shrubs, trees, lawns, vegetables, and vines. Make plans to attend our **Spring Gardening Workshop** on April 13 and 14 (see page 5).

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

With spring around the corner, **March** is the time to sow seeds in flats for early spring planting. Protect from cold weather in a sunny window, or in a greenhouse or coldframe if you have one. In preparation to plant as soon as the weather permits, clean and organize garden tools, and make plans to attend our **Spring Gardening Workshop** on April 13 and 14 (see page 5). Also, while **March** weather is typically cool, do not neglect watering. Properly irrigated plants tolerate frost and wind better than plants that are stressed. Sudden cold snaps can cause frost damage to plants just budding out. If this happens, wait until the plant shows signs of regrowth before cutting off frost damage.

After the official start of spring (March 21 this year), plant permanent landscaping plants (trees, shrubs, ground covers) in **April**, most especially bare-root berries, deciduous fruit and nut trees, flowering shrubs and vines (including wisteria), roses, grapes, rhubarb, and strawberries.

April is also a good month to start seedlings to transplant to flower and vegetable gardens. Use flats to grow seedlings of warm-season annuals, such as bachelor's buttons, marigolds, petunias, snapdragons, verbena, and alyssum, and of warm-season edibles, such as basil, eggplants, nasturtium flowers, peppers, and tomatoes. As soon as the soil is warm enough to be worked, sow seeds of beets, carrots, lettuce, onions, parsley, parsnips, peas, radishes, spinach, Swiss chard, and turnips, and plant seed potatoes. Set out seedlings of kale family plants (broccoli, Brussel sprouts, cabbage, cauliflower) and onions. However, be prepared to cover these row vegetables if temperatures drop!

Complete maintenance tasks such as fertilizing asparagus, perennials, rhubarb, roses, shrubs, firs and spruces. Apply dormant spray to fruit trees if they had problems last year with aphids, mites, or scale insects. Prune deciduous fruit and ornamental trees before new growth emerges. Prune flowering vines, grapes, and roses now, but wait until after bloom to prune forsythia and other spring-flowering shrubs.

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



British Columbia

And more ideas . . .

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.



Climate throughout Inyo and Mono Counties can challenge even longtime gardeners. Spring conditions vary widely across our counties, as can be seen in this table. Regions of the low desert in Inyo County often experience years with few or no frost days, while the mountain regions of Mono County can expect frosts anytime throughout the summer.

Probability of Spring Freeze (below 32.5° between January 1 and July 31)

	Earliest ¹	90% ²	80% ²	70% ²	60% ²	50% ²	40% ²	30% ²	20% ²	10% ²	Latest ³
High Desert (Owens Valley & lower elevations of western Inyo County): <i>Sunset</i>⁴ Zone 11											
Independence	Feb 11	March 14	March 21	March 27	April 2	April 9	April 14	April 18	April 25	April 28	May 25
Bishop	March 26	April 17	April 22	April 24	April 28	May 2	May 8	May 12	May 19	May 26	June 10
Low Desert (Death Valley & eastern Inyo County): <i>Sunset</i>⁴ Zone 13											
Furnace Creek	****	****	****	Jan 11	Jan 18	Jan 25	Jan 28	Feb 3	Feb 10	Feb 15	April 21
Wild Rose Ranger Station	Feb 17	March 16	March 30	April 7	April 11	April 17	April 25	April 26	April 30	May 6	May 8
Shoshone	****	****	****	****	****	****	****	****	****	March 13	April 30
Mountain Regions (Mono County & higher elevations of western Inyo County): <i>Sunset</i>⁴ Zones 1 & 2											
Bridgeport	June 7	June 17	June 25	July 1	July 4	July 8	July 11	July 19	July 25	July 29	July 30
Bodie	July 11	July 18	July 21	July 24	July 26	July 28	July 29	July 30	July 30	July 30	July 30

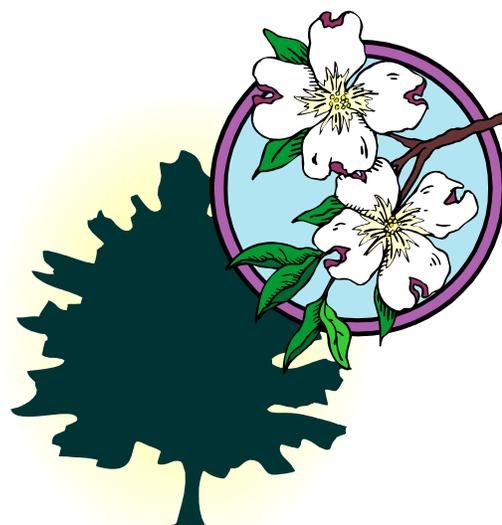
1. Earliest - Earliest date when a minimum temperature below 32.5° but above 28.5° occurred.
2. xx% - Percent probability that a minimum temperature below the threshold will occur on or after the given date.
3. Latest - Latest date when a minimum temperature below 32.5° but above 28.5° occurred.
[07/30 means the minimum temperature can go below 32.5° any day during January 1 to July 31.]
4. Based on Sunset Western Garden Book, by Lane Publishing and Company, Menlo Park, CA.

Information Available as Handouts in our office –

We have several handouts covering a variety of gardening topics thanks to past Farm Advisor Rick Delmas. Stop by to pick up copies of the following information sheets. And please stop to say hello to Yvonne Wood, the new County Director, when you come by!

Weekend Farmer Fact Sheets available are:

- Growing Tree Fruit at Home in the Eastern Sierra (#2-03)
- Lawn Watering Pointers for Inyo & Mono Counties (#1-04)
- Pruning Roses (#2-02)
- Pruning Trees (#1-02)
- Weed Management in Lawns (#1-05)





The attractive yellow-orange Bullock's Oriole (*Icterus bullockii*) can be lured to your garden when sources of insects, nectar, and berries, as well as tall canopy nesting sites, are provided.

Increasing Birds in your High Desert Garden

Attracting Creekside Species

In addition to the visual and therapeutic benefits that streams, creeks, and pools add to local landscaping, these features offer excellent opportunities to attract birds to your garden. The plant life that borders waterbodies (*riparian* vegetation) can be designed to provide food, shelter, and nesting sites for colorful migratory birds, as well as permanent residents.

Gardens designed to attract birds usually providing nesting habitats for: (1) understory or ground nesters, (2) midstory nesters, (3) canopy nesters, and/or (4) wood cavity nesters. Even if water does not run through your yard, planting these habitats will provide spots for birds utilizing nearby streams.

Understory or Ground Nesters

Dense undergrowth along creeks provides food and protection for differing types of birds, and a healthy understory is essential to most breeding riparian birds now matter at what canopy level they build their nests. Providing dense clumps of low-growing shrubs or tall forbs help provide save travels routes within the overall habitat structure. Include native plants whenever possible – climbing native plants can especially enhance habitat -, and don't mow during the breeding season. For areas that must be mowed, mow at least once before the breeding season and then keep vegetation less than 6 inches tall to discourage nesting. If you are lucky, you will be rewarded with visits by beautiful lazuli buntings and blue grosbeaks, and with serenades by throaty song sparrows.

Midstory Nesters

The majority of birds that nest in midstory vegetation build cup-shaped nests on branches of plants such as willows, elderberries, or locust (??) that grow in the shade of taller trees. This is the vegetation layer that will attract colorful hummingbirds, goldfinch, and warblers among other species. When possible, select tall-growing shrubs or low-growing trees native to your region. Include fruiting species such as elderberry or locust??? to provide food, and connect the midstory to the understory to provide safe travel routes for these birds.

Canopy Nesters

These birds build their nests on branches near or at tree tops. If creekside trees are newly planted, it can take five years for them to reach a suitable height for these birds. Clumps of trees, which provide forage and protection, are preferred by these birds. When planting, choose natives such as cottonwood, alder, willow (??) or aspen, arranged such that their canopy will connect other, lower layers of vegetation. Conduct any maintenance felling or pruning of trees in months when birds are not breeding.

Cavity Nesters

These birds use cavities to safely hide nests. The Wood Duck (*Aix sponsa*) is recognized by many as being the most beautiful North American duck. It can be lured to home gardens in our region by providing (1) large trees and snags with open cavities near creeks and ponds, and (2) available sources of invertebrates ('bugs'), seeds, and acorns. Other colorful and charming cavity nesters we can expect to attract here include woodpeckers, swallows, wrens, and western bluebirds.

Summarized by Yvonne Wood from: Pocket Guide to Creek Birds of California, (A project of California Partners in Flight and PRBO Conservation). This booklet is available for free from our local NRCS office, 270 See Vee Lane, Suite 6, Bishop, CA, or by phoning PRBO Conservation Science at (415) 868-0655.

Inyo & Mono Counties Gardening Workshop

We are pleased to announce that a GARDENING WORKSHOP will be held **Friday Evening April 13th from 6:30 to 9:30 pm** and **Saturday April 14th from 8:30 am to 2:00 pm** at the White Mountain Research Station, 3000 East Line St., Bishop, CA.*

Included in the presentation will be University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Environmental Horticulturists Pam Geisel (Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator), Michael Henry (Riverside County Turf Grass Expert), and

The cost of the workshop will be \$15 per person. We will have a lunch break, so feel free to bring a sack lunch to eat on the grounds of the White Mountain Research Station. Alternatively, we have made plans with Raymond's Deli of Bishop for box lunches at the price of an additional \$10.00 per person (includes choice of sandwich, two sides, and bottled water). If you want to purchase the lunch you need to fill out the form on page 7, and return along with payment to the UCCE Office **no later than Thursday, April 5th.**

Our lecture hall seats 80 people, so please RSVP to the UCCE Office in Bishop to be sure to have a chair saved for you. (Call (760) 873-7854 or in person at 207 W. South St, Bishop, CA). If you have questions regarding this program, please contact Yvonne Wood, County Director, at (760) 873-7855. See Pre-Registration form on page 7.

Registration begins at 6:00 pm Friday, April 13th.

TOPICS TO BE COVERED INCLUDE:

- The Home Orchard – Care and Training of Fruit Trees
 - Diagnosing Abiotic Landscape Plant Problems
 - Turf Management in an arid Climate
 - Growing Lavender in the Eastern Sierras
 - How to Get your Tomatoes in the Garden NOW
- Establishing Microclimates in your yard using big trees



Note: We will have this publication and others available for purchase at the workshop. Cost of the Master Gardener Handbook is \$32.33 including tax. Please make checks payable to: **UC Regents**

* Directions: From Main Street in Bishop (US 395) turn east on Line St. and drive for almost 4 miles (note that the street name changes to Poleta Rd.). Shortly after crossing the Owens River bridge the White Mountain Research Station will be visible on the south side of the road.

9th Annual Victor Valley Garden Party
March 31st
9:30 am to 3:00 pm
San Bernardino County Fairgrounds, Building 1, Victorville

The Victor Valley Garden Party focuses on gardening in the high desert climate, and includes information booths and displays from local businesses and organizations.

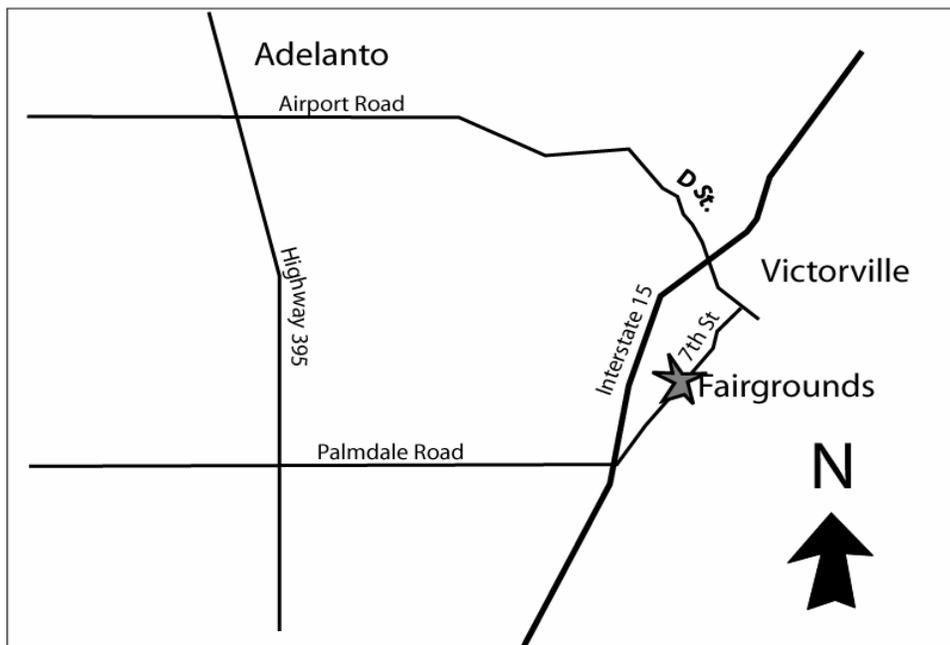
- Workshops on water-wise landscape design, grass mulching, drip irrigation, backyard composting, desert adaptive plants, and uses of artificial turf.
 - Demonstrations by local landscaping and gardening experts and local Master Composters.
 - Giveaways and door prizes including a drawing for a mulching mower
 - Performances by Eco-Magician Paul Cash and Shenanigans' Youth Theatre Group.
- Free face painting, balloons, crayons, and coloring books for the kids.

For more information visit WWW.URECYCLE.ORG or call Dana Armstrong at the City of Victorville Sanitation Department, 760-955-5086.

The Garden Party is being sponsored by the Mojave Desert and Mountain Recycling Authority, the City of Victorville, and the Town of Apple Valley. The Victor Valley Garden Party is part of the continuing effort by local communities to educate the public and implement programs to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill as required by State law AB 939. This law was passed in 1989 and requires all California municipalities to cut the amount of waste sent to landfill by 50% by the end of the year 2000 and beyond.

To get to the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds in Victorville, head south on 395 towards San Bernardino. Go about 210 miles from Bishop, then turn east onto PALMDALE RD / CA-18. After 4.5 miles PALMDALE RD becomes 7TH ST (Historic Route 66). Go 1.1 miles to end at the San Bernardino County Fairgrounds:

14800 7th St, Victorville, CA



Gardening Workshop Pre-Registration

Name _____ e-mail: _____

Address: _____ Phone No. _____

Please check one:

_____ Workshop only \$15.00

_____ Workshop and lunch \$25.00 (fill out sandwich request & return with this form)

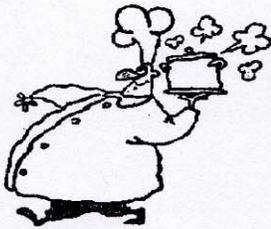
Please make checks payable to: *UC Regents*

Please return registration form and sandwich request form to the UCCE Office (Farm Advisor) at 207 W. South Street, Bishop, CA 93514 no later than Thursday, April 5, 2007.

Note: You may pre-register by phone at 760-873-7854 and pay at the door. If you are ordering a sandwich we need payment in advance. Thank you.

Space is limited. Walk-ins are subject to availability of seating.

Name _____



(circle one in each column) (except Veggies)

Pick TWO SIDES

Breads	Meats	Cheeses	Veggies	Sides
Shepherd(White)	Roasted turkey	Cheddar	Lettuce	Chips
Squaw(Wheat)	Black forest ham	Swiss	Tomato	COOKIE
Sour Dough	Roast Beef	Provolone	Onion	Potato Salad
Rye	Tuna	Pepper Jack	Dill Pickle	Macaroni Salad
	Pastrami	(Veggie)all cheese	Pepperonici	

Please note that we put all condiments on the side, like mayo, mustard, salt&pepper

(Pick as many ↑ veggies as you want)

WANTED!

Gardeners in Inyo and Mono counties willing to write occasional or bi-monthly columns for publication in the UCCE Backyard Gardener newsletter. Articles are usually 1000 words or less in length, and can address any gardening topic pertinent to our region. Call 760-873-7854 for details.

I love spring anywhere, but if I could choose I would always greet it in a garden. ~Ruth Stout

Wishing you all a beautiful and productive Spring, and looking forward to seeing you at our GARDENING WORKSHOP scheduled for the 2nd week-end of April!

Sincerely,

Yvonne A. Wood
County Director
& Farm Advisor



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION
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