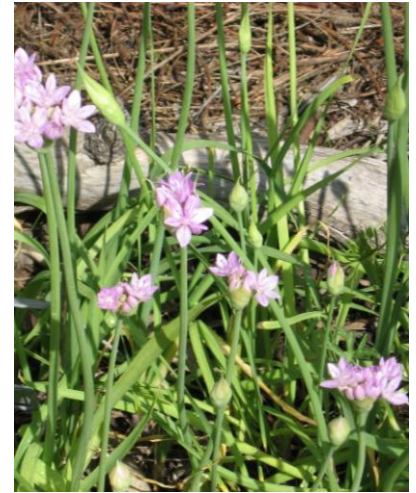


# The Digging Fork

A Davis Garden Newsletter

September - October 2010



Red bulbing onions are about ready to harvest and California native onion (*Allium unifolium*) with pink flowers.

|   | September  | October  |
|---|--|--|
| <b>Planting</b>                         | <p><u>Perennials:</u> everything except frost tender plants! Trees, shrubs, primroses, Iceland poppies, pansies, snapdragons, stock, etc.</p> <p><u>Cool season edibles:</u><br/><i>Good idea to shade transplants</i><br/>artichokes, broccoli, cabbage, cauliflower, leeks, elephant garlic, lettuce, bulbing onions strawberries, alpine strawberries, garlic</p>   | <p><u>Cool season bulbs</u></p> <p><u>Perennials:</u> everything except frost tender plants- (see September)</p> <p><u>Cool season edibles:</u><br/>artichokes, broccoli, bulbing onions, cabbage, garlic, shallots, leeks, elephant garlic, lettuce, strawberries, alpine strawberries, cilantro, Swiss chard</p>         |
| <b>Seeding directly into the garden</b> | <p><u>Cool season annuals</u><br/><i>Ammi majus</i>, larkspur, cornflower, annual clary sage, red flowering flax, breadseed poppies, sweet peas, forget-me-nots, etc.</p> <p><u>Cool season edibles:</u><br/><i>Good idea to shade seedlings</i><br/>arugula, beets, broccoli, carrots, Florence fennel, kale, leeks, lettuce, dill, green and bulbing onions, parsnip, peas, radish, Swiss chard, turnips</p> | <p><u>Cool season annuals</u><br/>see September, also CA wildflowers.</p> <p><u>Cool season edibles:</u><br/>arugula, broccoli, beets, carrots, cauliflower, fava beans, leeks, lettuce, miner's lettuce, green onions, parsnip, peas, radish, spinach, dill Swiss chard, turnips, cilantro</p>                            |
| <b>Fertilize</b>                        | <p><u>Lawns and roses</u> as needed</p> <p>Fertilizing in <i>early</i> September will help plants grow through the winter.</p>   | <p><u>Cool season lawns</u> as needed</p> <p>If you haven't already, now is a good time to add <u>soil sulfur</u> to citrus and other acid loving plants and those showing iron deficiencies.<br/>(will lower the pH of soil making iron more available to plants. Mix soil sulfur with top 6" of soil and water well)</p> |
| <b>Pest &amp; Disease Control</b>       | <p><u>Tomato hornworms</u> – pick off<br/><u>Snails, slugs and earwigs</u> damage –use baits or traps<br/><u>Aphids and whiteflies</u> –can spray off with water</p>   | See September.   |
| <b>Tasks</b>                            | <p>Garden clean-up and mulching begins -- find space for new plants</p> <p>Weed control continues<br/>Divide hardy perennials</p> <p>Order perennial plants for fall planting. Order hardy annual seeds for direct seeding.</p> <p>Fall planting begins!!!</p>   | <p>Continue garden clean-up and mulching, finding space for new plants</p> <p>Weed control continues</p> <p>Divide hardy perennials</p> <p>Planting continues!<br/>Renovate lawn</p>   |
| <b>Water</b>                            | <p>Continue watering as needed –especially new plantings.<br/>About mid September, change automatic timers to water less often.</p>  | <p>Continue watering as needed –especially new plantings.</p>  |

## Alliums -- the Onion Family

There are *Alliums* of all types -- both ornamental and edible. Many wonderful flower garden *Alliums* are easy to grow in our area. *Allium cowanii* (pictured below) is a favorite of Patricia's and is one of the first

bulbs to bloom in the spring. It is a great cut flower that is used in the floral industry because it doesn't have a noticeable onion fragrance. This 1923 heirloom is easy to grow and multiplies reliably in the garden. The **three-cornered leek or onion weed** (*Allium triquetrum*) is from the western Mediterranean and has somewhat similar white flowers to *Allium cowanii* but is **very invasive** in our area. Those who grow it have found it very difficult to control. It is easy to identify by the triangular stems of the flower stalk. The **single-leaf onion** (*Allium unifolium*) is a California native that is drought tolerant and will be happy in an area with little summer water but will also grow in the garden with regular water. The pink flowers brighten the garden in April. The summer flowering *Allium subhirstum* is also called **hairy garlic**. It is easy to grow, but will self-sow if you let the white flowers go to seed. The young, tender leaves are tasty and have a mild onion/garlic flavor. All these *Alliums* should be planted in the fall.



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It is so very easy to grow *Alliums* for kitchen use! They can be planted in the vegetable garden or tucked in among the flowers. Generally, the bulbs and leaves of all *Alliums* are edible, but they may not taste very good.

The weather is getting cooler. By October, plant water needs are about half of what they were in June and July. Set automatic timers to water less!

The edible *Alliums* that we know and love are generally divided into three groups, depending on how they are propagated:

**From vegetative divisions:** garlic, elephant garlic, multiplier/potato onions and shallots

**From seed:** garlic chives, chives, bulbing onions, leeks and green onions/scallions

**From bulbils:** Egyptian walking onions and other top-setting onions

Everyone should have **garlic** (*Allium sativum*) planted in their garden. There are softneck types for braiding and



hardneck types and they are planted from September to early January. Bulbs are divided into cloves and each clove planted right away with the papery covering and the tip up, 4-6 inches apart and 2" deep. During the winter and spring, the small

plants can be harvested and used like a green onion but will have a mild garlic flavor. Around July when foliage falls on softnecks and the bottom leaves dry on hardnecks, it is time to stop watering the plants. Harvest a couple weeks later and then cure in a cool place out of the sun. Garlic becomes stronger in flavor as it ages. Now is the time to order some of the more unique varieties of garlic like the hardneck Rocambole (*Allium sativum* var. *ophioscorodon*) that is easy to peel! Gophers love to eat garlic -- wire cages will protect the bulbs.

**Elephant garlic** (*Allium ampeloprasum*) is not a garlic at all. It is a leek that looks like a garlic but is much bigger in size and milder in flavor. As the plant matures a cluster of cloves will form around a flower stalk. This flower stalk should be cut in order to send energy into the clove production and not flowers. If there is no flower stalk, then there is no cluster of cloves.

Instead, only a single, giant clove is produced! Like garlic, the clove is divided and planted in fall but spaced 8-10" apart. After harvest the elephant garlic needs to cure for a month before eating because it is bitter. Curing will make the taste milder.



**Multiplier or potato onions** (*Allium cepa*) are perennial and will continue to produce small clusters of onion bulbs for many years. When planted 6-10" apart in fall, a cluster of about a dozen bulbs will grow at the base of the plant. Harvest in July/August and replant some of the harvest the next fall. **Shallots** (*Allium cepa* var. *aggregatum*) are a type of multiplier onion that is enjoyed for the mild and delicate flavor. Gray shallots reportedly have the best flavor but don't keep as well. There are many kinds of shallots with the yellow and red ones being



Patricia's gray shallot harvest for this year. These were originally planted in early January 2008 and some of the harvest has been saved and replanted each fall.

better keepers. There is no reason to be paying for expensive shallots when they are easy to grow in poor, even dry soil. They are propagated from divisions of the bulb clusters. When planted, big shallot bulbs make a cluster of 5-12 little shallots and little shallot bulbs grow into big ones. Individual bulbs are planted in October to early January, 6-8" apart with the tips about at the soil surface or a bit above. Harvest in the early summer when the tops die. An old adage says: "Plant on the shortest day, lift on the longest day". They seem to store pretty well if the clusters are kept intact and put in a paper or net bag in a cool, dark place. Save some shallots to plant a few months later in the fall.

A couple of *Alliums* are often found in the herb garden but are at home in the flower garden as well. **Chives** (*Allium schoenoprasum*) are easy to grow from seed, a purchased plant or division from a neighbor. They can be planted anytime of the year. Harvest the leaves by cutting them close to the ground. This perennial rhizome, with a mild onion flavor, is dormant in the winter. The lavender colored flowers are pretty and edible --and attractive to bees. The leaves are generally cut to the ground after flowering and new leaves will emerge.



**Garlic chives or Chinese leeks** (*Allium tuberosum*) are grown from rhizomes that grow into a sizable clump. The white flowers also produce seeds that self-sow. Leaves have a sweet and mild garlic flavor--the young leaves are best. The flowers smell like violets and are tasty. Seeds can be planted most anytime or a clump divided.

**Green onions**, sometimes also called **scallions**, **Japanese bunching** or **Welch onions** (*Allium fistulosum*) never form bulbs. These are perennial onions that can easily be grown from seed and then they continue to multiply, providing a continuous supply year after year. The leaves are hollow. Direct seed in the garden in August to December and/or February to March. Harvest by carefully digging what you need. To plant a new area, just divide and deeply plant a few onions. These onions

die back in the winter, like chives. They flower in spring and produce seeds, but continue to grow and multiply.

**Leeks** (*Allium ampeloprasum* var. *porrum*) are seeded in March and/or August to October. This biennial is grown for its mild and distinctive flavor. Leeks take a long time to grow (100-150 days from seed) but no bulb forms. Start them from seed and then dig, separate and transplant them when they are 8-12 inches tall. Transplants are often available in 6-paks as well. Transplant them deeply or plant in a 6" deep trench so the soil can be mounded around the plants to produce nice white stems. Leeks are harvested when they are about an inch in diameter. The flowers are also edible.

**Bulbing onions** (*Allium cepa*) are probably the most frustrating and tricky *Allium* to grow until you understand what causes them to either form bulbs or bolt (flower in the spring). The onion plants grow, producing leaves and if all goes well, each leaf will swell at the base and form a ring in the onion bulb. However,



bulbing is triggered by the number of daylight hours they need to begin the bulbing process. If a line is drawn from San Francisco to Washington DC, those living above would plant long day onions (needing 14-16 hours) and those below would plant short day onions (needing only 10-12 hours). Davis is located just about on the line – so which do we plant? Lucky for us there are also intermediate day onions (needing 12-14 hours) that do best in our area. These start to bulb about the end of March.

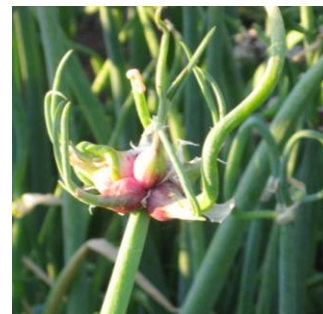
Temperature affects flowering. Once plants reach a critical size, which seems to be about 1/4" in diameter, a temperature of 40-50 °F will cause the plants to flower the next spring. If an onion plant flowers it is not putting energy into bulbing. So, we must plant the onions late enough so the plant is not too big to cause flowering when the cold temperatures set in. This is the tricky part. The timing of planting depends on whether planting seeds, transplants or sets. The easiest way to grow bulbing onions is to plant bare-root transplants that are for sale locally in about November. Don't pick out the biggest ones! Instead buy the smallest and plant them 4-6" apart. Sometimes transplants are available in 6-paks starting in September. Consider planting the Walla Walla Sweet that takes 300 days from seed (usually started in August) to harvest. Onion plants can also be started from seed by starting them in trays and about 2 months later transplanting in the garden. Or direct seed into the garden and eat some green onions as you thin.

Onion sets usually don't form bulbs in our area and should only be planted for producing green onions. Most sets are not identified by a variety but only as red, yellow or white. Patricia did a test last fall and planted red onion "transplants" and red onion "sets" on the same day in mid November. The experiment was repeated with

white and yellow onions as well. ***In all cases the onion sets bolted in the spring.*** The onion sets should have been harvested during the winter to use as green onions. All the transplants ***did bulb up!!***

In the summer, the tops of the bulbing onions will start to fall over. This is when you should stop watering them for a few weeks -- this is another tricky part unless you have thought about this when planting. Try planting them so they are at the end of a dripline that can be kinked to stop water to the onions only. Onions are harvested and cured in the shade with tops attached. Store them cool and dry! Unfortunately, the onion varieties that grow well in Davis don't store very well.

**Top-setting onions, also called tree onions** (*Allium cepa*) are fun to grow -- Egyptian walking onions being a favorite. Propagation of this hardy onion is by division of the bulbs or by planting the bulbils that form at the top of a stalk where you would expect flowers. To control where the new crop is started, the bulbils are divided and planted about 4" apart and just under the soil surface. If this is not done, then eventually the bulbils will start to sprout and get heavy, falling to the ground they take root. This is how they "walk" to a new location of their choice. The bulbils, small bulbs and emerging greens can all be eaten.



Shallots on left, Egyptian walking onions on right

In general, Alliums have shallow roots, so weeds should be kept at a minimum since they will compete for nutrients and water. Seeds stored for over a year don't germinate very well.

**John Scheepers, Inc** [www.johnscheepers.com](http://www.johnscheepers.com) 860-567-0838

*Allium cowanii* and *Allium unifolium*

**Redwood Barn Nursery** [www.redwoodbarn.com](http://www.redwoodbarn.com) 758-2276

6-paks and bare-root onion transplants

**Youngmark** Woodland 666-1414

6-paks and bare-root onion transplants

**Peaceful Valley Farm and Garden Supply** 1-888-784-1722

<http://groworganic.com> garlic, shallots and onions

**Territorial Seed Company** [www.territorialseed.com](http://www.territorialseed.com)

800-626-0866 shallots, multiplier and top-setting onions

Whew!!! Who would have thought there were so many easy to grow *Alliums* that we can enjoy in the kitchen and garden.



Both these shrubs grew happily for several years then all of a sudden died. Maybe the roots will give us a clue as to why.

## Roots

Many gardeners plant trees and shrubs that seem to thrive at first and then just die a few years later for no apparent reason. The reason may be the hidden roots. Often *kinked*, *circling* or *girdling roots* won't kill the plant right away. The real frustration is all the years invested in growing a plant that will have to be replaced.



These problems generally start at the nurseries where the trees and shrubs are grown. A plant in a small pot may have roots that are growing in a circle or square because they ran out of room in the pot. The roots might also be kinked as well, like in the above photo. Kinked roots are those that bend back on themselves. This may have been caused when a root was forced into a pot when transplanting. When large roots are kinked, they inhibit nutrients and water.

When these plants with problem roots are transplanted to a larger pot, the roots often continue to grow in the same pattern because circling roots generally don't grow many new roots on the *outside* of the circle or square. Since these roots are often hidden in the larger pot, we may not even be aware of the problem until much later. Plants that are not repotted properly or on time, meaning they were left in the pot for too long, will later cause us problems in our garden!



Sometimes it is possible to detect circling roots hidden inside a pot by pulling up gently on the trunk. If the trunk pulls up easily, like a spring, it is best to investigate further. Another test is to bend the trunk over gently. A good root system will hold the trunk securely. If instead, the root ball moves around in the soil, the roots might be

circling. Since the worst problems are near the trunk and in the top layer of soil, it is perfectly acceptable to dig around in the pot close to the trunk and a few inches deep to help determine if there are any root defects.

Once a tree or bush is planted, often the first sign of circling roots is when it starts to lean or tip over (see photos below). Since the roots aren't pushing outward into the soil, they don't provide much stability, so a good wind will blow the plant over. Often the roots become exposed above the ground and it is easy to see the root problems. If a plant continues to grow with circling roots, these roots may start to slow growth and eventually girdle or strangle the trunk -- killing the tree or shrub years later. Circling roots that are near the soil surface are the most dangerous and if detected, the tree or shrub should not be planted.



Sometimes a plant in a pot is very **root-bound**, but there are no large circling roots. These roots should be cut before planting by making 4 or 5 slices with a sharp blade from the top of the root ball to the bottom or you can gently tease the roots apart.

Here is a wonderful power point on selecting quality trees!!! There are also numerous tips on planting and lots of pictures. Slide #30 is the start of the root defects information.

[http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/powerpoints/selecting\\_quality.ppt](http://hort.ufl.edu/woody/powerpoints/selecting_quality.ppt)

**Garden Internship Available** 3 month internship in Patricia's garden. Days and hours to be negotiated. Require a minimum of 10 hours per month. Payment is in cut flowers, free plants, advice and a Gardening Coach consultation for your garden. This internship is very flexible and can be customized to meet your needs and interests. What is important is that you have a genuine interest in learning more about plants and gardening. You can specialize in edibles, cut flowers, irrigation, low water or California native or shade or tropical plants..... References available from previous/current interns.

## More Gardening Tips

**How to identify a bee.** A great lesson!

[http://www.greatsunflower.org/files/images/How\\_to\\_tell\\_a\\_Bee.pdf?utm\\_source=MadMimi&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_content=The+Buzz%3A+Summer+Pollinator+Party&utm\\_campaign=The+Buzz%3A+Summer+Pollinator+Party&utm\\_term=How%2Bto%2Btell%2Ba%2BBee](http://www.greatsunflower.org/files/images/How_to_tell_a_Bee.pdf?utm_source=MadMimi&utm_medium=email&utm_content=The+Buzz%3A+Summer+Pollinator+Party&utm_campaign=The+Buzz%3A+Summer+Pollinator+Party&utm_term=How%2Bto%2Btell%2Ba%2BBee)

**The Yolo Gardener** – a quarterly publication by the Yolo County Master Gardeners

[https://ucanr.org/mg/users/documents/6215The\\_Yolo\\_Gardener24881.pdf](https://ucanr.org/mg/users/documents/6215The_Yolo_Gardener24881.pdf)

## Plant sales

Why so many sales this time of year? Because it is the best time to plant most everything, especially natives. The winter rains will help the plants become established. The only plants that are best planted in spring are those that are frost sensitive, like citrus....

### **UCD Arboretum**

Saturday, September 25 Member Sale 9-11 a.m.  
(Join at the door!) Public Sale 11 a.m.-1 p.m.

Saturday, October 16 Public sale 9 a.m.-1 p.m.  
Lots of great guided tours and workshops coming up!!  
Email below for a monthly reminder of events sent to you  
For information 752-4880 [www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu](http://www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu)

### **Three Palms Nursery Fall Plant Sale**

September Sale (all month) 5 1-gal size plants for \$20  
Fall Sale October 2-3 and 9-10 9am to 5pm 20% off  
Russell Blvd and Rd. 95A, 2.8 mi. west of Rd. 98  
Information [www.3palmsnursery.com](http://www.3palmsnursery.com) 756-8355

### **Lemuria Nursery Sale**

September 7 to October 31 20% off all plants in stock  
7820 Serpa Lane, Dixon (707) 678-4481  
Look for this nursery on facebook.

### **California Native Plant Society Sale & Celebration**

Saturday & Sunday, September 25 & 26 10 am to 2 pm  
McKinley Garden and Arts Center, Sacramento  
For information <http://www.sacvalleycnps.org/>

### **Cornflower Farms Nursery Days**

October 16<sup>th</sup> and November 13<sup>th</sup> 7:30 am to 2 pm  
9811 Sheldon Rd. Elk Grove  
Info (916) 689-1015 ext. 10 [www.cornflowerfarms.com](http://www.cornflowerfarms.com)

### **Plant Sales at The Gifted Gardener**

Saturday/Sunday September 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 10am – 4pm  
Saturday/Sunday October 16<sup>rd</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> 10am – 4pm  
18<sup>th</sup> and J Streets, Sacramento. Sales benefit local charities  
Information [GardenNotes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:GardenNotes@sbcglobal.net) (916) 923-3745



In October the climbing rose 'Dortmond' often has flowers and rosehips on the same plant.

## Local classes, events & workshops

### **Growing a Kitchen Garden – Davis Adult School**

Mondays, September 27 to November 1, 6:30 – 8:30 pm  
Plus two Garden Visits to reinforce classroom learning:  
Sundays, October 10 and 24, 12-3 pm  
Taught by Patricia Carpenter and Lyn Taylor \$90  
Information [www.djUSD.k12.ca.us/AdultSchool](http://www.djUSD.k12.ca.us/AdultSchool) 757-5380

### **Master Gardener Educational Workshops**

All workshops are free. For more information 666-8143 or  
[http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu/Gardening\\_and\\_Master\\_Gardening/](http://ceyolo.ucdavis.edu/Gardening_and_Master_Gardening/)

### **Honey Bee Haven at UC Davis—Opening celebration**

Saturday, September 11, 10 am to 2 pm  
Harry H. Laidlaw Jr. Honey Bee Research Facility  
<http://beebiology.ucdavis.edu/HAVEN/havenopening.html>

### **City of Davis Worm and Garden Composting**

After taking the Davis Compost Correspondence Class,  
Get a GeoBin™ Composter, for only \$10 757-5686  
<http://cityofdavis.org/pw/recycle/backyardcompost.cfm>

### **Garden Exploration Workshop – Patricia's Garden**

Saturday, October 9 9 am to 12 noon  
Limited to 15 participants. \$25 per person/ \$40 for two  
Instructors: Patricia Carpenter and Melissa Kelly  
You will leave with handouts, some seeds and plants.  
Reservations required [TheDiggingFork@gmail.com](mailto:TheDiggingFork@gmail.com)  
These workshops will be held in Patricia's garden periodically during the year. Guided tour and lots of time for exploration and questions.

- see what is blooming in the fall and discover new plants
- learn about garden cleanup and fall planting, including bulbs
- ask questions about healthy soil, irrigation, composting...
- learn about cool season vegetables and when to plant
- discover how easy it is to divide plants
- find out sources for bulbs, seeds and other plants you like

### **Davis Central Park Gardens Workshops**

#### Fall Open House and Sculpture Unveiling

Saturday, October 30 9 am to noon

Garden Work Days This is a great way to learn more about plants and garden cleanup as you work alongside Master Gardeners and other garden experts.

Wednesday, September 15 - 5 pm to 7 pm

Saturday, October 2 - 9 am to 11 am

Saturday, October 16 - 9 am to 11 am

Free, more information <http://www.centralparkgardens.org>

### **Davis Flower Arrangers**

Courtney Williams Kett, co-owner and designer, Dixon

Florist Store. Wednesday, October 2 7 pm

Janet Martinez -- Thanksgiving arrangements for your home Wednesday, November 3 7 pm

Eleanor Roosevelt Center, 675 Cantrill, Davis  
For information Tina 662-9035 or Phyllis 758-7814

### **Ceanothus California Field Botanists Association**

Next Davis meeting September 18th (9:00am-12:00pm)

Learn to key plants. Group meets about once

a month at UC Davis Center for Plant Diversity

Information [www.ceanothusfieldbotanist.blogspot.com](http://www.ceanothusfieldbotanist.blogspot.com)

Dahlias are great for fall color. They are planted in late spring. In Davis, with our mild winter climate, they don't need to be dug up in the fall and replanted each spring.



#### **Newsletter created by:**

Patricia Carpenter -- Gardening Coach (Design and Education), with 35 years of Davis gardening experience

See <http://TheDiggingFork.wordpress.com/> for the current and archived issues. To be added to the subscription list or to unsubscribe, contact us at: [TheDiggingFork@gmail.com](mailto:TheDiggingFork@gmail.com)