

# The Digging Fork

A Davis Garden Newsletter

March - April 2010



Snails hide in plants and in the soil

## Snailology 101

It is the time of year when snails and slugs really start to frustrate gardeners! They are especially fond of eating young succulent leaves like newly planted lettuce and just emerging dahlias, *Brugmansia*, hosta and coneflowers. Ripening fruit like strawberries, citrus and melons that touch the ground are also favorites. Many gardeners plant seeds but never see any sprouts. Most likely they didn't fail to sprout, it is just that the snails and slugs often eat everything before the gardener ever sees them!

Snails and slugs hide out when it is sunny and warm, coming out at dusk and on foggy and cloudy days to feed. Where do they hide? They crawl to the under-side of leaves, bury into the moist soil and tuck in narrow spaces in plants. Disappearing young plants, leaves with irregular smooth edged holes, munched daffodil blooms and slime trails are all signs of a snail and/or slug problem. A combination of handpicking, trapping and baiting can greatly lessen the damage.

**Eliminate hiding places.** Gardening books always say that the first line of defense is to eliminate the areas they hide. Well, this is just about impossible. They seem to hide everywhere.

**Trap and remove.** Since snails and slugs like to hide in moist dark places, we can use this to our advantage to help trap them. Try an inverted clay flower pot, tilted so they can get under it. A great trap is a board, maybe a foot square, with a couple 1" x 1" strips attached along two opposite sides. This allows snails and slugs to easily crawl underneath during the day. Regularly pull or scrape off the snails and slugs to dispose of them. Inverted half melon rinds are reported to be very effective.

**Handpicking.** The trick to handpicking is to get up very early in the morning and to know where the snails and slugs might be found. Look on leaves that are strap-like as these make a perfect crawling runway and also, where the leaves meet the ground is a perfect daytime hideout. Iris, agapanthus and, this time of

	March	April
<b>Planting</b>	<p>Cool season vegetables: seed potatoes</p> <p><u>Half-hardy annuals</u> <u>Perennials</u> almost everything (mid March for citrus trees and frost tender plants) <u>Warm season bulbs</u></p>	<p>Warm season vegetables: <i>best to wait until mid April to early May to plant:</i> basil, eggplant, peppers, tomatillo, tomato</p> <p><u>Perennials:</u> most <u>Warm season bulbs</u> <u>Warm season annuals</u></p>
<b>Seeding directly into the garden</b>	<p>Cool season vegetables: beets, carrots, leeks, Swiss chard, parsnips, green onions, radishes</p> <p><u>Warm season vegetables:</u> Beans (dry, snap)</p> <p><u>Half-hardy annuals</u></p>	<p>Warm season vegetables <i>best to wait until mid April to plant most seeds:</i> beans (dry, snap, lima), corn (and popcorn), cucumber, gourds, okra, melons, peanuts, summer and winter squash, soybeans, watermelon Warm season annuals</p>
<b>Fertilize</b>	<p><u>Citrus</u> with citrus fertilizer. (if not fertilized in Feb.) <u>Roses, flowers and lawns</u> when growth starts <u>Mature deciduous fruit trees</u> fertilize with 1<sup>st</sup> irrigation</p>	
<b>Pest &amp; Disease Control</b>	<p><u>Snail, slugs and earwig</u> damage –use baits or traps. <u>Aphids.</u> Can spray off with water and watch for lady beetle &amp; parasitic wasps <u>Scale.</u> Control by keeping ants under control and rubbing off scale insect</p>	<p><u>Snail, slugs and earwig</u> damage –use baits or traps, handpicking works too <u>Aphids.</u> Can spray off with water and watch for lady beetles &amp; parasitic wasps</p>
<b>Tasks</b>	<p>Prepare beds for planting – <i>don't dig soils that are too wet. A handful of soil should crumble</i> Divide &amp; replant perennials Prune evergreen shrubs when new growth appears Some tender perennials will be ready to prune – watch for new growth Weed control continues Soil sulfur – dig in around iron deficient plants <u>Order warm season bulbs for spring planting</u> Paint trunk of young trees with white latex interior paint mixed with water to protect from sunburn.</p>	<p>Prepare beds for planting. (<i>see note in March</i>) Weed control continues Prune deciduous shrubs and vines <i>after they flower.</i> Clean up the vegetable and flower beds to make room for warm season plants. More tender perennials will be ready to prune – watch for new growth Thin fruit of fruit trees, except cherries</p>
<b>Water</b>	<p>May need to start watering. Did you check sprinklers and drip systems?</p>	<p>Water as needed.</p>



Snails and slugs and their damage to leaves.

year, daffodil leaves seem to always have plenty of snails. After awhile you notice which plants are



always infested - it is the Sedum 'Autumn Joy' in Patricia's garden. If you prefer not to use your fingers, a picker-upper works great, is easier to reach in the beds and will pull off snails as small as 1/4 inch.

Slippery slugs are trickier, however. With the aid of a headlight or flashlight, dusk and during the dark of night are also great times for handpicking. Pickings are greater the day after it rains or after the garden is irrigated with sprinklers.

**Bait.** Finally, we have a bait that is friendly to the environment, pets and children! When Iron Phosphate is eaten by snails and slugs, they will stop eating your plants. They then crawl away and eventually die from starvation. So, you seldom see dead snails until you clean up the garden and find empty shells under plants. It is important to keep checking the plants for damage. Sluggo was about the only brand available for awhile but now there are several other brands of Iron Phosphate and they are generally cheaper. Baits should be applied when the snails and slugs are active, usually when the ground is moist after irrigation or rain. Apply it very sparingly so you can monitor if it is being eaten. A pile of bait might be eaten by a dog or other animal and they can get sick if they eat a lot.

**Plant what they don't like to eat.** There are plants that snails and slugs don't like. Try planting hellebores, California poppies, fuchsias, impatiens, begonias, yarrow and red hot poker to name a few.

Check out the Pest Notes Publication #7427 available at UCD Integrated Pest Management website.

<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PDF/PESTNOTES/index.html> There is a great drawing of a board trap.



Snail slime across the path

## Local sales, events & workshops

### UCD Arboretum

Spring Nursery Preview & Tour (no sales) March 7, 2 pm  
Sales Saturdays, 9am to 1 pm. Talks and help!

March 13 Member Appreciation Sale -can join at door  
April 10 Great Plants for Water-wise Gardens  
April 24 Perfect Plants for Pots  
May 15 End of Season Clearance

Lots of great guided tours and workshops coming up!!

Call for a monthly reminder of events emailed to you

For information 752-4880

<http://www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu/calendar.aspx>

### Garden Exploration Workshop – Patricia's Garden

Sunday, April 18 12 noon to 3 pm

Instructors: Patricia Carpenter and Melissa Kelly

\$25 per person or \$40 for two people (gardening friends, spouses, family....) Includes handouts, bouquet & plants.

Guided tour of the spring garden, planting warm season vegetables, bulbs, tropicals and other plants, composting. Lots of time for exploration and questions.

Reservations required [TheDiggingFork@gmail.com](mailto:TheDiggingFork@gmail.com)

### Flowers: Near and Far -- Photos by Ray Borton

On display through March 10

International House Lounge on Russell Blvd.

Monday through Friday 9am to 4 pm

Photos below by Ray Borton. Information 530-756-0632



### Davis Central Park Gardens Workshops

Sustainable Gardening March 6 9:30 am

Tool Care and Sharpening March 6 11 am

Cover Crops for Your Garden. Easy Green Manure

Methods April 10 9:30 am

Compost and Vermiculture April 10 11 am

Summer Pruning and Fruit Bush Culture

May 8 9:30 am

Reducing Water Usage. The Whys and Hows of Drip

Irrigation May 8 11 am

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

### Water Conservation for Home & Garden

Wednesday March 31 5 to 7:30 pm Free.

Water-wise choices including CA natives and drought tolerant plants.

City of Woodland and Yolo County Resource Conservation District. Held in Woodland Community Center

Information 662-2037 [www.yolorcd.org](http://www.yolorcd.org)

## Master Gardener Workshops -- Woodland

### Spring Gardening Workshops & Plant Sale March 27

- 9:00 am Building and Maintaining Healthy Soil
- 9:35 am Vegetable Gardening Basics
- 10:10 am Tomato Growing Tips
- 10:45 am Water-wise Gardening Practices,
- 11:20 am Plant Propagation.

### Backyard and Worm Composting

Saturday, April 17 10 am to 12 noon

Workshops are free and held at Woodland Community College Horticultural Center. For more information 666-8143

## Master Gardener Workshops – West Sacramento

Vegetable and Herb Gardening March 13 9 – 11 am

Nutrition March 20 12 noon to 1:30 pm

Water, irrigation and composting April 3 9 – 11 am

Fruit Trees April 17 9 – 11 am

Workshops are free and held at Bryte Park, corner of Todhunter and Carrie Streets. For more information 666-8143

## City of Davis Worm and Garden Composting

Fridays, March 5 or March 12 or March 19 3 to 4 pm

Davis Public works Dept. Corp Yard, 1717 Fifth St.

Information 757-5686 <http://cityofdavis.org/pw/compost/>

## UCD Project Compost & Worm Free Workshop

Worm Composting Saturday, April 24 11 am -1 pm

Free worm bin and worms! RSVP [compost@yahoo.com](mailto:compost@yahoo.com)

Backyard Composting Saturday, May 22, 11am – 1 pm

For information contact **Project Compost** 754-8227

or <http://projectcompost.ucdavis.edu/>

## The California Center for Urban Horticulture-UCD

### **Your Sustainable Backyard Workshops**

Rose Day May 1 and 2 Presentations, tours and sale

Information <http://ccuh.ucdavis.edu/public> 530-752-6642

## Picnic Day at UCD

Saturday, April 17 Visit the many horticultural displays!

Botanical Conservatory Open House and Center for

Plant Diversity wildflower display

## Pence Gallery Garden Tour

Sunday, May 2 12 noon to 5 pm

Featuring gardens of the Willowbank and Oakshade neighborhoods in South Davis

Information [www.pencegallery.org](http://www.pencegallery.org)



Wildflowers in Patricia's garden in late April

**I live in the garden; I just sleep  
in the house. – Jim Long**

## Ceanothus California Field Botanists Association

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)

## Three Palms Nursery

All of the new plantings (planted last Sept. & Oct.) will sell for \$4.40 per gal. through March 14th.

## Plant Sales at The Gifted Gardener

March 13, 14, 27, 28 and April 10, 11, 24, 25

10 am to 4 pm

18<sup>th</sup> and J Streets, Sacramento. Sales benefits local charities

Information [GardenNotes@sbcglobal.net](mailto:GardenNotes@sbcglobal.net) (916) 923-3745

## Visit the Farm on Putah Creek

March 28 10 am to 4 pm

Family event to increase appreciation for where food comes from and enhance knowledge about environmental stewardship.

Information <http://www.landbasedlearning.org> 795-1520

## UC Davis Good Life Garden

Demonstration edible garden and events

[http://www.goodlifegarden.ucdavis.edu/garden\\_main](http://www.goodlifegarden.ucdavis.edu/garden_main)

## Davis Flower Arrangers

Barbara Lingberg and Helen Davis arrangers April 7

Meetings at Eleanor Roosevelt Circle Community Center

For information contact the President at 756-6722

## Davis Garden Club

Native Plants Chris Lewis from California Naïve Plant

Society March 22, 7-9 pm

Seed and Plant Swap April 26, 7-9 pm

For information 222-3052

## Woodland Library Rose Tour

Sunday, April 10

## Historic Rose Garden - Sacramento City Cemetery

Saturday, April 17 9:30 am to 2 pm

Open garden, and fund-raiser sale of historic roses

Free admission, tours. 1000 Broadway, Sacramento

Information [www.CemeteryRose.org](http://www.CemeteryRose.org) (916) 443-2146

## Wildflower Wonders at Sacramento Earth Day

Sunday, April 11 12 noon to 5 pm

Plant communities, exhibits, kid's zone, native plant sale

Southside Park, T Street between 6<sup>th</sup> and 8th

Information <http://www.sacvalleycnps.org/>

## Jepson Prairie Preserve – Vernal Pool Tours

Saturdays & Sundays, March 6 to May 9, 10 am

Information (707) 432-0150

<http://www.vernalpools.org/JepsonSchedule.htm>

## Yolo Basin Foundation

Talk on Vernal Pool Flowers April 1 7 pm

Vernal Pool Open House April 10 9 am – 3 pm

Information <http://www.yolobasin.org/events.cfm>

## Stebbins Cold Canyon Nature Outings

[http://nrs.ucdavis.edu/Stebbins/Guides/guide\\_schedule.htm](http://nrs.ucdavis.edu/Stebbins/Guides/guide_schedule.htm)

## California State Flower and Garden Show

April 8 to 11 at Cal Expo in Sacramento

<http://www.calstategardenshow.com/>

## San Francisco Flower and Garden Show

March 24 to 28. Show is again in San Mateo this year.

<http://www.sfgardenshow.com/>

## **The Great Sunflower Project**

*Bees are responsible for every third bite of food.*

The Great Sunflower Project, with over 50 thousand participants last year, is reaching their goal of documenting bee pollination in the US and developing strategies to protect and restore native bees where they are threatened. Building on the momentum from 2009, they are excited to get going this spring! **A big change for this year is that they are asking people to get their own 'Lemon Queen' annual sunflower seeds.** With 85,000 people signed up, it is becoming difficult to raise enough money to mail seeds. Sunflower seeds can usually be planted sometime in March in our area.

Information [www.GreatSunflower.org](http://www.GreatSunflower.org)

## More gardening tips!

**Citrus grows well in our area!** There are so many wonderful oranges, grapefruit, lemons and mandarines to try. It is usually safe to start planting around mid March, but we sometimes do get late frosts (remember the April 20, 2008 frost?). Citrus needs good drainage! For information visit the wonderful website of our local citrus supplier, Four



Winds Growers. <http://www.fourwindsgrowers.com>  
Photo thanks to Debra Ariola

### **Gardenscaping**

Davis Dollars is an organization that provides a currency for people within the Davis community to exchange services with one another. They feel that gardens will benefit Davis in a variety of ways, and they're looking for people interested in helping create some! Check out Gardenscaping.

<http://davisdollars.wordpress.com/gardenscaping/>

Patricia trades garden advice and plants with Teri who helps her manage this newsletter website – it's a great deal!

**Spring watering schedule.** Typically we change our irrigation timers from the winter setting to the spring setting about March 15 through May 15. With all the rains we have had lately, this can easily be delayed a couple weeks at least. Once irrigations begin, *it is a great time to start watering deeply and less often to encourage the roots to grow deeper.* Try increasing the number of days between waterings from last year's schedule.

### **Thinking about your spring vegetable garden?**

Robert Norris, a vegetable growing expert, gives four essentials for success:

1. Timing of planting
2. Timing of planting!
3. The cultivated variety planted
4. Everything else (soil, irrigation, pest control, nutrients, spacing, mulching.....)

Here is his vegetable chart (it is a pretty big file):

<http://groups.ucanr.org/cagardenweb/files/64270.pdf>

### **How to disguise a 6 pak planting.**

Most gardeners, even great ones, often grab a 6 pak or two when at a garden center. It is hard to resist – and some plants are difficult or not worth the effort to start from seed. But, six little plants lined up in a row is a dead giveaway that the plants started as a 6 pak. So, here are some ways to hide a 6 pak purchase. If the plants are being planted down a path, put some on both sides and not right across from each other. Think about grouping the plants rather than planting them in a straight line. And the groupings should not include the same number of plants or be equally spaced from one another. Try to mimic nature a bit. A plant or two can even be placed inside the bed and not along the path. Tall plants might be planted in the middle of a bed. Again, plant in groups with random spacing, not in rows. Don't be afraid to put a tallish plant next to the path – this is perfectly acceptable. Lastly, buy two 6 paks of the same plant since it is much easier to disguise 12 plants when grouped in the beds.

### **The Yolo Gardener spring issue is out.**

[https://ucanr.org/mg/users/documents/6215The\\_Yolo\\_Gardener19689.pdf](https://ucanr.org/mg/users/documents/6215The_Yolo_Gardener19689.pdf)

### **Carol Leigh's California Wildflower Hotsheet**

<http://calphoto.com/wflower.htm>

### **Hibbert Lumber has adjustable fan rakes!!**

These rakes are the best for getting leaves out of your flowerbeds. The tines are delicate enough to rake over most plants. Many evergreen trees and shrubs will soon be dropping leaves as the new ones emerge.

Information 753-5611



### **Newsletter created by:**

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

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