

JANUARY CAPRI GARDENER

January is often called the bare-root month because many plants are available in this form. Only plants that go dormant in winter can be bare-rooted. In our region, the major items sold this way are roses, cane berry bushes, strawberries and a few vegetables, including artichokes, asparagus, horseradish and rhubarb. Always solicit your nursery for suggestions of the best kind to plant in our area.

Roses: This is an important month for rose care. If you already have roses, this is the time to prune them. Remove all dead, crossed, twiggy branches and cut others to about 15 –24, depending upon whose advice you rely. Remove all leaves. Also remove all suckers by grasping them firmly and working them back and forth etc. until they're loosen, then pull them off with a yank. If you do this successfully, you will get the bud cells also and which prevents suckers from emerging. Remove the suckers after you have finished pruning. Make sure you clean up the ground under and around the plants and spray with dormant spray. Do not fertilize until new leaves are green. If you wish to replace some of your roses or try your hand at growing roses, this is the time to plant bare-root roses.

Citrus: This is the time to start fertilizing citrus in our coastal zone. If you fertilize now, you'll promote more blossoms in February and hopefully this results in an abundant crop. Citrus trees need large amounts of the three primary nutrients - nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium plus smaller amounts of ten other nutrients. Nitrogen is the nutrient the home gardeners everywhere must supply regularly as plants use it up quickly, and water from rainfall or irrigation washes it out of the soil. With clay or loam, phosphorus and potassium need not be replenished as often since they don't leach from the soil as readily. Sandy soil is the opposite. Choose a product that is higher in nitrogen than the other nutrients. How much? New trees need 2 ounces of nitrogen the first year, then increase by 4 ounces each year for the next few years. After about the 5th year, the tree needs 1 to 1 ½ pounds annually. Remember this is 1 to 1 ½ lb. of nitrogen a year. Since we need to give citrus a feeding a month from January to June - divide the total by 6. If your fertilizer is slow release, then divide by 3 and apply every other month. Ex.: for 1 lb. of N, use about 6 lb. of a 16-8-4 mix in 6 applications of 1 lb. each - like a coffee can. Watch for pests and take action. Also watch for chlorosis at this time and give iron and zinc to trees that need it.

Camellias & azaleas: Both can be planted during a cool winter month, but the best time is while it is actually bearing flowers. This is because the roots and branches rest rather than grow during their bloom cycle, and the minute they finish blooming they start a spurt of growth. Along the coast, some camellia and azalea varieties can stand full sun. Remove dead and fallen petals and flowers from camellias and azaleas to prevent petal blight, which is a fungus disease that causes brown, discolored, rotting blooms.

Crabgrass: Use a pre-emergent herbicide now to control annual weeds and crabgrass. After your first application, wait two weeks and apply again. If you have a terrible

problem, treat again in March as not all the seeds germinate at the same time, and even long lasting products can wash out of the soil.

Dormant spray: Dormant sprays are used to control over-wintering mites and insects, such as scale and certain caterpillars, by coating their bodies and suffocating them. Various types are available, so choose one that's recommended for the specific plants you want to treat. If you have peach or nectarine trees, you need to use lime-sulfur. Treat when leaves have fallen in Nov. or Dec. and then again in Jan. before buds swell.

Epiphyllums: Start feeding with 0-10-10 or 2-10-10 liquid fertilizer every two weeks to encourage spring and early summer bloom. Even if you've neglected them and they look scruffy, do not feed with higher than 2% nitrogen now or you will trigger growth instead of flowers. Don't prune until after bloom cycle unless there are badly diseased or rotted branches. Prune too much and you have growth but no bloom.

At the nursery: The new *Salvia pachyphylla*, a giant purple flowered sage, is one of 49 new plant offerings from the [Spring 2001 High Country Gardens](#) mail order catalog. It's best in sandy or loam soils and full sun. This California native plant blooms all summer and holds its silver foliage throughout the winter. Leaves are pungently fragrant. The [All America Selections \(AAS\)](#) for 2001 were chosen for performance around the US. [Sunset Magazine](#) chose their favorites from the list. *Eustoma 'Forever Blue'* is not as lanky as other eustoma (lisianthus) plants. These grow about 12 inches tall and are multi-branched which makes it a good container and bedding plant with a great shade of blue. *Pepper F-1 'Giant Marconi'* is a great vegetable to grow if you like grilled red peppers. They were specially bred for grilling. They are 6 to 8 inches long and meaty with a smoky-sweet flavor. *Zinnia 'Profusion White'* is a Gold Medal winner that puts out a profusion of 2½ inch, single, daisy-like flowers from early spring into fall. It is powdery mildew resistant and requires little care – no need to deadhead or pinch back to keep it blooming.

Pest Profile: **Aphids** belong to the order Homoptera, relatives include mealybugs, whitefly and scale. They come in many colors and the color of adults and their young may differ. A few protect themselves with a gray, bluish or white cottony coating. Aphids feed by inserting needle sharp beaks into plant tissues and sucking up juices. In the process, they inject toxic saliva. Plants lose vigor; foliage becomes deformed, shriveled or curled. Flowers are ruined and fruit is dimpled. Some plants may wilt, turn yellow or brown and die. They excrete sweet, sticky honeydew that acts as a growing medium for an unsightly black, sooty mold fungus. When thick, this mold can interfere with photosynthesis. Ants are attracted to and eat the honeydew. They herd the aphids and fight off beneficials. We can never completely get rid of aphids, just as we can never get rid of whiteflies, but we can try to control. First and foremost is becoming ant free as much as possible. Prune off parts with large, active colonies such as curled up tip growth on citrus or remove badly infested annual plants. Control weeds as they act as alternate hosts. Spray forcefully with water or spray with insecticidal soap and oil. Pesticides do work extremely well, but they kill also the beneficials.

FEBRUARY CAPRI GARDENER

Prune: Fuchsia, impatiens, ivy, asparagus fern & pyracantha need trimming now along with ginger and canna. Continue to cut old stems of canna and ginger to the ground once their flowers fade. Prune, cut ivy, 3-4 years old, and then fertilize.

Plant: Bare root roses, Iceland poppy, viola, lobelia and other cool season flowers to fill in bare spots. It is a good time to plant tubers and bulbs such as calla, canna, gladiolus and lilies. Perennials such as penstemon, salvia, coreopsis and gerberas can be planted along with summer vegetable seeds. When planting gerberas, remember to bury all the roots but not the crown (where roots join leaves). They rot easily and watch for snail and slugs! Great time to plant strawberries. If you haven't been too successful in the past, try growing them in raised beds or pots heavily amended with compost or other organic material. Mulch with hay or plastic to keep plants and fruit clean. When you plant bare root trees and shrubs, make a watering basin around the plant. Start the basin several inches out from the main trunk. Make sure it extends out as wide as the branches, and a few inches deep. Slowly fill the basin with water as soon as you plant. If you mulch, keep the mulch several inches away from the base of the plant.

Pest & disease control: Watch for slugs and snails – their damage is quite noticeable, as is their trail. If you control ants, you will have the upper hand in controlling aphids. This is especially true with citrus trees that need to be washed from time to time. Ants are determined little dairy farmers who manage immense herds of sucking insect “cows”, such as aphids, mealy bugs, woolly whiteflies and scale. Remove all weeds as soon as you see them, because if you leave them to seed, you will have weeds all over. You can use a pre-emergent now also, and if you manually remove weeds, remember dandelions and other weeds have long taproots that can re-sprout if left in the ground. Applying horticultural oil & fixed copper or lime sulfur again will help to control over wintering scale, mites and aphids.

Fertilize: It is time to start fertilizing established trees, shrubs, ground covers and perennials and cool season flowers and vegetables. Citrus trees along the coast need their second application of citrus fertilizer. If you are growing epiphyllum (orchid cactus), you need to fertilize now. Do not fertilize tropical or native plants as yet. If roses have leaves you should begin to feed.

Camellias: One of San Diego's favorite flowers is the camellia. In early America, we know that Thomas Jefferson and George Washington grew camellias. As mentioned in my last Capri Gardener, we have three types of plants. The most common camellia japonicas are beauties, but in the 1940s they were challenged by camellia reticulatas introduced from China. These are more open and although the plants may not be as handsome, their flowers are spectacular with new varieties being introduced every year. The third is the early blooming, sun loving camilla sasanquas. Camellias grow beautifully in containers, and are an ideal answer to our clay soil. Although they can

grow to 15 ft. or taller, you can manage them by pruning. February is the ideal month to start your major trimming and ending at the end of the blooming season. Remove dead wood, then cut crossovers and out of balance branches back to the closest limb. Tip pinch thin areas to stimulate fill out. Then after flowering, cut branches back an inch or two all over. In July you can do some additional shaping with light pinching to encourage bushiness. This strategy is best with 2 to 3 year old plants. On older plants, you'll have better luck if you lace out and open up mature camellias rather than cut them back severely. They are slow growers and have a hearty appetite. Feed them around Easter, July 4th and Labor Day.

Roses: Plant bare-root roses as soon as they arrive in nurseries. Prune roses by mid month and cut all dead wood, crossovers, twig growth and spent canes. Remove suckers from under the bud union. Feed roses when foliage turns from red to green, and feed bi-monthly with half amount of fertilizer. This is the time to use dormant spray with a mixture of lime sulfur and oil. This kills aphid and spider mite eggs and gives you a jump on pest free roses. Spray every two weeks for best results. If there is much rain, you may have to apply more often. A wonderful hybrid tea with the vigor and flower of a grandiflora is "Brigadoon" recommended in San Diego Home and Garden Magazine. It is salmon pink and quite pest free and is guaranteed to bloom nine months of the year.

Trees: flowering fruits and citrus: This is the time to plant bare root fruit trees and flowering pear and plum. Prune deciduous fruit trees by the 15th, and pear trees after they finish flowering, and ficus trees at the end of the month. Feed citrus by giving them 1/4th of their yearly ration. Feed any flowering fruit tree that is showing buds. Bait for snails and slugs around citrus or apply copper bands on the trunks to keep them away.

Bulbs, begonias, fuchsias and geraniums: Plant warm season bulbs such as gladioli, cannas, tuberose and bright colored, smaller calla lilies which bloom from spring to early summer, and which are wonderful massed in containers. The white variety can be planted all the way through May. Scented geraniums are a good buy. Most of them – rose, nutmeg and lemon for example – belong in the sunny areas, but peppermint does best in shady areas or with morning sun only. Prune about a third of growth from cane, shrub and bedding begonias, and severely prune fuchsias - up to half for badly shaped plants. Tip pinch geraniums for compactness. Feed fuchsias with fish emulsion or fishmeal at one half the recommended rate twice this month. Geraniums like a 10-10-10 formula applied at one half the rate. Even though dormant, check for white fly on begonias. After pruning fuchsias, watch out for aphids on new growth.

Primroses: Plants are often sold simply as English primroses, fairy primroses or obconicas. English types take more sun while fairy and obconicas do best in light shade. English types come in a wide range of brighter colors than the others and come in two types: acaulis and polyanthus. The acaulis primroses usually have just one flower per stem and the stems are only about 3" long, but the flowers are very large and colors are exquisite. They make an initial splash of bloom early, then follow with more sporadic flowers throughout the season due to a rain-induced mold called botrytis. You can limit it by deadheading faded blooms. They make ideal plants for containers and window

boxes. Polyanthus hybrids flower on 8" stems and thrive just about anywhere and their color range is almost limitless. The fairy primrose is a frost tender species that bears delicate whorls of bloom on 15" stems. The obconicas, sometimes called German primrose, are the most resistant to snails and slugs, and bloom the longest with flowers in pastel shades. Their one flaw is that their leaves give some people an itchy rash; however, Goldsmith Seeds of Gilroy, CA came up with Libre, a non allergenic obconica series that is free of primum (an alkaloid) making them easier to handle.

Pansies: I have received some information for those of us who have had a bit of a problem growing pansies. This information also pertains to periwinkle and petunias. Roberto of PacWest, when I asked him what was happening to my pansies, his first question to me was, "Have you planted them there before?" I said, "Yes, about three years in a row." Wrong thing to do! Pansies, periwinkle and petunias are susceptible to a soil fungus, which does not affect all the pansies in the area, but over time, more plants will be affected. If you notice some plants begin to wilt, collapse and when you pick them up, the plant appears to have been eaten completely from below - well, they have - by the fungus. Every year you plant in the area, more plants will have the problem. Suggestion: plant every other year and before you plant the second year, treat the soil with a fungicide, or treat it in the interim.

All America Selections: Some newer colors in well-known plants are: Cosmic Orange Cosmos, a vigorous new cosmos with a dense plant habit and a showy display of orange flowers over a long bloom period. Easy to grow and great in containers; Stardust Orchid Vinca, compact with a profusion of orchid and white blooms and is strictly low-maintenance; Soraya Sunflower, large bright orange petals with a distinctive chocolate brown center. Flowers are 4-6 inches across and plants grow 5-6 feet tall; Melody Pink Dianthus, long flowering annual with beautiful sprays of pink flowers that are great in cutting bouquets. Plants grow 2 feet tall and perform well in containers. If you want to attract hummingbirds and butterflies look up Fiesta del Sol Tithonia that have orange flowers on lush plants.

Miscellaneous garden tasks: Start warm weather annual flower seed mid month and warm weather vegetable seeds at the end of the month. Start late blooming perennial seeds this month. Mow cool season lawns short and keep cool season vegetables harvested. Feed cool season lawns and actively growing vegetables and annual flowers. Remove ground covers such as ivy, geranium, gazania and honeysuckle down to thatch every 3 to 4 years. Feed after cutting back then mulch. This cutting back invigorates the ground cover.

Gardening in the News: In the Feb.2000 issue of ZooNooz, the Zoological Society of San Diego's monthly magazine, there was an interesting article "On the Botanical Side: Naturalizing Nonnatives: Gardeners Beware!" I quote: "Living in a Mediterranean climate allows us to grow an amazing array of plants, most of which have been imported by immigrants from other regions of the world as food sources, industrial materials and ornamental accents. Many came into the country inadvertently as seed mixed in grains bought for crops, in the soil used for ballast in ships, or even in the immigrants' clothing

and bedding. After arrival, some of these plants, because of climate and soil condition, as well as a lack of natural enemies, became naturalized as weeds. Eucalyptus trees introduced from Australia in the late 19th century was first praised for its qualities as a fast growing species and lumber alternative; it was later found that brittleness, warping tendencies and invasiveness were among its negative traits. Pampas Grass heavily reseeds, invading coastal communities while choking out native vegetation and forming impenetrable thickets that cause high fire danger. Fountain Grass introduced as an erosion control measure along roadsides in the late 1950's, has become an epidemic problem in meadow habitat where it competes for nutrients while choking out native bunch grasses. Hottentot Fig known as ice plant or Pickle Weed was first imported as seed in the late 19th century for use in erosion and fire control. Today it is widely scattered along hillsides, freeways and is invasive in tidal marsh and coastal dune ecosystems. The effectiveness as an erosion control measure can be overshadowed by its ability to retain massive amounts of water, which can then actually contribute to slope failure as the heavy plants pull down soil. Sweet Fennel and Black Mustard bring wonderful yellow color throughout San Diego County but have become naturalized in just about every possible location.”

MARCH CAPRI GARDENER

During March you can plant most summer annuals and perennials, warm season and cool season lawns and almost all permanent garden plants, such as trees, shrubs, ground covers and vines. Tropicals should wait another month for warmer soil and weather.

Fertilize: Most trees, shrubs, lawns and ground covers respond quite well now to fertilizing. In good years, adequate rain means we do not have to water as much; however, heavy rains can also wash soluble nutrients, especially nitrogen, down to lower levels where roots cannot reach. Granulated fertilizer applied in early March to ground cover and your basic landscape can do wonders. Many plants fall into the “specialty” category such as succulents, cacti and native plants which have little or no need for fertilizer. Some such as camellias, azaleas, begonias, fuchsias, ferns, orchids, roses, citrus and vegetables have unique requirements so you should follow directions on packages very carefully. Then there are the over-grown gardens in rich soil that become virtual jungles, (as my better half keeps reminding me of our entrance way) feeding on their own refuse and have no need of fertilizer except if yellow leaves or disease may be seen, but I am a firm believer in fertilizing before outward signs appear.

Abundant deep rain is wonderful because it leaches out the salts in our soil, but they also wash soluble nutrients, especially nitrogen, down to lower levels, sometimes out of reach of roots. Most ornamental trees, bushes, lawns and ground covers can use a complete fertilizer high in nitrogen at this time. Listen to the weather reports and you can apply the fertilizer before it rains. Remember to fertilize citrus each month with June being the last application. Roses also need nourishment at this time – a good systemic fertilizer with insecticide can be applied when the leaves turn green.

Snails and slugs: Warm rains keep snails and slugs on the prowl. You’ll get better control if you strike early and mount a multi-flank attack. Clean up the garden by getting rid of undergrowth and other hiding places. Use baits: they come in spray, pellet, powdered and thick liquid form. Products that contain Mesurol, such as Slug-Geta, and products containing a high concentration of metaldehyde, such as “That’s It”, are highly effective but also most toxic and must not be used around edible crops and pets. Liquid bait, such as Deadline, is effective and long lasting but may make pets sick if they step in it and lick it off. Mesurol works better than metaldehyde in cloudy, shady or overgrown conditions. I use metaldehyde pellets and have success. All baits work better when you switch them from time to time. If you grow vegetables, a combination of carbaryl and metaldehyde can be used. It is successful on sowbugs too, but you should be careful not to allow it to come into contact with edible plant parts. Bait thoroughly, wait 10-14 days, then bait again.

Planting: We are in coastal zone 24 and now is the time to renovate the garden, if you are planting, by replenishing the soil - adding gypsum, humus and fertilizer to encourage healthy growth. Once your soil is prepared, you can plant just about anything that our

local nurseries carry. Some may be in their prime right now, and they will be finished by May or June, but they can still make a colorful addition to your garden even if it is for a shorter time. Be watchful of snails and slugs as this is the time they appear. I do not know if anyone in Capri has noticed a decline in these critters, but I certainly have noticed - maybe it's the opossums in our area that love them or our constant watch has helped. Also, we have noticed a new snail and wonder if you have also. Its markings are different and either they are a smaller snail or they are still young. They are quite attractive. This is the time to apply aluminum sulfate to Hydrangeas to turn flowers blue if that is the color you prefer.

March is one of the best times of year to plant almost anything we grow in the permanent landscape, such as trees, shrubs, vines and ground covers. Now through mid June is the time to look your garden over, see its strengths and weaknesses, replace troublemakers you do not like, add permanent plants where needed, or remove those not wanted. It is time to renovate! The soil needs its nutrients replaced by adding soil amenders, gypsum and humus. Where we live, we can still plant cool weather plants such as violas, pansies and primroses to fill in bare spots for temporary color. Good choices among annual flowers to plant now from pony packs for color in sunny spots all summer long include ageratum, marigolds, cosmos, verbena, salvia and petunias. In sunny areas a number of perennials can be put in now, including agapanthus, coral bells, coreopsis, statice and Shasta daisies. In semi-shade, you can put in impatiens, coleus and fuchsias along with begonias and lobelia. I have discovered that lobelia is a favorite salad for the bunnies in our area as are zinnias. This is a good time to plant citrus trees.

Bulbs: Continue to water bulbs in pots and in the ground. Green leaves manufacture food for next year's growth. Don't cut them back until half have turned yellow. If you can't stand the unsightly foliage, you can braid or fold them under. Note: Dutch tulips, hyacinths and crocus do not perform well from year to year; however, freesias and daffodils come up year after year and multiply.

Epidendrums: These orchids are easy to grow in pots or in the ground, are inexpensive, bloom almost year round and are almost immune to pests and disease. Grow them in full sun in our area. If you have a swimming pool, they are spectacular in a raised bed around your pool. Once a stem has borne its clusters of cattleya shaped flowers, it won't bloom as well the second time, so cut it back to the second leaf joint from the ground. Stick the cuttings in the ground or in your pot filled with potting soil and you will soon have new plants. Feed them often with liquid fertilizer for growth and bloom.

Fuchsias: Feed and pinch back. They bloom only on new wood - every tip will produce flowers, so the idea is to make the plant produce as many tips as possible. As soon as each sprout grows three pairs of leaflets, pinch out the top pair. You can take some of the bendable new un-pinched growth for cuttings.

Heucheras: (pronounced hew-ker-a) Heucheras, (coral bells, alum root) are wonderful perennials for the time, space and water. They have neat clumps of green, marbled or purple foliage that stay low and good looking all year. Their flowers bloom on slender

wiry stems from spring into summer and grow denser each year. After 5 or 6 years, divide, renew soil and replant. By the coast, give them full sun or bright shade. Plants bloom best with regular watering, but once established, can thrive with little watering. Easiest to grow and by far the most widely sold are coral bells (*H. sanguinea*) sold in six packs to gallon size containers. Different varieties have different color flowers ranging from bright red to coral, pink or white. Their flowers make good cut flowers on 12"-15" stems. Those who are bird watchers will love them as hummingbirds are attracted to them.

Flowering pear: If you have these trees, examine them now to see if there is any fire blight present. I cannot tell you how important this is for your trees and mine. If you notice brown, scorched leaves and branches, remove them immediately at least 6" below what you see. After each cut, sterilize your pruners in bleach.

Hawaiian snow bush (*Breynia*): This is a wonderful plant that is grown for its foliage of broadly oval, pink-flushed, green leaves that are variably bordered and splashed with white. It loses most of its leaves during the winter in our climate, but if you cut it back by as much as half and provide some balanced fertilizer, it comes back beautifully. It makes a wonderful container plant if you keep it watered and give it morning sun.

Vegetable gardening: Start planting summer vegetables now. Summer vegetables that can be planted now include artichokes, chard, corn, green beans, New Zealand spinach and tomatoes. In coastal zones and warm, south facing gardens, cucumbers and winter squash can be planted by mid-month. If the weather is cool enough, broccoli, lettuce and cabbage can be put in. On the coastal strip, we are supposed to be able to plant crops that go year round such as carrots, radishes, beets, chard and turnips. It is best to wait until April to put in the real heat lovers such as peppers, lima beans, melons, eggplant and pumpkins. Except for a few herbs, I have not planted vegetables. I do not have the room, and I am not very successful, but I know some Capri homeowners are very successful

Cultural tips for petunias:

1. Symptom: holes in flowers. Cause: looper worms. Treatment: apply Javelin or Dipel (organic *Bacillus Thuringiensis*). Look for snail and slugs and treat accordingly.
2. Symptom: chlorosis despite fertilizing. Cause: possible iron deficiency. Treatment: ferromec as a soil drench. Wash off foliage to prevent burning or add iron chelate.
3. Symptom: legginess. Treatment: cut back each plant, leaving about 8" of growth, or regularly pinch off just the leggy stems.
4. Symptom: fungus die back. Treatment: always water in the morning or if severe, remove entire plant and soil.

Note: Gardeners who have problems with their plants and can't resolve them on their own can get expert advice by contacting the master gardeners at the Farm and Home Advisor office. The service is federal, state and county cooperative. The phone number is 619-694-2860. The volunteer gardeners who staff the office are extremely knowledgeable and can be reached between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m. Monday -Friday.

MAY CAPRI GARDENER

While conventional landscape plants, most which are imported, are beginning a season of fast growth, native plants are in a season of withdrawal. The chaparral is beginning to dry up and most wildflowers are starting to brown and setting seed. Many wild plants let leaves fall as nature prepares for a long dry season. From now until November, the gardener's main task is to water deeply and appropriately for each plant, which at times can be mystifying. Since the price of water continually rises and domestic cutbacks occur whenever there's a drought, we should begin to think of a drip or bubble watering system.

Planting: Transplant summer herbs and vegetables such as peppers, eggplant, tomatoes, squash, basil, parsley, cilantro and dill. Vegetable seeds should be put in now and continue to transplant flowering annuals, perennials. You can still plant from seeds to accompany your already planted flowers. Plant tropical and subtropical fruits such as lemons, oranges, limes and tangerines. You might want to check out the African Blue Basil that grows into a neat bush 3 to 5 feet and has dense branching and maroon streaked stems and dusty purple veined green leaves. This herb sounds as lovely to look at as it is to eat! As a hybrid, it blooms but does not produce seed, so you can let it flower. When in bloom it looks like a lavender plant – from a distance, that is.

Heat loving annuals and perennials are arriving daily in our nurseries. I have found that if you are looking for something different, Home Depot is not the place to find the unusual. I have discovered some great nurseries this past spring that offer more unusual varieties. Pepper Tree in San Marcos have wonderful tubular cosmos with two contrasting colors that are difficult to find, and some real healthy specimens of Snowstorm Bacopa which is wonderful in hanging pots and containers. Their ranunculas were exceptional both in heartiness and price. If you are looking for fountains etc. along with plants, try Andersen's Nursery in Leucadia. It's a great place to browse in especially if you are looking for something special to accent your garden. We bought a birdbath for our side garden and have been delighted with how fast the birds discovered it. I am a great fan of Weidners' Gardens in Encinitas. On my trip two weeks ago I bought some 4" containers of blue Scaevola 'New Wonder' and rose Calibracoa 'Million Bells' which look like small petunias. Both of these plants are fast growing, extremely free flowering as ground covers or in hanging baskets. I have put mine in containers to spill over with larger plants in the center. I also use the white Bacopa for the same reason. So far they have lived up to their promise.

Citrus pests and problems in the home garden: Pests that attack citrus include insects, mites, snails and rodents. Check your trees regularly to detect pests before serious injury occurs. I have continually washed my citrus, but now notice the whiteflies fluttering around, so it is time to spray with insecticidal soap and oil. I have noticed ants appearing for the first time this season. Fortunately, our pest control service arrived to spray the yard. Scale – these are small insects that are covered by a shell. They are found on leaves, stems and fruit. The eggs are laid under a protective shell and hatch into mobile

crawlers. After a few days, crawlers settle and insert their mouthparts into the plant tissue. They produce a protective covering and remain in the same location for the rest of their lives. They feed on plant sap. Heavy infestations stunt plants, cause leaf drop and death of branches. Can be controlled with insecticidal soap, but several applications are required to control successive generations. Mites – very tiny and difficult to see without magnification. They have piercing mouthparts and feed on plant sap. They cause leaves to yellow and drop prematurely. Heavy infestations of citrus rust mites cause the skin of citrus fruit to dry out and discolor. Oranges turn brown to black. Lemons and grapefruit turn gray. Wash foliage and use insecticidal soap to keep under control.

Sickly yellow leaves: This is the first sign that a plant in your garden may be suffering from the nutritional disorder called iron chlorosis. Plants need iron to make chlorophyll, but in the west, many plants do not get enough iron because their roots are unable to obtain it from the soil. Roots may be damaged by lack of oxygen in overwatered or poorly drained soils – typical after a rainy spring or by extreme soil temperatures. High concentrations of limestone (calcium carbonate) make the soil more alkaline, which makes the iron less soluble. In severe cases, leaves can turn almost white, and the plant can decline and die. Iron chlorosis is easy to confuse with other nutrient deficiencies. If a plant is iron deficient, its newest leaves are yellower than old ones. If it's nitrogen deficient, the old leaves are yellow and the new ones are green. Just about any plant can become chlorotic, but a few are more susceptible than others are. These are citrus and gardenias. Sequestrene 138 and Sprint 138 is a powder you mix with water. It is effective in soils of pH 7 to 8.7 or higher, and is the reliable chelate for western soils, as it does not fix to clay. Not recommended for turf. Now I have to find out where to obtain these products!

Tropicals: Late spring is an excellent time to put in tropicals of all kinds, including citrus, palms, philodendrons and bougainvillea. They are planted during their active growing season. Here we try to get them to grow fast during the warm months and rest from growth in winter. The way to do this is to feed and water tropicals in spring and summer, but withhold fertilizer in early fall and water less when the weather cools down.

Ferns: Start feeding ferns once every two or three weeks now with a well diluted, complete, liquid fertilizer, and continue until fall. Fish emulsion is an excellent and safe choice. Ferns are ancient plants with poor plumbing systems. Most require shade, perfect drainage and acid soil. They should be fed with care. Staghorn ferns do not need to be fed as frequently – once every one or two months.

Water: water your lawns early in the day so blades won't be wet all night and encourage fungus. Water seedbeds and transplants to help them become established. Keep them damp, but not wet. If you have native plants, cut back water as they go into their slow growth phase.

Prune: prune winter and spring flowering trees, shrubs and vines once they finish flowering – such as Leptospermum, princess flower. Also, do some hard pruning with older lavender, rosemary that tend to die out in the center. As bulbs die back, leave

foliage on the plant until it has turned completely yellow. This allows the nutrients to restore themselves in the bulb crop. You can tie up the leaves to keep things looking neat, or tie and bend them out of sight. Cut back Fuchias once they begin to grow again, or pinch back tips to keep them full. Also, pinch tips of salvia and other soft stemmed perennials. Now is the time to shape camellias and azaleas if they through with flowering. Watch for tomato plant suckers. Remove them & support main branches.

Aerate: Aerating the soil is vital because healthy grass depends upon nutrients and minerals made available by earthworms, microbes and other soil organisms. For these organisms to thrive, they need abundant oxygen, which is scarce in compacted soil of most lawns. Regular aerating fixes this. There are companies that do this and then apply fertilizer. This is good tonic for your lawns.

Fertilize: fertilize all flowering annuals monthly until the end of the summer for maximum bloom. Also feed warm season vegetables once they start to show growth. Don't forget to feed your camellias and azaleas with one-sixth to one-third cup acid type fertilizer, and continue to feed citrus and avocado, roses, gardenias, ferns and lawns. If you have banana plants, feed with a high nitrogen fertilizer each month trough early September and top dress with compost. Don't forget to renew your mulch. Fertilize roses to keep them blooming and subtropicals such as hibiscus, gardenia, citrus, Natal plum, banana and bougainvillea. If you find long, shiny, red worms crawling through your soil, you must be doing something right. These are earthworms and they rank right up there with ladybugs as treasured garden critters. They churn and mix your soil, aerating it as they go. Mulch every plant in the garden to keep weeds at bay and to keep moisture in ground. Keep mulch away from stems, leaves and trunks.

What is a sunflower? Although the orchid and sunflower families include by far the most species of flowering plants, the orchid family has only one economically important crop, the vanilla bean *Vanilla fragrans*, while the sunflower family has many valuable crop plants. Important members of the sunflower family include vegetables such as lettuce, endive, chicory, artichoke and Jerusalem artichoke. Then there are the oils such as sunflower and safflower and herbs such as tarragon, yarrow and echinacea. There are at least 2 species used as timber trees *Brachylaena huillensis* and *Vernonia arborea*, and an insecticide is extracted from the dried heads of *Tanacetum cineriifolium*. The sunflower family has so many diverse species that it is subdivided into 3 subfamilies that are in turn subdivided into 17 different tribes for a total of about 23,000 species. We know many as daisies, marigolds, zinnias, gazanias and chrysanthemums. In San Diego County, as you drove I-5, did you notice the giant sea dahlia *Coreopsis gigantea*? It is a striking shrublike daisy found on coastal bluffs of central California and the Channel Islands. It established itself here by hydroseeding. Troublesome sunflowers lead to Velcro! Some members of the sunflower family have burs covered with hooked bristles that hitchhike on the fur of animals. Close examination of the burs with a magnifying glass reveals hundreds of stiff hooks, and this is how Swiss mountaineer George de Mestral came up with his idea of Velcro in 1948, after examining the burs in his socks. Get a magnifying lens and examine a Velcro fastener. The registered name Velcro comes from two words, velour & crochet.

Control pests: keep your eye out for snails and slugs, along with tomato hornworms. Wash aphids and scale off citrus etc. and destroy ants. A new non poison ant spray is on the market that is purported to be safe for plants. It is called Victor Poison Free Ant & Roach Killer that is a mint oil based aerosol that kills them by clogging their breathing holes and over-stimulating their tiny nervous systems.

Beneficial insects: Many nurseries have these available now. They are not cheap but are a great benefit to the garden. Green lacewings eat aphids, thrips, mealybugs and lots of other pests. Lacewings tend to remain put. Ladybugs roam. A tiny stingless wasp called *Encarsia formosa* parasitizes budworm (tobacco budworm) eggs. These tiny worms burrow into the buds and feed from the inside of penstemons, nicotianas and petunias; therefore, BT and other insecticides are rarely effective.. Remember aphids, mealybugs, scale and white flies are all soft-bodied insects that attack your plants. They are all closely associated with ants because ants protect them against their natural enemies by actually fighting off their predators. Give shrubs etc. a water bath. It helps.

JUNE CAPRI GARDENER

New flowers on our scene that might be of interest to you: *Leptospermum* 'Nanum Ruru' is a compact growing shrub to 3 feet with deep pink flowers. If you like the color yellow and are fond of clivia and can afford it, there is a new yellow clivia that took 20 years to develop. Looking for fruit trees other than citrus, then you might like the ultra dwarf apple with a maximum height of 6-8 feet. You might want to check out the newest lilacs, as there are several varieties available for our area. Double impatiens used to mean trouble, but Fiesta is a new line of double flowered impatiens that blooms early and often, side branches readily to form full plants which makes it great for hanging baskets. For a long blooming season add 14-14-14 controlled release fertilizer when planting, then a monthly application of 15-30-15 liquid fertilizer. If you have children, you might have them plant sunflowers. The mid-sized varieties are best for cuttings and they come in a variety of colors. There are some sunflowers that have no pollen that means no shedding on your table. Most of the above and below plants can be found at Armstrong's Nursery in Encinitas.

Gardenia: Looking for fragrance? While there are many plants that are known for their fragrance, the gardenia, a treasure from China, is one of the best. 'First Love' is one of the most popular. They can grow to 5 feet with only a 3-foot spread. It is very popular because of the size of the flowers. They are double and can open to 4 inches in diameter. 'August Beauty' has been a long time favorite with 3-inch flowers blooming during the summer. It can grow to 6 feet and is a heavy bloomer. If you like shorter varieties, try Everblooming, known also as 'Veitchii'. Flowers are smaller 2-3 inches in diameter but blooms profusely and can reach 3-4 feet in height. 'White Gem' or 'Daisy' grows slowly to 1-2 feet with abundant, extremely fragrant, five petalled, star-like or daisy like flowers. Great for containers. The entire above can be planted in full or partial sun. Most gardeners put gardenias in the wrong spot where whiteflies get to them more easily and cause bud drop especially in our coastal area. Don't put them next to the house or on patio where it might be warmer during the night. They like cool nights and warm days to keep their buds. They need an acid soil, good drainage, adequate moisture, full sun along the coast and protection from thrips.

Jasmine is a large group of plants native to Asia, Africa, Malaysia and Australia, and offers many choices for aromatic days and scented nights in Southern California. *Jasminum sambac* or Arabian Jasmine is a favorite flower for use in leis in Hawaii and in making perfume and jasmine tea. It is somewhat vining but can be kept as small shrubs. Has strong fragrance. *Jasminum polyanthum* or Pink Jasmine is a fast growing vine that can spread to cover a fence of 20 feet. Has lighter fragrance. Star Jasmine is not of the same family, but we recognize it immediately. It has white star like flowers that are intensely fragrant and usually appear in April. Mine are not quite there yet. It has been cooler this spring. It is very versatile. Can climb if you wish, or maintained as a shrub or as a groundcover. One plant can fill the air with fragrance. If you like yellow, try Carolina Jasmine. It has very fragrant tubular yellow flowers and blooms in late winter and early spring.

Pruning: You can now prune winter and spring flowering vines, bushes, trees and ground covers after they finish blooming. Rule of Thumb that applies in almost all cases is prune flowering plants that bloom once a year after they bloom, not before they bloom or you'll prevent them from flowering. A few examples to be pruned now are Jasminum polyanthum – lightly cut back after bloom to produce a second wave of bloom. Then cut back hard – almost to bare wood – to clean up tangled interior and produce new wood to bloom next year. New Zealand Tea Trees – Because our Capri New Zealand Tea Trees were not pruned last year, we are now enjoying their immense beauty. If these were in our own gardens, we could be shaping them now by cutting sprays for cut flowers. After they bloom we will be cutting out whole-unwanted branches and heading back tips of selected branches to increase bushiness, and in some cases to protect owner's views. Wisteria – Once a vine has reached the size and shape you desire, you can begin in May to cut back all unwanted new growth to two or three buds from the main branch, to create bloom spurs that will flower for many years. Trailing African Daisy – Give them a yearly haircut in May after bloom. You'll get another bloom this year.

Pest Control: Many pests are active in May & June. Spider mites, caterpillars, slugs and snails are just a few, but among the pests that seem to rear their ugly heads most avariciously in June are thrips and whiteflies. Our local paper mentioned the infestation of thrips already beginning in the avocado groves. While we may see whiteflies, thrips are another story. Thrips attack many ornamental plants and spread virus diseases from plant to plant. Adults look like tiny light or dark brown elongated flies. They are only 1/20 inch long, with two pairs of narrow feathery wings. The smaller and wingless nymphs are light green or pale yellow. Although they are hard to see without a magnifier, they can be identified by the damage they cause. Because they chew and suck plants vigorously, scraping away the chlorophyll on leaves where they feed, the surface of leaves look silvery or bronzy. Leaves may also be stippled, streaked or stunted. They are difficult to eliminate. Rinse off leaves in vegetable gardens every three days. Make or buy sticky yellow traps. Make yellow or blue traps of cardboard or painted board coated with oil or petroleum jelly to catch flying adults. Insecticidal soap can be used, or buy the wonderful green lacewings whose larvae hunt and kill thrip nymphs along with many other insect larvae. If too infested, remove and discard, or use diazinon, malathion or one containing pyethrum.

JULY CAPRI GARDENER

Watering: Except for some California native plants and a few well established drought resistant plants, all plants need regular watering now. Water large trees deeply but infrequently to encourage deep but healthy roots. Allow soil to dry out somewhat between irrigation, to permit air to enter the soil pores and provide the oxygen that roots need. Mist systems that pulse on briefly throughout the day in shady areas enhances the environment for some plants, or you can mist by hose. Many plants, including bromeliads, orchids, ferns, epiphyllums and fuchsias, either absorb water through their foliage or appreciate the cooling evaporation of a fine spray of water.

Care of bare ground: Two entirely different garden techniques can help you save water, reduce weed problems, and keep the surface of the ground from baking to a hard crust. One of these is to shallowly cultivate and the other is to apply mulch. In most cases mulch is by far the best method, but in some cases young annuals and vegetables can profit from having the ground around them carefully cultivated. By shallowly cultivating, or breaking up the surface of the soil, you can destroy weeds and let air reach roots, increasing the speed of plant growth. It can also reduce the need for water. Cultivation saves water because it aids penetration, and then prevents capillary action from drawing water through compacted soil to the surface, where it would be released as vapor. When you cultivate, in a sense you're making the top 2 or 3 inches of soil into mulch. Rule of Thumb: Cultivate 1 to 3 days after watering when the soil is still moist and crumbly but not soggy wet. Don't cultivate around tomatoes except to destroy weed and never cultivate close to corn. Pulling weeds by hand is still the safest for surrounding plants. If you do not have time to cultivate, a layer of mulch can do the job for you. Organic mulch keeps the ground cool, conserves water, keeps many weed from growing, and adds valuable organic matter to soil. Some gardeners mulch with black plastic on heat loving vegetables because organic mulches may cause problems by housing slugs, snails and sowbugs.

Citrus: Don't let citrus dry out in summer or a great deal of fruit may fall off, but don't keep the ground soggy either. They don't like it. If you haven't fertilized in June, make your final application this month, and watch for whiteflies, aphids and scale. We have discovered the presence of tree rats in our orange tree and have set out a couple of traps.

Roses: Prune any rose that blooms once in the spring. Continue to shape roses that have finished flowering; cut down finished blooms to the first five-leaflet leaf. Remove crossovers and any asymmetrical branches that ruin overall shape and cut suckers off below soil. Fertilize and mulch to conserve moisture and keep beds looking tidy. Sulfur spray three times at three-day intervals to take care of any mildew that appears. Wash foliage in the morning to keep them clean and to discourage aphids.

Tropicals: You can still set out tropical plants. Just remember to keep all newly set out tropicals well watered. If you didn't feed your tropicals last month, do so now. If you did, watch foliage color. If it stays yellowish through mid month, top dress with a handful of kelp meal for larger plants, half the amount for smaller ones, or treat with iron.

Wash off tropical foliage weekly. Dusty foliage on palms invites spider mites and soot. Watch for aphids on mandevilla and bait for snails.

Hydrangeas: Because of all the aluminum sulfate I applied during the growing season, my hydrangea is full of gorgeous blue clusters. After flower clusters fade to brown or green, cut back stalks to two or three buds from the base of the plant. The pruned stems will spring back rapidly and next year's flowers will come from this new growth. Make sure you don't prune stems that haven't bloomed yet. They will bear flowers later this year or next. I have used the faded blooms in fall floral pieces with heavenly bamboo and pittosporum. Adding whole lemons will add interest and color. This is not one of my ideas but one I got from my neighbor.

Tuberous begonias: If you planted tuberous begonias in March, they'll be in full bloom now. They are heavy feeders, so feed them regularly with balanced liquid fertilizer such as 8-8-8, every week, or use slow release 14-14-14. Don't over water. Let them dry out between waterings. Remove spent blossoms, but leave the stems on the plant. They'll fall off in a few days. Control mildew with a chemical product such as Bayleton or Benlate, or try an organic control such as Wilt-Pruf or Cloud Cover. Sprinkle the base of your plants with Deadline to protect them from snails and slugs.

Petunias: Our garden petunias are complicated hybrids of annual and perennial species native to Argentina. Petunias are subject to virus diseases, so when you cut them back, and mid July is a good time, dip your pruning shears in Lysol, bleach or alcohol so your won't infect the plants. If you smoke, wash your hands before pruning so you won't risk giving the plants tobacco virus. Cut plants to 4 inches above ground, except in the case of Cascade varieties, which should be cut back lightly. Feed camellias and azaleas for the third and last time with an acid fertilizer. Give azaleas that bloomed through June their first feeding of the year immediately after blooming stops, and don't feed them again until late September. Check for chlorosis and treat with a chelating product. Continue to prune, water and feed hibiscus and check for whiteflies.

Rabbits and other creatures: Well, bunnies certainly eat rose leaves - I caught them in the act. Then one morning, I saw a squirrel sitting in my pot enjoying a salad of lobelia! A neighbor said that they have instigated a relocation program. They have purchased traps, put bait such as lettuce in them and successfully caught a number of interesting creatures that they relocate.

AUGUST CAPRI GARDENER

While eastern gardeners are starting to think about late summer cleanup and Indian summer, California gardeners can plan for the fall planting season. California native plants do especially well when planted in the fall because they have the winter rainy season to become established, or at least we hope there will be rain. From all reports, it looks as we may have a recurrence of El Nino. Winter rains would be wonderful for all concerned – humans and plants – but hopefully, we won't have torrential rains like Texas had recently. Native plants along with Mediterranean plants are being promoted more and more in all the horticulturist literature, even local newspaper articles. Plant specialists are trying to help us create ecologically responsible gardens that don't guzzle water or require lots of fertilizing, and that harmonize with California's Mediterranean climate. Some natives include ceanothus, sages, rockroses and flowering currants. Some Mediterranean plants are grasses, lavender and rosemary.

Plant or move rhizomes of bearded iris now: iris planted this month is assured the best chance of blooming next spring. Existing iris should be divided every three years by breaking off and discarding older central rhizomes with no foliage. Allow young, healthy rhizomes to dry out of direct sun for several hours so a callous forms over the break before replanting it. Plant oleander, bougainvillea, plumeria, slopes with ground cover to get them established before winter rains come.

Control fire blight by removing areas of plants to 6 inches beyond infestation disinfecting shears before next cut with bleach, alcohol and spray with Citrall or Aliette after pruning. Whiteflies and aphids can become a nuisance now in hot weather. Begin control by sprayings of Envirepel weekly until problem clear up if spraying with water does not help. Watch lawns for sod webworm and cut worms. Control with Bayer Advanced Season Long Grub Control. Prevent fall weeds by applying weed preventers like Amaze or Preen to flower beds and Portrait to lawns. Feed ferns, fuchsias, tropicals with organic foods that won't burn. Feed cymbidiums orchids with a high nitrogen fertilizer. Watch citrus for fruit drop. Make certain a steady supply of moisture is in te soil and cull as necessary. Pick cucumbers, eggplants, peppers, squash and tomatoes as soon as ready to make room for new fruit to develop.

Fuchsias look bedraggled and bloomed out in August, so you need to cut them back lightly, pinch the tips for a week or two, and you'll have a second flush of bloom that will last until cold weather. Continue to feed them regularly and remove berries (seedpods). Cuttings root quickly now. Take your cuttings from the fresh, succulent growth that results from pruning. Root them in small pots filled with the same potting soil that you grow your fuchsias in, and they won't suffer root shock when transplanted.

Seaweed for the garden may seem strange, but at regular intervals our ocean dumps quantities of kelp on local beaches. Most beach goers find it a nuisance, but gardeners take a little home every time they go to the beach to improve their garden soil. Choose the juicy sections, not the dried out bits. Once home, rinse it off to remove salts. Chop it up and spade it straight into the soil or to your compost heap. Seaweed tea is made by

pouring boiling water into bucket of well rinsed, chopped kelp. Leave it overnight, and spray it on plants to increase yields and discourage aphids.

Daylilies and agapanthus need to be cleaned up after they have bloomed. Just cut them off near the base. Moraea, or fortnight lily is a great plant by swimming pools, is drought resistant and easy to grow. Keep them looking their best by feeding them lightly now and watering them well. After flowers fade from the yellow species, cut off the flower stalk at the base. With white moraeas, remove the seed pods to clean up the plants and promote continued flowering, but don't remove the stalks, they'll bloom for several years.

Cycads are ancient plants on earth, dating from the age of dinosaurs. They look like ferns or palms, but they're not even closely related to either. The best known is sago palm. They grow well here if provided with some shade. Water cycads well now: don't let their roots dry out. When they are neglected, they tell you by their leaves. Brown tips on leaves usually come from salt burn (sago palms are particularly sensitive to salts in the soil). Drench soil to leach out salts. Pale or brown patches on leaves can come from sunburn. All over pale or yellow leaves most likely means lack of nitrogen or trace elements. Use a complete liquid fertilizer around the roots every two three weeks throughout the growing season. They also respond well to foliar fertilizer. Yellowing and loss of color may also result from insect attack especially scale. Look under the fronds for small, round, brown bumps and remove. They can easily be removed.

Impatiens is now the most popular bedding plants. They are easy to grow, not affected by insects and diseases and are adaptable to almost any climate. I'm sure those are the reasons why so many new varieties are being developed. The impatiens clan wasn't always so impressive - native to Africa, naturalized in Costa Rica; it grew into 3' gangly plants with few blooms. Claude Hope, now 93, has been hybridizing impatiens, petunias, salvias and other annuals at his farm in Costa Rica. Claude Hope is another Ecke. Almost every impatiens available today is a descendant of the cross he made at his farm.

Ceanothus, our California Lilac, is one of our lovely indigenous shrubs. There are upright shrubs, small trees along with low ground cover that have shiny evergreen leaves and blue flowers. Some have white and pink flowers and even superior clones have been selected from wild plants giving us 'Zanzibar' a variegated one finding its way to nurseries. All they need is sun and well-drained soil to get established.

Ornamental grasses are really hot according to John Greenlee, the guru of ornamental grass. Lack of variety turned away many years ago, but today they go way beyond pampas grass. There are now 30 different grasses and grass like plants that can be found in nurseries thanks to John Greenlee. They are fascinating and extremely versatile, adding texture and movement throughout the year doing well also in containers. We get much pleasure from our purple fountain grass in containers. Some varieties to consider depending on your usage: Acorus gramineus 'Ogon' (golden variegated sweet flag) that is great in containers. Long butter yellow, sword-like blades create a striking contrast with other ornamental grasses or brightly colored annuals. It is a mounding non-invasive

rhizome that loves sun but will tolerate some shade. *Penisetum setaceum* 'Rubrum' (purple fountain grass) is not new but is almost a must for every gardener that enjoys structure and what it can lend to beds and borders. Its wine colored leaves and soft purple flowers present a focal point in a landscape and in containers. It is tender and loves the summer while *Penisetum setaceum* 'Red Riding Hood' is fantastic, dwarf and hardy. It's the one we have. The *Carex* (sedge) species are more than 2,000 strong. The different species offer foliage in green, red, orange, bronze, brown and silver, and accept a wide range of growing conditions, and are excellent in shady gardens offering color and texture. Some adapt to drought and heat. Blue fescue is not new, but a new *Festuca* 'Golden Toupee' is a new variety. It has bright yellow leaves, grows in small clumps and is great for borders, edgings and rock gardens.

Squirrels or rabbits having a field day in your garden? A family of three ground squirrels denuded almost every new annual I put into our garden pots. My husband had only a small amount of wire netting that he put around one pot. It was hilarious to see the ingenuity of the critter. I stood there and watched as he climbed the wire only to have it lean over. How clever, he could now use the wire as a ladder, and eat his lunch very nicely. I had to grab my camera to take a photo. We built two traps using 4" PVC pipe. It is built like a T. We put the bait in through the top of the inverted T. After five days there were no more squirrels, however, I noticed one today. Guess we'll have to put the traps out again. Now, you cannot use these traps for tree squirrels only ground ones. Our squirrels' home was in the Disneyland ground cover at the bottom of our slope. Don't forget to use Blood Meal to control rabbits.

Looking for shrubs that boast beauty and fragrance? If you have trouble with gardenias or don't like jasmines that need to be kept in check, then maybe you would like the popular *Brugmansia* 'Angel's Trumpet. It is native to the Andean region of South America and are large plants grown as tall shrubs or small trees with flowers in shades of pink, yellow, white or orange-yellow. Their fragrance has been described as 'heavenly perfume'. Most are fast growers that can reach their maximum height at 15 feet and as wide if left unpruned. Because of their mountain origins, they appreciate the cool nights that typify our region. They are members of the same family as potatoes, tomatoes and peppers, so they like full-sun, amended well-drained soil, regular water and tend to be heavy feeders. Pruning stimulates growth and bloom and are most attractive trained in an umbrella shape revealing their spectacular, hanging flowers. If not pruned, they tend to form multiple trunks that rise from the base of the plant. Each spring, cut out dead and weak growth, reduce remaining shoots to one or three trunks and remove lower branches.

Two heat loving plants that love hot, sunny days are *Salvia greggii* & *Angelonia angustifolia*, a newcomer. The former is loved for its neat, roundish look and dark green leaves and deep reds, purples and pinks, salmon and white flowers. Birds and butterflies are attracted to them. The latter grows about 2 feet high and wide with spikes of small orchid like blossoms in blue, white, lavender and rose with occasional dark freckles. If spent flowers are removed, you will ensure continuous bloom through fall.

All in the Family: Grey Poupon and sauerkraut have something in common. They are in the same family – Brassicaceae or Cruciferae, or in plain English, mustards. Brassica means cabbage whether red, green or Chinese. Our best-known cruciferous vegetables are broccoli, cauliflower and brussels sprouts. They are called cruciferous because their flowers are cruciform, four petals forming the shape of a cross. Cabbage is a worldwide staple, easy to grow, tolerant of a wide range of soil conditions and store well without refrigeration. Those grown in Egypt are enormous. With the help from enzymes, they get zest from fermentation like German sauerkraut and Korean kim chee. There are 3,000 species of Cruciferae, mostly concentrated in temperate climates like the Mediterranean. Of those that made their way to Southern California, many are dismissed as weeds. This month fills with gold. The skinny green pods contain round, black seeds that may lie dormant for years springing to life when some disturbance churns up the soil. Although it looks delicate, black mustard is hardy, pest resistant and fast growing. Many countries have their own versions of the savory seed paste, each a bit different in color and taste. These days, the preferred source is no long black mustard but brown mustard Brassica juncea originating in the Himalayas. The black mustard seeds shed so easily that they have to be hand harvested, while the brown mustard seeds can be gathered by mechanical harvesters, making the process a lot more efficient.

Thousands of years ago, the Chinese were seasoning food with mustard. Ancient Greeks used it to treat digestive disorders, soothe muscular pain and the Romans used whole seeds for pickling. Mustard paste was used years ago to put on kids' chests to fight congestive disorders like croup. If well diluted, the paste makes a warming poultice, but the volatile, oily liquid from mustard may cause severe burns and lung damage. After all, mustard gas is a chemical weapon used in WWI.

Sage is singular good for the heart & braine, it quickneth the senses & memory.

Gerard 1633

SEPTEMBER CAPRI GARDENER

September marks the beginning of the fall planting season. Beginning now, over a period of two or three months, we switch annual flowers from those that bloom in summer to those that bloom in winter and spring. Start to clean out faded flowers and vegetables, but leave good ones in place to enjoy as long as they're still going. Prepare the ground. Remember that the month of October is considered to be the best month to plant here in San Diego.

Ants, as you have probably noticed, seem to be everywhere. Without the proper commodities of food and water, forager ants will start to wander away from the "parent colony" to find food for the large number of hatching larvae. Behavioral characteristics of the home invading ant require that FOOD is the necessity during February to May, but WATER is the necessity from June to October. They are now desperately searching for water. "Parent colonies" that are water deficient will now move forward into "satellite colonies" where water is plentiful. This accounts for sudden large numbers of ant foragers. If temperatures become extremely high, they will look for shelter even closer to a new water supply such as inside your home! Ants have the perfect transport vehicle. The worker ant contains an additional stomach that they use to transport liquid, food and water. They invade your landscape looking for a food supply provided by aphid type insects in your plants and trees. What to do? 1. Give your plants a water bath weekly using your garden hose with enough pressure to wash aphids and other insects off the leaves. 2. A teakettle of boiling water will make short work of a small ant colony while in your yard. Just pour it into their nest, which is normally very close to the surface. 3. Maintain healthy plants and control your weeds. 4. Nurseries have many insecticides to use. Use Safer Soap first – do not use oil as it may burn the leaves now. After a week or so, give them a bath and reapply or use insecticide.

Pest control hints: pick all overripe and rotted fruit to discourage insects and rodents. Pick off tomato hornworms or dust with BT. Air may be dry, but snails and slugs are active in the early hours. Use the relatively new Sluggo and Escar-Go. Discourage ants from setting up aphid, scale or mealybug farms by encircling trunks with a sticky substance such as Tree Tanglefoot Pest Barrier.

Watering is extremely important. Continue to water deeply and according to individual plants. Though nights may begin to cool off along the coast and shadows are noticeably lengthening, early September is largely a continuation of summer weather. We may even get a blast of Santa Ana winds. One deep watering now can sometimes save the life of a tree or bush. Watering trees means watering roots, not watering trunks. Roots typically extend to just beyond the length of the branches. An imaginary line around the circumference of the tree's branches is called the "drip line." To get water to the roots, set your irrigation to water a band of ground from just inside the drip line to just beyond. Pay attention to houseplants. Water them well & wash their leaves of dust.

Fertilize container plants weekly with half strength fertilizer, and continue to fertilize summer vegetables and flowering annuals to support their flower and fruit production. If you have blueberry bushes, fertilize with an acid based fertilizer at half the strength used for the same size camellias or azaleas.

Pruning can be done now on several heat loving plants that bloom all summer such as oleanders, bougainvilleas and plumbago. They'll regrow during winter for a big burst of bloom next spring and summer. If you wait until spring, there'll be less bloom. Don't prune hibiscus or New Zealand tea tree (*Leptospermum*) or you will lose winter bloom.

Cymbidiums are largely terrestrial orchids native to cool tropical jungles, from the Himalayas eastward through southern Asia. For at least two hundred years they were hybridized and grown in cool greenhouses by English collectors. During WWII, great many varieties were sent to Santa Barbara to save them from the bombs. It soon became clear that cymbidiums flourish outdoors in Southern California. They multiplied so rapidly that when the loaned varieties were sent home after the war, many more plants were left here to continue to grow in our gardens. They've since become one of our best plants for winter and spring bloom.

Not all cymbidiums bloom every year. You need three plants to be assured of annual bloom. They are easy to grow, but do have certain requirements. Switch fertilizers in September. Beginning on the first, switch from a high nitrogen formula to a formula higher in bloom ingredients such as 15-30-15 or 10-30-10. Cymbidiums continue to grow year round so they always need some nitrogen. Keep cymbidiums in bright light. Along the coast, they can take full sun, though you will need to protect them during Santa Ana winds or a sudden heat wave. If they have dark green leaves, chances are you are keeping them in too much shade. Give them enough light to turn the leaves a yellowish color. Crowded plants won't bloom as well because the leaves shade the bulbs. Provide a wide range of temperatures. They need a daily temperature range of at least 20 degrees. Our gardens provide warm days and cool nights, but our patios or porches often do not. They are too warm and sheltered at night, so situate your cymbidiums away from protective house walls.

Something new in how to plant in a barrel or larger container than is needed: I was at the gym and some morning program had a demonstration on planting lettuce seeds in a barrel. Since the barrel is obviously bigger than is needed, the demonstrator put some planting mix in the bottom, then took 3 one gallon sized nursery cans and turned them upside down onto the mix. Then she took "packing pop corn" and filled the barrel up over the cans. The planting mix was then put on top – about 8 to 10 inches worth. She sprinkled seeds from various lettuces over the top and gently patted them down then lightly water. Using several kinds of lettuces will make a lovely "garden". You will need to keep the seeds damp and in the shade until they sprout.

OCTOBER CAPRI GARDENER

October is one of our loveliest months, and also one of the best times to plant almost all permanent additions to the landscape except for tropicals and bare root plants - best time for bare root plants is in January. October is great because we try to get everything in the ground before the rains come while the soil is still warm. That way roots get established during winter so they can really grow in the spring. Plant all trees, shrubs and vines now to give them the best start possible. If you are looking for shrubs, trees or vines with fall colors, this is a good time to notice those that provide color year after year.

Plants to divide, trim and mulch: October is the main month for dividing plants that tend to grow in a clump such as clivia, iris, daylilies, bird of paradise, gazanias, Shasta daisies, gazanias and ginger. Not all plants like to be divided. Clivia, for instance, loves to be crowded; however, if you have some in containers and are quite root bound, you may wish to divide them. Always water thoroughly the day before dividing. It is best to wait until November to divide agapanthus, society garlic and Matilija poppies. Daylilies should be divided every 3 to 5 years to keep them blooming profusely. Old varieties bloom longer without division than new varieties. If you do not divide them this month, it is best to wait until March. All daylilies need to be renewed by cutting the leaves back to 4 in. and mulching the beds after cleaning up dead leaves. If your daylilies are still blooming, then wait till November. After renewing them, follow up with fertilizer to bring out fresh growth. Moraea or fortnight lilies can also become huge ugly clumps. Shear them straight across about 6 - 8 inches above the ground and follow up with fertilizer and water. If clumps are too large, then dig up now - the roots are not deep, cut back tops to 4 or 5 inches and replant them. Throw away any excess. Bird of paradise can be divided if clumps are small - otherwise, they are almost impossible to attack. Dead leaves should be cut off, and bloom stems need to be pulled out after the flowers fade. Geraniums need to be cut back if they are zonal geraniums (*Pelargonium hortorum*) by half. Cutting back now encourages regrowth during winter and a rest from flowering. Cut back entire plant straight across a branch and 1/4 - 1/2 in. higher than a joint. Leave one or two healthy leaves on most branches. If your specimens are potted, dig out some of the old soil and replace it with fresh potting soil mixed with 1 tablespoon lime dolomite per gallon. Geraniums don't like acid soil. Feed occasionally during the winter with 20-20-20 or 18-20-16 fertilizer. As they begin to grow, pinch back tips to make them bushy. Ivy geraniums in hanging baskets need cutting - cut 5-6 in. from pot level making sure you clean up the soil by removing dead leaves and debris. Remove some soil and replace with fresh mix, fertilize and water. If in the ground, cut them back lightly and clean up the ground, mulch, feed and water. Chrysanthemums do not need fertilizing now. Bait for slugs and snails. They are best divided in the spring.

Fertilize: raphiolepis (Indian hawthorn), pittosporum and star jasmine. Camellias and fuchsias could use some nourishment this month along with good mulch. Most foundation plants are light feeders, but those that bloom January through March give a better display with a fall feeding. Feed existing lawns this month.

Replant: Flower beds and containers that we plant for seasonal color may be finishing up their summer bloom. Now is the time to switch from summer to winter annuals, perennials and biennials. Dig up, amend and fertilize the soil then transplant or sow flowers for winter and spring bloom. Flowers to put in from transplants include alyssum, calendula, dianthus, Iceland poppy, johnny jump up, pansy, snapdragon, stock, sweet William, candytuft, English primrose and viola. Feed them well for fast growth and bloom. It is still not too late to plant from seed if you desire.

Aeration: Compacted lawns result from foot traffic, roots of neighboring plants and shrubs or equipment such as lawn mowers etc. When the soil becomes compacted, it loses its springiness and becomes hard like a rock. Water puddles or runs off, and lack of air to the roots causes the turf to deteriorate in appearance and vigor and can develop thin or bare patches. To correct this condition: mow the lawn, then make holes in the sod with a rented aeration machine, or hire a company that does this. In previous years I have noticed such an outfit doing lawns in Capri. This is the time to do it. Rake up the plugs. Then spread gypsum, organic soil amendment and a complete lawn fertilizer according to directions, or just leave the plugs – they will dissolve. If your soil is so dry it sheds water, spread on a pelletized penetrate such as Water In or Soil Air according to directions. Rake these ingredients into the plug holes for extra penetration.

Healing herbs: The study of how people use plants in their lives is known as ethnobotany. Native plant displays at most botanical gardens describe traditional uses for those plants – for food, building materials, cosmetics, clothing, medicines and more. We are finding more information pro and con in our magazines, newspapers and health newsletters. Some healing herbs like jewelweed and Aloe vera are straightforward to use. Others require sophisticated processing in order to make them palatable and safe. If you are becoming more interested in planting a healing garden, it would be wise to consult a certified herbalist to get as much information and documentation as you can.

“Mustard seed”, according to Smithsonian, “is the world’s most heavily traded spice, an unctuous river of creamy yellow paste is spreading across American platters and palates.” One reason being it is a perfect fit with today’s lifestyle - a condiment that contains virtually no cholesterol. Guess that’s why I see it in so many recipes. Its emulsifying qualities make an essential part of everything from salad dressings and mayonnaise, to baked beans and barbecue sauce. Mixed into industrially prepared foods, it not only adds flavor but gives them a longer shelf life by inhibiting the growth of molds and bacteria. The market is largely dominated by the bright yellow spread that appeared with hot dogs when they were introduced at the St. Louis World’s Fair in 1904. The mustard family includes some 390 genera of plants with cruciform flowers and peppery leaves, such as radishes, broccoli, cauliflower, brussels sprouts, turnips and watercress, along with ornamental members such as candytuft, honesty and rose of Jericho. All the great ancient civilizations from Greece and Egypt to China and India, cultivated and consumed mustard seed. Alexander the Great used it during a battle in 331 BC. He figured he would knock off the Persian Empire in an easy afternoon’s work, but Persia’s cocky emperor, Darius III, sent him a saucy warning – a bag of sesame seeds symbolizing how numerous his troops were. Alexander coolly replied with a similar bag – but filled with

much more numerous mustard seed to show not only the number of his warriors but their hot ferocity as well. He won, but it was the Romans who used it most widely carrying it to their province of Gaul where it took root and formed the basis of France's preeminence in mustard making and consumption. Its center of mustard making has long been the Burgundian city of Dijon. Interestingly, one thing they don't make in Dijon is mustard seed. If you drive along fields of yellow flowering plants near the Maille factory, they won't be mustard plants but rapeseed plants, also a Cruciferae plant. Canola oil comes from rapeseed. Dijon, like those elsewhere, import nearly all their seed from thousand of miles away – the endless plains of western Canada. Mustard seeds need long, cool summer days to mature and Canada gets such good yields that no other part of the world can meet their prices. Over 700,000 acres are devoted to growing mustard seed producing 250,000 tons per year, enough to supply more than 90% of the world's needs. The only other countries with significant production are Britain and Czech Republic.

HORTICULTURE HISTORY:

American preoccupation with the present sometimes results in ignorance of the past. A lack of knowledge of the contributions of our forefathers can lead to a lack of appreciation in the lifestyles we lead today. We take for granted our garden plants and the food we eat. However, many people devoted their lives so that people today could enjoy the fruits of their labor. David Fairchild was one of those deserving of our gratitude.

The age of plant exploration began around 1897 under the direction of Secretary of Agriculture, James Wilson. He appointed botanist David Fairchild, fresh from 3 years of study in Italy, Germany and Java, to head a newly created USDA unit called the Section of Seed and Plant Introduction that he served for 27 years.

Fairchild hired Frank Meyer as chief plant explorer and this duo has come to be regarded as the founding fathers of USDA plant collecting. Together, they were responsible for crops such as barley, chestnuts, soybeans, spinach, sprouts and Chinese cabbage. Not to mention 55 varieties of mangoes from India, along with citrus, dates, figs, nectarines and pomegranates. More amazing is that air travel had not arrived, so all arrived by ship.

Some of Fairchild's efforts became infamous. He is usually blamed for the introduction of the invasive *Melaleuca* trees that are drying up the Everglades. He also in 1902 experimented with Kudzu, and planted it around his home. It quickly raced out of control, taking over his yard, growing into tall pines and suffocating existing vegetation. He did write against its planting, but his work was not published until 1938. By this time the vine had conquered most of the South, and its presence is still noticeable and thriving to this day. Thank goodness the vast majority of flora that arrived in the country was beneficial or benign. You can visit Fairchild Tropical Gardens in Miami if you are ever in that area.

In the San Bernardino Forest range one-third of the pines are lost and the forecast is that 90% of the remaining pines may be gone in four years. Pines in the Lake Tahoe and Mammoth regions are beginning to exhibit the same pattern of demise. Sudden Oak Death is jeopardizing the entire live oak population of northern California – health of trees everywhere may be at risk. Fortunately, new studies in the field of organics are resulting in breakthroughs that can save these trees and also benefit the environment.

Traditional treatments for pests involve the use of toxic chemicals and in many cases this practice only postpones the death of the trees. What happens is that although the pesticide may kill the pest, it also kills the beneficial microorganisms important to tree health. Just like we humans, if the immune system is compromised, the tree lacks the health and vigor to fight off disease. A better alternative had to be found.

Trees get their nutrition from the soil through root absorption, a process assisted by the work of microorganisms. If through pesticides, pollution, compacted soils, drought or

any other severe stress, then trees do not receive proper nutrition. One company, Tree and Plant Rescue, has developed an efficient and economical method to do this by developing a nutrient solution of healthy soil organisms. They inject the correct amount and type into the root zone of the tree and also spray the leaves with a dilute solution to activate foliar feeding. After a month, a second root zone treatment is applied along with proper food – positive results are seen usually within thirty days.