



THE YOLO GARDENER

Spring 2011

A QUARTERLY PUBLICATION BY THE U.C. YOLO COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Don't Dawdle with Giant Dodder

Diana Morris, Yolo County Master Gardener

This past fall giant dodder, also known as Japanese dodder, was found growing on a wild elderberry shrub along the banks of the Sacramento River in Yolo County. This highly invasive, parasitic plant attacks and grows over ornamental shrubs and fruit trees, with a preference for citrus. It can also parasitize annuals, perennials, and native trees such as oaks and willows. Giant dodder can cover and kill most large shrubs and small trees. If it doesn't kill them outright, the weakened state of infected plants makes them predisposed to diseases and insect and nematode invasions.

Giant dodder vines resemble thick spaghetti with leafless, twining threads that wrap around host stems forming a dense mat. Easily spotted because of its pale green to yellow or bright orange color, giant dodder stands out against the green foliage of the host plant.

"Giant dodder has been found at several hundred sites in many California counties, starting in Yolo County in 2005-2006. We found three sites in West Sacramento, two residential and one commercial property. The latest find was on River Road in the West Sacramento area, (and) is the first wild site," said Bill Lyon, biologist for Yolo County Agriculture.

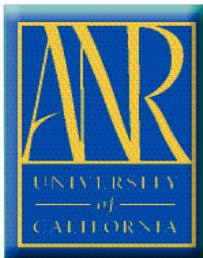
Not to be confused with the seed-producing, common native dodder, giant dodder primarily spreads through the dissemination of small pieces of stems that are distributed by birds and other animals or through pruning,



Giant Dodder along the Sacramento River

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composting, and the improper disposal of infested plant material. (One of the Sacramento finds, however, had produced viable seed pods, which Lyon said, "can make eradication very difficult if that becomes common.")

As dodder plants grow, they continually reattach to the host. When other hosts are nearby, dodder shoots spread from plant to plant, forming a striking and easily recognizable blanket of intertwined stems that are capable of growing up to six inches per day. Coming upon a plant covered in giant dodder is almost other worldly -- resembling something from a horror film.

Should you spot giant dodder, do not try to control it yourself. According to Lyon, "Any suspects should be reported to our office. We can take samples to the lab" for confirmation. "If in doubt, call it in. Do not chop up dodder and use as green-waste or compost. Small fragments can reproduce if they contact green plant material."

This weed is under an eradication program in California and has spread to more than a dozen California counties including Alameda, Butte, Contra Costa, Fresno, Los Angeles, Merced, Sacramento, Shasta, Solano, Sutter, Tulare, Yolo, and Yuba. It has also been a major problem in Texas.

Of the early sightings mentioned above, "The first three sites were eradicated by spraying and killing the host plants at one site, a large tree and shrub removal at another site, and the third site was killed simply by cutting the ivy host to the base where it was climbing into a cedar tree."

The latest find in the fall of 2010, "...has been cut out, partially removed, the remainder to be burned with follow-up Round-up spraying to prevent re-growth from fragments surviving on the ground. The standard removal involves total removal or chemical killing of all host plants," said Lyon. Costs for past and current eradications have been paid for out of Federal and State funds. To date, costs have amounted to about \$10,000. However, as a result of recent budget developments, according to Lyon, the Federal and State authorities may not continue funding future eradications of this pest.

Lyon continued, "The fear is that this parasite will escape into wild lands and be impossible to eradicate. It will literally smother host plants and can kill them over time. One name for the plant is strangleweed.... It is burned back by a freeze but seems to survive to grow back the following year."

For more information on giant dodder, visit the Integrated Pest Management website at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7496.html>. If you should come across a plant that you think might be giant dodder, contact biologist Bill Lyon of Yolo County Agricultural at 530-666-8140. 🌱

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Aphids, and Earwigs, and Snails! Oh My!

(Apologies to Dorothy, Wizard of Oz)

Barbara Ohlendorf, Yolo County Master Gardener

Springtime is a season filled with wonders and fresh delight but also some unpleasant surprises. As those succulent little leaves and buds burst forth in the warm weather, so too will the little critters that feed on them.

Aphids come in many colors and forms. The most commonly noticed forms are the wingless adult and nymphs that cluster on plants in colonies. Aphids really make their presence known when the colonies increase rapidly in the warm, sunny days of spring. Leaves on infested plants start to curl, turn yellow, and become distorted. Large quantities of a sticky substance (honeydew) that they produce appears on plant parts below the aphids and eventually the honeydew may be covered with a dark, sooty mold, making leaves and fruit pretty ugly. On some vegetables and ornamentals, aphids also transmit viruses, causing even more problems.



Aphid colonies often appear on the growing tips of plants in spring.

All in all, if these insects are left unchecked, they can really make a mess of your plants, but destroying them completely is not a good idea because aphids have a lot of natural enemies. With a little bit of help on your part, you can create an environment that encourages populations of natural enemies, such as lady beetle larvae, lacewing larvae, syrphid fly larvae, and soldier beetles while minimizing the damage that the aphids cause. A good way to achieve this balance is by hosing off the plants that are hosting colonies. Do this every few days during warm spring weather, because colonies

will reestablish themselves. You will kill enough of the population to keep your plants from being too damaged, while leaving some of the population to provide food for beneficial insects.



Insect larvae, like that of the lady beetle shown here, often fool people because they don't look anything like the adults. Like larvae of many other natural enemies, they look strange but are voracious predators.

Another important aspect to managing aphid pests is to make sure that you don't have ants protecting them, because if there are, it is much harder for the natural enemies to do their job. Ants get into the act because they want the honeydew that the aphids produce. In fact, honeydew is such an important food source for some ants that they have a system of tending the aphids to "milk" them for their honeydew all the while protecting them from predators and parasites. So ant control is also a key element in aphid management. (For text and video information on ant control in your garden, check out the UC IPM Web site at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7411.html>.)

You can always apply something a little stronger than water to control aphids, but keep in mind that preserving natural enemies is vital to the long-term health of your garden. For that reason, least-toxic insecticides such as insecticidal soap, neem oil, and narrow-range oil are your best bets. While these products will kill the natural enemies they contact, they won't leave toxic residues on the plants that would harm natural enemies that move in later. The UC IPM Web site has more information on controlling aphids at <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7404.html>.

Once the hot weather comes, aphid populations take a big decline and do not present as many problems in the garden.

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Earwigs. Before I took up gardening in California, I used to think earwigs were fascinating (they are not big garden pests in other areas). After a few years, however, my soft spot for these critters hardened.

Earwigs play a beneficial role in the garden by feeding on aphids and a large variety of dead and living organisms but become a problem when they feed on vegetable seedlings, flower buds, maturing soft fruit, and corn silks. So just like with aphids, the best approach to this insect's presence is not to aim at wiping it out but rather to keep its numbers on the low side.



Feeding by earwigs often leaves foliage looking tattered

Earwigs feed at night and hide during the day, and this little fact can come in handy when planning a control strategy. Placing traps in areas where earwigs are troublesome is usually adequate to control them. Traps can be anything that provides hidey holes for the earwigs during the day, like pieces of hose or rolled up newspapers that you collect each morning and empty or dispose of. To empty hose-type traps, just hit them against the rim of a bucket filled with soapy water.

Low-sided cans from tuna or cat food also make effective traps. Bait them with ½ inch of oil (tuna fish oil or vegetable oil with some bacon grease) in the bottom of the can and place them around plants where feeding is occurring. Empty the traps in the morning and refill.

Make sure you aren't providing hiding places for the earwigs in ivy, weeds, piles of rubbish, or leaves. One place you do not want to grow ivy is near your vegetable patch!



Snail feeding creates holes in ripening fruit.

Snails and slugs. These mollusks are ubiquitous but, like aphids, tend to cause the biggest problem in warm, spring weather. During winter and hot, dry summer, they hibernate, but in spring, they love the cool, moist weather and soft, green tissue of emerging plants. They can wreak havoc on seedlings, herbaceous plants, and fruit close to the ground (strawberries, artichokes, tomatoes). If plants are disappearing, or in the case of bulbs, not appearing, look around for the silvery mucous trails to confirm that snails and slugs are the culprits.

The plan of attack for snails is similar to the one for earwigs: eliminate hiding places and put out traps. With snails and slugs, you may also choose to use baits.

Hiding places for snails include boards, stones, debris, weedy areas around tree trunks, and dense ground cover (again, ivy patches are ideal sheltering spots). You can take advantage of this daytime hiding habit when selecting a trap. Make traps from boards, flowerpots, or just about anything that provides cool, moist shelter during the day. Checking under and inside these items and removing the snails you find can go a long way to bringing down population levels. If you crush the snails, they can be left in the garden; otherwise, dispose of them in a plastic bag or kill them in a bucket of soapy water.

Some gardeners use beer-baited traps, either home made or commercial. These traps only work when the beer is regularly replenished to levels deep enough to drown the snails. Also, they only attract snails/slugs in the immediate vicinity of a few feet.

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Copper foil (e.g. Snail-Barr) wrapped around the trunk of individual trees will keep snails out of your tree for years. Snails won't go onto copper. Brushing a Bordeaux mixture (hydrated lime and copper sulfate), or copper sulfate alone, onto a tree trunk can also create an effective barrier. There are other substances that can be used to create barriers, but none are as effective as copper. These include dry ashes or other abrasives, which lose their effectiveness if they get wet or damp and are difficult to maintain.

Several snail baits are on the market that can also be used effectively. Carefully read the directions of the product you are using because those that contain as their active ingredient iron phosphate (e.g., Sluggo, Escar-Go) are safe to use in the vegetable garden or in areas with pets and children. Products with other active ingredients (e.g., metaldehyde) are not. If you decide to include baiting in your control plan, read the section on *Baits* in the UC IPM Pest Note: Snails and Slugs (<http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7427.html>) for detailed "how to" information on this approach.

While generally you want to identify a pest before you take control actions, aphids, earwigs and snails are such common occurrences in this area that control strategies will not be wasted efforts if done well in advance of pests' appearance. Clean up debris in the garden, remove hiding places—other than those you intend to use as traps—and get rid of any ivy patches growing close to where you want to put your vegetables. These efforts will make for a much easier plan of attack when these critters put in their springtime appearance! 🐞

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Why Have a Vegetable Garden in a Park?

Peg Smith, Yolo County Master Gardener

Curious about what vegetables can be planted at this time of year? A visit to the Central Park Gardens vegetable bed will help you make your choices and evaluate new ways of doing things.

The vegetable garden is an oval at the north end of Central Park Gardens (corner of Third and B Streets, Davis) divided into four beds. Raised bed techniques are used in the management of the garden. These techniques preserve and improve soil quality and allow for close planting of the vegetables to increase the yield from the small space.

The vegetable area is designed as an outdoor teaching space to show the prime planting time for a wide

variety of vegetables. A year round plan for vegetable rotation has been developed so at any time of the year something is being planted, is growing, or is being harvested. All produce grown at Central Park is donated to the Davis Community Meals program.

Crops are rotated throughout the space to reduce the nutrient depletion of the soil and to decrease the incidence of pest infestations. For example, tomatoes are not grown in the same place each year. Intervention for disease and pest control is based on the "least toxic" approach of integrated pest management. The area surrounding the bed is landscaped with plants that attract beneficial insects to aid in pest control.

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The other component of the garden shows examples of Yolo County seasonal crops that you might see in the fields surrounding our community. It is probably easy to identify the grand displays of field corn in the summer, but what makes a field green through the winter? At the vegetable bed you will see seasonal samples of grain crops, field tomatoes sunflowers, safflower and other Yolo County crops.

February in the Central Park Vegetable Garden

This bed was planted in November of 2010 and is now being harvested. Broccoli, cabbage and kale (*brassicas*) were the demonstration winter crops this year. Onions are interspersed between the plantings.



This bed was planted in October 2010 with samples of “green manure” or cover crops. Included are annual rye, crimson clover, vetch and fava beans. Clover, vetch and fava beans are nitrogen fixing plants that improve the health of the soil. These cover crops will be chopped and turned into the soil or added to our compost.



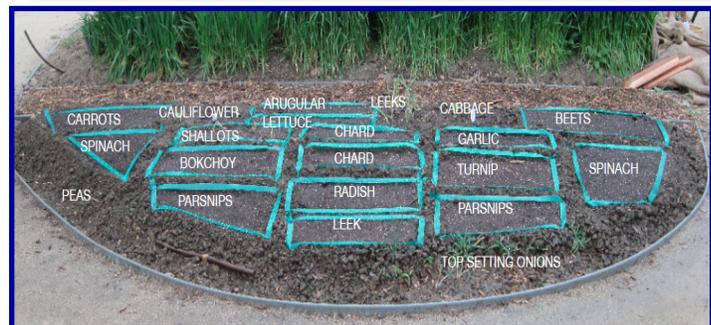
Yolo County winter grain crops. Looking at a field while traveling along the road, it is hard to tell what grain crop is in a field. Currently in the vegetable garden there are samples of hard white wheat, hard red wheat, durham wheat, triticale, barley and oats. This allows our garden visitors a closer look at Yolo County crops so they can easily see the difference between oats and wheat .



This bed has recently been planted with late winter crops.



Central Park Gardens offers free Master Gardener Workshops at the garden once a month. Please check <http://www.centralparkgardens.org> for a complete schedule. All are welcome, from beginners to advanced, at our outdoor garden classroom.



Fun With Genetics

Willa Pettygrove, Yolo County Master Gardener

This title may make you think of something old and quaint (Gregor Mendel and his first pea experiments) or something as sinister as “Frankenfood.” This article is not about either extreme. It is about expanding your gardening hobby with seed choices and seed saving.

As with many “aha!” moments, my first genetics fun was entirely by accident. I had decided to grow some of the Indian corn left from last fall’s décor, a seemingly homogeneous ear of dark red kernels. This was an ordinary ear, probably purchased from the Davis Food Coop or another grocery. The results of this accidental experiment were amazing. Even though I planted kernels of uniform color, the plants and the resulting ears were in an entire color spectrum, from light yellow to shiny purple. In addition, the foliage of the plants also varied, including at least one in dark red. I hoarded this motley harvest of ears and brought it out to display for many years. I was amazed.

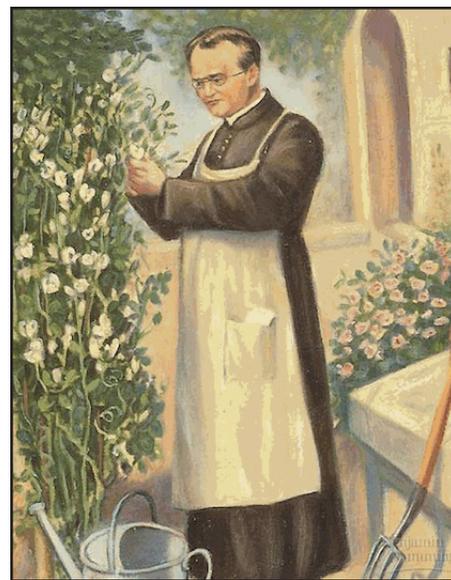
Then, last summer, I chose to let a volunteer squash grow after transplants of butternut (‘Waltham’ strain) did not respond in their usual vigorous manner. The volunteer, in all likelihood a Waltham relative that survived the compost pile, grew quite nicely and with no encouragement from me. At harvest, I was again amazed. The transplants had produced a few decent-sized butternuts. The volunteer, on the other hand, also produced squashes that looked like butternuts—only on steroids! When I prepared one of the jumbo squash, it was sufficient for three to four times the recipe for an ordinary butternut.

How might you replicate my experiences in your own garden? It is good to have records of your “experiments”, and these do not have to be elaborate. A small notebook will do, perhaps with photos of your results. Note what you plant, and when. Then simply observe, and make more notes. (After all, this is what Gregor Mendel did, in detail and with illustrative drawings.)

This year, I’m trying some other seeds. I’m soaking some organic popcorn (purchased in bulk from the Davis Food Coop) to check its viability before planting. Organic sources tend to work better for these projects because the seeds haven’t been treated to prevent sprouting. My experiment will compare results for kernels of different colors and markings.

The other experiment involves planting a packet of sweet alyssum seeds in mixed colors -- deep pink, yellow, coral, in addition to the usual pink and white. Because the seed is from a supplier that offers open pollinated and “heirloom” varieties, my hope is that the unusual colors will reproduce from one generation to the next. It will be interesting to see if they do.

Seed saving can be an interesting and rewarding way to indulge your interest in plant genetics. Some seeds, such as tomato, require special handling in order to sprout. There are books and Web sites devoted to this fascinating hobby. This would also be an interesting and educational project to share with younger gardeners. They might learn more in the process about people like Mendel (one of the first geneticists) and Barbara McClintock, one of the first women to earn a Nobel Prize for Physiology or Medicine (in 1983, 30 years after her pioneering research in corn genetics). 🌱



Maybe you can be a Gregor Mendel too!

*Spotlight on . . .**2011 Picks of the Year*

Jan Bower, Yolo County Master Gardener

International Rose of the Year

The Joy of Life – ‘*Rosa Joie de Vivre*’ – is the outstanding rose this year. Superb health, dark green glossy foliage, repeat flowering and a compact, manageable habit all contributed to its appointment. The Floribunda rose was bred by Kordes of Germany and continues to collect a string of international awards for its fragrant, old-style, cupped blooms in shades of creamy pastel pink and apricot. It is the perfect choice for an organic gardener or someone new to gardening who doesn’t want to use chemicals to keep their roses healthy. It grows to three feet tall so it can be used as a hedge alongside a path or just to add color to a mixed border of shrubbery. It also makes a fantastic centerpiece in a large tub on the patio.

*The Joy of Life – ‘Rosa Joie de Vivre’**All America Rose Selections*

The roses ‘Dick Clark’ and ‘Walking on Sunshine’ were chosen as the All-America Rose Selections for the year. ‘Dick Clark’ made its TV debut on a Camelot-themed float by Bayer during the Rose Parade in Pasadena on January 1 and is named for the celebrity who traditionally hosts the New Year’s Eve Party in New York City.

*Dick Clark**Walking on Sunshine*

The rose features a blend of cream and cherry blush with burgundy-edged petals. ‘Walking on Sunshine,’ is a disease resistant rose and sure to make someone happy when skies are gray with bright yellow flowers that are round and full like the sun.

Herb of the Year

The International Herb Association chose Horseradish – ‘*Armoracia rusticana*’ -- as its number one herb for 2011. Whole horseradish root has hardly any aroma. However, when the root is cut or grated, the enzymes in the cells of the damaged plant break down to produce a form of mustard oil, which irritates the sinuses and eyes. Once grated, if not used immediately or mixed in vinegar, the root darkens, loses its pungency and becomes unpleasantly bitter. In the

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kitchen, it can be used to flavor tomato juice, made into a seafood cocktail sauce or added to mayonnaise and mustard to make them more piquant.

Perennial Plant of the Year

The Perennial Plant Association selected the Arkansas Blue Star --- '*Amsonia hubrichtii*' -- as its winner this year. This versatile North American native is a hardy perennial that grows 36 inches tall and wide in Zones 4 through 9 and a versatile North American native. In spring and summer, *Amsonia* has clusters of small, light-blue flowers with bright green ferny foliage; in autumn, the leaves turn bright golden-yellow. It is attractive when mixed with ornamental grasses and border plants.



Seasonal colors of
Amsonia hubrichtii
2011 Perennial Plant of the Year™

Flower Bulbs of the Year

For at least 10 years, the International Flower Bulb Center has organized an annual Flower Bulb and Summer Bulb of the Year election. A jury consisting of top specialists in gardening trends from six countries selects the annual winners. *Nerine bowdenii*, also known as Guernsey Lily, Cape Flower and Japanese Spider Lily, was chosen as the Summer Bulb of the Year. This delicate pink flower blooms in a cluster on a leafless stem with trumpet-shaped flowers whose petals curl backward. The Autumn Bulb of the Year is *Narcissus triandrus* 'Thalia,' more commonly known as a daffodil. It grows to a height of 12-14 inches, and each stem bears two-three fragrant, snow-white flowers in the spring.



National Garden Bureau Awards

Each year the National Garden Bureau selects one flower and one vegetable to be showcased. 2011 is the Year of the Zinnia and the Year of the Tomato. Zinnias are popular with home gardeners because they are easy to grow from seed or bedding plants, adapt well to most growing conditions and come in a variety of colors, shapes and sizes. Tomatoes are the most popular home-grown vegetable so it is little wonder that they were selected. Classified according to fruit shape, ripening times, color and size makes it easier to choose one's favorites from a tremendous variety.



The Year of the Vegetable



To top everything, Mr. George Ball, chairman of the W. Atlee Burpee Co., has declared 2011 as the Year of the Vegetable. Eighteen years ago as president of the American Horticultural Society, he initiated a successful children's gardening program. He now wants to inspire all of America to at least develop a starter garden. A recent study by the Centers for Disease Control shows that only 26 percent of Americans eat at least three servings of vegetable a day. With child obesity at an all-time high, Mr. Ball advocates a nutritional diet with lots of fruits and vegetables. It has been found that kids who grow vegetables alongside their parents eat them regularly and with gusto. 🍅

Plants That Stink!

David Studer, Yolo County Master Gardener

To paraphrase an old adage, aroma is in the olfactory of the sniffer. To prove this point, just the other day, I was standing in my driveway and a gentle breeze blew across the dozens of paper whites (*Narcissuspapyraceus*) blooming in the front yard. The scent, acting as a harbinger of spring, added a subtle softness to the mild, sunny day and lifted my spirits. My wife, on the other hand, needed industrial strength decongestants and antihistamines to overcome the assault on her sinuses...So it goes.

I thought this would be a fun subject to explore, but as I get further into it, I realize that each reader may have their own list of plants that stink and this short introduction could grow into a reference tome quickly. So I propose that if you have a particular specimen that you would like to nominate for the list of “Plants That Stink”, let me know, and I will collect them and write a follow up article that includes your suggestions.

Here we go. The first nominee to the “Parade of Stinking Plants” is the Privet (Genus: *Ligustrum*). Native to Asia, species include the glossy privet (*L.lucidum*), Japanese or waxed-leafed privet (*L. japonicum*), California privet (*L. ovalifolium*) and *ad nauseum*—and I mean “nauseum”. The smell is akin to latex as in latex gloves. Pollen from the privet resemble tiny, razor-sharp, ninja throwing stars that lodge in your sinuses and refuse to come out no matter how hard you blow. If this isn’t bad enough, privets produce billions of tiny black berries that are consumed by flocks of birds, like cedar waxwings, who then deposit them on the car of some unlucky guy (me) who parked right below their perch. The berry deposits stain everything.

Now, you would think I do not like the privet—which is true—but they do have their uses in the landscape. They make great tall, dense, privacy hedges. Keeping them manicured into a boxy shape eliminates most of the bloom and along with it, the smell, pollen, and berries—thank Gawd!

Next, I nominate the ginkgo tree (*Ginkgo biloba*)—not just any ginkgo, but the female ginkgo. The fruit at harvest smells like the front lawn of a fraternity house the morning after the big homecoming “kegger”. I don’t feel the need to be any more explicit than that.

Also known as the maidenhair tree, the ginkgo has a beautiful golden fall color and an ancient legacy stretching back to the Triassic period (more than 200 million years ago)! Interestingly enough, according to the Web site about.com, the tree no longer exists in the wild. I would not be surprised if the other plants in the wild got together and voted it out because it stank.

Let’s talk a little about its stinkin’ fruit. It’s a pale pink, soft orb about the size of a small plum. Inside is a nut (or seed) that the Chinese like to serve roasted. They also dye the shells red to serve at weddings. flavorandfortune.com describes the taste as “slightly sweet with the texture of a chestnut”. If you type “ginkgo nut” into your web browser you will get a host of sites with recipes and advice on how to prepare and serve the ginkgo nut.

If you must have a fossil in your plant collection, my advice is to plant the male ginkgo tree (nurseries don’t even sell the female anymore).

My next nominee is devil’s tongue, aka konjac or voodoo lily (*Amorphophallus konjac*). Nice name—very stinky. A member of the Araceae (Arum) family, this wicked-looking plant really assaults the senses with a rotten-flesh odor. Keeping the plant in the dark during the bloom phase may cut down on the smell, but if the bloom sees sunlight, back away. I couldn’t find any place that said the devil’s tongue would grow in Yolo County, but several web sites are willing to sell the brave (or curiously foolish) amongst you a corm to grow on your own.



Interestingly, the large, starchy corms of devil’s tongue make a mottled, gray-tan gelatinous substance called konnyaku. It is high in fiber and low in calories, which make it a popular health food in Japanese cuisine.

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photo by D. Studer

Titan Arum (*Amorphophallus titanum*) Kew Gardens, London

Konnyaku is often served in soups or stews during winter. The noodle form, called shirataki, is a common ingredient in sukiyaki. Konjac can also be used as a substitute for gelatin in jelly desserts, although several web sites include warnings about possible choking hazards for the very young and very old. The risk is high enough that the Food and Drug Administration issued a product warning in 2001.

Finally, for the granddaddy of the “stinking plant parade”, may I present the titan arum, also known as the carrion arum or corpse flower (*Amorphophallus titanum*). Native to the equatorial rain forests of Sumatra, the titan arum takes about 15 years to reach its stinking maturity. It blooms over a 12-hour period during which it emits an odor to attract the flies that pollinate it. Read all about it at: <http://greenhouse.ucdavis.edu/conservatory/>

While it only blooms for a short period of time, this guy smells similar to the devil’s tongue -- like rotting flesh. What makes it the “granddaddy” is its size. Blooming titan arums stand about 6 feet tall and spread about 3-4 feet across—that’s a lot of stinking! The U.C Davis Botanical Conservatory offers tours during their bloom periods. If you contact them at the Web site above, they might let you meet one of their big stinking plants in person, but bring a clothespin for your nose! 🦋

SPRING GARDENING TIPS

Linda Parsons, Yolo County Master Gardener

Once again, we are experiencing above average rainfall in Yolo County. While our rainy winter may have prevented you from getting your garden ready for its spring show, you have a few weeks before spring. The Vernal Equinox on March 20, 2011 officially marks the beginning of spring in the Northern Hemisphere. March 23rd is the average last frost day in Yolo County. Days will gradually grow longer and our day and night temperatures will bring the warmth that encourages our gardens to break their winter slumber.

It is also likely to be a better than average season for insects and diseases. Be sure to keep an early eye out for aphids and fungal diseases.

The following tips and ideas will help you prioritize your garden chores and possibly discover some new adventures in gardening.

SPRING CLEANING

- Examine trees and shrubs for winter damage. Prune damaged foliage and branches.
- If you haven’t pruned your roses and fruit trees, this is the last month to ready them for their spring bloom.
- Do not prune early flowering rhododendrons, magnolias, camellias, azaleas, viburnum and forsythia. It is best to prune them after the blossoms are spent or wait until early fall.
- Apply the final application of dormant spray to all fruit trees before the buds swell. Roses need to be sprayed to prevent over-wintering insects and fungal spores.
- Weeds are starting to sprout, so take care of them before they take over.



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- Once your spring bulbs have finished blooming, dead head (remove blossom ends), however, don't remove the leaves until they turn yellow. This will help the bulbs store energy for next spring's bloom. If they are unsightly, braid them or fold them over and secure with twine, until you remove them in late spring.

FERTILIZING, COMPOSTING AND MULCHING

- Your plants are hungry. Begin to lightly cultivate your perennial garden, being careful not to dig too close to your plants. Loosen the soil as soon as it is not too wet to work.
- Add soil amendments, such as compost, peat moss and organic fertilizer.
- Roses and fruit trees need special attention now. In addition to organic rose food and soil amendments, I add a cup of alfalfa pellets and two table-spoons of Epsom salt to each rose plant. These help the rose to produce more basal breaks (new growth) and more chlorophyll.
- Be sure to use fertilizer that is recommend for each plant type. In particular, too much nitrogen will make the plant grow too quickly, producing growth which will not be as sturdy and which is more susceptible to sucking insects.
- Resume your feeding schedule for your lawn and fruit trees.
- Fertilize your spring blooming plants, such as camellias and azaleas after they bloom and repeat for the next three months.
- Fertilize your houseplants.
- Mulch your garden to a depth of 3 inches. The reward will be fewer weeds and less watering in the months ahead.



PLANTING



- Perennial plants need attention now. Remove any old growth. Dig and divide crowded perennial plants.
- Select early blooming annuals, plant candytuft, pansies, violas, dianthus, Iceland poppies, and primroses.
- Select summer blooming plants.
- Bulbs, corms, and tubers can be planted now. Some colorful choices are cannas, begonias, lilies, and dahlias.
- Shade plants include: Astilbe, Columbine, Coral Bells, Dicentra, Foxglove, Hostas, Nepeta, Pulmonaria, and Ferns.
- Drought tolerant and sunny location plants include: Russian Sage, Muhlenbergia, Rabbits Tale Grass, Buddleia, Echinacea, Rudibeckia, and Gallardia.
- Replace shrubs and roses. Be sure to select these plants with care to insure they have the correct growing conditions. Careful selection ensures healthy plants that are easy to grow and maintain.
- After you have completed your planting, be sure to lightly fertilize your plants and mulch well. Remember that plants do better if they are planted at or slightly above grade.
- If you are planning to grow your vegetables from seed, begin your seedlings indoors under lights. By late April or early May you can harden off and plant the seedlings in your vegetable garden. The soil temperature needs to be 50 degrees Fahrenheit before you set out your young plants.

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DISEASE AND PEST CONTROL



- If you have applied your dormant oil and fungicide, your plants will be off to a good start.
- Periodically check plants, especially roses, for signs of black spot, rust and mildew. These often appear first on the interior or lower parts of the plant. If the spring is especially rainy, you will need to be more vigilant and spray more often.
- While you are checking for disease, note whether slugs, snails and earwigs are munching on your plants. As the weather warms, aphids, mites, thrips and scale creep into your garden. These pests are usually kept in check by a variety of beneficial insects such as lacewings, mantises, ground beetles, tachinid and robber flies. Many plants attract beneficial insects including yarrow, alyssum, feverfew, dill, parsley, coriander, penstemon, and asters.
- If you need to use commercial pesticides, consult <http://ipm.ucdavis.edu/> for excellent information on controlling pests and diseases.

LAWN CARE

- Lawn is often the forgotten plant and one of the most neglected plants in the garden. Lawn does surprisingly well if given a modicum of care. Most importantly, it needs to be fed and watered regularly.
- Check your irrigation system and be sure that the lawn is getting the proper amount of water. The amount will gradually need to be increased as the days become longer and warmer.
- You will also need to raise the mower blade to a height of three inches, as spring gives way to summer.
 - Re-seed thin spots in your lawn and begin your fertilizing and mowing schedule in March.
 - While it is easier to use commercial fertilizer, applying a light topcoat of compost to your lawn will greatly benefit your lawn's growth and health.



FINAL SPRING TOUCHES

- Paint the lower trunks of young trees with water thinned white latex paint to prevent sunburn and borer problems. Stake tall growing perennials and vegetables before they begin to bend over in late spring.
- In late spring, thin fruit trees, leaving four to five inches between each fruit. This will help the remaining fruit to mature properly and keep the branches from being over-weighted and splitting.
- Deadhead spent flowers to assure a long blooming season in your garden.
- Plant containers with your favorite annuals and herbs.
- Clean and re-stock bird feeders. Sharpen and maintain garden tools.



SPRINGTIME IDEAS

Hang your hammock or set out your favorite garden chair. Relax with some lemonade and take time to enjoy a new gardening book or listen to a local garden radio program.

- Books:

Western Garden Book of Edibles: The Complete Guide to Growing Your Own Vegetables, Herbs and Fruits by The Editors of Sunset Magazine

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The Garden of Invention: Luther Burbank and the Business of Breeding Plants by Jane Smith
Garden Walks in California: Beautiful Gardens from San Diego to Mendocino by Alice Joyce

- Garden shows and podcasts can all be heard on weekend radio programs, and podcasts are available for past programs on their websites. Tune in to:

farmerfred.com
 capital nursery.com
 bobtanem.com
 davisgardenshow.com (also broadcast on Thursday)

- Garden Adventures:

Visit your local nursery, the UC Davis Arboretum plant sale, consult garden catalogs or books to find the perfect plant. Check out UC Master Gardener Classes. Enjoy a day in the garden by visiting one of these local offerings:

Annual Woodland Rose Garden Tour: May 1, 2011, Woodland

Luther Burbank Mother’s Plant and Corsage Sale: May 8, 2011, Santa Rosa

The International World Peace Rose Garden: State Capital Park, Sacramento

McKinley Rose Garden: Sacramento,

The Good Life Garden: Edible Landscapes Garden at the Robert Mondavi Institute for Wine and Food: UC Davis,

Central Park Garden: Davis



“Gardening is an exercise in optimism. Sometime, it is a triumph of hope over experience.” Marina Schinz

*Questions about your garden?
We'd love to help!*

Master Gardener Hotline..... (530) 666-8737

Our message centers will take your questions and information. Please leave your name, address, phone number and a description of your problem. A Master Gardener will research your problem and return your call.

E-Mail..... mgyolo@ucdavis.edu

Drop In..... Tuesday & Friday, 9-11 a.m.
70 Cottonwood St., Woodland

Upcoming Master Gardener
Free Public Education Classes
and Workshops

✳ **Woodland Community College Horticultural Center**
2300 East Gibson, Woodland

Saturday, April 2 - Spring Plant Sale and Gardening Workshops

Plant Sale

9:00 – 12:00 Heirloom and hybrid tomato seedlings, vegetable and flower seedlings for the summer garden, ornamental landscape plants and house plants

Classes/Workshops

- 9:00 – 9:30 Basic Vegetable Gardening – Peg Smith
- 9:40 – 10:10 Tomato Growing Tips – Dan Rott and Robert Dragoon
- 10:20 – 10:50 Installing a Water Garden – David Studer
- 11:00 – 11:30 Ornamental Plants for a Waterwise Garden – Linda Magrum
- 11:40 – 12:10 Water Conserving Irrigation Practices - Arlen Feldman

Saturday, April 16

9:00 -11:00 Backyard and Worm Composting

Saturday, May 14

9:00 – 10:30 Summer Fruit Tree Pruning
 10:30 – 11:00 Spring Citrus Care

✳ **Central Park Gardens**
3rd and B Streets, Davis

March 12

9:30 The Whys andHows of Integrated Pest Management

April 9

9:30 Allergies? Plants to Consider Using in Your Garden

May 7

9:30 Growing Edible Mushrooms
 11:00 Mediterranean Gardening

June 4

9:30 Attracting Beneficial Insects to the Garden
 11:00 Lavender Distillation

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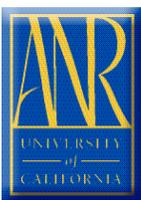


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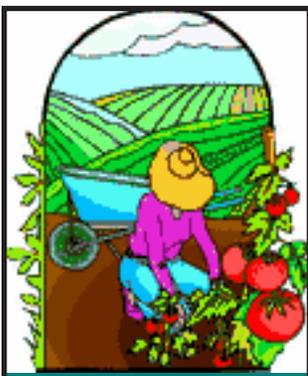
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Find it at the Davis Farmers Market at
 the Master Gardener table



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