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> Dorothy Volker Nevada County

> > Master Gardener

Making a Difference for California

VOLUME 18, NO. 4 FALL 2011

ALL-STARS IN YOUR GARDEN

ou've heard it before and you'll hear it again..."The right plant in the right place" is always something to keep in mind and now there is more help available to be sure we are all doing just that.

There are plants being grown in our gardens that are welcome additions to our gardens but there are also many commonly used landscape plants that your garden would really be better off without.

The ongoing All-Stars program, through the UC Davis Arboretum is making plant selection much easier. Easier on us, as gardeners, because these plants are not troublesome to grow, don't drain our wells dry (or increase our water bill) and don't expose us to dangerous chemicals...and easier on the environment for the same reasons. Yet these plants give us what we expect to see in our gardens and this knowledge is where the program began.

All-Star Eligibility

Plants, mostly California or other Mediterranean area natives, are first tested by UC staff for a period of time before even being considered possible All-Stars.

To be an All-Star, plants must thrive under a low water regimen (after being established), they must look attractive during most of the year, must resist pests

(including diseases) and it's a big plus if they also attract bees and other beneficial insects.

Then, because California is a complex state with at least 7 USDA zones and 24 Sunset climate zones, there are now test gardens all the way from Shasta County to San Diego County. The plants are monitored by Master Gardeners to determine how well plants do in various climates. The Master Gardener Demonstration Garden in Nevada County is one of the test gardens.

In each of these gardens, on a monthly basis, Master Gardeners observe the groups of plants, recording foliage appearance, floral display, insect and disease damage and overall vigor, as well as weather (heat and frost stress) and make note of any maintenance required.

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The University of California prohibits discrimination or harassment of any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, religion, sex, gender identity, pregnancy (including childbirth, and medical condition (cancer-related to pregnancy or childbirth), physical or mental disability, medical condition (cancer-related or genetic characteristics), ancestry, marital status, age, sexual orientation, citizenship, or service in the uniformed services (as defined by the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Rights Act of 1994: service in the uniformed services includes membership, application for service in the uniformed services) in any of its programs or activities.

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NEVADA:

THE CURIOUS GARDENER

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Four times a year, Master Gardeners also measure height and width of each plant, as well as the monthly observations. All of this data is submitted electronically by me or a member of our team to the UC Davis horticultural staff.

At the end of the study for each plant group (usually after two years), extensive information is submitted before determining that it is a plant that does well in our area and one we can now recommend to our neighbors as an All-Star.

Since 2006, one of these test gardens is right here in Nevada County where the public can see these plants in place and talk with the Master Gardeners who tend them.

The Nevada County Master Gardener Demonstration Garden is on the NID property at 1036 W. Main Street in Grass Valley. Just follow the signs to the garden and enjoy.

The public is welcome any time the gates are open (locked at 5:00PM during the week and 3PM on weekends). Just look for a **Arboretum All-Stars** sign near plants currently being studied and plants from past studies.



http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/ arboretum_all_stars.aspx A few of the plants that have done very well in Nevada County include:

- Rosy Coral Bells (Heuchera rosada)
- Serpentine Columbine (Aquilegia eximia)
- California Lilac 'Valley Violet' (Ceanothus maritimus)
- Penstemon 'Margarita BOP' (Penstemon heterophyllus)
- Muhly Grass (Muhlenbergia dubia)
- Pacific Coast Iris 'Canyon Snow'

Some of these plants are now being propagated at the Nevada County garden and are available at our twice-yearly plant sales.

UC is working with the horticulture industry to include plants that carry the All-Star label, but knowing that this industry thrives on introducing those plants that the public has never seen before and must have NOW is a problem.

If you don't see plants identified as All-Stars at your favorite nursery, let them know you would be interested in purchasing such plants and hopefully, you can encourage their participation in this great project. And then you too, can plant the right plant in the right place and enjoy the easy growing of these plants!

References:

California Agriculture Magazine July-September 2008 edition

Get Your Arboretum All-Stars Now!!

2011 Fall Plant Sales

UCCE Nevada County Master Gardener Fall Plant Sale October 8, 2011 9am to Noon Demonstration Garden 1036 W. Main Grass Valley (on NID grounds)

UC Davis Arboretum 75th Anniversary Plant Faire & Sale September 24, 2011 Member sale 9-11 am Public sale 11 am-1 pm Special 75th anniversary feature: From the hundreds of plants available, find out what our community members have selected as their 75 favorites! Children's activities – Live music

Growing a Green Future October 9, 2011 Public sale: 9 am-1 pm Focus on sustainable gardens: Learn how you can save water, reduce pollution, support native pollution, support native pollinators, and still enjoy a beautiful home landscape. Plant Doctor clinic: bring problem plants sealed in a plastic bag for diagnosis.

FALL PLANTING TIME!!!

C pring is long gone and done, summer is winding down, and plants like tomatoes and zucchini have kept many of us busy in the garden, so now its time to think about fall and planning the fall garden.

Many home gardeners think only of spring when it comes to planning veggie gardens and planting ornamental plants; however, fall is an ideal time to plant all kinds of things from cool-season veggies, turf grasses and perennials to both evergreen and



deciduous trees and shrubs.

During this season the gardener can take advantage of cooler outdoor daytime and evening temperatures and more plentiful moisture in the form of early rainfall.

Why is fall planting a good time for plants?

- There are many varieties of vegetables that do well in the fall and winter.
- Insect and disease pests are not as much of a problem in fall • plantings.
- Vegetables such as broccoli, cauliflower, and Brussels sprouts are better adapted to fall gardening, since they are more likely to produce better quality and flavor when they can mature during cooler weather.
- Fall gardening also helps

extend your veggie garden season so that you can continue to harvest produce after earlier crops have faded.

- Another reason includes the fact that in the fall, the warm soil encourages root growth. Roots continue to grow throughout the winter or, until the ground freezes, or in areas with milder winters roots may continue to grow, as well as, become established.
- The fall-planted plants have an improved chance of becoming well established over winter, while the same plant planted in spring gets a slow start due to cooler soils.
- Additionally, plants that are planted in spring are often subject to the long hot days of summer before their roots have acclimated or become established due to the short time that often

occurs between spring and summer versus those planted in the fall.



- The fall-planted plant is far better equipped to deal with heat and drought, when summer arrives, largely due to its well-established root system.
- Fall Plant Sales: For the budget minded gardener there can be an added bonus when many plants go on sale, at the local nurseries, at the end of the summer growing season.

Johanne Ryker Placer County Master Gardener

This makes fall planting not only a great idea but a money saving opportunity for you, too.

What are some plants that benefit from fall planting and whv?

Fall is an excellent time to grow

many vegetable crops that are also spring-planted such as lettuce and spinach that tend to readily bolt, or produce seed, as well as, become bitter in response to both the long, hot summer days.

There are more varieties of vegetables that can be planted in early fall and that grow better in fall or in cool season weather.

Examples of some vegetables that do well with fall plantings include cabbage, beets, carrots, and chard.

Note: Planting dates and planting zones vary in both Placer and Nevada Counties due to the diverse micro climates. In some cases even a back and front yard can vary in their micro climates.

A good source for USDA zones that appear on most see packages:

http://www.usna.usda.gov/ Hardzone/ushzmap.html

Determining fall planting time:

Timing of fall planting has much to do with soil temperature. Many plants can grow roots when the earth is as cool as 45°F.

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THE CURIOUS GARDENER

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At planting time, the soil temperature at 6 inches deep should be about 55°F to give plants ample time to start getting established.

In general, finish your fall planting about 6 weeks before your first expected frost date (8 weeks for

evergreens). In Zones 7-8, you would count back from the latter half of September, your first frost will likely occur by mid-October.



In our area, the rainy season is usually expected to begin in mid October or November. The optimum planting time would also suggest mid to end of September for fall planting.

Getting Seeds Started

Use a light mulch of vermiculite, compost, or potting soil over the seed row to prevent a crust from forming. Seeds of lettuce, peas, and spinach will not germinate well when the soil temperature is 85°F and above. Shading the soil and using a light mulch or straw over the seed row will help keep the temperature more favorable for germination.

Planting the seeds slightly deeper than spring plantings may also be beneficial, since temperatures will be slightly cooler.

Do not allow seedlings and young transplants to dry out Apply 1 inch of water in a single application each week to thoroughly moisten the soil. Young seedlings may need to be watered more often during the first week or two of growth.

Young transplants may benefit from light shade for the first few days until their new roots become established. This can be accomplished with a light weight row cover.

Frost Protection

Some vegetables that are already growing in the garden will continue to produce well into the fall, but are damaged by even a light frost. Some crops are considered semi-hardy and will withstand a light frost without protection. Others are hardy enough to withstand several hard frosts. Use coverings to protect sensitive plants and extend the harvest.

More tips for fall planting:

- Choose healthy-looking plants at the nursery. Choose balledand-burlapped or containergrown plants, not bare-root plants.
- Make sure the plants receives ample water (about an inch a week, from rain and/or irrigation) at planting time up until the ground is frozen (if applicable)
- Avoid species that are generally slow to establish, such as magnolia trees, birch, willows, hemlock, oak and hornbeam.

Great plants for fall and winter color



Cool-season flowers bring a splash of color to your garden right when you need it most. When buying fall color-plants look for sturdy plants with good leaf color in six-packs and 4-inch containers

Where freezes are infrequent, you can plant cheery pansies, snapdragons, English daisies, and more from early fall through late winter. They'll overwinter, filling your borders, containers, and pocket gardens with months of flower power.

Planning your fall garden

If you're thinking of planting something deciduous, fall is the perfect time to decide what to plant. After all, you need only take a walk or drive to discover which trees and shrubs offer the most in terms of fall color.

Beyond the shade they offer in summer, fall color is the most alluring attribute of many deciduous trees and shrubs.

Don't forget the Daffodils!

In late fall, plant daffodil bulbs for a glorious spring show!



References:

http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/HO-66.pdf

http://www.sunset.com/garden/ flowers-plants/best-plants-for-wintercolor-00400000063637/

http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/ archives/parsons/fallgarden/ fallgrowing.html

http://www.hortmag.com/weekly-tips/ determining-fall-planting-dates

FALL 2011



QUALITY HOME COMPOSTING WITHOUT BREAKING YOUR BACK!

V ou might say, "I already am composting without breaking my back." Compost definitely happens when you throw your garden trimmings, kitchen waste, dog hair, fingernail clippings and other suitable organic matter into a pile. It may take a year or two to break down-but at least you don't have a broken back.

The downside of lazy or cold composting

The downside is that your pile may attract and breed more flies, yellow jackets and rodents than you enjoy. Your chickens may get into it, eat something moldy and die en masse. Your finished compost may contain weed seeds and pathogens. Nutrients may be leached out by rain all winter long. And, if your pile is too wet it may go

anaerobic and stink-this is the one that gives compost a bad namel



On the upside, if your cold pile is covered with at

least six inches of browns (such as a mulch of pine needles or dead leaves) and you are burying kitchen waste two feet deep in the pile, it will probably be successful, unmolested and teeming with beneficial FBI (fungi, bacteria and insects/worms).

If your pile is full of enough worms, they will digest everything and create wonderful worm castings out of your waste. However, your worms will not be productive during the cold winter months because they operate best at 60-80F.

will pick it up?

Well, it's better than sending it to the landfill. But your valuable raw materials will travel a long distance in gas-guzzling trucks and be turned by monstrous tractors. It will reach temperatures higher than 160F, resulting material that will probably be sterile and have lost its disease-fighting properties-but it will be free of weed-seeds and pathogens.

What is responsible for compost quality?

With composting, diversity in your decomposer micro- and macroorganisms is everything. You want the broadest spectrum of decomposers to add value to your compost-and there are billions of them.

Each one is activated by different conditions and temperatures in a complicated dance, releasing nutrients into the compost and giving it superior attributes!

This universe of organisms is commonly referred to as FBI-Fungi, Bacteria and Insects/worms. Some of the most valuable ones operate at lower temperatures. The benefit of the high-heat phase of composting (135-155F) is that it is fast and kills most weed seeds and pathogens.

During the low-heat, early phase of composting, fungi and other organisms set the stage for a succession of decomposers and lay the foundation for becoming reactivated later in the curing

Mary Sanichas Nevada County Master Gardener

Why compost when Green Waste phase of composting after the highheat bacteria have finished their iob.

> The invertebrates (including slugs, snails, spiders, beetles, mites, ants, springtail and sowbugs) also contribute great value during the cooling and curing phase of the compost.

When worms digest the compost, they wiggle their way through the pile and aerate

it, keeping the "FBI" alive. They digest everything and excrete valuable worm castings. To my mind, there is



no point in making just compost when you can take it one step further and let worms digest it.

What's involved in hot composting?

Hot or batch composting requires that you assemble a large volume of browns and greens at once, sprinkling in water as you go. The minimum size for this volume is 3' x 3' x 3', but larger is better because only the center portion will heat up unless you insulate the sides with straw bales or other material. More detailed instructions are available in the Nevada County Gardening Guide and many other sources.

The backbreaking part of hot composting

For 2-4 days the temperature of your pile will slowly rise, as the lowheat organisms go Continued on page 7

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to work. After this, your pile will reach and sustain temperatures in the weed-seed and pathogen-killing zone of 135–155F for up to a week, then steadily decline.

If you turn/aerate the pile it will heat up again. Turning is repeated for 3 or 4 more cycles until the compost

no longer heats up upon being turned. A minimum curing period of 6 weeks after cooldown is recommended.



Spare your back, save your time

After your pile has heated up once, you can JUST SAY NO to turning it and treat your pile as an honorable cold pile. Or you can give it a halfhearted turn by making a hole in the middle and chucking the material on the outside to the middle. Feel free to do this.

Unless you own a tractor, have numerous suitors willing to do anything for you or young unpaid interns, turning compost repeatedly may not be the most efficient use of your muscle power or time.

Next, for best results, seed your pile with red wigglers. They will gravitate to the parts of the pile that are optimal for them. The center may still be too hot for them, but in winter—especially if your pile is insulated—the lingering warmth will keep them productive. They will prosper and multiply!

Depending on how large your worm population is, you could have a bin of pure worm castings by the next spring. If you have started another hot pile by then, your worms will migrate to the edges of the new pile.

Tips for improving hot-to-cold composting

- Stockpile your browns so you are ready when you come across a large volume of greens to start a new batch. Good sources for greens: pond weed, used coffee grounds, weeds or your cover crop, chicken manure (offer to clean your neighbor's coop) and manure from herbivores (be sure to use only fresh, MOIST horse manure, as it is impossible to moisten once all dried out and will probably contain weed seeds).
- Insulate your compost with straw bales or spoiled hay to make that first round of heat as efficient as possible. You can also build your compost with one side up against a hill, boulder or previous pile of compost.
- Create a dedicated compost pile for weeds gone to seeddon't contaminate your good compost. Confine it to an area where you can hoe down the weeds as they germinate. Or you can use your weedy compost underneath overlapping sheets of cardboard in "sheet mulching." Use your good compost or mulch on top of the cardboard. The weed-contaminated compost underneath will never see the light of day. This is also an excellent way to kill existing weeds without using herbicides. For information on sheet mulching look at http:// graysharbor.wsu.edu/Weeds/ documents/ sheetcomposting.pdf

 Whether you have a cold pile, a hot pile or a hot-to-cold pile, get some worms

and give them the time they need to digest your pile. You can



use worm castings as a soil amendment or make biologically active compost tea out of it. For more information on compost tea, visit <u>http://</u> <u>extension.oregonstate.edu/</u> <u>douglas/aerated-compost-tea</u>

- Build each compost pile close to a water supply and where you plan to use finished compost.
- Multi-task your compost pile in creative ways: use it as bottom heat to germinate seeds in spring...situate it next to your garden to moderate cold night temperatures or as a windbreak... build it on top of weeds to smother them. Your imagination is the limit!

Online resources

http://www.gardening.cornell.edu/

www.extsoilcrop.colostate.edu/ Soils/powerpoint/compost/ Composting_Horse_Manure.pdf

http://vric.ucdavis.edu/pdf/ compost_rapidcompost.pdf

http://compost.css.cornell.edu/ physics.html

http://web.extension.illinois.edu/ homecompost/science.html

WHEN NOT TO PLANT IN FALL

all has long been considered to Perhaps obvious to long time be the BEST time to plant because it allows the plant to become well established before the heat of the following summer. It's the best time to plant most native plants. It's the ideal time to plant most trees and shrubs. It's a good time to plant many perennials. It's the right time to plant many ground covers. It's a great time to plant!

However, just because fall is often quoted as "the BEST time to plant" doesn't mean it's the best time to plant ALL plants in ALL situations.

Gardeners need to use some discretion and common sense when deciding when to plant. Gardeners may also want to consider frost tenderness, plant availability, practicality, location, elevation, water availability, and use common sense.

Frost Tender Plants:

"Fall is the best time to plant. I'd like to plant citrus. Is this okay?"

Frost tender plants are one type of plant that should NOT be planted in the fall. Hold off planting citrus and other frost sensitive plants until springtime. Newly planted plants are more sensitive to frost than

established plants so it's best to give tender plants a long season to mature before the first cold



snap. The best time to plant citrus and other frost tender plants is early spring, after the danger of frost is over. Depending upon your climate zone, you may need to wait until mid to late spring to plant.

gardeners, warm season vegetables and flowers such as tomatoes, peppers, green beans, corn, cucumbers, zucchini, marigolds, sunflowers, and others that are sensitive to cold temperatures make sure to wait until spring to plant these!

Fortunately, there are many cool season vegetables and flowers that can be grown in fall and winter. Just because the seeds are available on a nursery rack or seedlings are sitting on a shelf, doesn't necessarily mean that it's the right time to plant.

Fungal Diseases and Clay Soil

"I planted some perennial flowers last fall and they all died over the winter. What happened?"

Fall planting is a good way to prevent root rot of many native and other plants. When planted in the spring, many plants are vulnerable to fungi in the soil when it becomes warm and damp during the summer irrigation season. However, other plants, mainly non-woody perennials, may be susceptible to rot when planted in fall in some of the heavy clay soils that we have in Foothill and Valley gardens.

These plants are sensitive to fungal disease when the soil is cool and wet. To avoid this, amend soil with good quality compost and take care that the crown of the plant is at or above the soil level. Thus, avoid planting the crown too low. When planted correctly, even these plants the plant in the benefit from fall planting, and grow more vigorously the following year.

Laurie Meyerpeter Placer County Master Gardener

Practical Considerations:

"If fall is the best time to plant, why don't nurseries have a better selection? The plants don't seem as lush as in spring."

There are many plants that are started in late spring and summer that are green and lush in the fall. However, a disadvantage to fall planting is that some gardeners may perceive that the selection and quality of certain plants may be lower in the fall. There may be fewer of certain plants to choose from. Some plants may seem tattered or cutback, or the roots may seem tight in the container.

Many nursery plants have been growing vigorously all summer and are nearing their seasonal rest as the days shorten. Many plants have bloomed and been cut back after flowering. Leaves have endured a long season of rain, wind, and hot sun and may have a more battered look than earlier in the season. Drought-tolerant plants may be dormant and scruffy looking. Roots have grown and often fill out the pots by the end of the growing season.

None of these should deter the gardener. Tattered looking plants will push new growth the following spring. Tight but healthy roots can be gently loosened or lightly scratched at planting time, if necessary. And gardeners who need a special plant or a specimen

can shop early in the season and then hold container until the correct planting time.



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"Fall is the best time to plant but I live in the countryside and don't have irrigation water after October 15. What can I do?"

Another practical consideration is water. Fall planting is often recommended because the fall rains provide moisture to plants, encouraging root growth.

Ideally, fall planting should coincide with fall rains. But if rains are late, or light and don't sufficiently saturate the soil, supplemental water will need to be provided. Newly planted trees and shrubs need to be kept moist until the roots have a chance to grow into the native soil.

Many rural residents in this region rely on seasonal irrigation water, which normally runs from mid-April through mid-October. If supplemental water through another source, such as the household well, is not available or inadequate in the event that natural rainfall is

late or not sufficient, a gardener will need to plant at a time of year that allows for irrigation.

Each garden is different, but water availability is definitely a consideration when deciding on the best time to plant.

Common Sense:

"I have a Japanese maple that I've been growing in a pot. It's getting root bound; it's showing a lot of signs of stress! I want to plant it in a corner of my garden that receives filtered light. Should I leave it in the same pot until fall and then plant it? Or should I repot it into a larger pot now, and then plant it in the ground in the fall?"

Of course, fall planting is usually the IDEAL time to plant. However, sometimes common sense trumps the ideal.

Generally, repotting into a larger container and then waiting to plant until fall makes sense. However, in this



case, the tree is showing stress in its present situation, yet is being planted in a good location, one where it will have minimal stress in adapting and growing. Don't keep a stressed tree in a tight container.

Gently correct any girdling roots, and provide sufficient moisture through the warm season and on into fall to give the roots a chance to grow into the surrounding soil.

Gardeners should use common sense and check both the condition of the plant and the new planting location when deciding what would be the best choice in each situation.

There is abundant research that fall is the BEST planting season, but practical considerations and common sense are important also for gardening success. And the best part of fall planting is how nice it feels for the gardener.

Cool snappy mornings and warm balmy afternoons, set with a background of red, orange, and gold fall foliage. What could be nicer? Happy fall planting everyone!

References:

Abiotic Disorders of Landscape Plants, A Diagnostic Guide. 2003. Costello, Laurence R., Edward J. Perry, Nelda P. Mattheny, J. Micael Henry and Pamela M. Geisel. University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources Publication 3420 **California Master Gardener Handbook.** 2002. Pittenger, Dennis R., University of California Agricultural and Natural Resources Publication 3382

> The Roseville Utility Exploration Center and the Placer County Master Gardeners Present **"ASK AN EXPERT" Days**

Have a question about gardening, landscaping, energy efficiency, rebate programs, water conservation, recycling and/or other City of Roseville utility services?

If so, then you're invited to **"ask our experts"** at this FREE monthly event hosted on the second Saturday of every month in the lobby of the Martha Riley Library, 1501 Pleasant Grove Blvd., Roseville. Experts from Roseville Electric, Roseville Environmental Utilities and Placer County Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer all of your questions.

Upcoming Dates:

October 8, 10am to 2pm November 12, 10am to 2pm December 10, 10am to 2pm THE CURIOUS GARDENER



FALL 2011 CALENDAR <u>SEPTEMBER</u>



Saturday, Sept 17th from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *Gardening with California Natives (annuals, perennials and bulbs)*

Saturday, Sept 17th from 10am-11:30am at RUEC (1501 Pleasant Grove Blvd. Roseville): *Basic Composting*

Saturday, Sept 24th from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *Growing Blueberries*

Saturday, Sept 24th from 10am-Noon at RUEC (1501 Pleasant Grove Blvd. Roseville): *Earth Friendly Pest Management*

Saturday, Sept 24th from 1pm-3pm at RUEC (1501 Pleasant Grove Blvd. Roseville): *Growing California Native Plants*

Visit the Placer Master Gardeners at the Auburn Home Show in Landscapers Meadow September 23-25 at Gold Country Fairgrounds

OCTOBER

Saturday, Oct 1st from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): **Don't Be in the Dark About Shade Gardening**

Saturday, Oct 8 from 9am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *FALL PLANT SALE*

Saturday, Oct 22nd from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *The Orchard of Your Dreams*

Saturday, October 22nd from 9am-11am at PC Master Gardener Garden (11477 E Ave. Auburn): *Growing a Backyard Orchard*

Saturday, Oct 29th from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *Raindrops Keep Falling on My Head: Rainwater Harvesting*

NOVEMBER

Saturday, Nov 5 from 10am-11am at PC Master Gardener Garden (11477 E Ave. Auburn): *Composting Basics*

Saturday, Nov 5 from 10am-Noon at Nev Co Rood Center Full Circle Demonstration Garden: *Composting Basics*

Saturday, Nov 19 from 10am-Noon at NC Master Gardener Garden (1036 W. Main, GV): *Winterizing Tools*

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