



Keep your garden cleaned up. Get rid of any diseased or insect-infested plant parts that you remove from (or that fall off) your plants.

Some diseases can only be treated by cutting out the affected portions of the plant. If you have remove diseased branches or stems, be sure that you cut back to healthy plant tissue.

Don't poison your plants by accident. If you use an herbicide, reserve a sprayer for it which you do not use for other garden sprays. Put a big, easy-to-see label on it

Try to use non-poisonous methods of pest control. If you feel that you must use a pesticide, look for a product that is non-toxic to humans and that breaks down quickly. Read the label and follow the directions carefully. Use the recommended amount of the product. Using pesticides carelessly may hurt you and others as well as your plants.

Examine your garden for problems regularly. Most problems are easier to handle if you catch them early. Treat the small problems before they become big ones. If a plant doesn't look right to you but you don't know what's wrong, bring a sample of the affected part to a Master Gardener. (See front page for locations.)



Free literature available from the Sonoma County Master Gardeners includes these titles:

- Fruit Tree and Vine Care Calendar
- Calendar of Operations for the Backyard Tree (for Apple, Apricot, Cherry, Citrus, Plum and Prune, Peach and Nectarine, Pear, Walnut, Grape)
- Climate Zone Map - Sonoma County
- Controlling Roots in Sewers and Drains
- Fences for Controlling Deer Damage
- Fruits, Nuts Berries and Grapes of Sonoma County
- Growing Blackberries, Blueberries, Currants and Gooseberries, Raspberries, Strawberries on the North Coast
- Growing Vegetables
- Growing Tomatoes
- Growing Salad Greens
- Meadow Voles
- Moles
- Plant Three Trees in One Hole
- Plants Usually Avoided by Deer
- Pocket Gophers
- Poisonous Plants
- Tall Bearded Iris
- Trees for Wet Soils ("Wet Feet")
- Vegetable Planting Summary for Sonoma County
- Water Management for Fruit Trees and Other Plants



Plan to Avoid Garden Problems

Many garden problems can be reduced or avoided altogether by thinking ahead. Give your plants the conditions they require and they will reward you by looking good, producing well, and resisting diseases and insect attacks. Here are some tips to help you.

For help with your garden problems, call the Master Gardener Information Hot-line at 565-2608 (938-0127 in Sonoma), or visit the Information Desk in the University of California Cooperative Extension office (2604 Ventura Ave, #100, Santa Rosa), or ask a Master Gardener at your local Farmers Market or the County fair. Check our Web site at <http://mgsonoma.ucdavis.edu>.

Know your garden conditions. What type of soil do you have? Which areas have full sun, which are generally shady, which get sun in summer and shade in winter? How much summer watering are you prepared to do?

Have your soil tested to determine its pH (whether it is acidic or basic or somewhere in between) and to determine what nutrients you should add.

Match up plants with your garden conditions. Before buying plants or building a new garden bed, investigate the needs of the plants. Do they require sun or shade? Do they need particularly good drainage? Do they require high acid soil?

Avoid disease-prone varieties. Find out before you buy plants if the plant you want to grow is generally subject to diseases when grown in this area. If so, see if disease-resistant varieties are available.

Get healthy plants. Examine plants when buying them. Look for healthy green foliage and strong stems. Learn to recognize the signs of diseases and insect damage.

See if the plant is “root-bound” (the roots have reached the container and have started to grow around the outside of the root ball or through the drainage holes). If you decide to buy it even if it is root-bound, it will be necessary to unravel the roots or score the root ball to encourage the roots to grow outward. Check the color of the roots; they should be white, moist, and crisp.

If you propagate your own plants from cuttings, be sure that the “parent” plant is disease-free.

Group plants by their watering and drainage requirements. Many problems are caused by over-watering or under-watering. Trying to grow plants that demand constant watering alongside plants that need dry conditions means trouble.

Water correctly. Among the most common reasons for plant problems are too much water and too little water. Symptoms of these opposite problems can appear similar — a plant will wilt when it has too much water as well as when it has too little.

When watering, be sure that the water gets to the root zone. Probe the ground to a depth of about a foot (a long screw driver or a piece of re-bar works well). You’ll be able to feel when the ground is hard and dry.

If your method of watering gets the foliage wet, water early in the day so that the foliage is dry before evening. The combination of moisture and cool temperatures encourages problems.

A mulch will help to conserve moisture and will also keep weeds down. Apply compost or shredded bark or other organic materials on the soil surface to a depth of at least 3” to 4”. Keep mulch several inches away from the base of each plant.

Control weeds. Weeds compete with your garden plants for water and nutrients. Hoe or pull by hand the

weeds between your plants. They will be easiest to control when they are small, so weed frequently, especially in the spring when everything is growing fast.

If you have perennial weeds such as bindweed, delay planting perennials and shrubs until the weeds are under control. Hoeing and hand-pulling perennial weeds may not solve the problem, since many of these will propagate themselves from parts of the plants that you leave behind. If you decide to use a weed killer, be sure to read the label instructions and handle it carefully.

Protect your plants from animal pests. Use bird net to protect seedlings and fruit. If gophers are a problem in your area, plant in gopher baskets or in raised beds lined with hardware cloth. If you see gopher holes around your garden, you may want to trap or poison the gophers.

Keep deer out of the garden with a high fence, or protect individual trees or shrubs with a cage made of fencing material. If deer are a problem in your area and you don’t want to (or cannot) fence, choose plants that are not attractive to deer. (A list of such plants is available from the Master Gardeners.) Be prepared to see some deer damage even if you try to have only “deer resistant” plants; if the deer are hungry enough, they will eat practically any plant.