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What is the Best Gardening Book to Have?
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Many times Master Gardeners are asked at public classes, Farmers Markets, or other locales – “What is the best gardening book to have?” As with many questions the answer is, "it depends..." We have our Home Orchard book to assist the homeowner with fruiting trees from pomes to stone fruits, nut crops, figs and persimmons. There is the Rose Book for all things roses. We also recommend the following three books for any homeowner as they cover what anyone could encounter in their garden. They are:

Landscape Plants for California Gardens, by Bob Perry, ISBN 978-0-9605988-5-4,
Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs, 3rd Ed. UC ANR Publication Number 3359, and
California Master Gardener Handbook, 2nd Ed. UC ANR Publication Number 3382.

Landscape Plants for California Gardens written by Bob Perry, Professor Emeritus of Landscape Architecture, Cal Poly Pomona is written similar to Sunset's Western Garden book. However, it not only contains more than 2,100 plants and photos, but also provides information to address California Climate Zones, approximate water needs, irrigation zones, and landscaping ideas that help conserve water.

The book's contents are divided into 1) Plant Climate Zones and Water Estimates 2) Plant lists Aggregated, Plant Types, Plant Functions, and Aesthetics, 3) Plant Palettes with regular water use and reduced water use, and 4) an A-Z list that is illustrated with their watering needs. This is my new 'go to' book to help homeowners with their planting needs as well as my own.

Pests of Landscape Trees and Shrubs, An Integrated Pest Management Guide comes from the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR). It's written for home gardeners, pest managers, and landscape professionals to assist with healthy maintenance of trees and shrubs using Integrated Pest Management.

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It begins with selecting plants that are adapted to the environment and resistant to pests. Next, it discusses Growing Healthy Trees and Shrubs including site preparation, planting, water management, fertilizing, pruning, and protecting plants. Starting with Chapter Four, the book covers abiotic disorders, diseases, insects, mites, and snails, weeds, and nematodes. It ends with almost 100 pages of problem solving tables (what the problem looks like, probable cause, and comments), and names of pests and the plant. All the information is great, however, the tables are incredibly helpful. This book is available at our public classes and other outreach events.

The California Master Gardener Handbook, also from UC ANR, is the book UC uses to train Master Gardeners. Designed primarily for Master Gardeners, we learn it's impossible to know and retain everything in this text - but we know where to go to find the information when needed. Each of the chapters was written by colleagues with a variety of credentials and areas of expertise, and collaborators who provided additional information, guidance and technical review. Later, because of its usefulness, this book began to be sold to the homeowner and professionals as a science based source of information not easily found elsewhere.

The MG Handbook starts with an Introduction to Horticulture and is followed by chapters covering Soil and Water Management, Plant Propagation, Pathology, Insects, Weeds, and Safe and Sustainable Pest Management. It continues with House Plants, Lawns, Woody Landscape Plants, Vegetable Gardening, Grapes, Berries, Tree Fruit and Nut Crops, Citrus, and Avocados. The last three chapters cover Garden Design, Poisonous Plants, and Diagnosing Plant Problems. This is the most comprehensive text for the California gardener and well worth forty dollars. It, too, is available at Master Gardener events.

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling [\(530\) 621-5512](tel:5306215512). Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at [http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener e-news](http://ucanr.edu/mastergardener-e-news). You can also find us on Facebook.