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Winning Ribbons at the County Fair
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For July 2018 Village Life

The 2018 El Dorado County Fair is history and this year was especially fun because the spouse and I won ribbons for several cut flowers we entered into competition. Oh, we also got cash prizes. The spouse thinks I should not talk too much about this because then more people might enter next year! On the other hand, we're both Master Gardeners and I would like to share what we've learned gardening here in El Dorado Hills.

We have deer. I know this because I see scat and occasional hoof prints in our front yard pathways and borders. I've also seen deer browsing in our neighbors' yards across from us and next to us. Aren't they stunningly lovely creatures and a tremendous joy to observe? They're not so lovely when we find they've munched away on tender and tasty blossoms and foliage.

The bulk of our ornamental and edible gardening takes place at the front of our house because that's where the sun shines. Six hours of sun is what most edibles need at the very least, and flowering shrubs and perennials that are labeled for full sun need the same. Our entries for the Fair came mostly from the cottage border we installed three years ago.

Yes. We have a cottage border crammed with flowers and fragrance for display and cutting, and we have deer. There is no such thing as "deer-proof" plants, but "deer resistant" plants have worked for us! We started with looking at deer-resistant plant lists and checked off those that would work in our exposure, irrigation targets, and fit our design scheme. Criteria included a long bloom time and suitable for cutting. Our preferences for plants in our garden are those that are attractive to birds, bees, butterflies, or some combination!

From our cottage border, we entered the following to this year's County Fair:

Coreopsis "Early Sunrise" - third place
Echinacea "Pow Wow White" - third place
Rudbeckia "Goldstrum" - first place
Leucanthemum "Crazy Daisy" - first place
Origanum "Kent Beauty" - first place
Flowering *Artichoke* - first place

These are all perennials, which mean they will return and bloom year after year. I have seen the *rudbeckia*, also commonly known as Black-eyed Susan, re-seed and new plants have shown up. The *leucanthemum*, also known as a shasta daisy, has been dug up and divided and continues to thrive. The bees certainly enjoy our border, as do hummingbirds, dragonflies, and the occasional butterfly. The deer have not bothered these plants.

You may wonder about the Artichoke. Typically grown commercially for their buds which are harvested and eaten - in the home garden, they make a striking statement plant of height and width and unusual foliage. At our lower El Dorado Hills elevation, they're also easy to grow.

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Left to bloom, the bud's center opens to a stunning purple thistle which can be left outside for a passerby to admire or cut and enter at the Fair.

Don't forget, what is "deer resistant" does not mean "deer proof." I currently have an abutilon that is covered with exciting red blooms. We chose to plant it because we saw abutilon was on a deer-resistant plant list and the first year it was in the ground, some annoying deer came by and ate most of it! Year two passed quietly and now in year three, the abutilon has taken off! And no one has come by to snack on it. Deer can extend those adorable soft-looking mouths and take a nibble (or chow down the entire plant) but may find they're not all that interested and not try for seconds. Depending on when that abutilon blooms next year, I think it would be worthy competitor.

The Sunset Western Garden Book has a good deer-resistant plant list. Even better is the list put together by Master Gardeners for our own El Dorado County! Find it at cecentralsierra.ucanr.edu under publications > internet resources > horticulture & gardening. For general information on deer management, check out UC ANR Publication 74117 at ipm.ucanr.edu where "informative leaflets that cover over 150 insect, weed, pathogen, and rodent pests of gardens, landscapes, homes, and structures" are located and free for downloading.

In closing, I would like to encourage my neighbors here in El Dorado Hills to give thought to what they grow and what they can enter for competition in NEXT year's County Fair. A lot of fancy roses and curiously perfect vegetables were on display this year, but most entries didn't involve armloads of greenery. For the spouse and me, we entered some of our efforts for the first time ever, and we came home with ribbons (and prize money)!

Once a year, the Master Gardeners present an in-depth workshop. This year's topic is on "Sustainable Organic Gardening" which will be offered on Saturday, July 14, 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at the Shingle Springs Rancheria, 5281 Honpie Road, Placerville. Seven breakout sessions will be offered, along with a keynote speaker. A \$25 fee covers class handouts, samples, and a bag lunch. Go to ucanr.edu/sustainable-organic-gardening or call 530-621-5502 for more information and registration.

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. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind Folsom Lake College El Dorado Center. We're open 9am to noon Fridays and Saturdays.

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/master_gardener_e-news. You can also find us on Facebook.