

November 26, 2014



How to Be a Lazy Gardener  
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Do you avoid gardening because you feel that you do not have the time or energy to get involved in yet another project? Well, you don't have to be a bundle of energy and resolve to garden -- you just have to take up a few gardening practices that will make your gardening life less strenuous.

The first is the most basic. Plant the right plant in the right place at the right time. Know what you are buying and be sure it is suited to our Mediterranean climate and zone. If you do this, your plants will not be struggling to survive in a hostile environment and you will spend less energy, money and time keeping them alive.

The right time to plant almost everything except annuals in our climate is fall or winter. By planting in the fall, after the initial watering you can generally let nature water for you until drier times come, at which point the plant will be more established with its roots sunk deeper into the ground. Thus, it will be healthier and require less attention.

Avoid planting annuals. Unless they are self-sowing plants, they have to be dug up and replaced every year. As "one-season wonders" that are planted in the summer, they need lots of watering and fertilizing to survive and keep blooming.

Plant natives. They are used to our poor soil and don't require pampering. This means you generally don't have to amend your planting holes or apply fertilizers. Many natives, grown in the proper conditions, are not prone to diseases, so you don't need to apply pesticides. And many natives actually do not want any supplemental water once established. They also need minimal pruning. So you can spend a hot summer drinking ice tea in the shade of an oak, rather than struggling to keep your pansies alive.

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Reduce your lawn size, or get rid of it altogether. Having to mow once a week, water frequently, fertilize and treat for insects and weeds is time-consuming, resource-intensive and a lot of work. I get tired just thinking about it. If you need a lawn, mow it less often and leave the clippings as mulch. A slightly taller lawn needs less frequent watering also.

Containerize your vegetable garden. This can mean using raised beds or even large pots on your patio. By putting hardware cloth (strong wire reinforcement available in hardware stores) in the bottom of a raised bed, you avoid dealing with gophers. Using good bagged or bulk soil means you don't have to spade up hard rocky soil, or amend clay, or deal with the weeds that spring up every time you disturb the soil. If you plant vegetables in large pots close to your house, you won't have to walk so far to tend them, and they will be handier to your kitchen.

Mulch everything you plant, unless it's a succulent. Mulching reduces the need for watering, weeding or adding compost.

And finally, don't be a clean freak. Leave some leaves as mulch. Let the dead stems of perennials shelter the plants through the winter. A slightly messy yard will attract more native wildlife to your yard, which will make it a livelier place and it will more enjoyable to spend time there, relaxing.

There is no UCCE Master Gardener public education class scheduled for this Saturday, November 29<sup>th</sup>; have a wonderful Thanksgiving holiday weekend. Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at the office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our Master Gardener website at [http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master\\_Gardeners/](http://cecentralsierra.ucanr.org/Master_Gardeners/) and you can also find us on Facebook.