



Is That Pesticide Really Necessary?  
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Are you the type of gardener that reaches for the handiest spray can sitting on a shelf in the garage when a garden pest is spotted? If so, stop! One of the most important roles we as UCCE Master Gardeners play is to impart to the home gardening public research-based information about pest management. This is where Integrated Pest Management (IPM) comes into play. IPM is a process one can use to solve pest problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment.

The definition of a pesticide is any material (natural, organic or synthetic) used to control, prevent, kill, suppress or repel pests. Pesticide is a broad term that includes insecticides (insect killers), herbicides (weed or plant killers), fungicides (fungus killers), rodenticides (rodent killers), miticides which are used for mite control and molluscicides that kill snails and slugs.

Before using any pesticide, be sure it is actually necessary. More often than not, pesticides are applied unnecessarily because the cause of damage has not been identified correctly. If a damaging organism is actually determined to be causing problems, research alternative management methods and keep in mind that most pests cannot be entirely eliminated, even with pesticides. Other management techniques include:

**Cultural control:** Using the right pruning, fertilizing or watering technique, or selecting pest-resistant plants.

**Physical control:** Using mulches to keep weeds from growing or solarizing for soil-borne pathogens or weeds.

**Mechanical control:** Hoeing or pulling weeds, spraying leaves forcefully with water to remove insects or using traps or creating barriers to exclude pests.

**Biological control:** Using beneficial organisms such as insects that eat or parasitize damaging insects.

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**Replant:** In extreme cases, where a plant requires regular pesticide treatment, consider replanting with a more pest-resistant variety.

If a pesticide is actually determined to be needed, select one that is effective against the identified pest and also poses the least risks to human health and the environment. When shopping for a pesticide, it is important to read the label to be sure the target pest is listed as well as to make sure it is appropriate to use on a particular plant or treatment site. Do not use a pesticide on edible plants if the label says it is for use on ornamental plants.

If all other control methods fail and a pesticide is determined to be necessary, follow the label directions completely. Please do not pour unused amounts of any pesticide down a drain, into the soil or into open waterways, gutters, storm drains or sewers, or in the trash. The only legal way to dispose of unused amounts of pesticides is to take them to your local household hazardous waste disposal facility. The best defense against unwanted garden pests is to educate yourself on IPM practices and the safe use of pesticides.

Join Master Gardeners Gail Fulbeck and Debbie Hillel for this Saturday's free public gardening class: Propagation from Seed. The various methods of propagating plants by seed will be taught. Subjects include: seed selection and germination, starting media, planting containers, hardening off, transplanting seedlings, and common reasons for germination and seedling failure. The March 14<sup>th</sup> class is from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Government Center Hearing Room, Building C, 2850 Fair Lane in Placerville.

A free youth class, Grow'n' Show Your Plants at the Fair, will be taught March 14<sup>th</sup> 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. at the Floriculture Building, El Dorado County Fairgrounds. This class is for kids ages 5 to 17, and is a hands-on opportunity for young gardeners to learn the fundamentals of growing their own plants, and how to enter their plants at the upcoming county fair. Interested students are encouraged to pre-register online: [http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC\\_Master\\_Gardeners/El\\_Dorado\\_County\\_Fair](http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/El_Dorado_County_Fair), or by calling the Master Gardener office.

Find out everything you've always wanted to know about growing succulents at The Art of Growing Succulents class, taught in cooperation with the Cameron Park Community Center on March 18<sup>th</sup>. Succulents are water-saving plants at their best, and can be protected from freezing. Learn how to water, grow, propagate, and feed succulents. The free class is from 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive in Cameron Park.

UCCE 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://ucanr.edu/edmg> and you can also find us on Facebook.