



Putting Your Garden to Bed
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The tasks of putting-your-garden-to-bed and preparing for 2016 offers new beginnings with experience gained from a fourth year of drought. We can use what we've learned about drought for successful gardening next year. It's the ultimate feel-good do-over!

First, clean up the garden, composting and post-harvest vegetable crops. If plant diseases are present, rake debris for the garbage bin or the burn-pile. Save oak leaves for your compost bin; chip pine needles and small branches for your future mulch needs. You should rake away old mulch to expose bare ground, to prevent diseases from overwintering. Check for an 80-percent peach leaf drop; this is the optimal time for first peach-leaf curl spraying (second spray is applied during the tree's dormancy and third spray before flower buds open). Examine your young trees for potential girdling from too-tight branch and trunk support, and remove supports when they become unnecessary, usually after one year.

Now that your garden is clean, you can plant cool-weather annuals like snapdragons, pansies, violas, fairy primroses, calendulas, cyclamen and stock to add future color. Don't forget to amend the soil with new compost beforehand, and if the weather stays warm, place new mulch at the dripline, as this is where new roots can be nourished. Ensure damp mulch does not touch the plant's stem/trunk, as it encourages disease and insect damage. Mulch at the dripline will protect against frost, prevent fall and winter weeds, and keep soil healthy. Another advantage to planting cool-weather annuals now is increased root growth giving them a head-start against next year's heat.

Plant cool-season vegetables like broccoli, cabbage, carrots, cauliflower, cilantro, lettuce and parsley for harvest in late fall. And for spring harvest, plant onions and garlic. Row covers will ensure that these are snug against cold. Think about bare-root plants and trees, economical in their winter-dormancy, as well as spring bulbs. Tulips, daffodils and lilies thrive with normal

October 28, 2015

winter moisture, beautifying your spring garden with very little effort – don't forget to chill tulips, hyacinths, and narcissus in the fridge for six weeks prior to planting. Divide those loyal perennials like columbine and primroses.

If you are preparing new ground, consider planting a cover crop now. Cover crops sow easily and have numerous benefits: stabilizing soil structure, adding organic matter to restore nitrogen to the ground, stimulating microorganisms to prevent disease, and smothering weeds with beneficial growth. Some cover crops even exude a compound which prevents weed seed germination.

Check your driplines and emitters for clogs and proper location: have your plants or trees grown so that the emitter is now watering the trunk instead of the outer root zone? You can mulch your lines in-place under a deep layer of straw or coil lines up for winter storage.

Fertilize, dethatch, and aerate your lawn -- or -- (my favorite) remove it. It's a wonderful season to re-design a happier, less water-hungry space with California natives, grasses, hardy ground covers and perhaps a square-foot vegetable garden or fruit trees. To give you added incentive, the State of California's SaveOurWaterRebate.com is offering up to \$2 per square foot of turf you replace with drought-tolerant plantings. One example for grass replacement is buffalo grass: it does not need -- or even like -- water or mowing, and is sturdy enough around family pets. Need more suggestions? Try WUCOLS, <http://ucanr.edu/sites/WUCOLS/> which ranks plants according to water needs, or UC Davis' 100 best performing plants at http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/arboretum_all_stars.aspx.

Cast off that lingering 'drought doubt' and prepare for a New Year right now. Put your garden to bed and know that past knowledge and this season's preparation will yield a great 2016 garden!

Join us today for the free presentation, Putting Your Garden to Bed, by Master Gardeners Cindy Young and Cheryl Turner, on Wednesday, October 28th, from 9 to noon, at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2052 Country Club Drive in Cameron Park. Yard and garden clean-up, cool season planting, tool sharpening, pruning and composting will be covered in-depth.

There is no Master Gardener class this Saturday, October 31st – Happy Halloween! UCCE Master Gardeners 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. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmg>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.