

July 12, 2017



HEAT-LOVING PLANTS
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Is your garden looking a little bedraggled these days with scorched foliage and crispy blooms? No wonder, July can be one of the hottest months of the year and August will undoubtedly be the same. If you were diligent about using mulch in your garden to cool the soil and retain moisture better, your plants may have held up pretty well. If not, however, maybe it's time to accept the fact that we live in a Mediterranean climate and need to use plants in our gardens that are adapted to this environment.

The U.C. Davis Arboretum is a wonderful place to visit to see what plants flourish in our summers, and the following selections are just a sampling of some good choices for our county. Many of these can also be seen in the Sherwood Demonstration Garden here in Placerville, built and maintained by the Master Gardeners of El Dorado County.

Lavenders top the list for heat tolerance. One good one is *Lavandula* 'Goodwin Creek Grey' which has deep violet-blue flowers that appear in spring and go all the way into late fall. It is a bit larger than most lavenders and has very dense foliage. 'Munstead' is an English lavender that has a very long bloom period, is a heat lover and makes a wonderful low hedge. Another particularly good heat-loving lavender is one of the Spanish ones – *Lavandula stoechas* 'Otto Quast' which tends to be very long-lived.

Teucrium chamaedrys, or Germander, is a tough plant that holds up well in hot weather. I have this in my own garden where it gets full sun exposure all day and is flourishing with very sporadic watering; in fact, it cannot tolerate wet soil.

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Origanum laevigatum 'Hopley's' is an ornamental Oregano that bears dense heads of purple-pink flowers and self-sows freely. It's a native of Turkey, so that should speak volumes for its ability to survive our summer heat. Another Oregano that does well is the 'Betty Rollins' cultivar which spreads in a low-growing mat to make a wonderful groundcover.

Phlomis fruticosa, commonly known as Jerusalem Sage, is another Mediterranean native that is an easy perennial shrub to grow. It grows to about 4' tall and wide and has deep golden yellow flowers that appear in ball-shaped whorls. This perennial looks wonderful when paired with lavenders.

Nepeta x faassenii, or Catmint, is a low-growing, bushy perennial that can be mowed down to the ground periodically to keep it looking good. It makes a great border or edging plant.

Salvia officinalis 'Berggarten' – is a particularly good choice for hot, dry climates. It is more compact, has denser growth and tends to be longer-lived than some of the other Salvias.

If you like ornamental grasses, *Calamagrostis x acutiflora* 'Karl Foerster' is a true workhorse in our hot, dry summers. It is a sturdy, clumping-type grass with feathery, buff-colored flower plumes that persist into winter. This grass is beautiful when mass planted.

These are just a few examples of drought and heat tolerant perennials you can plant to keep looking good all summer long, but look at the arboretum's web site at <http://arboretum.ucdavis.edu> for more information. You can also visit our demonstration garden site at http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Demonstration_Garden. The plants listed above are only watered about every two weeks or so, even during the hottest periods. However, remember that all plants - whether drought tolerant or not, must be watered regularly until they are well established. July and August are not the best months for planting, but if you can't wait until the cooler days of fall, do your planting in the early morning hours when the heat is not so intense. You will have to baby them more than if you waited until fall, but by next summer, they will have enough of a head start to perform well.

There are no Master Gardener classes from now through the end of July. Classes will pick up again in August with “Stone Fruit: From Garden to Table.” Stay tuned for more info!

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. 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.