

June 9, 2018



Enjoy the Magic of the Garden at the County Fair
By Charlie Basham
UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

If there ever was a perfect fit between the theme of the El Dorado County Fair and our gardening community - this is the year!

The fair's 2018 theme, "There's Magic in the Air," nicely lends itself to the idea that gardeners are magicians. After all, it's gardeners who can change a dusty plot of dirt or a fist full of seeds into something tasty or beautiful.

You can see the results of that magic in the Flower and Plants Building at this year's fair - June 14 through June 17. The UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are in charge of this building's amazing exhibition of flowers, plants, and vegetables. During the fair, local Master Gardeners will be on hand every day until 9:00 p.m. to answer your home gardening questions.

Gardening and farming are the bedrock of the El Dorado County fair history. As far back as 1859, at the first recorded fair in Coloma, the exposition was an opportunity for local farmers to show off the quality of their bounty and learn the latest methods to improve their harvest. Back then a farmer could earn a year of serious bragging rights when his crops netted a blue ribbon. Nearly 160 years later, that's still true!

During the fair's four-day run, more than 100 local home gardening entries will be judged and displayed in the Flower and Plants Building. The major categories are flowers, plants, fruits, and vegetables. Within each category are several sub categories like potted plants, cut flowers, leafy and stem veggies, nuts, dried arrangements, succulents, etc. There are just too many sub categories to list, so go to the fair's web page for details at <http://eldoradocountyfair.org>. My favorite sub category is "Monstrosities" which includes those quirky, massive growths seen in pumpkins, onions, squash and tomatoes.

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If you think your green thumb is worth a blue ribbon there's still time to enter the competition! Entry forms in the Fruits and Veggies categories are due to the fair by 4:00 p.m. Friday, June 8. Flower and Plant entry forms are due to the fair by 4:00 p.m. Tuesday, June 12. To ensure your entries are at their freshest, they are to be dropped off at the Flower and Plants Building between 2:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, June 13. You can get all the information about the many different categories, entry forms, costs, and deadlines on the fair's web page. The categories are also broken down into age groups: adult, teen, and youth.

When you visit the Flower and Plants Building you'll notice there are many more displays besides flowers and vegetables to capture your interest. These exhibitors will include the Apple Hill Growers Association, Christmas Tree Growers Association, El Dorado Winery Association, El Dorado County Farm Trails Quilt Trail Project, and the El Dorado Backyard Beekeepers.

So try to pry yourself away from the corn dogs and thrill rides and stop by the Flower and Plants Building to see the magic of the garden. And, unlike real magicians, Master Gardeners will be there to share their secrets to successful growing, pruning, weeding, composting and pest management. There will also be schedules of the many community classes offered throughout the rest of this year, as well as free informational handouts, and interesting publications for sale.

Master Gardener Barry Wold and his colleagues continue with "2nd Saturdays with Barry" on June 9 in the Vegetable Garden at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville. This month's focus will be on herbs, edible flowers, and planting a salsa garden. The class is free and runs 10:00 a.m. to noon. On campus parking is \$2. Wednesday, June 13 is "Orchids In and Around the Home" with Master Gardener Heidi Napier at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive, Cameron Park. Class runs 9:00 a.m. to noon and is also free.

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](tel:5306215512). 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.

(Photo on file)