

July 18, 2018



Invite Your Friends to the Party

By Mary Tran

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For Mountain Democrat 07-18-2018

OK, so you planted a garden so you could have fresh veggies to eat and a nice place to hang out. But then those pesky aphids and caterpillars and beetles and scale-insects and their kin arrived and made a mess. Just like last year.

Naturally, you don't want to spray your plants with nerve poisons and other toxins. Who wants that stuff in the garden? But what can you do about the pests?!

Let's be practical. First, avoid attracting pests; take it easy when applying fertilizers, and keep the garden tidy. Do this by cleaning up fallen fruit, removing the weeds, etc. Second, welcome the "natural enemies" of your pests to the garden and let them do the work for you. I call these insects the *Friends of the Garden*. Some act as parasites, laying their eggs in the eggs and caterpillar bodies of other insects. Some are predators - they eat your pests for lunch.

How to welcome the *Friends of the Garden* to your party?

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Avoid spraying them with pesticides. Learn to recognize your guests. Check ipm.ucanr.edu > Publications > Landscape and Garden Resources > Natural Enemies Gallery for photos of the bugs you want to welcome. In addition, plant the trees and bushes that will support the *Friends* year round. The University of California has provided a list of plants that, together, are recommended for providing this support. See “Natural Enemies Handbook,” by M.L. Flint and S.H. Dreistadt, published by University of California Press, 1998, page 46. From this list, I have picked out some that do best with our dry summers. Here they are:

To cover winter and early spring:

Ceanothus, also called California wild lilac. Can be grown as a bush or tree. Has white to blue flower spikes in spring. Likes full sun, doesn't like to have its feet (roots) wet too much, and can handle winter frost.

Cercis, or Redbud. Tree 25-35 ft. tall. Has abundant pink bloom in the spring. Likes full sun but some shade is ok.

To cover spring and summer:

Achillea, or Yarrow. Low perennial. Has generous bloom in pink and purple. Likes full sun. Good for cut flowers, but leave some for our *Friends of the Garden*.

Coffeeberry. Evergreen shrub, up to 15 feet tall, 8 ft. wide. Has red-black berries. Is not fussy about soil, likes full sun but is shade tolerant.

Toyon. Large shrub/tree, to 25 ft. tall. White flower clusters in summer, red berries in winter. Likes full sun but is ok with some shade.

To cover fall into winter:

Baccharis or Coyote brush, also called chaparral broom. Grows as a ground cover or as shrub 3 to 9 ft. tall. Flowers are white to yellow. Is deer- and possibly fire-resistant. One of the few winter bloomers.

If you cannot find these plants at your favorite nursery, you might take advantage of the special plant sales offered by UC Davis Arboretum (<http://publicgarden.ucdavis.edu/plant-sales>), the California Native Plant Society (<https://www.eldoradocnps.org/news-events/plant-sales>), and the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County (<http://mgeldorado.ucanr.edu/Calendar/>). Check their websites for dates, times, and places.

For a longer discussion, “The Good, The Bad, and the Bugly” is offered on Saturday, July 21 at 9:00 a.m. to noon. This free class will be held at Government Center, Bldg C Hearing Room, 2850 Fairlane Ct, Placerville. Come meet Mary Tran!

For July only, the Vegetable Garden is hosting 3rd Saturday with Barry. This month, the focus will be on irrigation, fall planning, and winter crops. 9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. on July 21 at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, 6699 Campus Drive, Placerville. Class is free, on-campus parking is \$2.

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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. Visit us at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located at 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville, behind the Folsom Lake College-El Dorado Center. We're open 9:00 a.m. to noon, Fridays and Saturdays.

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.