



Redwood Barn Nursery

1607 Fifth Street Davis, California

September in your garden

As the weather changes, we have lots of opportunities in our gardens and landscapes. Some September garden activities:

Prune your apricot and cherry trees.

Now? Yes, these two types of fruit trees should only be pruned well before the rainy season. Each is susceptible to a particular disease which infects through open pruning cuts when it's raining. It's important to prune with sufficient time for pruning cuts to heal before we get significant rainfall.

All your other deciduous fruit trees can be pruned mid-winter. But don't hesitate to do some pruning for size control now. Summer pruning of fruit trees can make more compact trees.

Start planting cool-season vegetables.

- Cole crops from September through February. These are all the many forms of Brassica oleracea: broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, collards and kale, kohlrabi, and more. All the same plant, selected over centuries for the different parts (leaves, stems, flower buds, axillary buds).

There is some variation as to the growth cycles and planting windows among the different cole crops.

Those that form a large 'head' such as cauliflower, Romanesco, single-crop types of broccoli, and most types of cabbage need to get an early start. Those should go in right away. It's already too late for Brussels sprouts; those are planted July to August.

"Sprouting" broccoli varieties, broccoli raab, and asparbroc can be planted now and right through the winter.

Kale and collards can be planted anytime in fall and winter. You can plant successive crops of kale right through February.

Plant leafy greens from October through February. This includes lettuce, spinach, beet greens, Swiss chard, arugula.

Peas can be direct-seeded now, or transplanted out from seedling starts as late as early November.

Root vegetables (beets, radishes, carrots, turnips) can be planted from seed now. Most can be planted through fall and early winter. Rutabagas need a long season, so it's getting late for those.

Garlic can be planted now through fall and early winter. It's best to buy garlic bulbs that are certified to be disease free. Grocery store bulbs may have problems.

Onions can be planted now from seed or small transplants, or you can plant them from larger bare-root plants that are available in November.

More about kale.

Kale has become one of the most popular winter vegetables, and for good reason. Aside from being very healthy for you, it's quite easy to grow.



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Kale seedlings can be crowded together in a large container, and you can harvest leaves steadily through the winter. Or the plants can be planted a foot or so apart and allowed to grow to their maximum potential, which is a LOT of kale.

Last year I grew every kind of kale I could find just to test them for vigor, size, yield, and even to see how attractive they were.

- Hands-down winner for early production and very attractive leaves was Red Russian kale. Each plant grew to two to three feet tall and wide, did so very quickly, and as soon as the weather cooled the leaves turned a lovely bright burgundy color. Even if you don't like kale, this one is worth growing as a garden ornamental. If your family is dubious about kale, this may be the best one to start them with as the leaves are thinner (kale leaves are kind of tough) and less fibrous.
- Lacinato kale grew almost as fast, and these also have very attractive leaves. The plants were somewhat more compact than Red Russian.
- The Tuscan or dino kales took longer to get going. The leaves are very thick. They were very impressive at the other end of the season. I had Tuscan kale growing and producing all the way into early summer.
- For limited space, Vates Blue Curled (sometimes sold as 'dwarf') made very compact plants that grew very well even when planted as close as six inches apart.

Flavor differences were minimal between the varieties. All had better, somewhat sweeter flavor once we had frost. Starches in the leaves convert to sugar in cold weather. Kale, like all the winter vegetables, is not just unharmed by frost, it's improved by cold weather.

Cover crops are often planted after summer vegetables are removed. These are plants chosen for vigor and cold tolerance. They out-compete weeds (usually) and often provide nitrogen to the soil.

Cover crops can be seeded anytime in fall or even into winter. Fava beans are especially popular due to their rapid growth, pretty flowers, edible beans, and high nitrogen-fixation, but clover, annual ryegrass, and oats with field peas are all very good cover crops for our area. Just scatter the seeds before a rainstorm and let nature take care of the rest.

Plant some flowers for winter!

There's great enthusiasm for flowers that draw pollinators, hummingbirds, butterflies, and beneficial insects to your garden. While much of this focus is on the summer garden, we do have native hummingbirds that are resident through the winter, and beneficial insects that emerge in winter and need food sources.

Try to keep something blooming year-around to help them out! That can include annual and perennial flowers as well as some great winter-flowering shrubs.

- For winter and spring flowers we plant snapdragons, stock, pansies and violas, calendula, pinks, poppies, sweet alyssum, cyclamen, and more. These are all unfazed by frost and bloom happily through April.
- Perennials that bloom in winter include gazanias, bergenia, lenten rose (Helleborus), and paperwhite narcissus.



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- Shrubs for winter bloom include golden bush daisy (Euryops), rosemary, ornamental currants (Ribes), grevilleas, camellias, mahonia, and daphne.

This is a great time to upgrade, restore, or replace your lawn.

If your lawn thinned out during the summer heat, fall is a great time to scatter more seed in the bare areas. Perennial ryegrass and fine fescues make a good combination for our area. For tougher turf that is subjected to more wear and tear, try tall fescue. In more shade, use creeping red fescue.

Seeding your lawn is easiest right before a rainstorm. Mow as short as you can and rake out all the dead stuff. Dethatching may be helpful. Broadcast the seed at about one pound per 100 to 300 square feet. If rain isn't imminent, water each morning for a few minutes, and again mid-day if we have windy weather. The seed will germinate in about two weeks. If you see areas that aren't coming up well due to weather (or birds eating the seed) just keep scattering seed every two to four weeks right into December.

Converting your lawn to a low-water landscape can seem daunting. While some folks like to kill out the whole turf area first, that can be a major undertaking, and if you're not using a weedkiller, you really needed to start the process earlier in the summer. But you can start planting new shrubs and trees, and even some of the tougher perennials, without going to that extreme. Just dig the grass out of an area a few feet across for each plant. Water the new plants individually while the weather is still warm and dry. Eventually you'll probably want to convert your lawn sprinklers to drip irrigation, but the current system can be adequate for now.

Mulch heavily around the new plants to smother weeds, and monitor for those that push through. Arborist wood chips or straw make great mulch for this purpose.

Garden centers have lots of low-water choices in fall, and it's also the prime season for sales at the UC Davis Arboretum as well as those sponsored by the local native plant societies.

More information about those events here:

<https://arboretum.ucdavis.edu/plant-sales>

<https://www.sacvalleycnps.org/plant-sales/>

By the way, for those especially interested in California native plants, we have an outstanding resource right here in the Davis area. Patricia Carpenter, a California Native Plant Society (CNPS) Garden Ambassador, hosts open garden visits several times during the year at her amazing garden/collection just west of town on Russell Blvd. Watch for her announcements in The Davis Enterprise, The Dirt, on local garden radio shows, and social media.



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Armload of kale

One of many mid-winter harvests of kale. There are several varieties available which differ primarily in vigor, ultimate size, and how long into the warm season they grow. Full sun is best.



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Salvia rosmarinus (formerly *Rosmarinus officinalis*)

Rosemary is one of our easiest winter-flowering shrubs or ground covers. The same herb that you use in cooking is a great landscape plant. Bees are very attracted to the flowers and songbirds like the cover that the plants provide. This is a tough, drought tolerant plant for full sun or light shade.



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Commonly called golden bush daisy, *Euryops pectinatus* is a winter-flowering shrub that grows to three to four feet tall and wide. Bright yellow flowers from November through May are very attractive to beneficial insects and hummingbirds. Full sun is best.



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Fava beans, crimson variety

Cover crops are grown to build the soil and out-compete weeds, but many are very attractive as well. This is a crimson-flowered variant of fava bean. Favas produce lots of nitrogen in the soil, grow vigorously, and tolerate soggy soil and very cold temperatures. The beans are edible. Plant seed anytime October through January.