

October in Your Garden

Get your garden ready for autumn: Last call to plant winter vegetables while there is sun to warm the soil. Plant seedlings of lettuce, chard, kale, other leafy greens, broccoli, cauliflower, especially purple and yellow varieties not found in the grocery bin. Pull out those tomatoes and use the same structure for snow peas all winter. Don't forget to freshen the soil by taking the top layer off and adding compost to mix into the soil. Check the Master Gardener list for other cool-season vegetables that agree with our climate.

Pruning of apricot and peach and pluot trees is easier done when the leaves are still on the tree, in September and October, and whips, long skinny branches of apple trees, can be removed. Do pruning of fruit trees soon, or wait until winter, when the leaves are gone. How about those perennials, like daylilies or salvia or agapanthas or Shasta daisies? Do they look a bit tired and maybe need thinning? Now is a great time to dig some up, take a spade to divide them into four plants, replant one clump and put the other three into gallon pots to give away or brighten up another area.

Fall is a great time to plant my favorite bulbs, ranunculus and anemone. But first, add some humus to the area in the form of compost or old mulch or dried manure. Also add some fertilizer, since mulch is really not a replacement for fertilizer. Did you know that free composting classes and low cost compost bins are available from the Master Composters? The workshops are 2 hours, and you can register on-line at www.reducewaste.org. I would like to hear from composters about their successful (or failed) efforts to create and use a back yard compost bin. Please contact vickisullivan@comcast.net to report your tales of making your own compost in your garden.

Did you remember to feed your camellias on Labor Day? Give your acid-loving plants a holiday treat by feeding azaleas, camellias, rhododendrons with 0-10-10 fertilizer to encourage their buds. They will reward you with bigger and better blooms. About California natives, they perk up and thrive when it starts raining. Look for native plants during October at your favorite nursery.