



Seeds For Thought

Solano County Master Gardeners

Spring 2009 Vol. 4, Issue 2

CAMELLIAS

Sharon Rico, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Sacramento is the camellia capitol of California. After attending the 2009 Camellia Show on Saturday, February 28, at the Memorial Auditorium, we drove through downtown Sacramento looking at the beautiful camellia trees laden with blooms. It seemed everywhere you turned the red, white and pink blooms were on display. What is amazing is the size of some of the shrubs and trees, covering up the second story of vintage homes and apartments. Many of these old camellias have never been pruned, although it is important to remove the interior twigs that no longer produce flowers. The pruning also opens the plant to light to enhance its health and energy.

The camellia shows in Northern California begin the first Saturday in February in Napa. They are held each weekend for about eight weeks and rotate through a series of locations each weekend. The

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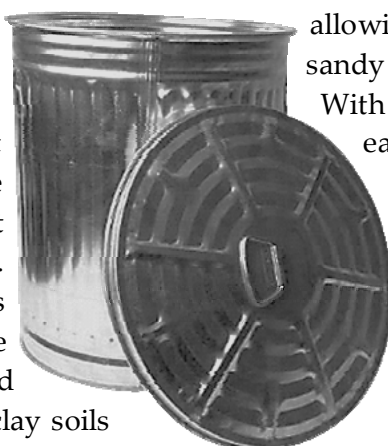
Displayed on this unidentified cultivar, variegated color is one of countless options for camellia flowers.

Photo by Sharon Leos

COMPOSTING: WHY AND HOW

Kelly Torres, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Composting is terrific for your flower and vegetable garden and your soil, and it reduces the amount of garbage you contribute to landfills. Using compost instead of synthetic fertilizer reduces the contamination of our waterways. Compost is a soil conditioner, mulch and fertilizer. As a soil conditioner, compost adds important microorganisms that increase plant health, so add it to your flower and vegetable gardens. It's also excellent for clay soils



allowing them to drain better and helps sandy soils to hold more water, longer.

With a little time and patience, it's really easy to make.

Almost any container can house your compost. A modified plastic or galvanized trash can, a pre-made compost bin, or a chicken wire ring in the corner of the yard will all work. If you have the space,

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CHERRIES - EVERYBODY'S FAVORITE FRUIT

Pearl Eddy, U.C. Master Gardener & U.C. Master Food Preserver, Solano County

Other than citrus, cherries (*Prunus* spp.) are the first fruits on the scene in our local orchards. The fruits are so lovely when ripe, from the 'Royal-Ann' which is yellow with a red blush, to the 'Bing' with its deep mahogany red color. The 'Lambert' is a dark, large, firm fruit with skin slightly firmer than that of the 'Bing.' All three of these varieties can be pollinated by the 'Black Tartarian' or the 'Van.' The 'Van' is pollinated by the 'Lambert' or the 'Bing.' These four varieties are very sweet when ripe, but sour (pie) varieties are available, and these do not require pollenizers.

Cherry trees are planted 14 to 20 feet apart in well drained soil and up on a small mound or berm or hillside. They don't like wet feet and are susceptible to brown rot, bacterial canker, root and crown rots and borers. You can look for cherries on dwarfing rootstock. These trees are smaller in stature (eight to ten feet) and are easier to cover with netting to keep the birds from eating all the fruit. Wait until the fruit is quite

ripe before picking as the sugar content rises dramatically in the last few days of ripening. You'll need to go over the tree every other day for about a week. Pick the fruit with the stems attached, but be careful not to tear off the woody fruit spur, which will continue to produce fruit year after year. If you plan to pit the cherries soon after picking, you can leave the stems on the tree.



Pitters are available that will do only one cherry at a time, or if you use a hand-cranked cherry pitter you can do a quart of cherries in ten minutes. I pit cherries if they are to be used for jam or relish, but for canning I leave the pits in. (Just warn your guests!) Cherries keep well in the refrigerator.

Cherries can be canned in jars using the "cold-pack" method of pouring hot syrup over cherries packed into jars. For sweet cherries you can use an extra-light syrup of 1 1/4 cups sugar dissolved in 5 1/2 cups of water. A light syrup is 2 1/4 cups sugar and 5 1/4 cups of

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SPICED CHERRIES

Yield: Approximately 5 half pint jars

4 cups granulated sugar	1/4 tsp. ground allspice
1 cup cider vinegar	1/4 tsp. ground cloves
1/2 tsp. ground cinnamon	5 cups pitted dark, sweet cherries

Bring sugar, vinegar and spices to a boil.
 Add cherries and cook until the jam is thick.
 Pour into 5 half-pint jars.
 Seal with 2-piece lids and process in a boiling water bath 5 minutes.

Recipe Courtesy of Pearl Eddy, U.C. Master Food Preserver & Master Gardener



A NATIVE POLLINATOR: THE LEAFCUTTER BEE

Erin Mahaney, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County



Damage caused by leafcutter bees is mostly cosmetic and does little harm to the plant.

Now that it's spring and we're eagerly venturing into our yards again, it's a good time to appreciate not only the spring blooms, but the hard-working native bees gathering pollen and moving it from flower to flower. While most of us are familiar with the non-native European honeybee (*Apis* spp.) and its value as a pollinator, native bees such as the leafcutter (or leaf-cutting) bee (*Megachile* spp.) and bumblebee (*Bombus* spp.) also are important pollinators. In light of the honeybee's decline, in part due to disease and mites, it has become even more important to conserve and protect these native pollinators.

Have you ever found holes in the leaf margins of your roses? The culprit is the leafcutter bee. But don't try to eliminate this bee unnecessarily! In a backyard setting, the damage that the leafcutter bee causes is largely cosmetic and is outweighed by its value as a pollinator. The bee is considered to be essential to pollination of wild plants and at least one species has been semi-domesticated as an alfalfa pollinator.

There are over 140 species of leafcutter bees in North America. The adult leafcutter bee resembles the honeybee in appearance, but is a little darker in color. Unlike the social honeybee, however, the leafcutter bee is a solitary creature that does not form colonies. The bee typically nests in holes in the

ground, in thick-stemmed, pithy plants (such as roses or bamboo), in soft, rotting wood, or in wood blocks. It builds nests in small holes about the size of a nickel or smaller. It cuts oval holes in the margins of leaves, such as roses and other ornamental plants, and uses the leaves to line its nest. The female leafcutter lays an egg in a cell of the nest and then seals the cell with the pieces of the cut leaf, forming a tight fit. Although unsightly, the leaf cutting is rarely harmful to the plant. For a photo of a rose leaf damaged by a leafcutter bee, see <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu/PMG/M/I-HY-MSPP-CD.004.html>

The leafcutter bee is not aggressive, and stings only if it is handled. Nonetheless, people may want to control the bee to reduce their chances of getting stung or to minimize damage to ornamental plants. Because the bee uses the leaf material to line its nest, and does not actually eat the leaves, insecticides are not effective controls. Protect selected plants by covering them with cheesecloth or loose netting when you start to see damage.

If, however, you can stand a few holes in the leaves of your ornamental shrubs, consider letting the leafcutter bee continue to do its important work of pollination.✂

*To make a prairie
it takes a clover
and one bee.*

- Emily Dickinson



WHAT IS A GARDEN ROOM?

Sharon Rico, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

We will be hearing this term more and more as people seek inspiration for a personal haven in their own backyard where they can vacation at home. These rooms can be used for dining, bathing, sleeping, meditation and entertainment. Within the familiar setting of home you can create outdoor space for comfort, privacy, pleasure, solitude and socializing. So begin dreaming, planning and building your own garden room, using the sky as your ceiling, walls of greenery, and floors of grass, gravel or wood. Can you visualize your ideal garden escape?

Garden rooms began back in biblical times with the exotic hanging gardens of Babylon. They donned a formal look that graced the sumptuous homes of European aristocracy. This style of room served to please the eye more than the soul. Garden rooms today are places we desire to be, not just places to see. They form nooks in the garden where we curl our toes in the grass, sip morning coffee, read the latest novel or play board games with our grandchildren. They remind us of our favorite vacation destinations, soothe us with their sense of sanctuary and extend our outdoor living spaces. They are all about expanding our comfort zone. They help us relax after a hectic day, provide a place for family and friends to gather and charm us with the promise of reconnecting with nature.

The beauty of a garden room with its decorative elements, is it helps create a sense of place that insulates you from the world, yet somehow connects you to it. It unites you with natural surroundings and sounds that are easily overlooked in this age of glowing computer and television

screens and artificially created environments. A sense of place provides one of the strongest influences on garden design today, resulting in garden rooms that reflect when and how you live. Let your region's climate and environment guide and distinguish your garden plans.

Garden rooms extend living areas beyond the walls of your home, spilling everyday indoor life into the surrounding green space. If you have a yard, why not transform it into a place you yearn to be, to sit, eat, work, sleep, interact and find solitude? Find a place that lends itself to transformation and add boundaries (shrubs, fences, walls) and you can achieve a sheltered private room outdoors.

Whereas walls and fences provide privacy, trees, hedges and raised flower beds offer a living framework for a room. Structure, such as gazebos, arbors or a pergola define a garden room instantly. A sense of enclosure separates the place from surround spaces and enhances its character.

Connect rooms with meandering paths and mark entrances with stylish arbors, gates, a change in surface underfoot or with a door. Count on hardscape (paths, steps, edging, patios and decks) to delineate separate areas of the garden. Then soften the hardscape with plants and accessories that express your personality and suit your lifestyle. Over time you'll create a space that ministers to body and soul.

Use fabrics that are weather resistant. Include comfortable outdoor furniture, night lighting and a water feature. Add vacation amenities, such as a spa and outdoor stereo speakers so that time spent in your backyard turns everyday into a holiday. ❀



SPRING GARDENING GUIDE

Nancy Duval, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano-Yolo Counties

	April	May	June
PLANTING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Edibles: Loose-leaf lettuce, culinary herbs, chard, radishes, spinach. <input type="checkbox"/> Warm-season annuals: Ageratum, alyssum, bedding dahlias, impatiens, lobelia, petunia, portulaca, salvia, zinnia. <input type="checkbox"/> Perennials: Ceanothus, lavender, coreopsis, penstemon, rudbeckia. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Edibles: Beans, corn, cucumbers, eggplant, melons, okra, peppers, pumpkins, squash, tomatoes, watermelon. <input type="checkbox"/> Butterfly, bee and hummingbird attractions: Agastache, alstroemeria, bee balm, coneflower, coral bells, fuchsia, honeysuckle, penstemon, salvia. <input type="checkbox"/> Perennial shrubs, trees or vines. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Edibles: Melon, beans and corn from seed; tomato, squash and cucumber seedlings. <input type="checkbox"/> Successive plantings of basil and cilantro. <input type="checkbox"/> Summer annuals: Cosmos, marigolds, portulaca, sunflowers, zinnias. <input type="checkbox"/> Summer-blooming perennials: Daylilies, gloriosa daisy, Russian sage, salvia, yarrow.
MAINTENANCE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Control weeds – pull or hoe them as soon as they appear. <input type="checkbox"/> Fertilize and clean up around azaleas, camellias, and rhododendrons. Fertilize citrus. <input type="checkbox"/> Tune up motor and sharpen blades on lawn mower. Mow often enough that you cut no more than 1/3 the length of the grass blade in any one session. Leave clippings on lawn. <input type="checkbox"/> Spray olives, liquidambar and other messy trees with fruit control hormone or blast with hose to curb fruit production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Aerate and fertilize lawns. <input type="checkbox"/> Fertilize citrus and established perennials and vegetables. <input type="checkbox"/> Deadhead spent flowers to encourage new bloom; pinch back petunias and fuchsia. <input type="checkbox"/> Allow spring bulb foliage to yellow and dry out before removing. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Roses: Cut back faded blooms to ¼ inch above first five leaflet that faces outside bush. <input type="checkbox"/> Fruit trees: Thin apples, pears, peaches and nectarines, leaving about 6 inches between fruit. <input type="checkbox"/> Sprinklers: Summer heat increases water needs by 2 inches per week. Adjust sprinklers for adequate coverage and irrigation. <input type="checkbox"/> Fertilize annual flowers, vegetables, lawns and roses. <input type="checkbox"/> Deep water trees to encourage deep, strong root growth.
PREVENTION	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Hand pick snails and slugs. If using bait, choose one containing iron phosphate as the active ingredient (it's safer around pets and kids) & follow all product instructions. <input type="checkbox"/> Rid new growth of aphids with blast from hose every few days. <input type="checkbox"/> Dump standing water to slow mosquito breeding. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Tune up drip irrigation systems. <input type="checkbox"/> Build basins around the bases of shrubs and trees; mulch those and garden plants to conserve moisture and reduce weeds, leaving a mulch-free margin around plant crowns and stems. <input type="checkbox"/> Stake tomatoes and perennials. <input type="checkbox"/> Remain vigilant against snails, slugs and aphids. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Mulch to keep roots cool and retain moisture. <input type="checkbox"/> Check underside of tomato leaves for hornworms. <input type="checkbox"/> Spray roses with neem oil to help control aphids, black spot, whiteflies and powdery mildew. <input type="checkbox"/> Inspect garden for earwigs. <input type="checkbox"/> Remain vigilant against snails and slugs.

"Half the interest of the garden is the constant exercise of the imagination."
- Alice M. Earle, 1897

BIRD GARDEN

Darrell g.h. Schramm, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

Recently I read that gardening and bird watching are the two most popular “passive sports” in the United States, with gardening in the lead. While I don’t consider digging, planting, transplanting, hauling, pruning, etc. passive work in the garden, I suppose I understand that writer’s definition. What interests me, however, is the juxtaposition of birds with gardens.

Surely most of us enjoy the form, flight, color, and call of birds on our property. Indeed, I keep two or three large bird feeders in my backyard. They and my plants entice at least four kinds of sparrows, three kinds of finch, bushtits, mockingbirds, robins, scrub jays, mourning doves, California towhees, a black phoebe, an occasional yellow-rumped warbler, black-capped chickadee, ruby-crowned kinglet, hermit thrush, northern flicker, and two or three hummingbirds.

Once or twice a year an excited flock of 30 to 50 cedar waxwings will descend on anything that produces berries—mulberry (*Morus* spp.), pyracantha (*Pyracantha* spp.), English ivy (*Hedera helix*). They will also eat blueberry (*Vaccinium* spp.), blackberry (*Rubus* spp.), serviceberry (*Amelanchier* spp.), cherry (*Prunus* spp.), honeysuckle (*Lonicera* spp.), sap drip, and the blossom of aspen (*Populus* spp.), cottonwood (*Populus* spp.), maple (*Acer* spp.), and various fruit trees. Robins and mockingbirds delight in berries as well. Nearly every year I host a flock of drunken robins, laughing and tottering on the berry vines.

What? You say you see few or no birds in your garden? If that is the case, the cause may be the plants that you grow do not provide enough seed, nectar or fruit for these feathered friends. Or it may be that you have scarce or no vertically structured foliage (trees, shrubs, Mexican sage (*Salvia mexicana*), etc.) Several ornithological studies have shown that the number and diversity of birds is proportional to vertical vegetation and food supply. Vertical, branching woody plants provide shelter, shade, and nesting sites.

To be realistic, the diet of most garden birds can be a mixed blessing. Insect-eating birds—bushtits, chickadees, kinglets, hermit thrush, towhees, scrub jays, most

sparrows—eat insects rather indiscriminately, the harmful and the beneficial. In fact, most songbirds eat insects. The first four I mentioned as well as sparrows consider spiders a delicious repast. Hummingbirds will even steal a meal from a spider’s web. If ever you’ve wondered why countless insects exist in the world, you now have a partial answer: Consider that there are more than 28,000 species of known insects and compare that to the approximately 8,700 to 10,000 species of birds, and you’ll understand there’s enough food to go around in the aviary supermarket known as the garden.

I have a fondness for bushtits. Tiny birds, they flitter about in tiny flocks, often hanging upside down, picking insects from twigs, stems, and leaves. I often see them in my rose bushes, no doubt searching for nasty rose enemies, especially aphids, which they enjoy. They are rarely in one bush or tree very long in their foraging sallies. They eat on the run.

Chickadees feed mainly on the eggs and larvae of insects, but also feast on caterpillars. They seem especially drawn to sunflower seeds and berries. (I provide abundant sunflower seeds in my feeder.) They are known to store seeds in tree bark. A word of caution: according to Rodale, an established earth-safe gardening group, the oil from sunflower seed hulls appears toxic to many landscape plants, so I keep my feeders a small distance from the roses and a few other plants, allowing the hulls to fall onto a pathway.

Of course the great seed eaters are sparrows and finch. They feed mostly on seeds from grasses and cereal grains as well as on seed sprouts. Flowers such as California poppy (*Eschscholzia californica*), coreopsis (*Coreopsis* spp.), bachelor’s button (*Centaurea cyanus*), calendula (*Calendula officinalis*), marigold (*Tagetes* spp.), zinnia (*Zinnia* spp.), and many others also offer seeds. Fox sparrows and golden-crowned sparrows will nip off young buds. If you have a resident flock of these birds, and/or house sparrows, you may want to protect your young vegetable garden with netting or some other cover, for they love the shoots of peas and other legumes. Re-seeded lawns can be a favorite for sparrows. Again, birds can be a

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Bird Garden (Continued from page 6)

mixed blessing.

And if you've wondered where that lovely flower came from, growing at the edge of a carefully planned flowerbed—or, for that matter, where that weed came from that you hadn't noticed in your garden before—it may well be from the seed in the excrement of a bird. Nature has its mysterious ways, its wonders to perform.

Consider the California scrub jay. Jays bury acorns, a habit which enlarges California oak country. But my one oak is enough, thank you, so I do find myself pulling up unwanted oak seedlings.

More helpfully, robins eat snails. Bring on the robins!

But the most symbiotic bird in my garden is the hummingbird. This wee buzzer gleans moth caterpillars from new leaves at the tips of tree branches.

It perches while scanning for flying insects and then darts into the air to catch mosquitoes, fruitflies, gnats. It dines on ants, aphids, thrips, and maggots. Hummingbirds need protein, which these tiny invertebrates provide. Could there be a more helpful bird in the garden? And that's not all.

While drinking nectar from certain tubular or long, curved flowers such as of the jewelweed (*Impatiens* spp.) or the trumpet vine (*Campsis* spp.), the hummingbird becomes a pollinator, furthering plant reproduction. While the bird is drinking in the flower, its pedicels deposit pollen on the hummingbird's head. And that, Mistress Mary, is how your garden grows.

Among the plants that attract hummingbirds—and I have nearly all of these in my garden—are the following: bee balm (*Monarda didyma*), columbine (*Aquilegia* sp.), cosmos, dahlia, delphinium (*Delphinium elatum*), foxglove (*Digitalis* spp.), Geranium (*Pelargonium* sp.), gladiolus, hollyhock (*Althea rosea*), honeysuckle, iris, lupine (*Lupinus hybridus*), nasturtium (*Tropaeolum majus*), petunia (*Petunia hybrida*), penstemon, sage (*Salvia leucantha* and many others), and speedwell (*Veronica hybrida*).

Like a garden, the birds within it will appreciate water. Even drought-tolerant plants are merely that: tolerant of lack of water—but not necessarily appreciative. Birds need water to drink and to bathe. Mourning doves, for instance, imbibe vast quantities of water. A pond with a shallow edge is conducive to those needs, as is a birdbath. I find it

a pleasure to watch birds bathing, ruffling and shaking their feathers, baptizing my terrace.

Lastly, the use of pesticides must be addressed. I advise against it. Some birds eat leaves, others seed sprouts and buds, still others the seeds and berries of plants. They also use, as I've mentioned, various parts of plants for their nests. Despite Rachel Carson's famous denouncement of chemical products used in and on the environment, the

U.S. each year still uses in gardens and yards about 4.4 billion applications of harmful products. Only about ten of the 40 active poisonous ingredients in insecticides, fungicides, and herbicides have been banned in this country. According to the American Bird Conservancy, because of these pesticides, 6.7 million birds die each year.

What to do? Try hosing with strong jets of water to remove pests such as

aphids, white flies, mealybugs, and mites. Or pick them off by hand, as I often do. According to the Department of Entomology at Virginia Tech, insecticidal soap also works well on soft-bodied insect pests. For preventing or treating powdery mildew, try spraying a mixture of one part milk to nine parts water onto your plants. The June 2008 issue of *Scientia Horticulturae* records that scientist Wagner Bettiol of Brazil discovered that such a milk spray reduced the mildew on cucumbers and zucchini by about 90%. (He acknowledges that further testing is required for optimum concentration and timing.) Begin spraying in early spring and continue spraying regularly through autumn. Another fungal remedy for powdery mildew as well as rust and blackspot is a solution of four teaspoons of baking soda plus two and a half tablespoons horticultural per gallon of water. Several drops of a mild dish detergent (not a concentrate) will help the solution adhere to the leaves. Spray weekly.

A flowering garden with bird life is like a living painting. Practically, the benefit of birds in the garden is that they disperse seeds (and acorns); eat insects such as mosquitoes, flies, gnats, aphids, and thrips; and pollinate plants. Gardens also benefit birds for some of those same reasons, but also gardens provide twigs, stems, leaves, moss and other plant fibers, and even cobwebs for nest building. Aesthetically, these hollow-boned, winged creatures give us the delight of play, of color, of form, of song. I can't imagine a truly attractive garden without birds. ❀



House
Finch
(male)

UC Statewide IPM Project
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EDITOR'S NOTE


Sharon Leos, U.C. Master Gardener, Solano County

For the last three and a half years, I have had the honor of editing *Seeds For Thought* and with the publication of this issue, I pass the care of our newsletter on to veteran Master Gardener Erin Mahaney.

Thank you to the all of the Solano County Master Gardener authors, whose enthusiasm for and dedication to serving the residents of Solano County have made our newsletter a source of pride within our organization. As the editor, I frequently received compliments on our newsletter, which would never be produced without the hard work and commitment our Master Gardeners demonstrate on a regular basis.

Thank you to our readers. We have grown an extensive list of home gardeners, both local and from cities beyond

Solano, receiving our publication. We provide our newsletter in support of the Master Gardeners' mission to distribute research based gardening information to the home gardener. Without an audience, there is no need for a newsletter. I have no doubt you will continue to enjoy our efforts.

Last but not least, thank you to Jennifer Baumbach, our Program Coordinator, who provided me with the opportunity to put my touch on a highly visible aspect of the Master Gardener program. I have learned a great deal from Jennifer, as an editor and in interacting with my fellow Master Gardeners. I look forward to many more years as a volunteer! 

Composting: Why and How (Continued from page 1)

the know-how and the time, you can build one from wood.


When choosing a plastic or galvanized trash can, pick a 20-30 gallon size. Make sure the it is large enough so the contents are easy to turn with a pitch fork or three-pronged hoe. Compost bins need oxygen, so hammer several holes in the bottom with a large nail and cut a small harvest door on the side. Arrange bricks on the ground and sit the can on them so air can circulate underneath. Another requirement is location. If you have a vegetable garden, locate the bin near the garden for convenience.

Moisture is important to the decomposition process, so make sure the hose is nearby. The pile should be soaked initially and then kept at a uniform dampness, similar to a wrung out sponge. Water may need to be added occasionally due to the high temperatures achieved during the decomposition process. If the pile is too dry, the process will slow down or even stop. Too much moisture will also slow the process and the pile will smell bad. The pile should be covered to protect it from drying out or soaking rains.

Two basic elements from your kitchen and yard turn into compost: green debris and brown debris. Green debris is comprised of yard clippings, old

annuals, and kitchen fruit and vegetable debris. The green components are high in nitrogen, which microorganisms in the compost pile will use for nutrition. If you generate a lot of vegetable and fruit debris in the kitchen, collect them in a small container on the counter or under the sink; then bring to it the main bin one or two times a week. Keep in mind that continuously adding to the pile will extend the time required to harvest the finished compost. Other suitable ingredients are crushed egg shells, coffee grounds and tea bags. Adding too much green debris can give the pile a bad smell. If this happens, add more brown debris to the pile, wait a few days, then turn.

Brown debris consists of dry leaves, dead plants and shrub or tree prunings. Only use items that are not diseased. These brown debris ingredients are high in carbon, which microorganisms use for food. If you do not have access to a lot of dry leaves, other browns include paper based items like newspaper, paper bags and cardboard egg cartons. Paper items should be shredded or ripped into smaller pieces so they can be mixed into the pile.

Unsuitable ingredients are animal waste, meats, oils, dairy, diseased plants, and weeds or plants that have been treated with pesticides or herbicides. Do not add them to your compost pile. 

Preservation Pointers (Continued from page 2)

water. In place of the sugar syrup you can use unsweetened grape or apple juice, but I don't like anything to get in the way of the real cherry flavor. After the jars are sealed with two-piece lids, process pints for 15 minutes and quarts 20 minutes in a boiling-water canner.

Freezing is another easy way to preserve cherries for later. Dark cherries are better for freezing because they do not darken further. Wash, stem and pit them, if desired. They can be frozen individually on cookie sheets and then placed in freezer bags. Also fresh cherries can be packed into freezer containers and covered with sugar syrup or fruit juice. I prefer to pit the cherries, sprinkle with a little sugar, allow to set for 15 minutes to make their own juice and then pack into freezer containers. I pack them down firmly as I use these to make jam. I use a pectin designed for low sugar recipes and sometimes substitute a cup of crushed pineapple in place of an equal amount of cherries.

To dry cherries, wash, stem and pit fully ripe fruit. Large cherries can be cut in half. Place on dehydrator screens and dry until pliable and leathery with no pockets of moisture. These store well in freezer bags or jars.

Preserves are an easy way to put up fruit as the

mixture contains larger particles than found in jam, and no pectin is necessary. In a 4-quart saucepan place 4 cups pitted sweet cherries (tightly packed) and crush to start the juice flow. Boil the cherries and their juice for about 10 minutes or until fruit is tender. Add sugar, stir well and boil for 5 minutes more. Cover the pan for 2 minutes and let the cherries stand to absorb more sugar. Stir to prevent floating fruit, place into pint jars (2), leaving 1/4 inch headroom, cover with two-piece lids and process in a boiling water bath for 5 minutes.

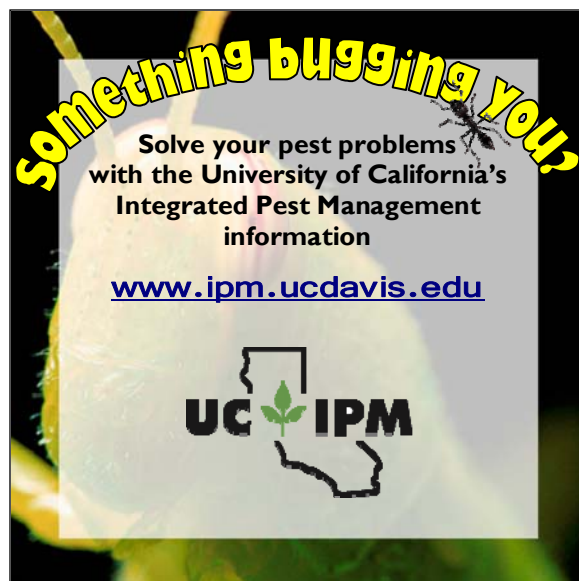
The Spiced Cherries recipe (on page 2) results in a product that can be used as a jam for toast and hot breads or as a filling for tarts (especially on a layer of custard).

Another recipe that I used to make every year when I had a good, producing 'Royal Ann' tree was for Maraschino Cherries. It called for lemon juice and almond flavoring and was delicious. I won't include it here as it is a rather detailed recipe which took several days to make, but you can find it in canning books or online.

Even if you are not growing your own cherries, they can be found from May to June in various growing areas such as near Brentwood or east of Lodi, farmers markets or even from vendors along the local roadways.✿



Vegetable Research & Information Center
University of California
Cooperative Extension
Learn about growing vegetables from artichokes to watermelons
http://vric.ucdavis.edu/main/veg_info.htm



Something bugging you?
Solve your pest problems with the University of California's Integrated Pest Management information
www.ipm.ucdavis.edu
UC IPM

Camellias (Continued from page 1)

camellia growers follow this eight week circuit to bring their blooms for competition and to assist in the judging process. The Solano County Master Gardeners have been volunteering as clerks and runners in Napa and Sacramento since 2004. We are not only exposed to some incredible, diverse blooms, but to the growers who are passionate about what they do and willing to share this information. Also, each show has unusual camellia plants for sale, some that are not available to purchase at our local nurseries. Buying a plant at a show will assure a healthy plant grown by a camellia grower or purchased from a noted camellia nursery. Another benefit, you can get instructions on planting, location and care.

There are over 250 known species of camellia mainly found in the woodlands of China. Three species are native to Japan. Around 45 species are available in cultivation. The more recognized camellia species are *C. japonica*, *C. reticulata* and *C. sasanqua*. It's estimated that there are over 33,000 cultivated varieties or cultivars of varying size with a range of lovely flower shapes. Some forms or shapes are singles, semi-doubles, rose formed double, formal double, anemone and peony.

Most species produce flowers that are red, white or pink, but a few subtropical species have yellow flowers and some species have fragrance. I think the most interesting and famous camellia (though not always recognized as a camellia) is *Camellia sinensis*, the tea plant. Most people do not know that tea comes from this plant, where the tender new leaves are the source of tea that has been enjoyed as a beverage for over 2,000 years. The flowers on *Camellia sinensis* are white and smaller than a pencil eraser. It is a delicate looking plant.

Camellias are exceptional among garden flowers in that most of its cultivars are derived from a single species (or pure-bred). A hybrid that is a cross between two species are the camellias of the future, and we will be seeing fragrance, yellow color and cold hardiness in these plants. The camellia looks beautiful in the garden in flower February through May, usually before other plants are blooming.

If you miss a show this year, mark your calendar for 2010 and try to attend a camellia show near you. It's something you won't want to miss. For more information visit the Napa Valley Camellia Society at www.napacamellia.org ❁



Advice
to
Grow By... Ask Us!

Master Gardeners

are trained volunteers who provide University research based answers to gardening questions and pest management information to the residents of Solano County. Ask your question in person at a local event, at our office, by telephone on the Hotline, or e-mail.

TELEPHONE HOTLINE (707) 784-1322

E-MAIL mgsolano@ucdavis.edu

INQUIRE IN PERSON 501 Texas Street, Fairfield
Tuesday - Thursday (707) 784-1317
9-5 (closed for lunch)

Master Gardeners at Local Events

PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP

Presented by the Solano County Master Gardeners

Learn how to propagate plants by cuttings, division, and layering. Participants will be able to make their own cuttings to take home.

April 4, 10:3- a.m.

Free to the Public

Solano Community College
Horticulture Building (Building 1000)
Reservation required due to limited space
Contact Jennifer Baumbach (707) 784-1321

BENICIA IN BLOOM

April 4 & 5, 11 a.m. - 5 p.m.

Tannery Building
Main Street, Benicia
www.beniciamainstreet.org

SPRING PLANT SALE

Solano Resource Conservation District

April 25, 8 a.m. - noon

SRCD Conservation Education Center
6390 Lewis Road, Vacaville
www.solanorcd.org



EARTH DAY FESTIVAL

April 25, 11 a.m. - 3 p.m.

Civic Center Pond
Behind Fairfield City Hall
1000 Webster Street, Fairfield

MORNINGSUN HERB FARM OPEN HOUSE

May 9, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.

6137 Pleasants Valley Road, Vacaville
www.morningsunherbfarm.com

Farmers Markets

**Exact schedules for Master Gardeners at Farmers Markets was not available at press time. Contact Jennifer Baumbach 784-1321 for staffing details at specific markets.*

BENICIA*

Thursdays (operates 4/30 -10/29)
4 p.m. to 8p.m.
1st Street between B & D Streets

DIXON*

Thursdays (operates 5/21 - 9/24)
4 p.m. to 8 p.m.
Women's Improvement Park
North 1st & East C Streets

VACAVILLE*

Saturdays (operates 5/16 - 10/31)
8 a.m. to 12 p.m.
Main Street between Parker & Dobbins Streets

VALLEJO*

Saturdays (operates year-round)
9 a.m. to 1 p.m.
Georgia & Marin Streets

VACAVILLE LIBRARY PRESENTATIONS

Presentations begin at 7 p.m.

April 16: "Compost"

Presented by Teresa Lavell, Marian Chmielecki, and Monique Moench

May 21: "Insects"

Presented by Riva Flexer

June 18: "Victory Garden"

Presented by Cheryl Potts

VACAVILLE CULTURAL CENTER LIBRARY
1020 Ulatis Drive, Vacaville (707) 449-6290

READ THE BOTANICAL BLOG

A branch of the *Daily Republic* Community blogs featuring the gardening insights of Solano County Master Gardeners.
<http://dailyrepublic.typepad.com/botanicalblog/>



Seeds For Thought is produced by
the Solano County Master Gardeners

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Have a comment or question about *Seeds For Thought*?
Contact us!

By email: mgsolano@ucdavis.edu
Please put '*Seeds For Thought*' in the email Subject line.

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It is available in full color through the internet for free download:

<http://cesolano.ucdavis.edu/newsletterfiles/newsletter130.htm>

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