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University of California
Agriculture and Natural Resources
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UC CE

# The Green Scene

August 2024

## Meetings and Announcements

### Next Horticultural Tour—Spain and Portugal, May, 2025

Thanks for your inquiries and emails. In cooperation with Travel Gallery of Pasadena, I offer an upcoming educational opportunity, a horticultural tour to northern Spain and northern Portugal. The dates are May 11 – May 23, 2025. This will be the twelfth horticultural tour in our series.

For a detailed itinerary, please use the link to connect with Travel Gallery at https://www.travelgallery.com/horticulture-spain-2025

The itinerary features at least two nights in all hotels, and much less driving with more free time than our previous hort tour to the UK. The tour begins at Madrid Barajas airport, moves to the north, moves to the west to the famous pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela, and then turns south to northern Portugal.

We envision the southern California group traveling together from LAX to Madrid, leaving Sunday, May 11, with arrival early afternoon Monday, May 12.

Expect good food.

Expect interesting plants and design. As we found in our previous hort tour to Spain, I know of no other country that handles large public spaces, e.g., squares and boulevards, as well as the Spanish. And we always learn something about plant selection, often applicable to our own landscapes.

I want to thank Frank Fish and Travel Gallery for taking on this project as an educational endeavor. We have always been one of the smaller or smallest groups they handle.

I will also like to mention that I intend to offer a horticultural tour to Japan in spring, 2026. Japan has superb examples of garden design, and one of the world's premier rose gardens is there, which I visited in 2009 as part of an international rose symposium.

### Master Gardener Program

The search for an MG coordinator continues. Because the search has not been successful thus far, it goes on, another round, and therefore I think it unlikely we will offer MG classes this fall.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, whenever that happens, you may call our office, 661 868-6200, or email cekern@ucdavis.edu, and ask to be put on the list for contact when the MG classes begin. We expect classes to begin this coming autumn.

## Sun and Shadow

The news in August is that day length shortens at an increasing pace, and we will drop about an hour of sun by the end of the month. As of this writing (Aug 6), the sunrise and sunset points have each moved south by nine degrees from their positions at the summer solstice. The zenith angle is now eight degrees lower (now 71 degrees) than it was at the solstice. This all means shorter days with less solar intensity. I don't know where stock prices or interest rates are going, but the movement of sun and corresponding day-length we can predict with certainty.

## Tree Decline—and therefore the need for a replanting program

Considering the Bakersfield area as the garden spot of California, trees are a part of the attraction of our fair city. Unfortunately, most trees do not live to great age in Kern County, especially the valley and desert portions, because the Kern climate often does not resemble where respective shade trees grow naturally. More specifically, stresses caused by warm summer temperatures, low humidity, and alkaline soils, can shorten tree longevity. Perhaps the most obvious example is coast redwood, *Sequoia sempirvirens,* remarkably successful in Bakersfield considering mountain locations of natural stands, but frequently displaying needle discoloration even as young trees.

Trees pass through the circle of life, i.e., growth, maturity, decline and death, and in Kern County they do so more rapidly than in many other locations. The term decline refers to premature, progressive loss of vigor and health. Decline may include slow growth, sparse foliage, dieback and undersized foliage. Decline because of age is common, since trees have life spans and life expectancies. Also, as trees become larger, demand for water increases, and so previously adequate irrigation may become limiting. Trees of the same species and similar ages may simply decline together without a specific infectious agent moving among them.

Decline is an inclusive word where more specific causes of a malady may not be known. Trees exhibiting poor growth often do not have one identifiable cause responsible for their decline. Sometimes the word "pressure" is used to describe the effect on trees of parts of the environment which are not favorable. Insects, fungi and microorganisms may also contribute to decline.

Decline can be caused by perennial or continual irritation by one factor, such as decline of pin oaks due to inadequate uptake of iron. Many trees species can be affected by drought stress or sunburn. Trees weakened by these factors become abnormally susceptible to fungi and insects, especially boring insects.

Decline can be caused by drastic injury plus secondary stress, such as the decline of native oaks after root loss as the result of construction or excavation. Although a less severe consequence, sycamore or ash may be affected by spring defoliation caused by anthracnose. Defoliation is most damaging if the foliage is removed just as leaves become fully expanded. This loss triggers a second flush growth during the same season, and the replacement of growth depletes the stored carbohydrate reserves of the tree and leaves it more susceptible to attack by secondary insects.

Decline can be caused by contributing factors such as girdling roots, restricted rooting space leading to water stress, cankers and water molds, soil compaction, or severe

trunk wounds. Trees in parking lot plantings often have very small soil volumes for roots with resulting stress, stunting, and short life.

Since the lives of trees are finite, replanting will be necessary. On larger properties, such as golf courses and common areas of homeowners associations, we can expect a percentage loss of trees every year, so that a regular planting program will be necessary to maintain a tree population.

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