Welcome to New Readers

I’d like to welcome readers from our fall horticulture classes. We welcome you to continue to use Cooperative Extension and University of California resources and information.

Pruning Demonstrations for Deciduous Fruit Trees

We invite you to come to our annual fruit tree pruning demonstrations, this year held Monday, December 16, and Tuesday, Dec. 17, at the orchard adjacent to the UCCE office, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Ave., Bakersfield. The demonstration will begin at 12:00 noon each day, led by Mario Viveros of University of California Cooperative Extension. Trees include apple, apricot, cherry, and almond, and Mario will also show how to prune grapevines.

The beneficial climate of Kern County allows residential planting of many deciduous fruit tree species. Unlike shade trees, deciduous fruit trees should be pruned every year before bud swell for optimum growth and yield. Pruning need not be complicated, but if pruned incorrectly the yield of fruit will be reduced or eliminated, and the life of the tree will be shortened. Pruning diagrams or photographs in books or on the Internet may be helpful, but seeing pruning in three dimensions and being able to ask questions are advantages for those who attend one of the demonstrations.

To reach the UCCE office and orchard, take Highway 58 and exit at Mt. Vernon, then proceed south for about 3/4 mile. Publications on pruning, fertilizer for fruit trees, and fruit tree varieties for the valley portion of Kern County will be available. There is no charge for attendance, nor is pre-registration required.

Upcoming Classes and Events

32nd Annual Landscape Management Seminar

The 32nd Annual Landscape Management Seminar is scheduled for February 11, 2014, at Hodels. Visiting speakers include Dennis Pittenger of UC Cooperative Extension, Riverside, who will speak about irrigation management in the context of pest problems. We’ll have a noon demonstration, updates on laws and regulations, and an update on the
very important citrus greening/Asian citrus psyllid problem. Abate-a-Weed is cooperating as a sponsor for this meeting and is handling registration.

**Horticulture Classes in Ridgecrest and Tehachapi**

I plan to offer a series of horticulture classes in Ridgecrest and Tehachapi. For Ridgecrest, classes are being co-sponsored with the Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWVWD). The class will be composed of 12 weekly three-hour sessions centered around water conservation, meeting 5:30 pm - 8:30 pm, held at the IWVWD office in Ridgecrest, beginning February 25, 2014. Our goals are to enhance and expand green plantings, conserve water in landscapes and gardens, and to reduce pesticide applications. We will cover practical topics pertaining to landscapes, orchards, and vegetable gardens, and offer plenty of time for Q&A and discussion.

In Tehachapi, we are still working on arrangements to finalize a location, but I expect to offer classes there beginning February 20, also starting at 5:30 pm. The topics will be an addition to those offered in our 2012 spring class series.

**2014 Horticultural Tour**

In 2013, participants in our horticultural tour visited gardens in Ireland. We found Ireland’s reputation as the Emerald Isle to be well justified—so much green and stunning gardens in terms of plant selection and design. For summer 2014, we offer an opportunity to visit gardens of Scotland. This custom tour begins June 19 in Edinburgh. If you would to know more, please send me an email (or call, 661 868-6220) and I will send you additional information.

**A Reminder for Maintenance Gardeners and Those Who Employ Them**

The Kern County Ag Commissioner’s office reminds us that maintenance gardeners who apply pesticides (“pesticides” includes herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, rodenticides, and others) as a part of their business are required under Section 11704 of the California Food and Agricultural Code to have a Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business License and to register with the county agricultural commissioner before performing pest control work. Gardeners are also required to report monthly the pesticide products used.

To qualify for this business license, gardeners must first obtain a Qualified Applicator Certificate (QAC) (also known as a silver card). This certificate is issued by the State of California after the applicant passes a two-part test covering laws and regulations and landscape maintenance pest control. It is not necessary that each member of a crew applying a pesticide hold the QAC, but a supervisor must. One can ask to see a QAC if hiring a maintenance gardener.

It is a violation of the law to apply pesticides or perform any kind of pest control for hire as a gardener, landscape maintenance business or any interiorscape business without a Maintenance Gardener Pest Control Business license. Any person who violates this law is subject to a civil penalty of up to $1,000 per violation.

The Commissioner’s office has heard stories of gardeners asking the homeowner to purchase pesticides so a gardener can apply them, apparently in an attempt to skirt the law. However, it is the application of pesticides that is the focus of the law, so no matter who purchases the materials it is the gardener who applies pesticides who still needs to have a QAC.
For those interested in pursuing a QAC, classes are forming, to be held the second Thursday of each month. For further information in Kern County, please contact Monica Haskell at the Agriculture Commissioner’s office at 1001 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue, Bakersfield, or call her at 661-868-6300.

Also, DPR testing will again be available in Bakersfield, May 21, 2014. The application deadline is several weeks earlier. Again, please contact the Ag Commissioner’s office if you are interested.

**Cold-Weather Injury to Landscape Plants**

Landscape plants found in Kern County vary considerably in ability to tolerate cold temperatures, and low winter temperatures may result in injury to them. The minimum temperatures recorded thus far in December on the valley floor of Kern County may lead to damage of some plant species that normally emerge from winter unscathed. Species sensitivity and microclimate play key roles in determining the extent of injury. More specifically, temperature factors include the minimum temperature and time at that temperature as well as total time below 32 °F. Early winter lows are more injurious to plants than low temps that occur later in winter since in adapted species cold tolerance develops as winter progresses.

Wood of thin diameter is more affected by cold than the large-diameter wood of limbs and the trunk. If partial dieback occurs, we still expect regrowth of many species from latent buds or adventitious buds, if the injury to wood is not too severe. No other immediate steps, such as applying fertilizers, fungicides or insecticides, are necessary or helpful in promoting recovery. Time will reveal the extent of injury, and pruning to remove damaged tissue should wait until mid- to late spring.

Deciduous trees and shrubs—those which normally lose leaves in autumn—should not be injured at all by temperatures in the 20’s, which are only a prelude to winter in areas where most of these plants are found in nature. Similarly, many pine species are hardy in cold-climate areas, and temperatures in the 20’s are relatively mild for them.

Air temperatures of approximately 20 °F will injure broadleaf evergreen plants such as silk oak, euryops daisy, bottlebrush, bottle tree, carob, and of course citrus. Some backyard citrus trees may fare better then citrus in some commercial groves, since urban plantings often have a microclimate that includes heat sources and protection by buildings.

What about palms? Some palms, such as Mexican fan palm and California fan palm are normally winter hardy in the Bakersfield area as well as the Kern desert. The fronds of queen palms usually discolor in winter anyway, but plants grow new green leaves as spring arrives.

In Bakersfield, we expect to take a chance with plants which develop essentially no cold tolerance, such as the tropical herbaceous plants philodendron, dieffenbachia and schefflera. Their locations in a landscape in relation to microclimate often determine whether or how much of the plant survives. These tropical plants have no internal mechanism to develop cold hardiness, and when outside temperature drops below 32 °F ice forms inside the plant, rupturing cells and killing plant tissues. Some herbaceous plants, such as geraniums, begonia, hibiscus and lantana, are marginally hardy in normal winters on the valley floor. Many of these plants can be injured, although some, such as lantana, may come back from the roots. A couple of tender woody plants, bougainvillea and cape honeysuckle (orange tubular flowers in summer), have been widely planted and are
marginally hardy most winters. Jacaranda has also been more widely planted around Bakersfield, and we wait to see how much injury will occur.

**John Karlik**

*Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science*

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