

## Meetings and Announcements

### Food Preservation Class—Please Respond if Interested

As previously announced, Margaret Johns, our Advisor emerita for foods and nutrition has offered to present a class on food preservation. So far, I have received a number of responses. If you are interested in this topic and would likely attend a class on food preservation, please send me an email ([jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu)) or call 661 868-6220 and let me know that a) you are interested, and b) the meeting time that would work best for you. Margaret has not yet specified the time, but I am keeping a list of those interested. I expect this class will occur in the September-October time frame.

### Fall Horticulture Classes—Please Help Us Get the Word Out

For more than 30 years we've offered horticulture classes to our community, and we are pleased to do so again this autumn. Upcoming classes can benefit homeowners by conveying knowledge of how to take care of turf and landscape plants as well as how to grow food, including vegetables and fruits. The classes have been attended by many Kern residents as well as professionals in the turf and landscape industry, since we offer research-based information on how plants grow and up-to-date information on pest management and irrigation practices. We emphasize water conservation and non-chemical alternatives to pesticides. Representatives from homeowners associations and real estate professionals may also wish to attend to pick up tips on evaluating landscapes, using appropriate terminology to request work from landscape contractors, and evaluating work that is done.

Our Horticulture I class is planned to begin August 29, meeting on successive Tuesdays from 5:30-8:30 pm at our UC Cooperative Extension office, 1031 S. Mt. Vernon Avenue. Topics include soils, irrigation systems and repair, insect biology and management, fruit trees, shade tree selection, and more.

Horticulture IV is to begin Monday, August 21, and offer a series of topics including training young trees, a soils lab, landscape design, large-scale composting, palm tree selection and care, and others. The horticulture classes we offer are not sequential, but rather cover a variety of specific topics. In other words, it's not necessary to have taken Horticulture I, II, or III to benefit from Horticulture IV.

Cost for each is \$75. The syllabus for each class may be found on our website, <http://cekern.ucanr.edu/>.

### Announcement: Return to Chernobyl, April, 2018

Chernobyl, Ukraine, was the site of a nuclear accident 31 years ago. Since that time, the ecosystem in the affected area (the "Zone") has recovered remarkably. Several people have said they would like to visit, but did not have previous opportunity. We have plans for

a return visit April 15-20, 2018. We anticipate access to areas not previously visited, and there have been developments in the social and cultural aspects of the Zone as well. Please see the flyer on our website at <http://cekern.ucanr.edu/> or contact me at [jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu](mailto:jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu).

### **Early Announcement: 2019 Horticultural Study Tour destination Thailand**

Due to feedback, we have rescheduled our planned 10<sup>th</sup> Horticulture Study Tour to February, 2019. The weather in Thailand at that time is cool and dry.

Thailand is home to a number of botanic gardens, and a visit would provide exposure to the fascinating culture of Asia. The best definition I have ever seen of sustainable agriculture comes from the demonstration farm at Mae Rim, near Chiang Mai. We plan to visit Bangkok and Chiang Mai, and we will also arrange a side trip to Angkor Wat in Cambodia. Lodging and other expenses are relatively low in Thailand. Further details will be available in a few months.

### **Later Summer Turfgrass Problems**

Later summer is the time when some grasses are reaching the end of a period of annual stress, while other grasses would be happy with lots more warm weather! In August and early September, certain turf problems can become obvious, and it's a good time for corrective action.

Turfgrasses fall into two groups, warm season and cool season, that in many ways are opposite. Warm season turfs like temperatures of 80-95 degrees, and possess drought and salinity tolerance, but turn brown and go dormant in winter. Common bermudagrass and hybrid bermudagrass are the most common warm season turfgrasses found around Bakersfield. In contrast, cool season grasses prefer temperatures of 60-70 degrees and stay green during Bakersfield winters. High temperatures lead to stress in cool season turfs, which may predispose the turf to disease. Tall fescue, often called "fescue," is the most common cool season turf in the Bakersfield area.

In late summer bermudagrasses and other warm season types should be growing vigorously, but unsuitable management practices can take a toll. Hybrid bermudagrass needs a reel mower ("front-throw") for an even cut; using a rotary mower will result in an uneven and patchy look. Hybrid bermuda was developed to be a warm-season alternative to the bentgrass found on golf greens and tees, and it does tolerate low mowing heights. However, mowing at heights below a half inch will cause loss of roots, since the plant responds by directing its energy to shoot growth. With a very low mowing height the lawn at first has a velvet pool-table look, but gradually, over a period of months, the turf will thin and open up, resulting in weed invasion. This is the most common turf problem I see around Bakersfield, affecting perhaps 40% of hybrid bermuda lawns. Try raising the cutting height of the mower if turf does not fill in or if weeds seem to be spreading.

There seems to be more disease on bermudagrass this summer than in previous years. Keeping nitrogen in the middle range is helpful since turf diseases tend to prefer either high or low nitrogen. Similarly, water stress or over-watering can favor disease, so irrigating sufficiently is best. What is sufficient depends partly on the site, such as how much sun the grass receives.

For tall fescue, on sandy soils in the Rosedale area in particular, it may be difficult to sustain the grass during August, and disease may cause loss of the stand. The disease symptoms are often typical of Pythium blight, a disease caused by a fungus. Keeping the

mowing height above two inches helps reduce turf stress and increases resistance to the fungus. Pythium is opportunistic and sensitive to temperature and humidity. More specifically, wet conditions, warm nights and high humidity favor the disease. Irrigation should occur in the early morning so turf dries off during the day, but during a heat wave it may be helpful to cool the turf by lightly irrigating in mid-afternoon. Fungicides may be helpful, but timing and coverage are important, and turf fungicides are very specific for certain diseases so not just anything will be effective. Since tall fescue is a bunch grass with limited lateral spread, it may be necessary to re-seed or re-sod areas that have been lost. The best time for reseeding is October when day temperatures are lower but still high enough for rapid seed germination.

Regarding weeds, crabgrass plants continue to enlarge in late summer. Herbicide treatment for crabgrass is not very effective in late summer, and in a couple of months the plants will die, so if control is necessary it's often best to wait until very early spring and prevent seed germination with a pre-emergent herbicide. Other perennial weeds, such as dandelions or plantain, can be treated with herbicides throughout the fall. But, the most important aspect of weed management is to maintain a healthy, dense turf through favorable cultural practices such as mowing, irrigation, and fertilizer application.

*John Karlik*  
*Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science*

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