

# THE EL DORADO NURSERY AND GARDEN NEWSLETTER

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## May/June 2021



### GARDEN CALENDAR



#### What to do in May

- Plant warm season vegetable seeds or starts.
- Prune spring blooming shrubs immediately after bloom.
- Check roses for aphids! Hose off plants and feed roses with systemic fertilizer if needed.
- Start new lawn from seed or sod. Stop by for a free planting guide.
- Thin fruit set on fruit trees (leave 6" between the ones you want to ripen). Prune for size control as needed.
- Mow lawns, removing less than 1/3rd the height.
- Plant summer annual flowers and perennials.
- Fertilize container plants with time-release fertilizer.
- Thin over-abundant seedlings in vegetable beds.
- Check and repair irrigation systems.
- Whitewash fruit tree trunks to prevent sunburn. Use a light colored interior latex paint mixed with 50% water. Paint up to 40" or the first set of branches.
- May 9th Mother's Day – Get your mom or someone special a spring blooming plant that she can enjoy year after year, or give her a gift card to pick one out herself.



#### What to do in June

- Protect ripening fruit with bird netting or scare tactics such as reflective tape, plastic owls, old CDs, plastic snakes, old neck ties, or wind chimes. Put up just as fruit ripens so the birds don't become too familiar with the devices.
- Remove spent flowers on annuals for re-bloom.
- Feed azaleas, camellias, gardenias, & rhododendrons with azalea food. Try out our G&B organic fertilizer.
- Feed lawns with lawn fertilizer.
- Feed perennials and shrubs that have extensive bloom times G&B Organic all purpose.
- Plant a batch of herbs near the kitchen door for easy access to instant flavor.
- Annual checkup on mowers and trimmers. Dull or dirty blades spread disease and cause stress.
- Trim hedges so that the base is wider than the top by pruning down the sides.
- Use Tangle Foot or Ant Traps on fruit trees to prevent crawling insects from damaging fruit.
- Plant Tomato, pepper, eggplant starts, or seeds for corn, beans, zucchini, cucumber, melons.
- Keep an eye on your irrigation. Hotter days can stress plants and may require timer adjustments.
- June 20 – Father's Day! Tools make a great gift!
- Still time to seed Corn, Snap Beans, Cucumber.



## Around the Nursery:

It's coming up Roses! Roses everywhere....



New arrivals



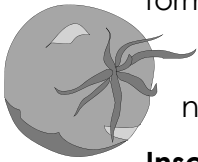
# Growing Killer Tomatoes

Despite the blazing hot weather we endure in Northern California during the summer, one consolation is the tomato growing season and the delicious fruits of our labor. But sometimes we are met with disappointment after caring for and tending to our dear tomato plants. Discolored foliage, rotting or undersized fruit, or no fruit at all can make us frustrated enough even to try a dreaded store-bought tomato. Below are some common tomato problems and what you can do to prevent them.

## Diseases

**Fusarium** and **Verticillium** are fungi from the soil that cause vascular wilt in tomatoes. Brown discoloration of the tomato's stem reveals this problem. The plant is unable to receive nourishment and leaves turn yellow and begin to shrivel. The plant dies from the top down. These diseases can't be treated, but you can take preventative action. Buy disease resistant varieties, rotate crops, and be sure to remove and destroy any diseased plants.

**Tomato Spotted Wilt Virus (TSWV)** is recognized by dark spots on the leaves that spread to the stems and form cankers. The fruit that develops has yellow spots or rings. The disease is spread by an insect called a "western flower thrip" and is very hard to control. These pests are often found on weeds so clearing the area around your garden helps. Unfortunately, there is no treatment for this disease except to remove and destroy the plants.



## Insects

**The Tomato Horn Worm** is the most common pest of tomatoes. These 3-4" caterpillars eat the foliage and fruit, but can be easily picked off and removed. **Garden insect Spray** w/ Spinosad works as well.



**Aphids** also enjoy feasting on tomato plants. If you see any, first try to spray them off with a hose. If they come back, an insecticidal soap usually works as well as **Garden Insect Spray(Spinosad)** or **Take Down**.

## Environmental Problems

**Blossom End Rot** begins with a small "water-soaked" spot near the blossom end of the tomato and grows into a large brown to black spot that is sunken and leathery. This occurs when the plant is deficient in calcium. Improper irrigation or prolonged dry weather often is the cause. A high nitrogen level from fertilizer also is thought to be a culprit. Prevent this problem by following the directions on your fertilizer and by mulching the plant to maintain moisture. Use dolomite lime in the soil when planting as its high in calcium, or **Tomato & Blossom Spray** spray if they're already planted.

**Sunscald** is caused by the sudden exposure of fruits to direct sunlight in hot, dry weather. White or yellow patches develop on the sun-exposed side of the tomato. To avoid sunscald, do not prune the foliage back too much so that the fruit has sufficient shade.

Unfortunately, these aren't the only problems you might find with your tomato plants, but with attention, care, and multiple plants you will bear delicious fruit to enjoy during our summer heat. Feel free to stop by the nursery with any other tomato questions. Happy growing!

Summer time...and the living is easy...well, so the song goes. As far as your fruit trees are concerned, this is the working time of year – and hopefully they're in fruit production mode. Here is some information to keep you thinking about your 'working trees' this summer:

**Watering:** Most fruit trees need a lot of water. If they don't get it, they won't necessarily die, but they also won't grow fast or produce well. This really is true; I can vouch from personal experience. For example, a 1 year old tree can transpire 3/4" water per day in the summer, a large 3 year old tree can transpire as much as 5-3/4" per day. What does this mean? If you are drip irrigating, you'll probably want to water daily for an hour, or every other day for two hours, with a total of one gallon of water per hour for a tree in its first year, more for older trees. The key here is to never let these trees experience stress - they shouldn't have to 'look' for water – that way they can use all their energy to grow leaves and fruit. Mulch a radius of at least 3' around the tree - to a 3" depth - to keep weeds down and hold moisture in the soil around the tree. Now, after all this water talk, know that the leading cause of fruit tree death is *too much* water, so pay attention to those watering practices!

**Fertilizing:** Expect to fertilize from April to July, about every 6 weeks. We recommend G&B Citrus and Fruit Tree organic fertilizer. Especially for late harvest fruits such as apples and pears, be sure to get one fertilizing in after harvest.

**Sunburn:** The sun can burn (scald) the leaves and bark of trees, especially those trees that are young and don't have a shading canopy of leaves. Before that intense sun hits, make sure you've painted all large exposed areas of bark on your trees with a whitewash tree trunk paint or a 50% latex paint/ water solution. Sunburned bark means damaged bark, and damaged bark is wounding of the tree, making easy entry for bugs and disease. Young trees are more susceptible to sunburn on their leaves if they're stressed.

**Fruit:** *When will my tree bear fruit?* For most varieties, by the third year. Those tiny branches have to be large enough to physically support the fruit, and the tree has to have enough roots to sustain itself through fruiting. *Do I have to thin my fruit?* On a 1-year tree, a few pieces left on the tree are okay but, sigh, you should remove the rest and let that young tree use all its energy growing. With older trees, if you don't thin (remove some of the quantity) the fruit can still be good, just smaller than if you thin. If you do thin, current studies show that you should leave the largest fruit, even if it's close together, and limit the number of fruits per branch. *Do I have to use bird netting over my trees?* Believe me, you'll figure out pretty quick if you need netting because the birds will be pecking all your tasty fruit. Where I live, it gets so dry and with the woods around, the birds even peck the apples! The decision 'to net or not to net' is a personal one usually based on wanting the fruit versus dealing with the hassle factor.

**Problems:** Some of the problems that we observe in summer have actually been present and active in the spring: peach leaf curl, shothole fungus, blind fruit (your tree didn't make any fruit), etc. Bring a sample of your problem into the Nursery and we'll help diagnose and/or find the information on how to best treat the problem.

***The most important part of living with your fruit trees in the summer is to enjoy watching them grow!***