



Common myths and other info

Welcome to the land of clay and rock! We do not have “dirt” here - it all washed down the Valley.

Common planting **myths**:

1. *Dig a deep hole and fill it with “potting soil”*. Nope. You never use “potting soil” in the ground and you never dig a hole deeper than the root ball. In order for your plants to survive here you need to amend your soil and plant proud. Dig your hole 2-3 times the width of the container and only as deep as the root ball. Your plant should sit ½” to 1” above grade when planted. For example-a one-gallon plant hole should be 8” deep and 12”-18” wide. What you dig out of the hole should be mixed with a soil amendment such as compost or composted fir bark. Do not use peat moss in this area! Feed your plants a low nitrogen starter fertilizer at the same time.
2. *Water a little bit every day*. No! Most plants like a good drink of water every few days. That means you add enough water to thoroughly soak the root mass. A little sprinkle just wets the surface and encourages shallow roots and unhappy plants. Our clay soil holds moisture and over watering is the biggest cause of plant failure in this area. If you are running your drip system for 10-20 minutes a day-you are not watering your plants properly. Drip is meant to run for longer amounts of time and fewer days.
3. *Water your lawn every day in the morning and at night*. Wrong! Lawns should never be watered after 3pm. Your grandma was right when she said “never go to bed with wet hair”. Same goes for plants and lawns. Nighttime watering encourages disease and pest problems. If you run your sprinklers and have gutter flooding after 10 minutes or so- you are wasting water and need to adjust your sprinklers &/or aerate your lawn. Try running your lawn sprinklers at 6 am for 10 minutes and then again at 9am every other day.
4. *Plants do not need to be fed*. Wrong! Our clay soil has nutrients in it but they are tightly bound in the soil and hard for the plant to get at. Feed your plants regularly to keep them healthy. That doesn’t mean Miracle Gro! Feeding your entire yard 2-3 times a year with an all organic purpose fertilizer (like G&B 4-4-4) is very beneficial. Use species-specific fertilizers for plants like roses, camellias, azaleas, Japanese maples, citrus etc. Organic fertilizers are extended release by nature, and are better for the plant and the environment. Just use the recommended amount - MORE IS NOT BETTER! Feed the first of Spring, Memorial Day and Labor Day.

5. *We can't have a yard because of the deer.* Not quite. Bambi does live here-but they do not have to dine at your house. There are many plants that are "deer resistant" but no plant is "deer proof". Proper plant selection and using deer deterrents such as fencing, organic chemical repellents, big dogs and guns (just joking) will allow you to have a beautiful yard.
6. *It is too cold/hot to plant.* Plants can be planted 12 months a year-spring and fall are the most popular times but gardening when it is 40 degrees is not so bad compared to 100 degrees. It is easier for a plant to live in the ground than it is in a black nursery pot on the concrete.

Other info;

7. *Turkeys!* Forget about it-they are just big rats with feathers! We have had some success with Goose repellants that will help with turkeys. Fowl eat bugs not plants, so tolerate a few.
8. *Gophers and moles-* yes they live here and yes you can get rid of them. New products such as Mole gel, Molemax, and gopher baskets will help.
9. *What zone are we?* Depends on who you ask. Cameron Park/Shingle Springs would be Zone 7 in the Sunset Western Garden book and zone 8 on a USDA map. But there are always some microclimates in the area. El Dorado Hills would be SWGB zone 9. We do have freezes and frosts.
10. *Everyone wants to kill their weeds.* Why not prevent them first? Pre-emergents are not new to gardening-just not widely used. They are better for the environment and much easier to use. A pre-emergent prevents weed seeds from germinating therefore cuts down the weeds. They will not harm existing plants and can be used in planting beds, barked area, gravel areas etc.

