



Southern California Horticultural Society – July 2020 Webinar Questions

This month, the Southern California Horticultural Society invited Yvonne Savio, UC Master Gardener and author of the blog [Gardening in LA](http://www.GardeningInLA.net) (www.GardeningInLA.net), to present a webinar on how to grow your own vegetables.

These are Yvonne's answers to questions we were unable to answer live. If you wish to contact Yvonne with further questions, please email her at GardeningInLA@gmail.com.

To watch the full replay of Yvonne's presentation, visit <https://youtu.be/uZV8ikg1Zc0>.

1. What was the name of the carrot good for clay soil?

Romeo or Short Stuff; any that are short and broad rather than long.

2. [I get] powdery mildew on [my] zucchini leaves. [I've] been cutting them off, but should I spray with something?

Best to remove them into the trash – carefully so spores don't spread. Thrives in high humidity. Can spray with milk (1 part milk to 10 parts water) or neem oil.

3. Yvonne, I'm having steady progress with the warm season vegetables planted in my two amended raised beds. However, as the summer season goes on, how often and what kind of amendment/fertilizer should I be applying to continue gaining vegetables?

General fertilizer such as 5-5-5 cultivated into the soil and then watered in.

4. Which type of mulch do you recommend for plants?

Any organic mulch, such as compost and leaves, will break down nicely and provide nutrients. Small-size bark looks good under ornamentals like roses.

5. Does climate change affect your planting schedule?

Broadly, climate change is lengthening and intensifying our summers, so we're having earlier Spring and later Summer for longer hot weather, and less Fall and Winter cool-season time. We gardeners can take advantage of not knowing what the weather will do by sowing/planting earlier and later for each season, as if you're on the cusp of the changes like March (both last cool-season plants and first warm-season plants) and September (both last warm-season plants and first



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cool-season plants). Recall my example of no longer planting a second batch of tomatoes in June because it's too hot for them to be able to get well established, much less thrive, during the summer.

6. As a child, my mother ate purslane (apparently, full of vitamins), but of course it is an invasive weed. Any ideas on how I can actually grow this as a veggie?

I, too, remember purslane as a child – but to my folks it was a weed, and my job was to hoe it out before I could play with my friends. I learned of its nutritive value when I had my first class of Master Gardeners visit my garden, and they wanted to take my pile of just-pulled purslane home to plant it! Finding the seed may be the issue, but it'll grow just fine. See my list of favorite catalogs on my website – in the bottom right corner of <http://www.gardeninginla.net/web-links.html>

7. Are you tying the panty hose, holding the melon, to something?

They're tied to the top of the cage or stake.

8. Can you elaborate the 5 gal watering system?

See my 7/4/20 blog - <http://www.gardeninginla.net/blog>

9. How much water do potatoes need? How do you know when they are ready to harvest?

Potatoes prefer moist but not wet soil, and do better in compost rather than clayish soil. When the foliage dies back naturally, the potatoes can begin to be harvested.

10. Any deterrents for bunny rabbits?

Physical barriers are the only effective mode – literally keeping them away from the tasty plants. See the University of California Integrated Pest Management website for more info - <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7447.html>

11. When harvesting leafy greens like cabbage, is there a minimum amount of the center portion that you retain to keep the plant productive? If so, how much?

I've not harvested just the outer leaves of tight-headed veggies like cabbage. For looser-leaf veggies like lettuce (not iceberg head), I leave the central 4 or 5 leaflets that are about 1 inch in size to continue growing.

12. How to deal with gophers. Any plants that they hate?



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According to the University of California Integrated Pest Management website, no repellents have proven effective against gophers. See more info -

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7433.html>

13. Leaf miners and spider mites may be getting to my summer and winter squashes. I've sprayed a bit with neem and peppermint oils but they're still there. Is there any hope?

I've not found leaf miners to become severe enough to lessen crops, and I just cut off and destroy the affected leaves. Spider mites, however, I now immediately pull and destroy the plant when I observe a considerable infestation of the fine webbing. See more info - <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/QT/spidermitescard.html>

14. [I'm in] Fallbrook, CA [and my] tomatoes start great, set fruit but turn yellow and die. I've heard it's a fungus. What can we do about it?

Perhaps you'll find the specific disease here -

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/tomato.html>

15. I don't have much land to plant on so I wanted to start container gardening. What would be the best soil (brand) to purchase to start this?

I like LGM from El Monte, and also Dr. Earth and Whitney Farms; but anything organic and not containing chemical fertilizers.

16. Should I be using a starter tray for germination and then transplant into a bigger planting container? Or can I plant the seeds directly into a planting container?

Sow big seeds like corn, beans, squash, and root crop seeds directly where they will mature, whether in containers or the garden soil. For smaller seeds, you can go either way as long as you keep track of watering the soil surface a couple of times each day to augment germination, then keep track of the seedling growth until they're large enough for transplanting. You may find a combination of modes to work best for you.

17. Tell me more about bolting. How [do I] avoid/stop it? I gather it has to do in part with not harvesting enough? Once something has bolted, can I "control" or limit it?

You can't stop bolting since it's the natural progression of the plant to go into reproduction mode by blossoming and setting seed. You can delay it by keeping plants well watered, fertilized, and harvested. But there will come a time when the



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plant will bolt no matter what you do or don't do. Then you can either let it set its seed that you want to save (like for lettuce and onions), or pull the plants that you can still salvage some of the edible parts (like leeks).

18. What kind of materials do you use to grow the gourds up (they are heavy)?

Stakes or tomato cages for viney foliage, or just set pumpkins or melons onto upturned pots, just to get them off of the soil surface.

19. What are the best fertilizers for asparagus?

Asparagus are “heavy” feeders and need lots of manure applied every year as mulch. You can also use any organic slow-release fertilizer.

20. How many holes do you place in the 5gal containers for the watering?

I use the 5-gallon containers that come when purchasing fruit trees or large ornamentals, which already have 5 or 6 drainage holes in them. Ask at your local nurseries – they all have billions of the old used containers stashed somewhere and I'm sure will be willing to have you take them or charge very little.

21. New gardener here [and I] want to make my own fertilizer. What kind of things do you put on the compost?

Compost ingredients are “greens,” like grass clippings and kitchen and garden clippings that are full of moisture, and “browns” that are dried leaves and small twigs that are dried out. I find it useful to add a thin layer of old potting mix or soil in between the green and brown layers, and then to sprinkle the top of the pile to activate the decomposition process. Coffee grounds and tea leaves are excellent additions too.

22. Every year, leafhoppers ruin my herbs (oregano, thyme, mint and rosemary) [and] marigolds. What is the best organic control option?

Floating row covers as a physical barrier, beneficial insects such as ladybugs, lacewing and minute pirate bugs, applying diatomaceous earth, spot treating with insecticidal soap on bot tops and bottoms of infested leaves. For more info, see <https://www.planetnatural.com/pest-problem-solver/garden-pests/leafhopper-control/>

23. I've had initial success with my cucumbers, but now they are looking like potential pickles. Should I be concerned?



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You mean big cukes that are staying small or curling up? Perhaps, [they] need more water and fertilizer. Curling results from uneven watering – too dry then too wet. Water deeper and more frequently.

24. How to get rid of red spider mites on tomatoes.

I've found it impossible to get rid of them once they've infested a plant. Just rip out the affected plant and destroy (don't compost).

25. I am in a similar zone as SoCal in So. FL - zone 10b. I am having trouble, however, with bright yellow fungi even in the sun. I assume because of the humidity. Is that a good organism to leave or should I be concerned to remove?

Please check with your local University of Florida Cooperative Extension Master Gardener office – see

<https://gardeningsolutions.ifas.ufl.edu/mastergardener/contact/county-list.html>

26. I'm a new gardener. Can I grow vegetables in an area with very little sun?

Of course, it's just a matter of what amount of direct sun your garden will get daily. You can grow anything that you eat just the foliage – like lettuce, basil, kale, chard – in areas that get 4-6 hours of direct sun daily. For anything that blooms and then sets fruit and matures that fruit – like tomatoes, squash, beans, melons – you can grow in areas that receive more than 8 hours of direct sun daily.

27. What is better for amending soil - adding a layer of compost, compost tea, or adding granular or liquid plant food?

Amending the soil requires organic matter to enable the microorganisms to break down to benefit the “bulk” in the soil. So, of those choices, compost is best.

28. We live in Hancock Park, CA and have nematode attacks on plant roots of chard, tomatoes, beans. What do you recommend?

Root knot nematodes attack a wide range of plants, including many common vegetables, fruit trees, and ornamentals. They are difficult to control, and they can spread easily from garden to garden in soil on tools and boots, or on infested plants. Try to minimize damage by adjusting planting dates to cooler times of the season when nematodes are less active. Try to provide optimal conditions for plant growth including sufficient irrigation and soil amendments to make plants more tolerant to nematode infestation. See more info -

<http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7489.html>



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29. White butterflies left eggs that turned into caterpillars that ate all my brassica starts. Any suggestions for how to protect the plants?

Cabbage moths are among the first to appear in the spring, and they – as their name suggests – love cabbage-family plants. Use floating row covers as soon as you transplant the seedlings to keep the moths from laying eggs. If you see the eggs, pick them. Spray with *Bacillus thuringiensis* or spinosad. For more info, see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/PESTS/importcabworm.html>

30. What do you recommend for soil that has root knot nematodes?

Nematode infestation is difficult to counteract. Aside from completely replacing the soil to the depth of more than a foot, growing resistant varieties of plants over several years' time may allow you to again plant susceptible varieties later. See more info - <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7489.html>

31. Thank you for your slideshow, Yvonne. Covid-19 has given me the opportunity and time to create [my] first true victory garden. I've always had squirrels in my yard because of my Pineapple Guava tree and I'm wondering what might work best: netting or chicken wire?

Congratulations on your successful gardening! Chicken-wiring the entire tree would certainly be a huge project! On my persimmon tree, I netted select branches that had lots of fruit, anchoring the netting several times at the base of the branches, and punching a hole at the outside center so I could harvest inside the netting "balloon". If the squirrels tried to use my hole, gravity would pull them below the opening. Maybe something similar would work for your guava?

32. My grapevine has some yellow leaves. Why?

Older leaves that yellow aren't a problem – it may just be age. Iron deficiency starts on young terminal leaves and later works inward to the older leaves. Deficiencies in manganese, zinc, or nitrogen develop on inner or older leaves first and then progress outward.

33. I didn't let the flowers on my zucchini grow and took them off to cook them. Will it keep flowering? I think I heard you say earlier to fertilize them as they start flowering. Would that help?

Your harvesting the blossoms foiled the plant's attempt to reproduce. It should continue setting flowers as long as you keep watering and fertilizing. It's up to you whether you continue to harvest more blossoms, or allow the plant to set fruit.



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34. I understand that peppers and some other fruiting plants shouldn't have too much nitrogen or they will have nice foliage but not necessarily so much fruit. Tell me more. Does compost have a lot of nitrogen?

Yes, nitrogen makes great-looking greenery, but the plant is too "happy" to set blossoms and fruit. Compost generally has very little nitrogen and other nutrients so it's a good amendment but won't "overfeed" the plant.

35. What is your favorite thing to grow?

During the winter, I grow 15 kinds of lettuce. During the summer, 20 kinds of tomatoes. Yum!

36. I planted seed potatoes for the first time this year. The plants seemed to get attacked very badly by aphids. I ended up pulling out a couple of the plants so the aphids wouldn't travel to the neighboring plants. Fortunately, I was able to harvest some new baby potatoes and they were delicious. Would it have been okay to let them stay in the ground, despite the aphid infestation?

You were smart in removing the aphid-infested plants in favor of not having them spread to other plants since aphids may transmit viruses, which mottle, yellow, or curl leaves and stunt plant growth. At least you did get to taste the few babies you salvaged! For more info, see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7404.html>

37. My jalapeno plant is now producing a nice amount of fruit but the leaves are curling up around the edges. What might be the problem?

Tomato-family plants (including peppers) do tend to curl up in self-protection from too much sun. If the curling was downward, the plant might be infected with Curly Top Virus.

38. How do you treat fungal infections on veggies? [Am I] right to pull them out early?

Ah, too many bad ways for fungi to affect veggies! Yes, best to pull out infected plants, and destroy (don't compost). To help you identify which fungi are affecting which veggies, and what to do about them, see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/veggies.html>

Basic management includes sanitation, using resistant or tolerant varieties, monitoring weather for appropriate, amending soil, plant spacing, and rotating crops.



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39. It's been really hot lately and some of the lower leaves on my tomato plant have been yellowing. What is the cause of this and what should I do to fix it?

Older leaves that yellow aren't a problem – it may just be age or a bit of nitrogen deficiency because the older leaves are allowing the nitrogen to go to the younger leaves. Iron deficiency starts on young terminal leaves and later works inward to the older leaves. Deficiencies in manganese, zinc or nitrogen develop on inner or older leaves first and then progress outward. For more info, see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/GARDEN/VEGES/tomato.html>

40. I have a new mulberry tree, [but] the leaves are showing a little yellow.

When young leaves turn yellow between the veins, this may signal iron chlorosis. If the entire leaf turns yellow or light green, lack of potassium or nitrogen may be the cause. Yellow leaves can also signal a pH problem. Sudden leaf drop can have many other causes, including squirrel damage, weather extremes, and drought. For more info, see <https://homeguides.sfgate.com/mulberry-trees-leaves-turn-yellow-drop-55895.html#:~:text=must%20be%20removed.-,Leaf%20Spot,sun%20can%20also%20become%20infected.>

41. I have about 30 above-ground beds and a corn field of about 90 stalks. I live in the high desert and every year I have a problem with powdery mildew in my cucumbers. It doesn't matter where I plant them. How can I avoid powdery mildew?

Different species of powdery mildew fungi affect a wide variety of vegetables, and each species attacks specific plants. Powdery mildews generally do not require moist conditions to establish and grow, and normally do well under warm conditions. For more info, see <http://ipm.ucanr.edu/PMG/PESTNOTES/pn7406.html>

42. Can you advise how to replenish soil in my raised beds? I am planning a big re-haul after too long without enough amendments.

I recommend adding a 4" layer of manure, a 4" layer of compost, and a 1" layer of coffee grounds (Starbucks and Peet's, etc. offer for free), and turning it all with the existing soil to a 1-foot depth, preferably with a fork instead of a shovel to get it all incorporated fully with less labor.