

University of California  
Agriculture and Natural Resources  
Making a Difference for California



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Whether it's a vegetable garden, house plants or a landscape...

# A Garden Runs Through It

## In This Issue:

May 2017

This newsletter is produced by:

**Gerry Hernandez**  
Master Gardener  
Coordinator

**Luis Espino**  
Advisor

**Luis Espino**  
County Director

- ◆ Book of the Month— *Floret Farms Cut Flower Garden*
- ◆ Ornamental Plant of the Month— Weed?
- ◆ Edible Plant of the Month— What to Plant in May
- ◆ Recipe of the Month— Dad's Favorite Chicken and Rice Pilaf
- ◆ May in the Garden
- ◆ Garden Club activities



## OFFICE HOURS:

Tuesday,  
9am—12pm  
1pm –4pm  
UCCE office,  
100 Sunrise Blvd,  
Colusa  
458-0570

Have a question?  
Email us at  
[colusa@ucanr.edu](mailto:colusa@ucanr.edu)

[Our Blog](#)

[Small gifts can make a big difference.  
Click here to support us.](#)

## Information Booth Locations:

**Gourd workshop**  
Saturday May 20  
9am to noon  
Colusa County Fairgrounds  
Community building  
\$10  
See flyer for details

**Colusa County Fair**  
June 8-11  
Etchepare hall

**Native Bees and Bee Boxes**  
Saturday June 24  
10-noon  
CIP conference room  
\$10, details to come





# Gourd Workshop

Presented by

UCCE Master Gardener Program Colusa County

**When: Saturday May 20**

**9am to noon**

**Where: Colusa County Fairgrounds**

**Community Building**



- We will learn the art of decorating gourds.
- We will also learn how to grow and dry gourds.
- We will provide the gourds, paint, polish and drills.
- Fee - \$10, prepayment is required. [Click here to pay.](#)
- Or go to [cecolusa.ucanr.edu/Master\\_Gardeners](http://cecolusa.ucanr.edu/Master_Gardeners)

## Best Practices to pay online

- To pay online, use Firefox browser.
- Payment boxes do not line up correctly when using your smartphone.



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# Colusa County Fair entries are due!

- Do you have potted plants or cut flowers around your house?
- Do you have an artistic flair?
- Did you attend one of our workshops?

**Colusa  
County  
Fair**

- **Agriculture (online)**
  - Herbs, veggies, fruit
    - June 5
- **Floriculture (online)**
  - Container plants and artistic arrangements
    - May 12
  - Cut flowers
    - May 30

[Click here to enter](#)



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## Book of the Month

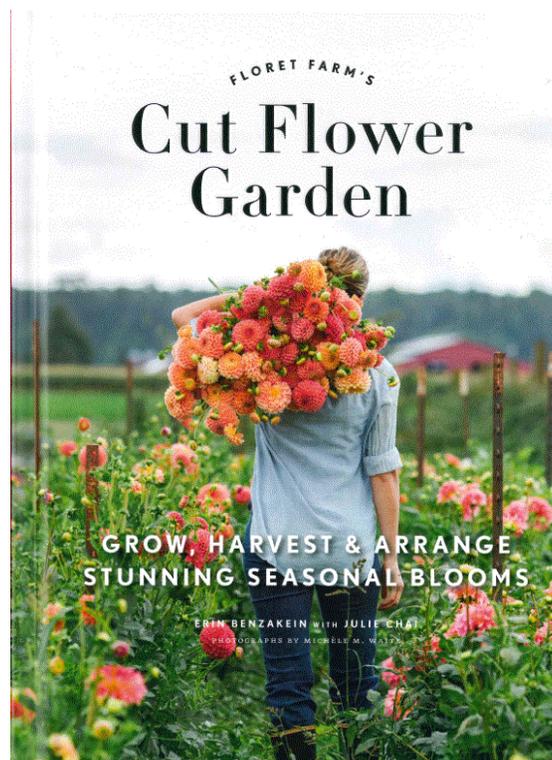
### Floret Farms Cut Flower Garden

Erin Benzakein with Julie Chai

Many years ago when we would travel through northern Washington on our way to visit our daughter in Anacortes, we would pass flower farms in Skagit Valley. Some of these farms even had “a pick your own bouquet” signs. At the time I thought owning a flower farm seemed like the ideal business, but I certainly did not have the knowledge or the land to pursue that dream. I always hoped that someone in our area would have the same dream and actually follow it. So far as I know, this has not happened. (If anyone who reads this knows of such a place close by, please let us know.)

For several months I have been receiving emails from Floret Farms in the Skagit Valley. When I read that the owner, Erin Benzakein, had written a book, *Floret Farms Cut Flower Garden*, I bought the book and decided that reading about a farm would have to substitute for owning one, working at one or visiting one.

The secondary title of the book: *Grow, Harvest & Arrange Stunning Seasonal Blooms* tells you what you will find in this beautiful book. Even though the climate in the Skagit Valley is much cooler than ours, the author has tried to make the information as universal as possible. And even if we never own a flower farm, there is much to learn about planting, growing and arranging flowers in each of the four seasons.



Submitted by Peggy Townzen

# Edible Plant of the Month

## What to Plant in May

At long last, spring weather is securely in place. The soil has drained and warmed and trees are stretching and quickly greening up. Many of us really get the gardening bug at this time of year but think that May is somehow already too late or behind schedule for the best planting possibilities. Not to worry! Now that temperatures are consistently in the 50s at night and daytime weather is warm and settled, it's the perfect time for sowing seeds right into the garden. Good choices are summertime kitchen garden staples like squash, beans, cucumbers and melons. Seeds sown directly into well-prepared warm soil will grow effortlessly at this time of year, outperforming six-pack nursery transplants with ease. Remember that if your first sowing comes up unevenly you can plug in more seeds. They'll come up and catch up quickly at this time of year.

### Marvelous Melons

Melons are easiest and most rewarding to grow if you have long hot summers. If your climate is more marginal because of a short season or cooler summer weather, locate your melon patch in the sunniest spot you have, ideally near a south-facing wall where heat will reflect back on the bed. Get a head start by covering the ground with black plastic to heat up the soil a week or two before you sow seed. Then plant melon seeds right into small holes made in the plastic. Keep melon seedlings well watered and fed. If insects are a problem, cover the bed with floating row cover until blossoms set, then remove. After fruits start to size up, reduce water so best sweet flavor develops.

Ripe melons are a real centerpiece of high summer. I love to serve two or three different kinds of melon cut in chunks and put on skewers, alternating with juicy red strawberries. For an elegant dessert, serve perfumed Galia or Earlidew honeydew quarters with a tablespoon of port wine in the center. Don't forget to try ripe melon slush drinks that you whip up in the blender. Good combinations are orange juice, Solid Gold cantaloupe and green grapes or Galia and Seven-Up with a strawberry garnish. Earlidew Honeydew, mango and pineapple juice makes a great tropical tasting summer treat.

### Crunchy Cukes

Cucumbers love warm, comfortable conditions. Start with rich soil for best production. I like to sow seeds in a raised mound, planting five or six seeds in each raised one-foot circle, then thinning to the two best seedlings. Cucumber seeds will germinate quickly in just 6-12 days. Be sure to protect young seedlings from marauding birds. One easy foil is to use old plastic strawberry baskets that you remove when the seedlings begin to crowd them. I stake my cucumber vines because I find that training the vines up supports saves garden space and results in straighter fruits that are easier to see and harvest. I use soft string or twine to tie up the vines as they begin to ramble.

Cucumbers require consistent moisture. Periods of alternating dry and wet conditions stress these shallow rooted plants and result in bitter and stubby fruits. Pick cucumbers on the young side, before seeds mature and while fruits are firm-fleshed. Harvest often, every 2 or 3 days in peak season, to keep plants producing. Fresh cucumbers are sweet, crunchy and refreshing. Dill, mint, fennel and parsley are all herbs that complement and enhance their flavor. A dressing of very fresh, plain yogurt, combined with a little olive oil, crushed garlic and freshly chopped herbs makes a great dish to eat with crusty bread and a good dry white wine. Try both Middle Eastern Garden Oasis and English style Chelsea Prize to experience the differences between crispy cuke cultivars.

# Recipe of the Month

## Dad's Favorite Chicken

### Ingredients

8 chicken thighs, remove the skin, bone in or not, your choice

You could also use chicken breasts or a mix - up to you.

1 large onion, chopped

1 red and 1 green bell pepper, cut into 1" squares

1 package Lipton Onion Soup mix - dry (or Onion Mushroom is good, too)

1 8 oz jar of jam, your choice: apricot, apricot pineapple, or orange marmalade our favorites

1 to 1 1/2 cups of Catalina or Russian (red French-type) salad dressing

### Directions

Brown the chicken in a little olive or salad oil

Place in a shallow casserole

Chicken pieces should be touching but in a single layer.

Spread the chopped onion and peppers evenly over the top of the chicken

Start with 1 cup of dressing, you want just enough sauce to cover.

Mix the onion soup, jam and dressing together, pour over chicken.

You can add a little more dressing if needed,

once you see how it covers the chicken with just 1 cup

Cover and bake in a 350 degree oven for about 35-45 minutes.

Check the chicken for doneness (no pink at the bone) at 35 minutes

If you want a thicker sauce,

Carefully pour off sauce into a skillet or saucepan.

Mix 1 tablespoon of corn starch into 2 tablespoons of water

Mix into hot sauce and cook, stirring constantly, over medium heat to thicken.

Return sauce over chicken and serve

This recipe is easily increased to serve as many as you need.

Leftovers freeze well

Serve with Rice Pilaf, next page



# Rice Pilaf

## Ingredients

1 medium onion, chopped  
2-3 ribs of celery, sliced with the tops  
2-3 cups sliced mushrooms  
2 cloves of garlic, minced fine

1/2 of a red bell pepper (optional)  
1/2 of a green bell pepper (optional)  
1 can of sliced water chestnuts (optional)

1 stick of butter - yup, real butter!  
2 cups of rice - white or brown, short or long grain, your choice  
3 1/4 - 3 1/2 - 4 cups chicken stock - depends on the rice you choose

1/2 cup parsley, chopped, optional  
1/2 cup sliced almonds, toasted, optional

## Directions

Melt butter in a large, heavy skillet or pot  
Saute vegetables until beginning to soften, 3-5 minutes  
Add the rice and toast the rice in the butter, stirring frequently.  
You want it to begin to brown a little, but not burn.

For long grain white rice, add about 3 1/4 cups of stock  
For short grain white rice, add 3 1/2 cups of stock  
For brown rice add 3 3/4 - 4 cups of stock

I like my rice to be not be too sticky, so I tend to use a little less liquid than a label would call for.  
You can always add a little bit at the end if your rice tends to dry out before it is done.

Cover the pan and...

You can cook this on the stovetop over low heat (or in a rice cooker if you have one, I don't).  
OR -- If you have used a heat proof skillet (like cast iron)... or put the whole shebang in a casserole,  
You can put the rice in the oven at 350 degrees  
    bake for about 20 minutes for long grain white rice  
    or about 35-40 minutes for brown rice

Fluff with a fork and toss the parsley and/or nuts on top once the rice is done.

Serves a crowd.



Submitted by Penny Walgenbach

## Ornamental Plant of the Month

### Weeds?

Maybe you too have been overwhelmed with “weeds” in your garden, (those plants which are not wanted or growing in the wrong places) from all the rain this spring. Well, there is a pretty, fine leaved plant everywhere, and I mean everywhere throughout my yard. I thought it was chickweed, but have discovered it is one of the members of the Euphorbia family; looks very much like the variety “Tiny Tim” (photo below). I really didn’t believe this prolific plant in my yard could be in the same family (genus) as our familiar Christmas flowering plant, the Poinsettia.



Photo by: Chelsea Stickel.  
‘TINY TIM’

With the tongue-twisting official name of *Euphorbia martini* ‘Waleutiny’, it’s no wonder this cushion spurge has acquired a much cuter appellation. Looking like a Koosh Ball, ‘Tiny Tim’ forms a perfect 1-foot dome of narrow blue-green leaves and a cloud of greenish-yellow bracts cupped under little red flowers. Unlike many spurges, this one continues to bloom throughout the season, zones 6-8.

Euphorbias are easy to grow perennial plants that are tough and have few problems. Popular for their richly colored leaves and unusual flowers, euphorbias are an excellent addition to borders, rock gardens, meadows and more. With over 2,000 types, you’re sure to find one that will thrive in your garden, no matter your zone. Exposure: full sun to partial shade; soil: well-draining; warning: sap is a strong irritant.

Why Grow Euphorbia? Euphorbia is deer resistant, drought and heat tolerant, long blooming, and low maintenance. However, if only they can be kept under control!!

#### Euphorbia Care:

Some are short-lived (even so, totally worth growing) and should be divided or propagated every two to three years, either in early fall or spring. Many benefit from being cut back hard, at least by one-third, after flowering is finished. This keeps any free-seeders from gaining the upper hand and encourages a flush of new fresh foliage.

## Weeds?, cont.

How to prune euphorbia: Trim back any damaged stems in early spring to keep the plant tidy and healthy.

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How to prune euphorbia: Trim back any damaged stems in early spring to keep the plant tidy and healthy. Cut back euphorbia stems at the base immediately after bloom. Wear gloves when handling euphorbias, and quickly wash off any milky sap that gets on your skin, as it's a strong irritant. The sap also makes spurges poisonous, so be aware if you have children and pets, though I've had euphorbias and garden cats coexist for years without incident — perhaps the plants' skunky smell keeps them from seeming like a tasty treat.

One of the main benefits of growing spurges is their drought tolerance, so good drainage is key, though a few, such as *E. griffithii* 'Dixter' and *E. dulcis* 'Chameleon', do prefer more moisture than others. Euphorbias are also not picky about soils, and most can handle sandy and average situations. For those types that tend to run and spread, fertile soils could encourage them to expand beyond their boundaries, so keeping things lean lends control. But if you want your *E. amygdaloides* var. *robbiae* to cover more ground faster, rich organic soil will kick things off.

### Euphorbia Plant Varieties

Their lyrical Latin name (euphorbia) and guttural common name (spurge) are indicative of the dual nature of euphorbias — elegant yet tough. The ones discussed here are the hardy perennial types, but the genus also includes succulents like pencil cactus, tropicals like poinsettia and shrubs with wicked-sharp spine.

Submitted by Bernice Dommer

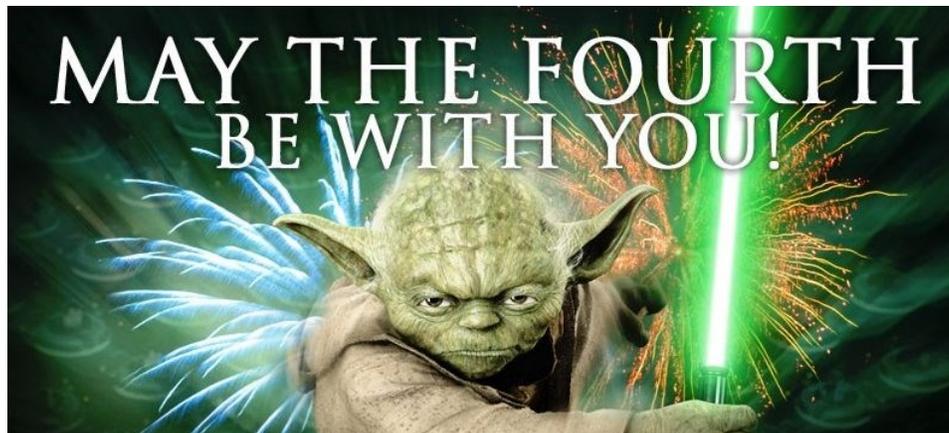
## May in the Garden:

### What to plant?

- Direct seed in the garden cucumbers, melons, summer squash, beans, corn, and annual herbs.
- Plant sunflowers, zinnias, cosmos, marigolds and aster in the flower garden.

### Chores:

- Fertilize summer blooming flowers early in the month.
- Apply (or re-apply as needed) organic mulch to all beds to keep the soil cool and enrich the soil. Be sure to leave space around the base of the plants.
- Trim the dead flowers but not the leaves from spring bulbs. The leaves restore the bulb; so wait to remove them until they turn yellow. Fertilize the bulbs after the bloom is finished with bone meal.
- Later in the month prune spring flowering shrubs to shape, removing old and dead wood. The plants flower on the growth that happens during the summer; do not prune in the fall or winter or you will have no flowers on the shrub.
- Continue the battle against slugs and snails.
- Deadhead (cut off spent flowers) to get continuing bloom on annuals and perennials.
- Thin peaches, plums and nectarines so there is 6" between fruits.



**Science word of the Month....**

## Garden Club of Colusa County activities

- May 22, 6:30
- St. Stephens church, Colusa
- Getting ready for fair!

## Additional Links

Integrated Pest Management [www.ipm.ucdavis.edu](http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu)

UC Davis Arboretum [www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu](http://www.arboretum.ucdavis.edu)

McConnell Arboretum and Botanical Gardens [turtlebay.org](http://turtlebay.org)

Invasive Plants [www.cal-ipc.org](http://www.cal-ipc.org)

Plant Right [www.plantright.org](http://www.plantright.org)

PG&E [www.pge.com](http://www.pge.com)

Save Our Water [www.water.ca.gov](http://www.water.ca.gov)

The Colusa County Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a partnership among the University of California, USDA, Colusa County and the Colusa County Farm Bureau. Master Gardener volunteers extend horticultural information and offer educational programs and garden-related demonstrations in Colusa County.

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*To simply information, trade names of products have been used. No endorsement of named products is intended, nor is criticism implied of similar products which are not mentioned.*

**University of California, United States Department of Agriculture, Colusa County Cooperating.**  
**For special assistance regarding our programs, please contact us.**

