

# THE EL DORADO NURSERY AND GARDEN NEWSLETTER

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www.eldoradonursery.com



## May/June 2020



### GARDEN CALENDAR



### What to do in May

- ✓ Plant warm season vegetable seeds or starts.
  - By Seeds now: Corn, Beans, Squash, Melons, Pumpkin, Cucumber
  - By Start now: Tomatos, Peppers, Eggplant
- ✓ Prune spring blooming shrubs immediately after bloom.
- ✓ Check roses for aphids and hose off plants if you find any.
- ✓ Feed roses with systemic fertilizer such as Bayer All in One if needed.
- ✓ Start a new lawn from seed or sod. See our care guide on the web <https://www.eldoradonursery.com/lawncare>
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ May 10<sup>th</sup> Mother's Day – Get your mom a spring blooming plant that she can enjoy year after year, or a gift card.



### 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.
- ✓ 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.
- ✓ Keep an eye on your irrigation. Hotter days can stress plants and may require timer adjustments.
- ✓ June 21 – Father's Day! Tools make a great gift!
- ✓ Still time to seed Corn, Snap Beans, Cucumber

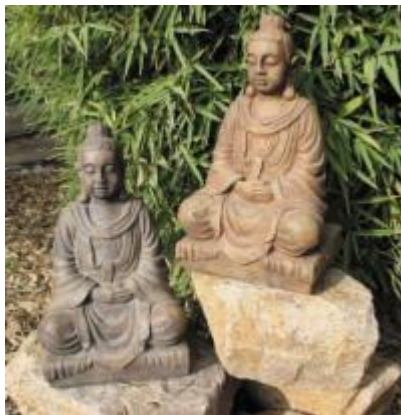


### **Upcoming Classes:**

Hanging Basket class from May rescheduled. Please see the web for more information. If you have signed up, you will get a call with the new dates

### **Around the Nursery:**

New selection of Statuary and Birdbaths in stock this week!



Thank you for your patience as we try to keep our inventory stocked as possible. The shortages are running all the way up the supply chain.

We are not able to hold any veggies for customers for longer than 24 hours. Please pick up your orders quickly- we will call you with whatever we have in stock. We cannot hold your order until the next truck comes in since we have no idea what we will get until the truck gets here.

We will continue to follow Social Distancing Guidelines for as long as it is needed.

Come say hi to Snowball (the kitty) when you are in, she is very friendly! She does not respect the SD guidelines, so please refrain from petting her until they are lifted.



*From the Editor* - We are very excited and encouraged to see a lot of new gardeners in the nursery this season! Whatever your motive, whether food security, education for your children, or just plain health reasons, gardening is indeed medicine for the soul. There is no shortage of information out there, some good, some not so good, but we will be here to help sort it out and answer your questions throughout the season. And Please when you get to go back out to work and social events, don't abandon the Garden! It still needs you!! Remember the old adage:

**“THE BEST FERTILIZER IS THE GARDENER’S SHADOW”**

Keep those hands “dirty” (but sanitized) 😊 - Shilo

# Straw Bale Gardening

Straw bale gardening is popular because it is simple, fairly inexpensive, and can be done most anywhere. **Setup:** Use tight, heavy straw (not hay) bales from your local feed store. Before you set up your bales, lay down hardware cloth or landscape fabric to prevent gophers from getting up through the bales when they decompose. Arrange the bales side by side in rows, with their cut sides up. The strings that bind the bales should run across the sides, not across the planting surface. The strings will help keep the shape of the bales as they start to soften and decompose.

**Conditioning:** Two weeks before you plant, you have to get the bales cooking. This means wetting and fertilizing the bales for roughly 10 days to start composting the inner straw.

**Days 1-6:** Put down 3 cups of organic fertilizer such as G&B Citrus & Fruit tree 8-4-2 (the higher nitrogen will help speed up the break down process), per bale every other day, and water the bales to push the fertilizer down and thoroughly saturate the straw. On the off days, simply water the bales.

**Days 7-9:** Apply 1.5 cups of the same organic fertilizer each day and water.

**Day 10:** Put down 3 cups with phosphorus and potassium (bone or fish bone meal mixed with 50% wood ash works like a charm).

Instead of using fertilizer, you can use a rich bagged product such as G&B Worm Castings or Kellogg's Topper. In this case just do a 2 inch layer across the top and water every day.

Don't worry if you see mushrooms – they are an indication that things are working.

**Trellising: (optional)** T-posts inserted into the ground at the ends of the bale can be used to string wire or trellis netting to support tomatoes, peas and other vining things, and/or support row cover to aid in keeping pests at bay.



**Planting:** Once the bale has been conditioned for 10-14 days, it is ready to plant. Starts work better than seeds for this. For seeds add an inch of sterile seed-starter soil to plant the seeds into. Using a sharp trowel and your fingers, work out a hole in the top big enough for the root ball of the start. Poke it in, press the straw around it, and water.

**Fertilize:** Add a cup of an organic vegetable fertilizer and water in each week, for the first few weeks. Then you can cut back to once a month.

**Watering:** Setting up a drip timer is the easiest way. Every other day should be good for most crops, as the bales help hold moisture.

**Weeds:** Practically non-existent!!

**Recycle:** At the end of the growing season, spent plants and the straw can be mixed and piled to create compost to use in the garden next spring.



## **GROWING BLUEBERRIES IN EL DORADO COUNTY**

The Southern High Bush Blueberry is a hybrid of native North American blueberries, which grow wild. The southern high bush was specifically hybridized for superior fruit, soil adaptability, heat tolerance, and low winter chilling. This makes them suitable for most areas of California, including our county. We also carry the Northern High Bush, which is another excellent choice for our county and places that have very cold winters.

<b>SEASON</b>	<b>NORTHERN High Bush</b>	<b>SOUTHERN High Bush</b>
Early	Patriot Blueray	Misty O'Neal
Mid	Bluecrop Hardyblue Chandler Darrow	Southmoon Jubilee Legacy Liberty
Late	Elliot	Pink Lemonade (Hybrid) Top Hat (Hybrid Dwarf)

For blueberry lovers, allow two plants per family member. Plants can be planted as individual specimens or 2 ½-3 feet apart for a hedge. It all depends on how much you prune and how dense of a shrub row you want to establish. Most blueberry varieties are self-pollinating, but the berries will be larger and more prolific if two varieties are planted together. Blueberries prefer full-sun, but in our hot area they need some protection from the west sun in the afternoon. Blueberries ripen at different stages as well. Choose a variety from each Early, Mid, and Late season ripeners to have a longer harvest.

### **Planting in Containers (highly recommended)**

The potting mix should be acidic (pH 4.5-5.5), high in organic matter, and well drained. *Gardener and Bloom Acid Planting Mix* is a good choice. After planting, keep the soil moist and mulch with bark, or Peat Moss. Add more mulch each year to replenish what decomposes. Use a soil test kit or pH test kit yearly to ensure that you are in the correct range. Good soil recipe is 2/3 Acid Planting Mix, 1/3 Small Bark.

### **Pruning**

It is important to prune blueberry bushes and reduce the number of flowers and developing fruit in order to improve berry size and hasten development. In the first year, allow plants to get well established by pinching off flower buds. Successful pruning is done during dormancy, just before spring.

1. Remove low growth around the base. If it doesn't grow up, prune it out.
2. Remove dead wood and non-vigorous twiggy wood. Keep bright colored wood with long laterals. Remove blotchy brown colored stems, short growth.
3. If 1/3 of the wood has not been removed during the above steps, thin out fruiting laterals and small branches until this balance has been obtained.
4. As you prune, notice the difference between the two types of dormant buds. The fruit buds are round and plump. The small, pointed buds grow into shoots.
5. As plants get older, prune to select 4-6 bright colored, erect canes per bush. Prune these canes in October down to a height of 6"-8".

## **Mulching, Fertilizing, & Water**



- Since blueberry roots are near the surface, they should never be cultivated. Instead, mulch with an acid forming material such as shredded bark, pine needles, peat moss, oak leaves, or oak bark chips to a depth of six inches.
- Blueberries like acid fertilizers such as *Gardener and Bloom Rhododendron, Azalea, Camellia* formulations.
- **Do not use nitrogen in a nitrate form.**
- For new planted stock, use 2 tablespoons of organic *Gardener and Bloom Starter or Bud n Bloom* fertilizer in late spring or once plants are established. Follow manufacturer's instructions.
- For organic fertilizers, cottonseed meal is good as it helps lower pH. Avoid fresh manures.
- Blueberries are very sensitive to over-fertilization. Fertilize after leaves develop (around March 15<sup>th</sup>) through July. **Do not fertilize during other times of the year.**
- Blueberries like water. We suggest 4 gallons, twice a week, during the first two growing seasons and during fruit development each year. To conserve water: after harvest, water the plants once per week in the absence of rain. Stop water in early autumn to help plants harden off (toughen up) for the winter.

## **Yields**

Each bush will yield around three to eight quarts of blueberries. If you allow them to ripen so that there is no tinge of red showing on the fruit, they will be sweeter. They should pull off easily.

## **Critters**

Birds **love** blueberries, so use a piece of bird netting or place several pieces of red/silver mylar bird scare tape hanging randomly from each bush once berries start to ripen, not before. You must change the position of the tape every 3 days so the birds don't become accustomed to its movements and position. Better yet, build a cage of aviary wire around them. It's War!