

NEWS RELEASE

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UC Cooperative Extension

(209) 966-2417

Submitted by UCCE Master Gardeners Association of Mariposa Co.

WINTER BRIGHT

You've likely noticed the beautiful bright red berries (fruit) of toyon, a native plant to this area, as you drive along Highway 49 and Highway 140. Closer to populated areas, you've no doubt also seen berry-laden pyracantha (firethorn) shrubs (not native to the area). The fruits of these plants add warm, glowing color to what otherwise would be a somber winter landscape.

Non-fruiting evergreens are great as green-bearing standards throughout the year—and, of course, as good “bones” in the landscape, but nothing colors the off-season garden better or says “Welcome” quite like the bright, cheery berries of many winter- and end-of-fall-bearing plants.

If you'd like to brighten next year's garden *and* have your own berried boughs for holiday decorating, now's the time to make your plant list and check it twice. But be forewarned. You're not the only one attracted to these colorful plants. Many winged visitors will likely drop in for a hardy winter meal. If you're not in the mood to share all the berries with the birds, add whirlygigs or Mylar strips (nothing red!) to plant branches before fruit begins to ripen. Several berry-producing plants also provide winter forage for other wildlife as well.

Here's a list of top berry contenders for the off-season in Mariposa. Fruit colors range from white, yellow, blue, and nearly black to vibrant gold, orange and red.

Berry Picks

Some of these plants are evergreen, some deciduous. Some require a male and a female plant to bear or to bear abundantly, though some are self-fruitful. Check with nurseries, online sources, and the Master Gardener and Mariposa County libraries for the best selections for your garden.

Tree/Tree-trained

Dogwood, *Cornus kousa*

Hardy citrus (may need protection)

Hawthorn, *Crataegus*

Mountain ash, *Sorbus*

Strawberry tree, *Arbutus unedo*

Shrub/Shrub-like

Beauty bush, *Kolkwitzia amabilis*

Beautyberry, *Callicarpa bodinieri*

Cotoneaster

Currant, gooseberry, *Ribes*

Firethorn, *Pyracantha*

Heavenly bamboo, *Nandina domestica*
Holly, *Ilex*
Oregon grape, *Mahonia*
Rose, *Rosa* (many, especially *R. rugosa* hybrids)
Skimmia japonica
Toyon, *Heteromeles arbutifolia*
Viburnum (*V. sargentii*, *V. setigerum* and the “cranberries,” especially *V. trilobum*)
Snowberry, *Symphoricarpos*

Vine/Vine-like

Honeysuckle, *Lonicera*
Porcelain berry, *Ampelopsis brevipedunculata*

Master Gardeners are available to answer your home gardening questions. Call the UC Cooperative Extension office at (209) 966-2417 or email mgmariposa@ucdavis.edu. As we gear up for spring in the garden, our office hours have changed. Master Gardeners are in the office every Tuesday and Thursday, from 2:00 pm to 5:00 pm. We welcome you to stop in at 5009 Fairgrounds Road with your gardening questions or problems.

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