

NEWS RELEASE
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HOPS UPDATE

BACKYARD HORTICULTURE
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Last year at this time, we started a research trial in Mariposa looking at growing hops. This perennial vining plant produces aromatic flowers, followed by hop cones. The cones are used in the flavoring of beer and also in various potpourri mixtures. Hops are also good ornamental plants, producing three-to-five-inch wide dark green leaves. The vines can grow over 20 feet long each season. In the fall, the top growth can all be removed, with new basal shoots starting the next spring. The rhizomes we planted last year grew well in most cases, produced many hop cones, and are just now sending up new shoots.

Of the 20 or so varieties available, in our Mariposa County trials, five seemed to do well. These include Cascade, Willamette, Fuggle, Brewers Gold, and Chinook.

If you are interested in growing hops, they are sold as root cuttings called rhizomes. These are about the size of a three-inch-long pencil. One mail order source, which we used last year with good success, is www.freshops.com. Starting March 20, this company can supply any of over 20 varieties. They cost \$3.00 to \$4.50 each, with a reasonable shipping fee.

The hops rhizomes should be planted in the ground soon after shipment in well-drained soil or large containers. A string or trellis is necessary to support the vines through the summer. In September, the one-to-three-inch long papery hop cones are ready to harvest.

Hops can be grown in most areas of Mariposa County. In fact, there are old, well established plants in front of the Wawona Hotel.

For a free leaflet on growing hops, call the UCCE office in Mariposa at 966-2417.

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