

Central Missouri Master Gardener Newsletter



The Latest Dirt

AUG 2026

Newsletter of the Central Missouri Master Gardeners

Vol. 184 No. 01

Note from the Chair

AUG 2026

Good Hot August everyone, Hope your summer is going the way you planned it. We are getting a bountiful from our garden and feel blessed to share with family and friends before they go to waste. We have never been turned down yet.

Important - We are still in need of board members for 2026-2026 year. We have 4 board members that will be leaving the board as their four-year term is expiring at the end of August. Please volunteer for the board as we are making progress and keeping an eye to the future of the CMMG program. Without a full Board, we cannot make the decisions and actions to continue to guide CMMG.

In the July members meeting the members approved the budget for the 2026-2027 calendar year. It will receive a final approval by the Board in August.

It's a hefty one but we will be getting a lot of work to be done on the greenhouse to get ready for the spring sales and it is time to make these changes for the greenhouses. If you need a copy of the budget we will be posting it on our website for your viewing in the members only section.

We also approved a policy and procedure regarding donations that are given to the CMMG program. This was also voted and excepted by our members at the July members meeting.

We are going to have small gathering this month at the new River Market for you to come out and see the perennial flowers that we a planted for the Parks Dept. We hope you will be able to attend and see the work that our master gardeners have been working on and will be doing some upkeep on during the coming seasons.

If you have a bountiful harvest and more than you need, it is a great idea to share with others by posting on our members' only Facebook page or reach out to other members who do not have a garden to see if they would like some of your extras. Same If you are looking for some vegetables and would like to have a few before the season is over post that on our Facebook page as well and I am sure we can hook you up with more than you can handle.

Join us this month at the River Regional Library on August the 25th when our guest speaker will be our own Master Gardener Gerald Sills. His topic will be on Smart Gardening. Hope to see you there.

Ed Vitela

CMMG Chair, Edward Vitela

2025-2026

NEW

History Corner

***NEW**

June 1996 Meeting

On June 25, 1996, approximately 30 master gardeners met at the Extension grounds for a tour of the projects that have been worked on this summer. Carol made several announcements:

1. The area behind the compost pile will be utilized as a picnic area.
2. Plans are being made for a trellis for wisteria vine near the back door.
3. We hope to continue to add to the herb garden.
4. Plans are being made for a watering schedule for the perennials beds.

After these announcements members car pooled to the following sites Special Learning Center, Thomas Jefferson School, The Heisinger Home, Demonstration Garden, Villa Marie, The Habitat for Humanity Homes

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Dhruba Dhakal has asked to share these upcoming webinars:

The State Extension Master Gardener program has scheduled three additional continuing education webinars for EMG volunteers.

Registration is required and is free. Each webinar will begin at 6:30 pm. Upon registering, you will receive the zoom link to attend the webinar. If you are unable to attend the webinar live but are interested in the topic, please register. An email will be sent after the event when the recording is available for viewing. For any questions, please reach out to [Debi Kelly](#).

Sept 8 – Forcing Bulbs for Indoor Winter Bloom - [registration](#)

Nov 3 – Sustainable Landscape Design – [registration](#)

Subscribe to the [Garden Spade newsletter](#) for home gardeners.

Subscribe to the [Commercial Horticulture video newsletter](#).

Subscribe to the [MU IPM YouTube Channel](#).

Debi Kelly

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Paula, Deb, Brenda, Kathy, Janet, Bonnie, Martha, Mark, Ed



Marilyn Holtmeyer, 2010 active, Emeritus-death 7-27-2026
She will be missed by all!

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4 Best Types of Fir Trees to Fill Your Winter Garden With Gorgeous Green Foliage

Discover your new favorite evergreen tree! Here are 4 gorgeous types of fir trees every gardener should know, if they want year-round beauty.



By [Teo Spengler](#) published 5 hours ago in [Features](#)



What Are Fir Trees?

Fir trees are magnificent conifers, tall, with soft, needle-like leaves. They are native to cooler areas in the Northern Hemisphere, including the United States, Europe, North Africa and Asia.

All true fir tree varieties are in the *Abies* genus, which includes some 50 species. This classification, however, excludes a couple coniferous trees with "fir" in their common name that are not actually part of the *Abies* genus. Douglas fir and hemlock fir are two examples. But these [evergreen tree varieties](#) are not true firs.

Fir trees are a beautiful addition to the landscape with their tall, conical growing habit and upright cones. You can distinguish true firs from other conifers by their distinct features, which I'll discuss below.



(Image credit: Meindert van der Haven / Getty Images)

Unique Features of Fir Trees

Fir trees are in the *Pinaceae* family, together with many other conifers, including [pine](#), [spruce](#), and [hemlock](#). They can be distinguished from the others by their unique features.

You can identify a fir tree by its needles, trunk, and cones:

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The needles are a vibrant green, arranged in a spiral and attaching singly to the branches in an arrangement that looks like a small suction cup.

- Spruce needles appear in pairs and pine needles in clusters.
- The trunks are straight and tall, with the branches forming a conical or pyramid shape.
- The cones are exceptional, soft and held upright on the branches like candles. Other conifers have cones that droop or dangle.

Different Types of Fir Trees

Here are four of my favorite types of fir trees. They all provide evergreen beauty and elegance that will elevate any landscape.

1. Fraser Fir



(Image credit: arlutz73 / Getty Images)

Botanical name: *Abies fraseri*; Hardiness: USDA zones 3-7

You may recognize this fir with its gorgeous color, sweet fragrance, and perfect pyramidal shape from the Christmas tree lot. Yes, [Fraser firs](#) are Christmas incarnate, often used for holiday trees, wreaths, and garlands. The Fraser fir is generally compact with a conical crown and branches that angle slightly upwards.

Fraser firs grow to 50 feet tall (16 m) with a trunk up to 20 inches (50 cm) in diameter. The needles are flat and dark green on top with two silver backs beneath. Look for dark purple cones to appear in fall, turning brown as they mature. The bark starts out smooth, but gets craggy as it matures.

Plant your Fraser fir in full sun or part sun and [acidic soil](#). Cover in summer is crucial to its development, providing a cooling effect. It will get some 8-10 (20-25 cm) inches taller every year until it tops out around 50 feet (16 m) tall.

2. Korean Fir



(Image credit: Anetta Starowicz / Getty Images)

Botanical name: *Abies koreana*; Hardiness: USDA zones 5-7

If you are looking for a smaller fir with high ornamental value, consider the [Korean fir tree](#). It's native to the mountains of South Korea and is an utterly lovely decorative tree, beloved around the world as an addition to gardens.

The Korean fir only grows up to 30 feet (10 m) tall and many top out at half that height. It has a beautiful symmetrical shape with a conical outline and will live around 30 years. The branches are densely packed with flat, shiny needles that are dark green on top with two vivid bands below. Cones

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are purple-blue when young, growing darker with maturity.

This tree needs a full sun location and well-draining, acidic soil. It is a thirsty tree, so provide extra [irrigation](#) except during the rainy season.

If you need something even smaller, check out the short variety, *Abies koreana* 'Compact Dwarf'. It only reaches around 5 feet (1.5 m) tall and 3 feet (1 m) wide. Or add unique yellow color to your evergreen garden with an [Abies koreana 'Aurea' from Etsy](#).

3. Noble Fir



(Image credit: Meindert van der Haven / Getty Images)

Botanical name: *Abies procera*; Hardiness: USDA zones 5-6

This species is an iconic tree of the Pacific Northwest. In the wild, the [noble fir](#) is a true giant of the forest, towering over all others at 225 feet (70 m) tall and literally scraping the sky. However, when cultivated in a home garden, the standard height is 50 feet (16 m) tall. In either situation, however, the noble fir exhibits a beautifully symmetrical branch structure

With dramatic blue-green needles and a tall, straight trunk – some growing up to 6 feet (2 m) in diameter – the noble fir is an icon of resilience. It survives and thrives in the wild coastal ranges of North America. Beyond its good looks, this tree is crucial to the ecosystem because it [supports wildlife](#) and provides valuable timber. Young trees have smooth, gray bark that turns mahogany, as it matures.

This type of fir needs a sunny location and well-drained, loamy soils to prosper. In ideal conditions, it survives windy conditions and it makes an impressive and effective wind break.

4. California Red Fir



(Image credit: Michele D'Amico supersky77 / Getty Images)

Botanical name: *Abies magnifica*; Hardiness: USDA zones 5-7

In California, we call this majestic tree the [California red fir](#), but it's also known as red fir or silvertip fir. This huge evergreen tree grows up to 210 feet (70 m) tall with a 6-8 foot (2-3 m) trunk diameter. It is native to the Sierra Nevada mountains. The “red” in the common name comes from the orange-red bark color of mature trees, but young trees have smooth, grey bark.

The crown of the California red fir is narrow and conical. The needles are blue-green and curve upward at the tip making the foliage look lush and full. Indeed, the tree is admired for its ornamental qualities – the gorgeous bark and unique foliage. Cones are erect and yellow-green, ripening to brown.

If you wish to grow a California red fir, be sure you have the space and site it needs. These firs require full sun exposure and well-drained soils. It will be a fabulous addition to a large garden landscape.

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This unusual, yet absolutely stunning evergreen can be a bit difficult to find. But you can [buy California red fir seeds from Etsy](#) to plant your own trees.

What Is The 8-8-8 Lavender Rule? Find Out Why This One Simple Pruning Tip Can Help Rejuvenate Your Lavender

One of the most satisfying summer pruning jobs involves getting your lavender in shape – so if you care about doing it right this summer, the 8-8-8 lavender rule is well worth a try



(Image credit: Marketlan / Getty Images)



By [Janey Goulding](#) published 4 days ago Contributions from [Amy Draiss](#) in [Features](#)

There are some gardening traditions that hold true even though they might seem a bit odd – such as planting aphid-loving plants like nasturtiums next to crops you want to protect, even though you know they will attract the very bugs you don't want. Or using a pinch of cinnamon as an anti-fungal agent in the garden (and yes, this one has worked for me!). Then there are a few hacks I keep doing out of habit (like singing to plants, for instance – but maybe that's a story for another time).

Still, there are certain rules that stick in your head and acquire a certain status, even though you're not entirely sure where you first heard them. The 8-8-8 lavender rule is one such piece of advice I was told many years ago. And around this time every year, a little internal alarm goes off and I duly inspect my lavender bushes to assess my next steps. But what is the 8-8-8 rule, you may well be asking – and how can it help you maintain healthier, happier lavender shrubs and specimen plants? Here's what I've learned about this [lavender pruning](#) tip, how it works for me, how you can use it, and how it can be adapted to suit your needs...

What is the 8-8-8 Lavender Rule?

At its heart, the 8-8-8 rule – or the rule of three-eighths – is a pruning maxim. Quite simply, it is a moment in the [pruning calendar](#) to pull out our snippers or shears, with a view to helping prepare our lavender plant for the slower months ahead. Over early summer, many of us will hopefully have been [deadheading lavender plants to extend the flowering season](#). But the approach to the eighth day of the eighth month (8th August) is a chance to think about reducing our lavender plants by at least 8 inches (depending on the size and overall condition of the plant).



(Image credit: Yuliia Kokosha / Getty Images)

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I've heard a couple of variations on this pruning rule, as it goes. One variation, which seems fairly hardcore, is to reduce your lavender plant so it is 8 inches (20cm) tall and 8 inches wide (again, allowing for size of plant). However, the variation I follow for [lavender I am growing in the garden](#) involves reducing the size of the plant by approximately eight inches all the way around. This involves creating a more rounded, compact shape and removing tatty, leggy stems, dead branches and remaining flower stalks. The intention is to give lavender, whether potted or in garden beds or borders, the very best chance to slow down healthily on the approach to dormancy.

Why Does the 8-8-8 Rule Matter?

The lavender 8-8-8 rule provides a useful assist in determining a tidy-up operation – based on the idea that certain lavender flowers are starting to die back as August begins. It pinpoints a moment (after flowering, but before the fall) when it is good to prune lavender to allow it chance to rejuvenate and develop new growth before slowing down for the dormant period. Ideally, it's a good idea to give lavender plants at least a month to recover from that 'end of season' pruning before the colder months kick in.

So the 8-8-8 rule for lavender matters as a barometer for formally marking the end of the flowering cycle, and welcoming in a quieter phase for growth generally, before the plants come to rest entirely. Making these important cuts now promotes a burst of new green growth which can establish before the plant starts to rest. It then wakes up next spring with the necessary foliage required to fire up the engines for the new flowering season. So this timely August prune is vital to helping the lavender 'stock up' on fresh supplies ahead of winter, basically.



(Image credit: Ekaterina Goncharova / Getty Images)

That said, I take the 8-8-8 rule as a guideline and a prompt, rather than a set of rigid principles. For example, I was told that it can only be used with [English lavender](#). This is based around flowering habit and flowering time (English tending to flower later than certain other types), but there will be variations depending on cultivar, weather, soil, and regional fluctuations.

I would take some cues from the plant in question – such as, is it still flowering, or has it stopped? Does the plant generally look a bit straggly? Are there any purely [woody lavender](#) bits that haven't performed that well over summer? This can all help make a decision about how to apply the 8-8-8 rule on a case-by-case basis.

How Rigid is the 8-8-8 Rule?

The way you apply the 8-8-8 rule for lavender plants will hinge on a few specifics, but the exact nature of both timing and amount still requires a measure of instinct and adjustment. For me, the big determining factor is whether or not your lavender is indeed reaching the end of its particular flowering season. Some [shrubs will seem to bloom all summer long](#). If your lavender plant is still looking flush and vibrant, I wouldn't just start snipping out of some mechanical desire to follow the crowd. As with many tips, it's one you can adapt for your own situation. It is, I believe, a valid checkpoint, though – a chance to inspect and assess, and formulate next steps.

The 'hard pruning' style does favor English [lavender varieties](#), which can bounce back impressively

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from extensive late summer snips. Within that broad category, there is plenty of variety in terms of plant shape and size. Plant age and growing conditions (and location) should also be factored in. So in terms of rigidity, I would keep another saying in mind as you decide on the date and extent of your hard prune: check twice, cut once.

Look at the color of the flowers – if they seem gray, that’s the big clue. Pollinators will also tell you when the lavender’s flowers are on the way out – by refusing to flit around in the same way. Appraise the overall shape and spread of the plant – is it becoming unwieldy or ungainly? Look out for legginess, and also gaps in the plant. Where there are opportunities to reduce weariness but also give the shape a lift, don’t be afraid to use this rule to prompt a phase of targeted rejuvenation.



(Image credit: Westend61 / Getty Images)

How to Prune with the 8-8-8 Rule

If you’re satisfied that your lavender has stopped flowering, is mostly covered in faded blooms, looks leggy and seems to have collapsed into itself, your summer cutting is sure to be beneficial. Make sure your shears, secateurs and pruners are sharp. I would also say it’s well worth using a measuring stick or measuring tape to check both the height and width of the plant. Again, some gardeners go in really hard with this [haircut](#), and apply the 8-8-8 rule as leaving 8 inches rather than removing 8 inches. I would be looking to remove 8 inches (or thereabouts) but only if I was still confident that at least half the plant remained.

Where making cuts, don’t slice indiscriminately into the wood zone. Look closely and check along the branches. You don’t want to cut into the woody part – unless it looks fairly lifeless, hasn’t produced any green or bloom during the summer, and isn’t adding anything to the overall shape. The ideal is to cut just above the area where the foliage begins. Along the length of woody stems, where you see blue-green nobs of color, cut just north of those. The result will hopefully be a smattering of foliage color, with significant reduction in plant scale and shape. You can use this opportunity to take [lavender cuttings](#) and start off your next generation in pots.

I find it helps to use shears for bulk cuts and pruners for targeted, precise cuts. Cut just above a node (where the foliage meets the stem) to give the best chance at healthy regeneration. Take your time, and treat this rule as a great chance to set the tone for next year’s growth. You won’t need to [feed your lavender](#) after pruning – just the usual watering, and you’re done. When you aren’t able to get to this rule in time, and you miss out on a late summer cut, it’s best to wait until spring for a lighter prune – and resolve to go in hard at the end of next summer’s flowering phase.



(Image credit: La Huertina De Toni / Shutterstock)

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RECIPE TIME

Crispy Fried Olives with Garlic Aioli (Vegan, No Eggs)



These crispy fried olives are the ultimate snack or appetizer, and the garlic aioli takes them over the top.

Equipment

- Dutch oven or deep pan
- Thermometer
- Three shallow plates or bowls
- Paper towels
- Slotted spoon or spider strainer

Ingredients:

For the Fried Olives

- 1 jar 5.5 oz / 155 g small pimento-stuffed olives, drained
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup [all purpose flour](#) divided
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup cold water
 - 1 tsp [paprika](#)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp [garlic powder](#)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ tsp [black pepper](#)
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup panko breadcrumbs
- Oil for frying canola or vegetable

For the Garlic Aioli

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegan mayonnaise
 - 1 tbsp [lemon juice](#)
- 1 heaping tbsp minced garlic
 - [Salt and pepper to taste](#)

For the Garlic Aioli

- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup vegan mayonnaise
 - 1 tbsp [lemon juice](#)
- 1 heaping tbsp minced garlic
 - [Salt and pepper to taste](#)

Directions:

Make the aioli. Combine the vegan mayo, lemon juice, minced garlic, salt, and pepper in a small bowl. Stir until smooth and pop it in the fridge to chill while you work on the olives.

1. **Make the batter.** Whisk half of the flour together with the water, paprika, garlic powder, and black pepper. You want a smooth, thick consistency that clings to the olives without sliding off.
2. **Set up your breading station.** Put the remaining dry flour on one plate, the panko on another, and keep the batter bowl in the middle.
3. **Coat the olives.** Take each olive through the three stages: toss in the dry flour first, then into the batter, then roll through the panko until fully covered. Set aside on a clean plate.

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4. **Get the oil hot.** Fill a Dutch oven or deep pan with a few inches of oil and bring it to 325 to 350°F (170 to 180°C). Use a thermometer to keep it in range.
5. **Fry in batches.** Drop the olives in a few at a time, giving them space to float and crisp up evenly. They only need about 1 to 2 minutes until golden all over.
6. **Drain and serve.** Transfer to a paper towel-lined plate for a minute, then serve hot alongside the chilled garlic aioli.



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HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
AUG



AUGUST ~ GLADIOLUS & POPPY

The August birth flowers are the **gladiolus** and the **poppy**.

The **gladiolus**, or 'sword lily,' represents remembrance, calm, integrity, and infatuation. Gladiolus indicates that the heart is being "pierced with love."

The other August flower is the **poppy**:

- A red poppy signifies pleasure;
- A white poppy is given for consolation; and,
- A yellow poppy wishes wealth and success.

Meetings are held at the Missouri River Regional Library, 214 Adams St, Jefferson City, MO
We hope to see you there!

Online Reporting Site: Hours must be entered at https://vms.momg.org/sec_Login/ please remember you need to enter hours on a computer, not a tablet or a phone. Again, all hours must be entered on line.

Enter your hours again starting in January.

Any emails that need to be distributed to ALL MG's should be sent to **CMMG Cole County Master Gardener <cmmg@missouri.edu>– please don't call in messages**

CMMG Official WEBSITE-- <https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/cole/extension-master->

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