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# Sunset

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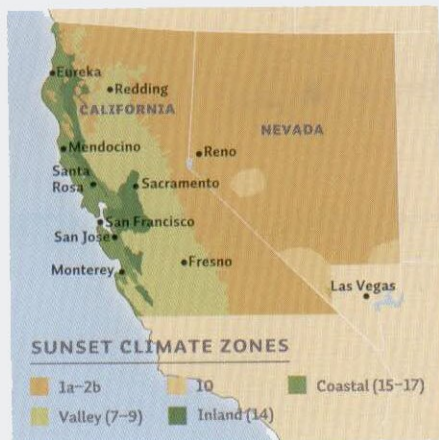
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# What to do in Northern California June



## Shopping

**Water gardens** For a great selection of water features and water plants, check out Flora Tropicana Aquatics in Elk Grove (10255 Grant Line Rd.; [floratropicana.com](http://floratropicana.com) or 916/714-4200). The 5-acre showroom and growing grounds feature ponds and water gardens of all sizes, with an array of plants, garden decor, one-of-a-kind outdoor-art pieces, even koi. It's open daily, but try to visit Friday through Sunday, when local wines are served for you to enjoy while strolling among the displays.

## Planting

**Annual color** For an instant hit of color in sunny spots, plant cosmos, Madagascar periwinkle (sometimes sold as vinca), marigold, portulaca, sunflower, verbena, or zinnia. In partial or full shade, grow browallia, coleus, impatiens, and semperflorens (fibrous) begonias.

**Cantaloupes** Sunset climate zones 7-9, 14-17: For best fruiting, plant seeds through holes in black landscape plastic early this month. (Lay the plastic over the planting bed, cut small x's in the plastic, then plant seeds through the incisions.) In trials led by Dan Johnston of the Santa Clara County Master Gardeners, growing cantaloupes through sun-warmed plastic produced a 50 percent greater yield (116

pounds of fruit total) than in bare earth alone (77 pounds of fruit).

**Vegetables** Grow something that's difficult to find, even at farmers' markets—an Italian green bean, for instance, such as 'Roma Improved' from Renee's Garden ([reenebgarden.com](http://reenebgarden.com)). Or the Mexican heirloom tomato 'Zapotec', with its bell shape and deep ribs, available as a seedling from the Natural Gardening Company ([naturalgardening.com](http://naturalgardening.com) or 707/766-9303).

## Maintenance

**Fertilize** Zones 7-9, 14-17: Feed annuals, berries, citrus, fuchsias, lawns, perennials, and vegetables; use a balanced fertilizer such as 20-20-20. Fertilize rhododendrons with an acid plant food after bloom finishes. Use liquid or controlled-release fertilizer to nourish plants in containers.

**Protect Japanese maples** Zones 7-9, 14-15: Hot, dry conditions can cause Japanese maples to suffer from tip burn. Minimize damage by spraying foliage with an anti-transpirant such as Cloud Cover, available at nurseries and from Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery in Sebastopol ([harmonyfarm.com](http://harmonyfarm.com) or 707/823-9125). Water regularly, and apply a 2- to 3-inch-deep layer of mulch to the soil around the tree to help keep moisture from evaporating too quickly.

**Treat chlorosis** If foliage on azaleas, camellias, citrus, gardenias, and other garden plants is yellowish with green veins, the plants need iron. Apply iron chelate in liquid or granular form according to package directions.

## Pest control

**Hose off aphids** These tiny black, brown, green, red, or yellow soft-bodied insects feed on new growth, sucking out plant fluids. To keep them from damaging sturdy plants such as roses, wash aphids from foliage in the morning by knocking them off with a strong jet from a hose.

—JULIE CHAI

## TIP FROM THE TEST GARDEN

### Summer's hottest new coneflower



Orange flowers that practically glow give Echinacea 'Tiki Torch' its name. The vigorous 36-inch-tall plant pumps out the blossoms all summer in sunny locations; bees and butterflies love its nectar-filled cones. Once 'Tiki Torch' becomes established, it tolerates heat and drought. Buy it in bloom this month—just keep snipping off faded flowers, and new ones will continue coming well into autumn.

INFO 'Tiki Torch' is sold at some nurseries and garden centers; availability will improve next year. Or order plants in 3-inch pots from White Flower Farm ([whiteflowerfarm.com](http://whiteflowerfarm.com) or 800/503-9624).

—JIM MCCAUSLAND