

CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

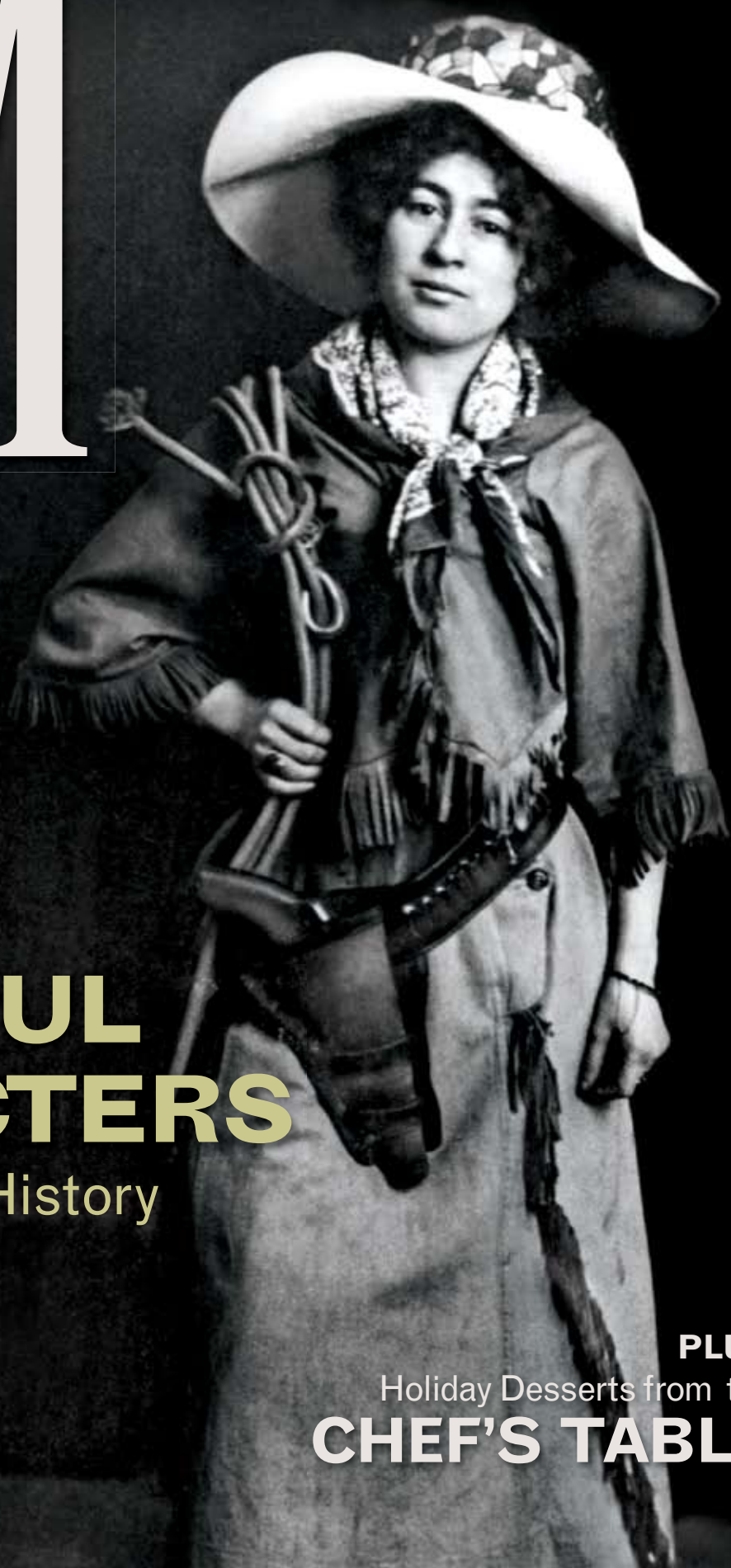
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# Winterize Your Garden

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As winter approaches, freezing temperatures and pummeling hail and rain threaten to reduce our precious garden plants to crisp brown bran flakes. Therefore, some proactive pre-winter workings in the garden can pay dividends in protecting you, your property investments, and your priceless peace of mind.

Winterizing the garden can involve tasks as simple as placing frost cloth protection over tender plants, or as involved as landscape construction to head-off drainage issues and erosion-control concerns. Winter is also an ideal time to transplant perennials and trim fruit and ornamental trees using the virtue of dormancy; quiescent plant metabolism allows us to perform surgical horticultural endeavors with a minimal amount of stress and shock.

Erosion prevention from incessant rain is no small matter. Fertile topsoil is a rare and precious resource that the rain, if unchecked, diminishes each year. After all, why pay California's Central Coast real estate prices to simply watch valuable topsoil exit your property to municipal storm drains? If you have an unstable slope, bare from fresh construction or garden remodeling, it is in your best interest to quickly execute proper positive grading, install ground-cover plantings, and apply jute-netting before the first major rain event. In addition, ensure all of your landscape surfaces and gutter downspouts flow positively with a two-percent drainage away from the home with amply-sized inlet catch basins, and correctly caliber drainpipes to safely channel water to the municipal drainage systems in your neighborhood. Do everything in your power to hold on to your topsoil; it holds most of the nutrition responsible for bountiful plant growth and the flurry of flowers to arrive in spring.

Frost protection can involve digging up and containerizing a tender plant in the comfortable indoors for the winter. For plants that are established and can not be transplanted, utilizing varying thicknesses of frost cloth can add several degrees of warmth—possibly the difference between life and death for a plant or crop. In large-scale agriculture, giant wind propellers can homogenize air to prevent cold air pockets from standing over a crop too detrimentally long. Even using early morning overhead irrigation can break the ice on some frosty mornings. Remember

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that well-hydrated plants are proven to be substantially hardier in freezing temperatures.

It is also time to be cutting back those deciduous ornamental grasses and mulching the entire garden. Fortunately, unlike most of our gardening friends in the chilly parts of the country, we do not have to bury our roses and other valuable deciduous shrubs in 12 inches of soil (“heeling up”) to keep them from freezing during winter. The power of mulching, however, is still very effective in Central Coast gardens. Three to four inches of mulch helps insulate the soil from compacting rains, preventing unwanted weeds, and adding an “icing” on the aesthetic landscape.

Let's face it; the chore of winterizing our Central Coast gardens is easy compared to the rest of our grand, snow-laden country. A few proactive practices will allow you to sleep easy as we welcome a needed wet winter season and look forward to exciting new perennial combinations to pair this spring. [ccm](#)

Todd M. Davidson owns Sage Ecological Landscapes  
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