Digging Deep with Cynthia Brian
Talking Dirt
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When our fruit trees are not producing or our flowers aren't blooming we question why this is happening. My first response is to gaze at the ground. When was the last time you added compost? Do you mulch regularly and fertilize when needed? Have you had your soil tested? Do you need to purchase clean soil?

I am a big proponent of having new fresh enriched soil delivered every few years to enhance the condition of the dirt. Home gardeners can have their dirt tested for a fee from a variety of labs across the United States to find out about the physical contents, contaminants and chemicals. With this information, you'll be able to optimize the growth of your plants and diagnosis any soil-related issues. Here is a sampling of places in California that you can contact. Visit their websites for more information or call to find out what is required.

A & L Western Laboratories, Inc.
Modesto, CA 95351
www.al-labs-west.com
209-529-4080

Control Laboratories
Watsonville, CA 95076
www.compostlab.com
831-724-5422

Dellavalle Laboratory, Inc.
Fresno, CA 93728
www.dellavallelab.com
800-228-9896

Fruit Growers Laboratory, Inc.
Stockton, CA 95215
www.fglinc.com
209-942-0182

Harmony Farm Supply and Nursery
Sebastopol, CA 95472
www.harmonyfarm.com
707-823-9125

Peaceful Valley Farm and Garden Supply
Grass Valley, CA 95945
www.groworganic.com/soil-health.html

Soil and Plant Laboratory, Inc.
San Jose, CA 95128
www.soilandplantlaboratory.com
408-727-0330

Test results of soil samples may indicate an excess of salts, improper nutrient levels, too high or low pH, or problems with the soil itself. With the guidance provided by soil testing, gardeners will be able to fertilize properly and amend your dirt, creating the soil for optimum growing.

Dig in the dirt! Amend the soil. Miracles will appear.

The magnificence of the magenta hydrangea.   *Photos Cynthia Brian*

Swallowtail Butterfly pursuing Jupiter's Beard