

Most snakes to visit our gardens are not venomous, yet, all snakes can bite and should not be handled. King snakes are my very favorite snake to have in a garden because they kill rattlesnakes.

The California Department of Fish and Wildlife suggests the following precautions since rattlesnakes do not just reside in rural areas. We live in hill country with plenty of open space, creeks, and trails. Rattlesnakes are here. Pay attention.

- Be alert when walking in a park, golf course or riverbank.
- Wear sturdy boots and don't wear flip-flops when hiking. Stay on the trail and don't wander into the brush. Inform your children to stay with you.
- Avoid tall brush, woodpiles, and underbrush. Snakes often hide during the heat of the day; they come out at dusk and dawn to hunt.
- Check your sleeping bag when camping, step on rocks and logs instead of climbing over them.
- Watch where you step when leaving your house or a building. Rattlesnakes often stretch out at door thresholds.
- Rattlesnakes swim. Don't grab onto floating sticks or branches when swimming anywhere, including your swimming pool.
- Don't put your hand into a place you can't see. Don't weed under bushes unless you've rattled the area.
- A dead rattlesnake is still venomous. The head needs to be buried.
- If you have a dog, talk to your veterinarian about getting the canine rattlesnake vaccine. For small dogs, it doesn't always work, but for a large dog, it could be life saving.
- Hire a snake wrangler if you find an unwanted snake. Check online.

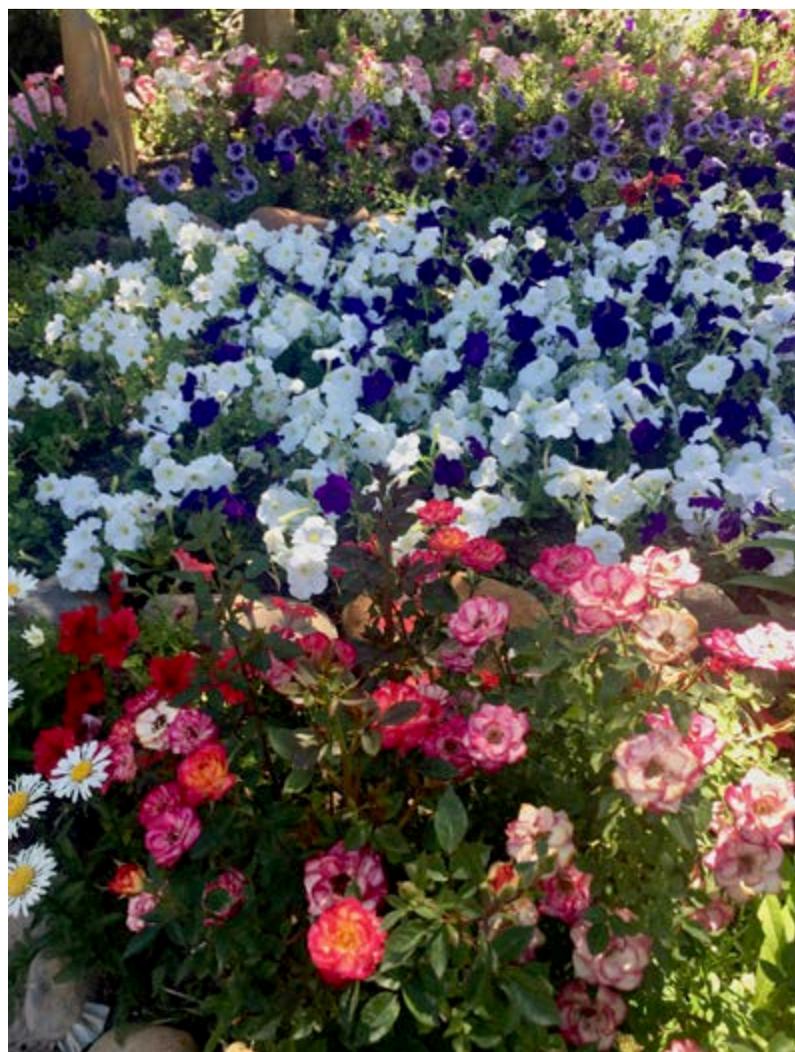
In case of a rattlesnake bite, call Poison Control immediately at 800-222-1222 and get to the nearest emergency room. Stay calm, remove rings, and don't try to suck the venom, cut the wound, tourniquet the bite or ice it. Most rattlesnake bites are accidental, but all are very dangerous, and can be fatal.

I still haven't found my rattlesnake but I am being extra cautious, especially when weeding, wearing my boots, gloves, and carrying a sharp shovel. As much as I despise rats and other rodents, a rattlesnake is not a welcome serpent in my summer paradise where I prefer to be barefoot and bikini clad!

Enjoy the summer and join me in my dance to stay clear of the rats, rattles and voles!



*Rattles from a rattlesnake.*



*Pelargoniums and petunias are a pretty combo.*



*Yellow yarrow is a medicinal herb that people use to reduce toothaches and other ailments.*