



What Gardening Means to Me

by Norma Guinn, UC Master Gardener

I think gardening is a meaningful way to cultivate self-love. It's like meditation – a time to be still and listen to the sounds of the outdoors and to your own voice.

This soil on our earth nourishes the roots and gardeners alike. Getting my hands dirty in soil is just plain healthy for me. It is my therapy and others have told me it is therapy for them. It is successfully used with veterans and victims of disasters and at rehabilitation centers. Plants and gardening help people that have had traumatic experiences re-adjust. Gardening improves all aspects of people's lives.

Gardening will slow me down and even stop me right where I am. It helps put me back on this wonderful earth again for a few more minutes. When you start gardening you start sharing the energy of the earth; it's like having a relationship with Mother Nature herself.

We can learn a lot from Mother Nature. Facts our ancestors knew and passed down to us over the centuries. We may think some aspect of gardening is a new idea or concept, but you know what, more often than not, it has been around for decades.

Gardening is my canvas each season for creative beauty - from the herbs growing in my kitchen window-box to blossoms on fruit trees to large swaths of native blooms.

Gardening brings people together. Gardening with my husband is rewarding and special. It doesn't matter if the weather is cold or warm. We start working outside on our compost pile or our fruit trees and before we know it we are talking about the kids and old friends we haven't seen in years. Gardening is so relaxing for us that we start strolling down memory lane and find ourselves laughing out loud about the craziest things! It's just the two of us spending real time together. We experience gardening with a different kind of intimacy: shoulder to shoulder rather than face to face. Plus our present activity is groundwork for a future experience, like a weed free flowerbed or a bountiful fruit harvest.

When you garden with your kids and grandchildren it forms a lasting bond that connects them to the earth through plants and the animal kingdom. Flowers, herbs, and vegetables might be some of the first plants they touch, but butterflies, snails, dragonflies, birds and bees quickly enter the garden scene. Then there are lizards, toads, and the occasional snake. This all peaks their curiosity and their eagerness to learn how all of these creatures interact and live together in our world. Enter the sun, the moon, the stars, lightning, rainfall and fog and now their awareness of earth's natural resources increases. Gardening together is our opportunity to teach them about ecosystems and showing them how to care and appreciate this wonderful planet.

A friend of mine recently asked me why I love gardening so much. I quickly answered that it is a down to earth chore. Getting my hands dirty, pulling weeds, dividing my irises, turning my compost pile all leads to "My Garden". It is my retreat from the crazy world and provides me several places to sit and behold

something that I created. That feeling of satisfaction is BIG and runs DEEP - so deep that I plan to be out in my garden for as long as I can.

Community outreach demonstrates to others these intrinsic values associated with gardening that the average person may not appreciate at first. Gardening definitely keeps our hands busy and our bodies moving, while generating a big gift to ourselves. Plant trees in your yard to provide shade and help clean our dirty air. Plant containers or window boxes with herbs and native flowers and nourish the bees and butterflies with nectar and pollen. Allow lady beetles, lacewings, and spiders to run wild in your yard for they will feed on aphids, flies, and whiteflies. Even a small garden or a few plants can add beauty and provide habitat for these valuable creatures.

Come learn what to plant and how to garden with the Master Gardeners. We have three Gardening Festivals coming your way soon. All are on Saturdays from 10 am to 2 pm and feature open booth displays on various aspects of gardening. There is no fee, we are family friendly, and we just want to share information about sustainable gardening in the San Joaquin Valley. **PLEASE** wander through and ask us any and all of your gardening questions. I'll be at the Compost Booth. Come visit me and I'll be sure to ask you "What does gardening mean to you?"



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present
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10 am to 2 pm - Saturdays

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March 15
Orchard Walk East Shopping Center
Target, Ross, Vallarta, etc.
Hwy 63 at Riggins & Shannon Pkwy

HANFORD
March 29
Hanford Mall (in front of Ross)
Lacey Blvd & 12th Ave

TULARE
April 12
Tulare Outlet Center
North of Calvin Klein



Garden Pest Booth at a Garden Festival



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Succulents Booth at a Garden Festival

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