



NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

Aspire to Inspire: Become a Master Gardener (September 11, 2021)

by Priscilla Girard, UCCE Master Gardener

When I first moved to Porterville 30-something years ago, I remember driving around looking at different neighborhoods for a home. I was so impressed with one home's landscaping and appeal that I kept going back to that area hoping to find a house. What made it look so welcoming were the colorful blossoms spilling out of the window boxes, the perfectly trimmed low hedges with skirts of bright flowers lining the curved walkway, and beautiful shade trees on the corner lot sheltering lush ferns, impatiens, and coleus. I became acquainted with the wonderful woman who created this inspiring landscape, and she became my go-to source for all my fledgling gardening questions. Her cheerful and gracious generosity in sharing her wealth of information made me long to be just like her. I discovered she was a Master Gardener and pledged to follow in her footsteps someday, which I did in 2010.

Master Gardeners are volunteers who share a common goal of educating the public in research-based home gardening practices, integrated pest management, and sustainable landscape practices in our community. They are trained by and under the supervision of the University of California Cooperative Extension.

MGs are available to answer questions from the public in Tulare and Kings Counties by conducting office hours at the UC Cooperative Extension, by hosting booths at several local Farmers' Markets, and holding special events at local nurseries several times a year. In addition, MGs offer workshops and demonstrations to the public on rose pruning, fruit tree pruning, composting, and many other garden topics. They serve the community by maintaining the roses at the Tulare County Courthouse, the Ralph Moore Rose Garden, and the Woodlake Botanical Garden, a demonstration garden at Hurley School, and help maintain a garden at the Visalia Senior Center. MGs mentor teachers and other adults who interact with youth in establishing school and community gardens.



In the first year as a MG, volunteers agree to perform a minimum of 50 hours of qualifying volunteer service activities. In subsequent years, MGs agree to participate in a minimum of 25 hours of qualifying volunteer service activities. In addition to these volunteer hours, each Master Gardener acquires a minimum of **12 hours of continuing education hours** annually to remain in the program.

The rewards of serving as a Master Gardener volunteer are numerous and varied. From the new-found friendships outside of their local community to the fulfillment in sharing knowledge and gardening experiences with others, or to improving one's own personal gardening repertoire, being a MG creates a sense of purpose in giving back to the community. Even though she always loved to garden, Nancy Hawkins, current MG President, joyfully admits, "As a Master Gardener, I now have the knowledge and support to garden properly. I know which plants to use in our area, how to irrigate efficiently, and how to use and dispose of pesticides and fertilizers correctly. But, best of all, I have met a group of people who share my passion and enthusiasm." Sue Schieferle, Co-Director of Recruitment and Training, added, "Not only have I expanded my own gardening knowledge, I've expanded my circle of friends to include eager plant experts willing to share their insights with the community."

If you are interested in expanding your gardening knowledge and sharing your horticultural passion with others, the Master Gardener program may be perfect for you. A new training class will be offered in January of 2022. The weekly classes will be held Wednesday mornings from January 19 through June 8. If you are interested, please call our office at 684-3343.

Applications will be available online in August and must be turned in by October 27. We will be holding a mandatory orientation on Wed., Oct 13 to share what the training course and the volunteer commitment entail.

More detailed information can be found on the Tulare-Kings County Master Gardener website, at:
[https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC Master Gardeners/Become a Master Gardener/](https://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/Become_a_Master_Gardener/)

The Tulare-Kings County Master Gardeners will be available to answer your questions in person:

Ace Hardware, Visalia - 1st Sat./every month, 10 am-1 pm

Luis Nursery, Visalia - 2nd Sat./every month, 10 am-2 pm

Hanford Farmer's Market - 4th Thurs, May - Sept., 5-8 pm, 7th ST. and Irwin Downtown Hanford

Visalia Farmer's Market - Saturdays, 8-11 am, 2100 W. Caldwell Ave (behind Sears Building)

Questions? Call us:

Master Gardeners in Tulare County: (559) 684-3325, Tues & Thurs, 9:30-11:30

Visit our website to search past articles, find links to UC gardening information, or to email us with your questions:

http://ucanr.edu/sites/UC_Master_Gardeners/

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