



What is a Master Gardener?

By Lois Trimpey

UCCE Master Gardener of El Dorado County

Here's a little test to see if you might be a good candidate to become a volunteer in the Master Gardener program. Do you:

- Enjoy sharing your knowledge and experience with others in the community and helping others do the same?
- Like detective work -- taking a problem and researching the cause and solution?
- Have an interest in teaching?
- Enjoy gardening?
- Want to learn more about composting, plant identification, insect identification, herbicide/pesticide use, pruning, propagation, and irrigation?

If the answers to these questions are “yes,” the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Master Gardener program could open up an exciting, new phase of your life.

What is a Master Gardener? The Master Gardeners are volunteers, trained by UCCE to help meet the gardening needs of the residents of El Dorado County by providing research-based knowledge and information. This includes supporting the growing interest in using sustainable landscape practices, including soil and water conservation and reducing dependence on chemical fertilizers and pesticides, as well as providing information on home gardening and backyard orchards.

Sometimes Master Gardeners make significant contributions to agriculture, such as discovering a new insect pest that could cause a huge financial burden to agriculture and home gardeners if not managed properly. You can become a bug detective as well!

Master Gardener projects are many and varied and include activities at Farm Day for El Dorado County third graders, school gardens, Sherwood Demonstration Garden, farmers markets information booths, and staffing the Master Gardener office and hotline.

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UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are proud to announce the Grand Opening of our “pride and joy” project that consumed several years of hard work: the Sherwood Demonstration Garden, located behind Folsom Lake College – El Dorado Center, 6699 Campus Drive in Placerville. The public is invited to visit the Grand Opening on October 3 from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Sixteen different themed gardens will be showcased, and Master Gardeners will be on hand to answer questions on all the beautiful, flourishing plants... refreshments and treasure hunt prizes, too!

Master Gardeners also host an annual plant sale every spring to raise funds for outreach activities such as the Sherwood Demonstration Garden. On most Saturdays, the Master Gardeners offer classes at no charge, usually from 9 am to noon in Placerville and one Wednesday a month in Cameron Park. These classes cover topics from pruning to orchids to organic gardening to composting and beyond! If you are reading this, you know that Master Gardeners write a weekly article on a topic of local gardening interest for the readers of the Mt. Democrat. The program offers many on-going opportunities for continuing education through classes as well as informative field trips to other gardens, native plant habitats and other significant horticultural locations.

Come join the fun! An unexpected and very welcome benefit from participation in the program is the large group of new friends with whom you can share your experiences, gain from their knowledge, their enthusiasm and their dedication to the work we all love. Together we enjoy helping the community learn about the wonderful world of gardening.

The next UCCE Master Gardener training program will run from January through the end of April 2016. The training includes presentations by top horticulture experts in their unique field of expertise. After successful completion of training, acceptance to the Master Gardener training program includes a commitment of 50 hours of volunteer work, to be accomplished within a year from when training is completed. The time will be spent working with other Master Gardeners on the activities and projects listed above. It is fun, hours add quickly, and the experience gained is invaluable. Through all of this process, the pieces of the big gardening puzzle begin to come together.

If you are interested in applying for the 2016 Master Gardener program, plan to attend an orientation meeting September 15, 2015 at 3:00 p.m. in the Bethell-Delfino Agriculture Building, 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. Please call 530-621-5528 to RSVP. Applications are due by October 1, 2015, by 4:00 p.m. See our 2016 Master Gardener Training webpage for more details: http://ucanr.edu/be_mg.

Learn all about seed saving and garden journals at today’s free Master Gardening class, 9:00 a.m. to noon at the Cameron Park Community Center, 2502 Country Club Drive in Cameron Park. Learn how to select, collect and store seeds from your favorite vegetable, herb and flower plants; plus take free seeds to try in your garden next year! The importance and fun of garden journaling and record keeping will also be covered.

UCCE Master Gardeners are available to answer home gardening questions at local farmers markets, and Tuesday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to noon, by calling **(530) 621-5512**. Walk-ins

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are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to our UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County website at <http://ucanr.edu/edmg>. Sign up to receive our online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find us on Facebook.