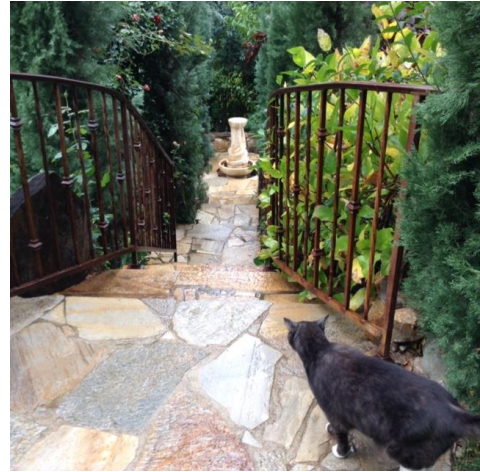


22nd Annual Garden Tour Highlights Local Gardens

By Rebecca Miller-Cripps

On Sunday, May 21st, UCCE Master Gardeners of Tuolumne County will host their twenty-second annual garden tour. This year's theme, "Over the Garden Gate," offers glimpses into four gardens on the self-guided tour from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. For the very first time, the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden will feature a plant sale. Plants available for purchase have all been locally grown and are suitable for planting in the foothills area. The gardens vary from a bed and breakfast one, to one that incorporates native oaks and ones that have adapted earlier landscapes to become more water-conserving.



Barretta Gardens Inn is a Sonora bed and breakfast. The current owner bought the property in 2005, and together with a former partner, designed and planted the gardens; with the assistance of a helper, the garden is owner-maintained. Irrigation is provided primarily by drip systems. For beautiful photos of the current landscaping, go to the Barretta Gardens Inn website at: <http://www.barrettagardens.com/>

The mature gardens and grounds are "themed," each area arranged as a room with its own focal point. The owner maintains an inconspicuous compost area to utilize green manure from the garden and chicken manure from the hen house.



The Swanson garden is located on the west side of Sonora and incorporates mature oak trees into its landscaping. It also boasts elderberry plants, from which the owner makes syrup. This one-acre property was designed and planted by the owner. She and her son maintain it as a lovely example of year-round variety in plant color and texture.

The garden is certified by the National Wildlife Federation as a wildlife habitat. A Certified Wildlife Habitat is a site that is gardened sustainably by eliminating chemical pesticides and fertilizers, conserving water and soil, and eliminating exotic species. The site provides the four elements needed by wildlife—food, water, cover and places to raise young.

Sally and Doug Clark describe their garden as "always changing and evolving over the last 18 years." They have performed all planning, installation, change and removal, and maintenance activities. Originally landscaped with lawn, they have now removed all lawns and replanted front, back and side areas with drought-tolerant species. They have added permeable hardscape

in the form of gravel paths, rock borders, stepping stones, flagstone, and mulch. The decision to remove the lawn was based on several factors. Water conservation was a high priority. So was integrated pest management; gophers and moles made the decision to eliminate the lawn even easier!

The Clark garden, including the fruit trees, hosts a variety of wildlife. The home owners note that their landscape attracts “lots of birds” and one time they even observed a bear visiting their property.



The Master Gardener demonstration garden at 251 S. Barretta Street in Sonora is a good place to start the tour. It will offer garden tour tickets for purchase on Sunday, May 21, and is also the site for will-call tickets ordered by phone. The garden offers welcome shade, refreshments and public restroom facilities. And, don’t forget to check out those locally-grown plants to help your yard become its best.

Tickets for the 22nd annual tour are available in the Columbia area at Columbia Nursery on Parrotts Ferry Road and the Farmory near Columbia Airport. In Sonora, tickets can be purchased at Sonora Lumber on South Washington Street, Antiques, Etc. on North Washington Street and from the UCCE Office, 52 North Washington Street. Farther up Highway 108, tickets can be found at Mountain Book Shop in the Junction Shopping Center, Whole Foods Depot on Standard Road, and The Nest in Twain Harte. Tickets are also available from your favorite Master Gardener.

Come out and join us for an enjoyable day spent touring gardens in the Mother Lode.

Rebecca Miller-Cripps is a University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener of Tuolumne County.