



MASTER GARDENERS & COMPOSTERS

Program Highlights

240 certified Master Gardener volunteers giving over 15,500 hours of service .

Over 14,000 people received gardening composting information through Master Gardener outreach and education.

Over 55 workshops given by Master Gardeners on various gardening and composting topics.

The UC Placer and Nevada Master Gardener Program provides volunteer training and horticultural knowledge to enhance home landscapes and garden experiences while striving to improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

The UC Master Gardener Programs in Placer and Nevada Counties began in 1983 to meet the demands of the growing population and mitigate one-on-one requests to Extension staff for home gardening and related information.

Interest in home gardening and urban horticulture continues to grow. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and landscape/nursery crops are now the third largest agricultural crop in California. UC Master Gardeners identify issues and needs of Placer and Nevada County residents, and develop educational activities to address these concerns in the areas of:

- Water Wise Gardening
- Firesafe Landscaping
- Pest Management
- Vegetable Gardening
- Prevention and Diagnosis
- Recycling Garden Waste
- School Gardens
- Perennials and Flowering Shrubs
- Soil and Irrigation
- Community Gardens



With the goal of shifting public perceptions of yard and garden debris from “wastes” to “resources,” the University of California Cooperative Extension’s volunteer Master Composters have engaged the public in recognizing the importance of organics management through composting, vermi-composting, and shredding/chipping/mulching. These activities alone can divert between 20 and 35 percent of a family’s garbage from the landfills and have helped Placer and Nevada Counties meet state mandated diversion rates.



1st ANNUAL GARDEN FAIRE

ISSUE

With a “growing” interest in gardening in our communities comes the increased need for more events focused on home gardening. Based on the inquiries we receive from the public, home gardeners are seeking ways to learn about home gardening that fits nicely with their busy schedules.

WHAT WAS DONE

In March 2015, after our annual event in Loomis called the “Gardeners’ Gathering”, the Master Gardeners reviewed the event and decided to change it completely for the future into a “Garden Faire”. This new event would be an all day event held in Auburn, allowing folks to come and go as they please with scheduled speakers and a diversity of vendors. The plan was to make the event more accessible to families who can’t commit to a whole day event and pay the larger registration fee of our past event.

IMPACT

The 2016 first annual “Garden Faire” was a big success. Over 300 people attended and enjoyed the many vendors, the speakers and getting their gardening questions answered. Overall, when the evaluations from the event were collected and tallied, 95 percent of the evaluations included favorable reviews and said that they would return to the event again next year. The highest rated parts of the event were the inexpensive entrance cost, the diversity of the vendors and the opportunity to come and go as they please from the event.



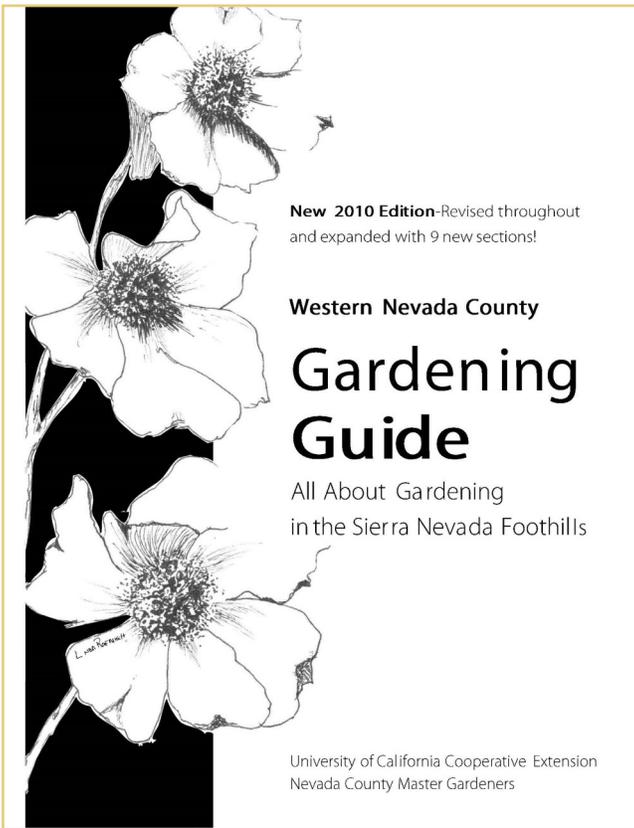
As part of the Garden Faire, there were speakers throughout the day on different gardening topics. Folks could sit in on one of the talks and ask questions of the presenters in between visiting the other parts of the event.



Attendees at the Garden Faire were treated to a wide variety of vendors. From bees to bats to native plants, there was something for all to enjoy and learn about.



NEVADA COUNTY GARDENING GUIDE



The Nevada County Gardening Guide is a comprehensive publication covering everything the gardener needs to know for getting started in the garden or landscape.

ISSUE

As more and more people plant gardens and tend to their landscapes, the Master Gardener program must continually strive to meet the “growing” demand for gardening education. Traditional outreach methods like public workshops have been wildly successful but there are always other vehicles for information to promote to our clientele.

WHAT WAS DONE

Years ago, the Master Gardeners in Nevada County created a “Gardening Guide” for local residents that has evolved into a book of invaluable information on gardening within the county. This guide has been updated and revised multiple times to include a very large amount of gardening and composting information and resources. The guide is sold through the Master Gardener program—in the office and at events—but also through local vendors. In this way, the guide is available all over town to help people in their gardening efforts.

IMPACT

In this day and age, it may seem like an actual book couldn’t compete with the internet and online publications; however, the Nevada County Master Gardeners have continued to have success selling the Gardening Guide and use the money earned as funds for their other outreach endeavors. Although anecdotal in nature, the feed back we receive about the Gardening Guide is very positive. Beyond our customers, the Gardening Guide serves another huge purpose with great impact in our organization: Master Gardener resource! The volunteers have their publication at all their events and activities so they have a wonderful resource at their disposal for answering those tough gardening questions from the public!



DEMONSTRATION GARDENS



Placer County Master Gardeners get ready for their public workshop by clearing the main path to their garden areas. Not only do the Master Gardener volunteers use their gardens for education, but they also provide plenty of team building opportunities!



Nevada County Master Gardeners prepare for their 2016 Spring Plant Sale and fundraiser at their demonstration garden in Grass Valley. Hundreds of people buy their veggie starts here each year.

ISSUE

The mission of the Master Gardener program is to spread research-based gardening and composting information to the public to help them grow healthy plants.

Demonstration gardens can be a great way to help people learn more about gardening because they can see and experience the practices in person. Also, these gardens provide a venue for public workshops, social gatherings and fundraising activities.

WHAT WAS DONE

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have both created and maintained demonstration gardens in their respective counties. A tremendous amount of volunteer time is spent in these gardens to make sure they are ready to help local gardeners learn.

IMPACT

Over 36 workshops are given between the two Master Gardener groups at their Demonstration Gardens. This translates to over 850 people that have received information at these venues. These gardens don't only serve the public; they also serve as places where current Master Gardener volunteers can earn their volunteer and continuing education hours. These hours are required to remain active in the program.

Some other highlights of the Demonstration Gardens:

- Serve as a venue for field trips for local schoolchildren, local garden clubs and other organizations.
- Serve as a social gathering spot for the Master Gardener monthly meetings in the summer.
- Gardens are collaborative efforts between the Master Gardeners and Nevada Irrigation District in Grass Valley and Placer County in Auburn.



COMMUNITY EVENTS

ISSUE

Master Gardener programs look to reach out to their communities in various ways. It is often challenging to reach all areas of the counties we serve so it becomes essential to identify community events that serve as venues to extend garden education to the public.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Master Gardeners in both county programs participated in many community events throughout the counties they serve. Some of these events are over a period of days and require a lot of volunteer support while others are one day events that a few volunteers can staff. Some of the community events Master Gardeners attended in 2015-16 are: Nevada County Fair, Auburn Home Shows, Roseville's Bird and Bug Bonanza, The Union's Home and Garden Show, and the UCCE Farm Day.

IMPACT

Community events offer the Master Gardeners a way to reach a lot of people in a short period of time with an efficient use of volunteer's time. In the year 2015-16, the Master Gardeners in both county programs reached over 3,400 people through the different community event venues. In some of these cases, information was handed out and gardening questions were answered. In other cases, people will approach the Master Gardeners with questions about the program which gives them the opportunity to introduce new people to all we here at UCCE have to offer. Overall, community events provide a great audience and an opportunity to network with other groups attending.



Master Gardeners Richard Huntley and Becky Fritchie share their love of worms and the magic of composting with kids at the Roseville Bird and Bug Bonanza.



The Master Gardeners in Nevada County always do a great job of creating inviting displays to draw people in at the Nevada County Fair and Home and Garden show.



SENIOR COMMUNITY GARDEN

ISSUE

There are many senior citizens in our counties who live in senior housing, apartments, and other homes that lack outdoor space for gardening. They do not have the opportunity to experience the numerous benefits that gardening offers in the form of physical, mental, and emotional exercise. In addition, in some senior living situations, there are very few people to socialize with on a regular basis.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Senior Community Garden was developed and offered as a space for seniors to garden and socialize. The University of California Cooperative Extension partnered with the County of Placer to transform an unused portion of an athletic field into a community garden. This partnership resulted in a fenced garden area, irrigation installation, shed placement, and the creation of 30 plots with pathways in between.

IMPACT

The Senior Garden has all 30 plots under cultivation and produces a large amount of fresh produce for the senior gardeners who tend it. The garden not only provides a place to grow fresh food, but also serves as a gathering spot for seniors to bring their friends, socialize, and create new relationships. There is constantly a waiting list for the plots in the garden, and it has been written about in the local paper.



In addition to the Community Garden, the Placer Master Gardeners have carved out a little section within the overall garden for an Edible Demonstration Garden. This space is being developed to demonstrate different growing techniques and will serve as an educational venue for the volunteers to teach the public. There is also a composting area and fruit trees planted within the demonstration site.

