

UC Cooperative Extension Placer and Nevada Counties  
**2020 Annual Report**



**University of California**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources



# Cooperative Extension

Cooperative Extension is a nationwide system for non-formal education which was established by Congress in 1914 to improve America's agriculture and strengthen families and communities. Cooperative Extension is a partnership of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), the State land grant universities, and county governments, cooperating to serve local citizens.

The mission of the University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE) is to serve California through the creation, development, and application of knowledge in agricultural, natural, and human resources. Cooperative Extension was established in Placer and Nevada Counties in 1917. The original agreements stipulated that each county would provide support staff and services in exchange for university-paid programs and professionals. Today, funding for research and education programs comes from county, state, and federal governments; and from competitive grants awarded to county-based academics.

UCCE, also known as the 4-H and Farm Advisor, serves as a local problem-solving center. UC Cooperative Extension works to strengthen and ensure the sustainability of our land, environment, and local communities. We are catalysts, collaborators, educators, and stewards of the land, living in the communities we serve.

In Placer and Nevada Counties, county-based Advisors provide unbiased, research-based information and training through programs focused on Horticulture and Small Farms, Livestock and Natural Resources, and Nutrition Education. Delivery of our 4-H Youth Development and Master Gardener programs is facilitated by hundreds of community volunteers.



# From the County Directors

Placer and Nevada Counties' UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) advisors and staff provide research-based information and education to meet the needs of local residents. Our 4-H, Master Gardener, nutrition, horticulture, livestock, and forestry/fire programs provide hands-on learning with an emphasis on "helping people help themselves." In 2019-20, UC Cooperative Extension helped local residents by providing information, educational opportunities, and technical assistance. Programs have continued virtually since the COVID-19 shelter-in-place.

## **4-H Youth Development**

- 20 4-H clubs served 986 youth members in Placer and Nevada Counties.
- 1,155 youth enrolled in group and short-term activities.
- 283 dedicated adult 4-H volunteers facilitated program delivery.

## **Master Gardener**

- Outreach and education activities, including 44 workshops, reached over 19,000 people with gardening and composting information.
- 250 Master Gardener volunteers gave over 18,000 service hours, valued at \$450,000.

## **Nutrition Education**

- 2,800 low income Placer and Nevada Counties schoolchildren participated in nutrition education.
- 1,037 students participated in school garden activities.
- \$580,948 in USDA grant funds supported nutrition education for low-income youth.

## **Horticulture and Small Farms programs**

- 299 producers improved business, soil, water, and pest management skills through 17 UCCE workshops.
- 140 farmers improved farm sustainability by adopting new practices.
- On-line research-based information reached 53,422 producers.

## **Livestock and Natural Resources**

- 150 people gained hands-on experience through UCCE livestock and pasture/ rangeland management workshops.
- Virtual outreach via webinars and podcasts reached more than 1,000 people since the start of COVID-19.

## **Nevada County Fire and Forestry**

- 350 Nevada County residents attended Forestry and Fire educational events and increased their knowledge of fire-resistant homes and natural areas.
- 90% of event participants stated their intention to implement new fire preparations.

Collaboration with county governments, community partners, and volunteers allows us to provide these educational opportunities. We are grateful for their support and assistance.

**Cindy Fake and Dan Macon**

**County Directors, UCCE Placer and Nevada**

# Horticulture and Small Farms



## Program Highlights 2019–20:

- Delivered 66 hours of training to 299 producers through short courses, hands-on and virtual workshops and classes.
- Assisted 140 farmers to implement sustainable practices such as integrated pest management, mulching, and pruning; that reduce water use, conserve soil, and manage pests with fewer pesticide applications.
- Provided tools and assisted 44 new and beginning farmers to plan their new farm businesses, increasing the probability of success.
- Reached 53,422 producers with research-based information through our Foothill Farming website, blog, and Facebook.

Placer and Nevada Counties farmers produce a wide range of horticultural crops; including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and nursery crops. These crops are produced on small family farms, which feed a growing demand for high quality local produce.

The small scale of most Placer/Nevada farms is a challenge to economic viability and stability of local agriculture. Specific issues include: training a new generation of farmers; helping working farmers build to scale; building business management and economic analysis skills; planning for operational continuity; and implementing sustainable production practices to manage soil, water, and pests effectively with minimal environmental impact.

UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) helps growers meet those challenges through education, technical assistance, and providing networking opportunities. We also conduct applied research to develop appropriate production practices for the foothills. Collaborative research on mulching in citrus orchards is helping producers manage the impacts of climate change.

UCCE develops and delivers training to area farmers on crop production, pest management, farm business, small farm economics, and beginning farming. We provide individual assistance to commercial producers through farm calls, phone, e-mail, and online consultations. Practical, research-based information on our Foothill Farming website is always available on demand. With COVID-19, we implemented virtual, online workshops, networking events, and consultations, which have allowed us to continue program delivery.



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# Livestock and Natural Resources



## Program Highlights 2019–20

- More than 150 people attended UCCE livestock and pasture/rangeland management workshops and field days, gaining hands on experience in livestock management, irrigated pasture establishment, predator protection tools, and rangeland nutrition.
- Our virtual outreach efforts, including online webinars and a new podcast, have reached more than 1,000 people since the COVID-19 shelter-at-home orders were issued.
- Our IGTV Channels on Instagram featured more than 30 short videos on a variety of livestock production and rangeland management topics. These videos were viewed more than 8,000 times.
- Our Ranching in the Sierra Foothills blog featured 26 posts and more than 21,500 page views. Our quarterly New Foothill Rancher newsletter reaches more than 1,000 subscribers.

The Livestock and Natural Resources program for Placer and Nevada Counties serves approximately 2,400 commercial livestock producers who raise beef cattle, sheep, goats, hogs and poultry. We also serve local, state, federal, and NGO land and resource managers who focus on rangeland resources. Our 2019-2020 programs continued to reflect the intersection between natural resource management, livestock production systems, and agricultural business viability.

We continue to work with local producers and University of California specialists to improve livestock production and pasture/rangeland management systems. Through workshops, webinars, and a newly created podcast, we provided research-based information on sheep, goat, and cattle husbandry practices, irrigated pasture management, drought preparation and response strategies, and the utilization of new technology (including electronic identification and remote sensing). We also developed several economic analysis tools for producers, including two irrigated pasture cost studies and a targeted grazing business planning tool.

Conflicts between livestock production and predator management in the foothills and Sierra continue to be challenging. We are leading a regional effort to provide livestock producers with science-based information about a variety of nonlethal livestock protection tools. We are also working with ranchers, the U.S. Forest Service, and the California Department of Fish and Wildlife to better understand options for protecting livestock from gray wolves, mountain lions, and other predators east of the Sierra crest.



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# CalFresh Healthy Living UC



## Program Highlights 2019–20

- Over 2,800 low-income Placer and Nevada Counties school children received nutrition education in their classrooms.
- 1,037 students participated in school gardens.
- \$580,948 in USDA grant funds supported CalFresh Healthy Living programs for low-income Placer and Nevada County youth.
- Nutrition Educators adapted to COVID-19 by providing resources to teachers, students, and families. These included worksheets, links to online activities, newsletters, virtual book readings, and physical activity “brain break” sessions.

## CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE Placer and Nevada Counties

*Let's Eat Healthy!* is the name for the CalFresh Healthy Living program for UCCE Placer and Nevada Counties. The vision of Let's Eat Healthy! is to help CalFresh participants and CalFresh eligible children and families in Placer and Nevada Counties to maintain healthy lifestyles through wise food choices and physical activity.

This is done through direct education in qualifying schools where at least 50% of the students receive free or reduced-price meals. These schools receive nutrition lessons, USDA approved nutrition curricula, resources, and teacher trainings. We reach parents through adult workshops as well as family events at participating schools.

Changing individual behavior is difficult. While nutrition education can teach children what it means to be healthy and what foods they should eat, a comprehensive, coordinated strategy is needed to achieve the greatest benefits. Schools look to Let's Eat Healthy! for support in their efforts to create a healthy school environment. This year we provided assistance with Harvest Festivals, Jog-A-Thons, and other school events.

All schools receive direct education, tastings, and other program components such as:

- Cooking Academy
- Garden Education
- Zumba/CATCH
- Parent nutrition lessons
- Smarter Lunchrooms
- Student Nutrition Action Council

In these difficult economic times, families have to stretch food dollars to feed their families. Making nutritious meals adds to the challenge. Through nutrition workshops, adults learn how to plan and cook nutritious meals for their families, while saving money and time.



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# Nevada and Placer Counties 4-H Youth Development



**In 2019–20, 4-H programs offered experiential learning activities and leadership opportunities to youth in Nevada and Placer Counties.**

**4-H Youth Members** Nevada: 407  
Placer: 579

**4-H Community Clubs** Nevada: 7  
Placer: 13

**4-H Adult Volunteers** Nevada: 124  
Placer: 159

**Youth Enrolled in Group  
and Short-Term Activities** Nevada: 191  
Placer: 964

The University of California 4-H Youth Development Program provides a variety of enrichment activities that support the development of life and leadership skills for young people. The focus of 4-H programs is positive youth development through science, healthy living, civic engagement, and leadership. 4-H programs are accessible and open to all youth.

The 4-H program uses an experiential learning model focused on discovering, reflecting, and applying knowledge. Through youth-adult partnerships, youth members and adult volunteers share in learning, and members gain valuable experience. Programs and projects offered in 4-H in Placer and Nevada Counties include robotics, summer camp, shooting sports, animal science, coding, yoga, public speaking, sewing, gardening, cooking, citizenship, and more!

In these uncertain times, Nevada and Placer 4-H programs have had to adjust to serve our communities. 4-H staff and volunteer leaders have worked to establish virtual opportunities for 4-H youth, and have created innovative ways for youth members to participate and learn from home. Statewide, we have redesigned in-person events to virtual platforms.

4-H youth have been able to participate in online opportunities such as Code Camp to learn computer coding, and the 4-H Disease Detectives Project to learn about disease outbreaks, public health investigations, and how protective actions like hand washing, wearing masks, vaccinations, and herd immunity help manage negative public health outcomes. A new Placer and Nevada 4-H blog was started after COVID-19 stay-at-home orders, as a collaborative place to connect with the public and for youth to showcase their work.



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# Master Gardeners



## Program Highlights 2019–20

- 250 certified Master Gardener volunteers gave over 18,000 hours of service, valued at \$450,000.
- Master Gardener outreach and education reached over 19,000 people with gardening and composting information.

Volunteers delivered 44 workshops on various topics, including:

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

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 Counties residents and develop educational activities to address these concerns in the areas of home horticulture and composting.

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.

The COVID-19 situation and subsequent stay-at-home order in California created a huge increase in interest for backyard gardening. The Master Gardeners were at home too, but maintained their social media pages and their phone hotline and continued to take questions through their webpage online submission form. In this way, the Master Gardeners have continued to serve their communities even during the shutdown.



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# Nevada County Fire and Forestry



## Program Highlights 2019–20

- 350 Nevada County residents attended 9 Forestry and Fire educational events and increased their knowledge of fire-resistant homes and natural areas. More than 90% stated their intention to implement new fire preparations.
- 35 residents and 15 natural resource professionals attended two prescribed-fire workshops resulting in 8 training burns and Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS) “EQIP” funding for prescribed fire preparation in Nevada County.
- Over \$160,000 in competitive grant funds supported forestry and fire programs in 2019-20.
- Fire prevention and recovery information reached over 10,000 area residents through the Living with Fire website.

The goal of the Nevada County Forestry and Fire Program is to improve the fire resilience of Nevada County communities through public outreach and education on firesafe practices, fire prevention and recovery. It aims to connect local professionals and residents to the latest science and land management techniques. The programs were funded by \$160,000 in competitive grant funding in 2019-20.

Working with a variety of community partners, including the Nevada County Office of Emergency Services, the Fire Safe Council of Nevada County, Cal Fire, USDA Rural Development, the Natural Resources Conservation Services, the Nevada County Resources Conservation District, the Insurance Institute for Business and Home Safety, Registered Professional Foresters, and PG&E, the UCCE forestry and fire program delivers workshops on forest health, fire prevention, and fire preparation. Outreach includes educational presentations at public meetings; and individual consultations with landowners and professionals.



**Photo credits: Wayde Carroll, Susie Kocher, Dan Macon, and Cindy Fake**

# Programs



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