



Master Gardener Newspaper

Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties



Aspire to Inspire: Become a Master Gardener

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.

To accomplish these lofty goals, MGs are available to answer questions from the public in Tulare and Kings Counties by conducting office hours at the UC Cooperative Extension, booths at several local Farmers' Markets, and at 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 other garden topics.

They serve the community by maintaining the roses at the Tulare County Courthouse and the Ralph Moore Rose Garden, as well as cultivating a new demonstration garden at Hurley School. MGs mentor teachers and other adults who interact with youth in establishing school and community gardens. Each Master Gardener gives a minimum of 25 hours of volunteer time each year and 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 Director of Recruitment and Training, 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 2018. The weekly classes will be held Wednesday mornings from January through May. If you are interested,

contact Sue Gillison, Master Gardener Program Coordinator, at 684-3343 or sgillison@ucanr.edu. To be considered, you must fill out an on-line application at <http://cetulare.ucanr.edu> and attend an orientation on October 11, 2017 from 3:00 - 4:30 pm at the Master Gardener Office, 4437 B South Laspina Street, Tulare. More detailed information can be found on the Tulare-Kings County Master Gardener website, at http://ucanr.edu/sites/uc_master_gardeners/.

Priscilla Girard has been a Master Gardener since 2010 and lives and gardens in Springville.

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