



## CALL for 2013 Master Gardener Training Class

by Michelle Le Strange, UC Master Gardener

Have you thought about becoming a Master Gardener? If you have experience in home gardening, a history of volunteering in service organizations or professional committees, and like sharing your knowledge with others, then consider serving our community as a Tulare/Kings Master Gardener Volunteer. A new class will be starting in January 2013 and now is the time to show your interest.



To become a certified Master Gardener (MG) one must participate in a 22-week science-based training program and pass a written exam. Weekly attendance at classroom style meetings on Wednesday mornings is critical to learning and gaining the experience needed to pass the test. This may sound intimidating to many, but the setting is friendly and supportive. To remain certified there are annual educational and volunteer requirements. It is a lot of work, but to Master Gardeners it becomes a challenging and rewarding experience.

**Pre-requisites:** MGs share a number of qualities. They are enthusiastic and nice, willing to learn and

help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. Experience and background in gardening are pre-requisites as is having enough time to volunteer throughout the week and on weekends. You must be a resident of Tulare or Kings Counties and have email and internet access.

**Who are MGs?** A MG is a "formal volunteer" of the University of California that is trained by UC Cooperative Extension Farm Advisors, whose major focus is making agricultural research available to the farming community. The mission of the Master Gardeners is to extend to the gardening public the research-based information produced by the University through a range of volunteer activities. Master Gardeners are EDUCATORS, not just gardeners, and follow University policy guidelines.



MG Training is intensive classroom coursework in horticulture. Participants will learn from University and horticultural experts about a wide variety of sustainable gardening and integrated pest management topics.

Upon completion of the course work and exam, the graduates will become certified Master Gardeners. In exchange for the training Master Gardeners are expected to complete 50 plus hours of volunteer work and 12 additional hours of continuing education within the first year. To remain certified as a Master Gardener there are annual volunteer and continuing education commitments.

**So how do MGs of Tulare & Kings Counties provide gardening information by volunteering in the community?** First, they have offices in Tulare and Hanford with office hours on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9:30 to 11:30 am. MGs answer plant and garden questions, in person or by telephone, on topics including diagnosing plant problems, integrated pest management, pruning, what to plant, and so on. When they don't know the answer, they research the question and call back.

MGs organize and conduct information booths and demonstrations at community events, which allow the gardening public to get personal answers to their questions. Perhaps you've attended one of our Garden Festivals or rose pruning demonstrations. MGs also give speeches at local gardening clubs, make presentations at trade shows and expositions, and write this weekly newspaper column on a variety of gardening topics. MGs are doers and must be self motivated and skilled to organize and conduct these activities.

**Attend a mandatory Orientation Meeting:** If the MG program sounds like it may be for you, then now is the time to get involved. Applications are available online and due in early November, but before we accept your application you must attend a mandatory orientation meeting on **Tuesday, October 23 from 3:00 to 4:30 pm at our office in Tulare.** We will be happy to answer your specific questions about the MG Program at this meeting.

If you are accepted into the training class, the program registration fee is approximately \$120, which pays for the course text books and materials. The next training program for Tulare/Kings Counties will be held from 8:45 to 1:00 pm on Wednesdays from January 16 through June 12, 2013 at the Agricultural Building auditorium in Tulare.

**Register for the Orientation Meeting on our website <http://cetulare.ucdavis.edu>,** and click on Master Gardener. Can't make that date? See our website for more details. We look forward to meeting you!

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