



Master Gardener Newspaper Articles



Volunteer Program

Tulare/Kings Counties

Bring Them On: Get Your Gardening Questions Answered at a Garden Festival!

by Dorothy Downing, UC Master Gardener

Are you faced with gardening questions that need answers? Has the drought cast a dismal look to your landscape? Do you want to take out your lawn, but are not sure how or what to put in its place? Then come to a Garden Festival and chat with UC Master Gardeners, who can answer your home gardening questions.

Garden Festivals are events that the Master Gardener volunteers specifically designed to conduct in various communities in Tulare and Kings Counties throughout the year. We bring our best information and set up our canopies and tabletop displays on a variety of topics in order to give you, the public, a chance to ask us your questions on home gardening. We love to talk about all kinds of plants, including landscape and fruit trees, shrubs, flowers, herbs, vegetables, lawns and lawn alternative groundcovers, as well as special interest plants. We can talk about how to plan, prune, irrigate, and compost. We emphasize water conservation, pest management, and sustainable landscaping along with proper gardening techniques. We can help you choose native and drought tolerant plants appropriate for our Central Valley climate.



Central Valley Style plants

“Gardening Central Valley Style” is how our Master Gardener Program has been promoting “sustainable landscaping” to home gardeners for many years. One of our members came up with this phrase and we latched onto it because it merges the concept of gardening sensibly with our specific climate and location. Our goal is to educate and encourage you to make new choices in your own landscapes and backyards in four critical areas: proper plant selection; water conservation and water quality; green waste reduction; and awareness and use of Integrated Pest Management (IPM). We have developed many plant lists for our area that focus on growing easily and sustainably, while enhancing wildlife visits.



IPM Booth

While we adults were learning about gardening, we discovered that for more than a decade, national and international assessments of science education and literacy have shown that US youth perform at levels below those achieved by their peers in many developed countries. We are concerned that the lack of community and civic engagement by our youth threatens the sustainability of California. Tulare and Kings Counties have strong agriculturally based economies, so another main objective of the Master Gardener Program is to reach out to local youth through science education about gardening and wildlife. To reach this goal, we engage in teaching and showing school children where soil comes from, vegetable gardening, good and bad bugs, all about seeds, and all about trees. At our Garden Festivals we have designed a Scavenger Hunt for Kids, who hunt for the facts about gardening.

Our Garden Festivals are usually on a Saturday from 10 am to 2pm and we try to have them in locations that are accessible to the public. **On March 14**, the Visalia Garden Festival will be at Orchard Walk East Shopping Center (on Highway 63 between Riggins and Shannon Parkway, near Riverway Sports Park). Just look for our colorful canopies and signs across from Target and Vallarta Market, near McDonalds. **On April 11**, the Tulare Garden Festival will be at the Outlet Mall (off Hwy 99 between Cartmill and Prosperity) near the Calvin Klein store. **In June**, look for us at the Annual Berry Tasting Event at the Bravo Lake Botanical Gardens in Woodlake. **In September**, we'll be hosting our Hanford Garden Festival at the Mall. (We will provide more information about that event later in the year.)

At these Garden Festivals, we will have information about:

- Attracting Hummingbird and other pollinators to your garden
- Perfect landscape trees, shrubs, and vines for our area
- Lawns and lawn replacements
- Growing vegetables and herbs
- Flowers and groundcovers
- Succulents and cacti
- Roses
- All about fruit trees, berries, and grapes
- Growing citrus trees and the threat of the Asian Citrus Psyllid
- Integrated Pest Management (IPM): how to get rid of insect, weed, and disease pests and do the least amount of harm to the environment
- Composting to recycle garden waste
- Mulching to conserve water
- Gardening with Kids – It's a Scavenger Hunt!

So, mark your calendars, collect your questions, and plan to spend a few hours with us roaming around the displays. Tell your neighbors and friends. Bring your kids or grandkids. We want to be busy talking with you! Please help us spread the word about Gardening Central Valley Style!

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