UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources ▌UC Master Gardener Program

2023 Search for Excellence Guidelines
(Submissions accepted Feb. 1 – May 1, 2023)

Search for Excellence (SFE) is a recognition program to highlight and celebrate UC Master Gardener volunteer work. SFE has seven categories in which programs can demonstrate outstanding contributions to their local communities. Guidelines and criteria governing submissions for the 2023 UC Master Gardener Conference closely resemble the International Master Gardener SFE competition. A panel of judges selected from across the state will review and score all qualifying and complete submissions.

Projects must fit the following parameters to qualify for SFE awards:

- Projects must not be previous winners in the UC Master Gardener SFE awards
- Projects are judged on merit for work completed between 2020-22
- Projects must have been implemented for a full year to be considered
- Entries must be group, not individual projects
- Each county may complete multiple SFE submissions, but only one project per category will be considered

    SFE Categories:
    1. Community service
    2. Demonstration garden
    3. Innovative project
    4. Research (applied scientific methodology)
    5. Special needs audiences (e.g. senior, disabled or horticultural therapy)
    6. Workshop or presentation
    7. Youth program

Submission criteria

1. Simple and easy to replicate - The goal of SFE awards is to share ideas and projects that can easily be replicated by other counties. For example, a 20-acre botanical garden would be difficult to replicate, but garden education concepts inside the garden would be easy to replicate.

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2. Practical - A SFE project is supported by the community and fits well for the situation for which it was intended. A program might develop a wonderful project with a $10 admission fee, but if people can't justify the fee they won't attend. Demonstrate that you have found the best way possible to meet the needs of your community.

3. Original and creative – Don't recreate the wheel, just utilize parts of it if it fits your situation. We are looking for those added touches that make this project your own … or that reflect the personalities of the UC Master Gardener volunteers who are working on it.

4. Consistent with Cooperative Extension (UCCE) and UC Master Gardener missions - Projects should have an educational component and information should be research-based. Projects should extend the resources of the University to the public wherever they live, helping them use knowledge to solve problems at work, at home, and in their communities. Projects must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, and marital or family status.

5. Significant learning and measurable impacts - Significant learning, change in attitude, and practices are outcomes that UCCE uses to evaluate the impact of its services and programs. Impacts from UC Master Gardener projects should improve people's lives. Explain how your project augmented learning, increased knowledge, or changed practices to enhance the quality of life. Impacts can be economical, environmental, educational, health, community-based, etc. Ask participants, partners or community members for testimonials of how your project made an impact in their lives or the lives of others. Depending on the nature of the project, evaluations may be very informal (i.e. casually asking questions) or formal (i.e. pre-test/post-test). For example: "How do you plan to use this information?" or "can you share specific information that you learned today?" shows impact - especially if you can report statistics, such as 70 percent of the participant plan to use fewer pesticides.

6. Quality of impact with population served - SFE projects should have quality impact on the targeted audience. Impact numbers are not as significant if the target audience does not learn or utilize the information.

7. Complete online submission form, including budget information - Please give specific details as much as possible. Be sure to provide all information based on "Criteria for Judging" (see pg. 4). Be specific about educational goals met and include a budget of expenses and

explanation of how project was funded. Note any other groups or partners that worked on this project, if applicable.

Expectations

- All entrants are strongly encouraged to prepare a poster for display at the conference, regardless of award status. Please include photos of the project with documentation, county name, information about group, and other information to assist counties considering implementation of your project into their program. Must be no larger than 24" x 36". Posters can be picked up on the last day of the conference (Oct. 6)
- The top three winners of SFE will:
  - Present their project in a shared session (1 hour) at the 2023 UC Master Gardener Conference (Tahoe City, Oct. 2- 6 2023).
    - Presenter need not be the person who submitted the entry, or person in charge of the project. Awarded counties are asked to choose a dynamic presenter who is comfortable speaking to a large audience.
  - NEW! Create a video (3-minute max., mp4 file format) about the winning project submitted no later than two weeks before the 2023 UC Master Gardener Conference
  - Receive a cash prize in a UCCE income account. Funds can also be applied directly towards the purchase of statewide supplies available through the Coordinator's website. In addition, winners will also receive recognition at the 2023 UC Master Gardener Conference awards banquet.
    - 1st place = $1500 GRAND PRIZE
    - 2nd place = $1000
    - 3rd place = $500
  - All funds must be used within one calendar year from the day the money is issued. Failure to use the funds will result in forfeiture of the unused portion.
- The top three overall winners will work with the statewide marketing coordinator to promote their projecs.). The winner showcase will include a post about the winning projects for the UC Master Gardener Program Statewide Blog.
- There is no reimbursement for winners' registration fees or travel expenses to the conference. A limited number of scholarships are available to assist with conference registration fees. Scholarship information can be found on the conference website.

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Submission Procedure

- Use the 2023 Search for Excellence Submission Guideline and Guide to prepare the submission beforehand, tcut and paste the text into the online form.
- Complete the [2023 Search for Excellence Submission Form](#).
    - Applicants may submit up to six high-resolution photos with their online submission form (recommended file size 1MB or higher.)
    - <u>No</u> hard copy or mailed submissions will be accepted.
- Prior to submittal all submissions need to be reviewed and approved by the UC Master Gardener Program Coordinator and/or Academic Advisor.
- Submission accepted Feb. 1 – May 1, 2023.

Disqualification

- Incomplete submission
- Late submission
- Does not fit the SFE parameters listed above

Criteria for Judging

1	Simplicity of project (easy to replicate)	10
2	Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project in relation to desired goal	10
3	Originality and creativity	10
4	Consistency with UCCE and UC Master Gardener mission	20
5	Significant learning evidenced	20
6	Quality of impact with population served	20
7	Clarity and completeness of project write-up (including budget and funding data)	10
	Total possible points	= 100

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Questions? Contact:

(Please include county name in subject line for all email communications)

Search for Excellence Chair
Email: mgsfe@ucanr.edu

Search for Excellence Submission Form, Activated February 1, 2023:
ucanr.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8AIaM8xh8CvPdAO

Search for Excellence Website:
ucanr.edu/sites/23MGConference/

SFE Submission Checklist

Before you submit…

	Check that submission meets the listed criteria (page 1)
	Read and understand the listed expectations (page 2-3)
	All seven submission criteria are addressed (page 4)
	Submission is approved by the UC Master Gardener Program Coordinator and/or Academic Advisor

Important Dates

- Submission Guideline and Guide posted online Jan. 2023
- Submissions accepted Feb. 1 – May 1, 2023
- Winners contacted end of June 2023
- Winners announced publicly on July 2023
- Conference: Oct. 2 –6, 2023

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