

## Here's How You Can Become A Master Gardener In Shasta County

Leimone Waite, Master Gardeners, Aug. 16, 2019

**Q:** Can you explain the Master Gardener program and what the Shasta master gardeners do? How does one become a master gardener?

**A:** The Shasta Master Gardeners is a joint program of Shasta College and University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE). The Shasta County program is unique. In most counties, the Master Gardener program is run completely by the University of California Cooperative Extension folks. In our county, Shasta College provides training and coordination and the UCCE provides consistent programming across the state, access to integrated pest management materials and some administrative support.

The Master Gardener program is an internationally recognized program for individuals who wish to increase their horticultural skills and knowledge and then return researched-based knowledge about horticultural practices to their community as a volunteer.

The main goals of the Master Gardener program are to create healthy communities, healthy plants and healthy environments. This is done by promoting sustainable landscaping and gardening practices, water and environmental conservation, garden science literacy and healthy local food systems.

In the past year, the Shasta County master gardeners contributed over 2,537 hours of volunteer community service dedicated to answering gardeners' questions, increasing environmental awareness, replanting after the wildfires and providing educational opportunities for beginning gardeners.

Master gardeners work to provide current researched advice to the local community by writing a weekly advice column for the Redding Record Searchlight, staffing a gardener help line and a weekly information booth at the Redding Farmers Market. The University of California started training master gardeners in 1980 based on the program that started in Washington state.

According to the UC Master Gardener website, the program offers "volunteer services and outreach to the general public in more than 1,286 demonstration, community and school gardens across 50 California counties. Last year 6,154 active UC Master Gardener volunteers donated 446,237 hours, and 6.8+ million hours have been donated since the program's inception."

This past year volunteers worked on many projects to keep our community healthy and green, some examples include:

- Providing worm bins to schools to teach children about composting and recycling with worms,
- Propagating plants and giving them away to folks who lost landscaping in the wildfires.
- Staffing information booths at the Whole Earth Festival, Redding Farmers Market and county health events
- Providing workshops, talks and information walks so participants can learn about integrated pest management, soils, composting, fire-safe landscaping, irrigation management and water-wise plant selection.

To become a Master Gardener you must complete the training course that includes 54 hours of lectures and demonstrations. Once you've passed this class you need to complete 50 hours of garden-related community service during the next 16 months.

After you become a master gardener, to stay certified you must complete 25 hours of community service related to horticulture and complete 12 hours of continuing education every year. Master gardeners meet regularly to share information, hear lectures, attend demonstrations, and continue their gardening education.

In many counties you must put in an application and go through an interview process to be chosen for training, but here in Shasta County you can just sign up for the training class and then complete the application process if you decide to become a master gardener once you finish the class.

The next training class, at Shasta College in Redding, begins Aug. 20. The class meets for 15 weeks once a week on Tuesday nights and three Saturday mornings. To register online go to the Shasta College website, [www.shastacollege.edu](http://www.shastacollege.edu) and in MyShasta look for AGEH 60, Master Gardener Training.

*The Shasta Master Gardeners Program can be reached by phone at 242-2219 or email [mastergardener@shastacollege.edu](mailto:mastergardener@shastacollege.edu). The gardener office is staffed by volunteers trained by the University of California to answer gardeners' questions using information based on scientific research.*