

## Master Gardener program graduates first class

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University of California Cooperative Extension Imperial County Master Gardener Program graduates during the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, August 8, in El Centro.

MARCIE LANDEROS PHOTO

EL CENTRO – The University of California Cooperative Extension Imperial County (CCEIC) had the first graduating class of their University of California Master Gardener Program, welcoming a new set of gardeners sharing gardening knowledge with the public through community outreach.

UC Master Gardeners received 50 hours of training provided by the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (UCANR), according to the UCANR website, over the course of 16 weeks at the Cooperative Extension.

While this group is the first of its kind in Imperial County, CCEIC Director Oli Bachie said that the Imperial County is the 53rd county to adopt the program while honoring his graduates during the Board of Supervisors meeting on Tuesday, August 8 in El Centro.

"This our first year, but already we have become so successful that it is like we have been here for 20 years," Bachie said. "Thank you, Supervisors, for supporting us in this program."

In exchange for education and certification, according to the UCANR website, the UC Master Gardeners are required to volunteer a minimum of 50 hours in the first year and 25 hours each subsequent year. UC Master Gardeners must complete a minimum of 12 hours of continuing education per year, starting their second year.

CCEIC had 22 graduates, all of who will now be expected to perform community outreach including demonstration and community gardens, school gardens, classes, workshops websites, blogs, fairs, plant clinics, print and digital media.

Those 22 graduates include: Reyna Rubi Acosta, Eliza Barajas, Candice Cano, Sue Casey, Alejandra Chavez, Crystal Cortez, Lee Davis, Fabian Dominguez Jr., Belen Donato, Karin Eugenio, Krista Flores, Rachel Fonseca, AJ Gaddis, Aleexya Garcia, Richarda (Cardi) Grummett, JB Hamby, Geoff Holbrook, Vicente Lopez, Vance McAlister, Carlos Molina, Gloria Morales, Christopher Moreno, Marilyn Moskowitz, Denisse Pimentel, Gerardo Roman, Michelle Taylor, Diego Torres, Eduardo Valdez-Belmonte, and Christopher Wong.

Master Gardener Program Coordinator Kristian Salgado handed out the certificates and congratulated the gradates during the meeting.

"Thank you all for your participation in our program," Salgado said.