



MASTER GARDENERS/ COMPOSTERS

The UC Placer-Nevada Master Gardener Program provides volunteer training and horticultural knowledge to enhance home landscapes and garden experiences while striving to improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

The UC Master Gardener Programs in Placer and Nevada Counties began in 1983 to meet the demands of the growing population and mitigate one-on-one requests to

Extension staff for home gardening and related information.

Interest in home gardening and urban horticulture continues to grow. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and landscape/nursery crops are now the third largest agricultural crop in California. UC Master Gardeners identify issues and needs of Placer and Nevada County residents, and develop educational activities to address these concerns in the areas of:

- **Water Wise Gardening**
- **Firesafe Landscaping**
- **Pest Management**
- **Vegetable Gardening**
- **Prevention and Diagnosis**
- **Recycling Garden Waste**
- **School Gardens**
- **Perennials and Flowering Shrubs**
- **Soil and Irrigation**
- **Community Gardens**

With the goal of shifting public perceptions of yard and garden debris from “wastes” to “resources,” the University of California Cooperative Extension’s volunteer Master Composters have engaged the public in recognizing the importance of organics management through composting, vermi-composting, and shredding/chipping/mulching. These activities alone can divert between 20 and 35% of a family’s garbage from the landfills and have helped Placer and Nevada Counties meet state mandated diversion rates.



Program Highlights

- ◆ **195 certified** Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ **Over 10,000 hours** of service were provided by Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ The Master Gardeners gave **45 workshops** and participated in **22 community events**
- ◆ **Over 10,500 people** received gardening composting information through Master Gardener outreach and education



Public Workshops



Home Gardening is one of the most popular hobbies in our country. When problems arise, Master Gardeners are here to help!



With the support and knowledge gained from Master Gardener workshops, home gardeners can enjoy bountiful harvests!

Issue

The rise in popularity of home gardening, especially growing food, has been wonderful to witness. As gardeners expand their garden spaces and try new things, they need educational opportunities to help them learn and succeed in their endeavors. If problems arise, having a solid, unbiased resource to go to is important for home gardeners.

What Was Done

The Master Gardeners conduct public workshops throughout the year to help inform and support the home gardening community. The workshops are held at various locations and address a multitude of topics. This past year, the Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties offered over 40 public workshops for home gardeners. Topics ranged from Composting to Pruning to Pest Management.

Impact

The public workshops offered by Master Gardeners are very popular in the community and attendance at our events keeps growing every year!

Over **1,200** people attended over 40 public workshops this year in different locations throughout Placer and Nevada Counties. These participants rated the workshops “good to excellent” and many attended future workshops after their initial experience. At each workshop, participants are given further resources to help them beyond the workshop.



Community Events



At the "Gardeners' Gathering", participants spend a Saturday listening to expert speakers on various gardening topics.

One of the Gardeners' Gathering attendees said, "It is so great to be able to count on a great gardening event in the month of March to get my wheels spinning!"

Issue

With the increasing interest in home gardening, community members are seeking garden-related community events that teach practical information as well as provide entertainment and a forum for discussing their hobby with other like-minded passionate gardeners in the community.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners have done two things to help bridge the gap between community members and all the wonderful information they have to offer. First, the Master Gardeners attend many community events such as the Nevada County Fair and Auburn Home Show, staff a booth with volunteers and give out free information and advice. Secondly, the Master Gardeners have created community events of their own, namely the Annual "Gardeners' Gathering" in Placer County and the Annual "Bite Me: Tomato Tasting" in Nevada County.

Impact

- **120** people attended "Gardeners' Gathering" - evaluation feedback was overwhelmingly positive.
- Over **200** people attended "Tomato Tasting" with many staying for the workshops afterward.
- Over **2,000** people received information from the Master Gardeners at community events in Placer and Nevada Counties.



Farmers' Markets

In the spirit of community building, the Master Gardeners not only teach people how to grow their own food but also support local farmers and local food movements.

Issue

Although the Master Gardeners have tons of good information for local gardeners, it is often difficult to extend this information to the public. Rather than waiting for inquiries, it is essential to identify venues that make sense for outreach and education to be sure information is passed along.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties both identified the Farmer's Market as an appropriate venue to meet local gardeners and extend information to them. Both programs now have an ongoing presence at local Farmers' Markets to ensure that local gardeners know who they are and what they offer.

Impact

The Farmers' Markets have been an important role in the dissemination of information from the Master Gardeners to the local public. During the past year, the Master Gardeners maintained a presence at the market in Grass Valley in Nevada County and the Auburn market in Auburn by the historic courthouse.

In Nevada County, **1,300** local residents received consultation on their gardening questions at the Farmers' Market.

In Placer County, **1,200** local residents received consultation on their gardening questions at the Farmers' Market.



Master Gardener volunteers at the Growers Market helping local residents solve their gardening problems.



School Garden Support



The Master Gardeners helped rejuvenate the garden at Rock Creek Elementary School in Auburn.

“The Master Gardeners are awesome. They work with my kindergarteners in the garden planting, and we harvest our vegetables for the Interfaith Food Closet. They come into the classroom and give lessons on plants and they teach them songs. My class looks forward to Thursdays. They are already aware of the day and time when the gardeners are to visit.”
—Rock Creek School Teacher

Issue

There is an increasing need for support in school gardens within our communities. Without totally committed parents and/or teachers, many school gardens fail to thrive due to lack of volunteer support and lack of funds to sustain the gardens.

What Was Done

The Master Gardeners offer support to school gardens in various ways. In some cases, a casual site visit with some helpful tips is all that is needed. But, in other cases, Master Gardeners volunteer time to help teach staff and children how to use the garden. They may teach about planting, soil preparation or composting. Specifically, at Rock Creek Elementary School in Auburn, Master Gardeners helped resurrect an unused garden through ongoing training and support.

Impact

The Master Gardeners have worked with a number of schools in a variety of ways. Some highlights are:

- At the Rock Creek Elementary School Garden the Placer County Master Gardeners helped teach students and staff about gardening and composting. They also helped secure a grant from Home Depot for the school garden which provided materials to completely rebuild garden beds.
- Master Gardeners visited Head Start sites to consult on school gardens and helped to institute on-site composting.



Demonstration Gardens

From a Demonstration Garden visitor, “The garden is a great place to take a workshop because you can see what you’re being taught about in action!”

Issue

There is a need for a public garden venue where Master Gardener outreach and information can be seen and heard.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have public demonstration gardens to exhibit their knowledge in a hands-on approach. In Nevada County, the Demonstration Garden is mature and has been developed over a long period and is truly a comprehensive teaching garden. In Placer County, the volunteers have identified a site and begun the process of development of a edible demonstration garden.

Impact

- Master Gardeners in Nevada County give over **20** workshops a year at their demonstration garden, reaching over **500** residents
- Master Gardeners in Nevada County give tours of their demonstration garden to local and visiting groups and have been an inspiration to other Master Gardener groups starting their own gardens.
- Master Gardeners in Placer County have already held workshops about “Starting a Garden” in conjunction with their own demonstration garden creation.



The Master Gardeners in Placer County are hard at work developing their Demonstration Garden that will focus on methods for growing food.