



MASTER GARDENERS/ COMPOSTERS

Program Highlights

- ◆ **171 certified** Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ **Over 10,000 hours** of service were provided by Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ The Master Gardeners gave **40 workshops** and participated in **16 community events**
- ◆ **Over 3,200 people** received compost information at fairs and festivals
- ◆ **6,000 Web hits**
- ◆ **44 new Master Gardeners** trained in 2009 Master Gardener Training

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*



Master Gardeners teach everyone, kids and adults, to connect with the earth through the process of gardening and, in turn, sow seeds of success that will blossom with time and care.

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.



Nevada County Master Gardener Search for Excellence Award: Pathways to Learning

Issue

The gardening needs of Western Nevada County are as diverse as its natural setting and its inhabitants. Our organization is continually refining our program and our skills to meet these needs. The goal is to provide varied paths to learning so that people of all ages and experience can take steps in developing their gardening skills and creative talents. The overriding message is resource efficient landscaping translated into easily understood, practical and sustainable gardening techniques.



The UC Nevada County Master Gardeners pose with their FIRST PLACE award at the 2008 Statewide Master Gardener Conference.

What Was Done

The UC Nevada County Master Gardeners offer many “Pathways to Learning” to reach as many county residents as possible. There are 3 main areas of outreach: Public Education (direct contact), Public Information (media element), and the Demonstration Garden. The **Public Education** component includes 30 public workshops on various gardening topics delivered by the Master

Gardener volunteers. The **Public Information** element includes the popular radio show, “Master Gardeners and Friends”, newspaper articles, a quarterly “Curious Gardener” newsletter, and the award-winning “Western Nevada County Gardening Guide.” Finally, the **Demonstration Garden** offers county residents a place to see sustainable gardening practices in action.

Impact

The outreach approach, “Pathways to Learning”, set into action by the UC Nevada County Master Gardeners was recognized by the University of California Statewide Master Gardener Program as a stellar Master Gardener program in September 2008 at the Statewide Master Gardener Conference.

The UC Statewide Master Gardener Program requests applications for their “Search For Excellence” awards prior to the Statewide Conference. Among all the applicants, which includes over 30 different county-based Master Gardener Programs, the UC Nevada County Master Gardeners were awarded **FIRST PLACE** for their extraordinary efforts in the implementation of their “Pathways to Learning” multi-faceted educational approach.



Placer County Master Gardener

Search for Excellence Award: Gardener's Companion Calendar

Issue

Rapid population growth has increased the need for home gardening education. Home gardening has real environmental impacts on water availability and quality; therefore, in order to nurture and sustain the natural environment and avoid the pitfalls of related water pollution, home gardening education must be available to all residents, new and old. As the population grows, so must the outreach and education that the Master Gardener volunteer group is responsible for. To help meet this need, the UC Placer County Master Gardeners developed a wonderful means of delivering pertinent gardening information in a beautiful and practical package: “A Gardener’s Companion Calendar”.

What Was Done

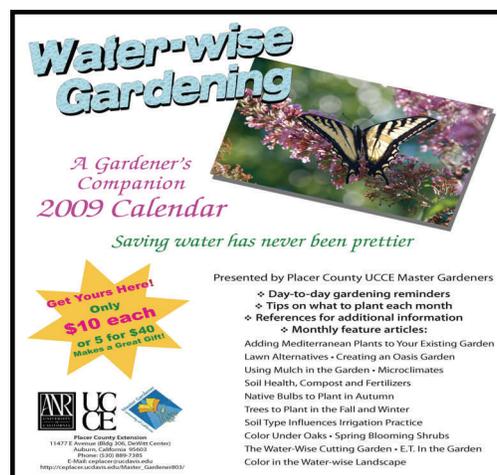
The annual Gardener’s Companion is a full-color, 13-month calendar. Each year, a two to three page article introduces a theme. Each month’s spread contains a 250-word article that supports the theme, an attractive color photo, a “What to plant this month” box, daily reminders of what to do in the garden and contact information for our local MG Hotline and the university’s IPM website. An extensive list of references used in researching the calendar and resources for further study is included.

The primary goal for this project is to present research-based information that is appropriate for the time of year and local conditions to people of all knowledge levels, from those with no gardening experience to long-time garden enthusiasts. Secondly, we seek to increase visibility of our Master Gardener Program and raise funds to support other outreach efforts.

Impact

The UC Placer County Master Gardeners were recognized for their amazing calendar project at the 2009 International Master Gardener Conference, held in Las Vegas. Among all the Master Gardener programs that submitted projects for the award, the Placer County Master Gardeners won **FIRST PLACE** in the “Innovative Projects” category.

Additionally, after viewing the calendar, at least four county organizations in California, and one in New Jersey, have been inspired to consider creating or improving their own locally appropriate versions.



For the 2009 calendar, the UC Placer County Master Gardeners focused on Water–Wise Gardening tips and sustainable gardening practices.

Compost Education Project

Issue

With increasing populations and decreasing landfill space, there is a growing need for viable options in the area of waste management. The majority of materials that flow into our landfills are organic materials that can be diverted, processed, and used in positive ways throughout our communities. A great deal



Worm Composting is a fun and easy way to divert food scraps away from the landfill and produce a wonderful soil amendment in the process.

of the organic materials usually hauled to the landfill can be composted at home. Backyard composting not only diverts waste from landfills but also provides the homeowner with a wonderful soil amendment. Composting also benefits air quality as many of the organic materials that are annually burned can be composted instead.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners, in conjunction with Placer and Nevada Counties, maintain a Compost Education Project. The goal of the project is to educate homeowners about the many benefits of backyard composting, including vermiculture,

using worms to compost. Throughout the year, the UC Master Gardeners offer workshops on a variety of topics at their Demonstration Garden and the Rood Center Full Circle Garden specifically on composting and recycling. They also provide information at all public venues that they attend, such as the county fairs and home and garden shows. In addition, UC Master Gardeners answer composting questions regularly on their HOTLINE.

Impact

- **22** workshops on composting were given throughout Placer and Nevada Counties, reaching over **900** residents.
- **4** quarterly composting articles in the *Curious Gardener* newsletter reach over **1,200** households.
- Master Gardeners visited **10** local schools throughout the counties and presented vermiculture concepts to over **250** youth.
- Composting information was distributed to local nurseries, local community centers, schools, and homeowners.
- Over **200** compost bins were given away to workshop attendees to get them started on composting at home.



Senior Community Garden

Issue

There are many senior citizens in our counties who live in senior housing, apartments, and other homes that lack outdoor space for gardening. They do not have the opportunity to experience the numerous benefits that gardening offers in the form of physical, mental, and emotional exercise. In 1987, a Senior Community Garden was created at the Dewitt Center in Auburn through a cooperative effort between the County of Placer and the University of California Cooperative Extension.

What Was Done

Recently, in 2006, the Senior Garden was relocated to a more appropriate spot and improved in many ways. Fencing was installed to protect the gardens from critters and people. Irrigation was installed so that each plot (30 total) has access to their own spigot and can water more efficiently. A



A Senior Gardener tends to his plot while other gardening plots grow and flourish around him. The gardening plots are thriving and the Senior Gardeners are happy.

beautiful garden shed was placed on-site for tool storage. The areas around the garden outside of the plots has been slowly taking shape and is now planted with fruit trees, bamboo, vines, and other shrubs. Overall, the Senior Community Garden is gradually becoming a model for community gardens everywhere.

Impact

The Senior Garden has all 30 plots under cultivation and produces a large amount of fresh produce for the senior gardeners who tend it. The garden not only provides a place to grow fresh food, but also serves as a gathering spot for seniors to bring their friends, socialize, and create new relationships.

Furthermore, the Senior Community Garden has become quite popular in the greater community as other interested groups have come to visit the gardens to see how it is organized and put together. It is a resource for those who wish to start a community garden of their own. During this past year, four such groups toured the gardens to get an idea of the structure of a community garden and to see how it works. These groups are local residents intent on starting a community garden in their own neighborhoods.



Master Gardener Hotline

Issue

There is an overwhelming amount of gardening information available in bookstores, on the web, and on TV. It is difficult for the public to determine what information is research-based and what gardening practices will work for their own specific situation in the foothills.



Master Gardener volunteers staff a HOTLINE in both county offices to answer gardening and composting questions from the public. Residents can call or walk in to receive helpful information.

The UC Master Gardeners' mission is to educate the public on local gardening topics that have research-based, scientifically accurate data behind them. Many times, gardeners encounter an issue in their garden that necessitates an immediate diagnosis. There are plenty of resources out there, but to the untrained eye, the problem may elude them.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners have developed a dedicated phone line and office space in both Placer and Nevada Counties to be a resource for home gardeners and their problems. The HOTLINE is staffed by volunteers who answer calls, diagnose plant problems

and offer a space where residents can come in and talk about what is going on in their yards and landscapes.

Currently, the HOTLINE's in both counties are staffed Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 9 AM to Noon. Residents can bring in samples so the volunteers can inspect the plant and/or pest and get a better idea of the problem.

Impact

The UC Master Gardener HOTLINE's in both counties are a wonderful resource for residents. And it is a resource that is utilized!! During the past year, over **900** residents have called or consulted one of the HOTLINE's in their respective county. Each time a resident calls into the HOTLINE or comes in, the Master Gardeners give them information and further resources to help them solve their problems.

With the interest in growing food increasing, the UC Master Gardener HOTLINE's will continue to serve the public and be a valuable resource for home gardeners. As the capability to staff the HOTLINE's increases with more and more volunteers being trained through the UC Master Gardener Program, the benefit to the community will also likely grow.