



Program Highlights

- ◆ **165 certified** Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ **Over 10,000 hours** of service were provided by Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ The Master Gardeners gave **44 workshops** and participated in **15 community events**
- ◆ **Over 3,500 people** received compost information at fairs and festivals

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**

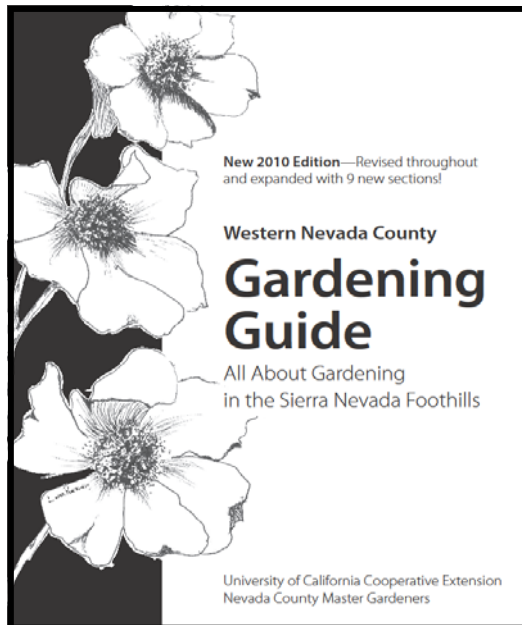
With the goal of shifting public perceptions of yard and garden debris from “wastes” to “resources,” the University of California Cooperative Extension’s volunteer Master Composters have engaged the public in recognizing the importance of organics management through composting, vermi-composting, and 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.



Nevada County Master Gardener 2010 Edition of the “Western Nevada County Gardening Guide”

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. With home gardening becoming more and more popular, there is a need for locally produced publications that directly target local gardening issues. Furthermore, as the interest of the public expands so should our information. There is constantly new information and new topics in the gardening world and the Master Gardeners consistently attempt to provide updated, concise, research-based gardening and composting information to the public.



What Was Done

The UC Nevada County Master Gardeners embarked on a 9 month journey of expanding, updating, and editing their own *Western Nevada County Gardening Guide*. This new 2010 edition of over 208 pages was compiled and edited by 21 local Master Gardeners and features gardening in the

Sierra Nevada foothills. Local people contributed their ideas over the past few years when they responded to questionnaires on what they would like to see in the guide and added to the public workshops. Nine new sections, five updated sections and a complete redesign add to the excitement over this updated gardening guide. After many requests, an index with over 900 entries was added, making the guide much easier to use. User-friendly formatting and more illustrations are included adding to the ease of reading.

Impact

Since its' release in March 2010, the new edition of the Gardening Guide has been very well-received. Vendors who sell the Guide report that it is flying off the shelves as local gardeners seek local information. We have also expanded the number of nurseries and other businesses that are selling the Guide. Looking to the upcoming Master Gardener Training in 2011, the new edition will play a prominent role in training new volunteers in Nevada County. The Guide has become the go-to resource for gardening and composting in Western Nevada County with over 250 sold in just three short months.



Placer County Master Gardener Mother's Day Garden Tour

Issue

Over the past year, interest in home gardening has increased in multiple ways. Some people have started their first vegetable garden, some have planted their first roses, and others have created a children's garden for their kids. As residents begin to take on gardening projects, questions naturally arise. Some questions are easily answered while others are more challenging. It can be difficult for home gardeners to get the answers they need and to see mature gardens that have utilized good gardening practices. They want knowledge and also the ability to see that knowledge put into action.

What Was Done

The annual Mother's Day Garden Tour was created to provide a venue for education, fun, and exploration. Each year, 6 gardens are showcased around different communities in Placer County and offered as a special Garden Tour where residents can not only get answers to their gardening questions but also see good gardening practices in action. The gardens chosen for the tour are extraordinary private home gardens that would otherwise be hidden from the view of the greater community. This year, the Placer County Master Gardeners celebrated their **25th Annual Mother's Day Garden Tour.**



2010 Garden Tour site.

Impact

The Mother's Day Garden Tour is very popular in the community and has become an annual ritual for many families on Mother's Day. By rotating the areas in which the tour takes place, the garden tour links local communities to local gardens thereby increasing the knowledge of local home gardeners. They are seeing elements in the gardens that they can directly apply in their own. In this past year, in celebration of 25 years, the gardens highlighted on the tour were simply fabulous. Over 800 people toured the gardens this year, including all ages from toddlers to seniors. The positive feedback regarding the quality of the tour was wonderful. Some folks enjoyed simply strolling through the gardens while others photographed their favorite plants while many chatted with Master Gardener volunteers at each garden to get answers to their plant and landscape questions. "One of the best garden tours I have ever attended", said one of the attendees.



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



A thriving Senior Garden plot.

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

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 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. For the first year there was a waiting list for plots in the Senior Garden.

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, three such groups toured the gardens to get an idea of the structure of a community garden and to see how it works. These groups, such as the Colfax Garden Club, are local residents intent on starting a community garden in their own neighborhoods. In addition, the Placer County Master Gardeners, will be creating a demonstration garden featuring vegetables and fruits.



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.

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.

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 **1,000** 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. The Hotline in both counties answers questions on pest management, soil fertility, plant identification, and more.



What are these holes in my Pine tree?



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 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.



Residents first learn about how to compost and then go home with a bin to get started!

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

- **25** workshops on composting were given throughout Placer and Nevada Counties, reaching over **1,000** residents.
- **4** quarterly composting articles in the *Curious Gardener* newsletter reach over **1,200** households.
- Master Gardeners visited **11** local schools throughout the counties and presented vermiculture concepts to over **280** 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.