

Horticulture and Small Farms



Program Highlights 2021–22:

- Delivered 4 virtual and 13 in-person workshops, providing 56 hours of training to 350 producers.
- Directly assisted 152 farmers to implement sustainable practices including mulching, cover crops, and/or integrated pest management practices that reduce water use, conserve soil, and manage pests with less pesticide.
- Provided tools and assisted 49 new and beginning farmers to plan their new farm businesses, increasing the probability of success.
- Reached 43,340 producers with research-based information through our Foothill Farming website and blog.

Small-scale family farms in Placer and Nevada Counties feed the growing demand for high quality local produce. These farmers produce a wide range of horticultural crops including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and nursery crops. However, economic viability is challenging because of the small scale of most local farms.

UCCE programs help growers meet these challenges. We develop and deliver area-specific training to new and experienced farmers. Our programs help farmers build to scale; improve their business and risk management skills; and implement sustainable practices to manage soil, water, pests, and our variable climate conditions. We also provide individual assistance to commercial producers through farm calls, phone and e-mail consultations. We provide on-demand information on our Foothill Farming website and blog.

We conduct applied on-farm research with local growers to develop appropriate practices for the foothills. Our research on mulch in citrus orchards over the last 6 years has demonstrated that mulch reduces water use, improves soil health and tree health by reducing stress, and prevents yield loss due to fruit drop. Mulch mitigates many impacts of the current drought and variable weather conditions, leading to healthier and more productive orchards.

The Horticulture and Small Farms Advisor took academic sabbatical leave for six months in 2021-22 to study citrus varieties and production practices in the Mediterranean. Working with citrus breeders in Sicily and the USDA provided an opportunity to import new citrus varieties that will help our foothill citrus growers diversify their markets and products.



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