



University of California Master Gardener Volunteer Program



The University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources (ANR) is the largest and one of the most distinguished organizations of its kind in the nation. University of California Cooperative Extension (UCCE), the principal outreach arm of the University, serves Californians through 64 county offices. More than 150 specialists and 280 county advisors work as a team to bring the University's research-based information to the public.

UCCE is financed with federal and state funding and is supported from the county in which it operates. UCCE tailors its programs to local needs. Thousands of volunteers extend UCCE's reach, assisting with nutrition education, 4-H Youth Development activities, and Master Gardener programs.

Historical Perspective

Cooperative Extension has been helping people solve their agricultural problems since 1913. Extension agents/farm advisors supervised "Victory gardens" during World War I and II and have helped home and community gardeners ever since. Eventually, a voluntary educational program was initiated to teach gardening to people who would then extend the information to others in the community.

The first Master Gardener program was started in 1972 in Washington State. Since then, Master Gardener programs have spread to over 45 states and four Canadian provinces, and boasts of more than 45,000 volunteers.

In California, Sacramento and Riverside began pilot programs in 1980. Many of those original graduates are still active today in the program. As of January 2000, California had 31 active county programs providing more than 130,000 one-on-one contacts each year.

Master Gardeners have become a significant resource of gardening information and are official "formal volunteers" of the University of California Cooperative Extension.

Goals / Mission

The mission of the Master Gardener program is to provide research-based information for gardening practices and technologies of home horticulture,

integrated pest management (IPM), and environmental resource conservation. Master Gardeners answer questions, conduct demonstrations, diagnose plant/pest problems, and provide this horticultural assistance by telephone, newspaper, and public contact.

Most information used by Master Gardeners is developed through research by UC professors, specialists, and farm advisors. The University system has nine campuses, nine field research stations, and 64 county Cooperative Extension offices throughout California.

The Basic Program

TRAINING

Master Gardeners receive approximately 50 hours of initial classroom instruction in different topics, including

- basic horticulture
- soils and fertilizers
- water and irrigation management
- weed, disease, insect identification and integrated pest management (IPM)
- pesticide safety
- ornamental plants and lawns
- fruit, nut, and landscape trees
- vegetables, berries, & vines

and more.

Classes typically meet once a week for 3 to 4 hours depending upon the program. The entire training program may last for 15 or more weeks.

WHO ARE THE INSTRUCTORS?

Classes are taught by Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists, faculty from the University campuses and Experiment Stations, community college and state university faculty, other experts from industry, and Master Gardeners.



WHO BECOMES A MASTER GARDENER?

Master Gardeners are from all walks of life including business and professional people, educators, retirees, homemakers, and students. In essence, adults of all ages, gender, ethnicity, and backgrounds with varying degrees of experience with plants and gardening may apply.

Volunteers should possess practical gardening experience, enthusiasm, a willingness to learn and help others, and the ability to communicate with diverse groups of people.

THE COMMITMENT

After completing the training and passing a written exam, the new graduate is required to volunteer a minimum of 62 hours of service within one year to the Master Gardener Program where the training was received.

In subsequent years 37 hours are required to remain a certified Master Gardener. Volunteer hours are a combination of continuing education and community/public service activities.

The desire and ability to fulfill the volunteer commitment is a major criteria in the selection of a potential volunteer.

TYPES OF VOLUNTEER WORK

Master Gardeners extend the information they have learned through a variety of ways. They write news releases and newspaper articles, produce television and radio programs, provide plant clinics, answer "hotlines" in county offices, conduct educational workshops at fairs and shows, and help with research.

COUNTIES WITH MASTER GARDENER PROGRAMS

Alameda	Los Angeles	Sacramento	Shasta
Amador	Madera	San Bernardino	Solano
Butte	Marin	San Diego	Sonoma
Calaveras	Mariposa	San Francisco/San	Sutter
Colusa	Mendocino	Mateo	Tehama
Contra Costa	Merced	San Joaquin	Trinity
Del Norte/Humboldt	Monterey	San Luis Obispo	Tuolumne
El Dorado	Napa	San Mateo/San	Tulare/Kings
Fresno	Nevada	Francisco	Ventura
Humboldt/Del Norte	Orange	Santa Barbara	Yolo
Kings/Tulare	Placer	Santa Clara	Yuba
Lake	Riverside	Santa Cruz	

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