



# Quarterly News & Events December 2024

San Mateo and San Francisco Counties

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## Year In Review from County Director Igor Lacan

It has been a productive and impactful year here at the **UC Cooperative Extension** and **UC Elkus Ranch**. Here are just a few highlights!

2024 started with a comprehensive review of UC Elkus Ranch facilities in preparation for the long-deferred work to repair, refurbish, and replace the worn-out parts like flooring, gutters, roofs, and lights. The repairs are now underway, overseen by our outstanding Ranch staff, and we thank our University of California Office of the President colleagues for spearheading this effort alongside our own UC ANR facilities and planning



office.

Mid-year was a moment of transition for us: our longtime **Ranch Coordinator Leslie Jensen retired**, her legacy of service to more than 100,000 children who attended Ranch programming over Leslie's twenty-year career at the ranch. We were immensely lucky to welcome **Amy Bono, our new coordinator**. Amy, no stranger to Elkus where she got her start as an educator a decade ago, jumped right into the program planning, infrastructure repair, and the many other tasks along with our educators and ranch staff, leading Elkus to another successful year serving almost 7,000 school children.

On the Cooperative Extension side, Advisors **Dr. Carolyn Whitesell and Dr. Sally Neas** continued their important work on mountain lion management and youth development (respectively – the youth and the lions did not mix!) with Sally leading a truly innovative project that teaches life skills to youth at the County Juvenile Justice Facility.

In the fall we held a **Friends & Stakeholders Event**, where our UC administrators met with our local stakeholders and supporters, from the Farm Bureau, to County Supervisor Mueller, to the Agricultural Commissioner. They also toured our UC Master Gardener projects admiring the bountiful tomatoes, tasted our UC Master Food Preserver program volunteers' jams, and learned from our wonderful 4-H youth members!

Speaking of food, our **Nutrition Education program** is fully staffed and has been busier than ever with educational programming all across San Mateo and San Francisco Counties.

Reflecting on all the successes, challenges, and changes of the past year, I am truly grateful for the excellent work of our team, and the steadfast support of our volunteers, partners, stakeholders, and clients. I wish everyone a restful holiday season, and all the best in 2025. ~ Sincerely, **Igor**



# UCCE and San Mateo County Working Together!



## UCCE SMSF Revitalizing the Phoenix Garden

UCCE San Mateo/San Francisco Counties is excited to announce that it has assumed co-leadership of the San Mateo County (SMC) Phoenix Garden, a six-acre therapeutic and educational garden with the SMC Health Department. The garden is nestled across the street from the San Mateo County's Youth Services Center. This center houses SMC's Juvenile Probation Department, Juvenile Detention Facility, Juvenile Courts and Behavioral Health and Recovery Services (BHRS) clinical team. In 2006, there was a vision to revitalize the land where the old probation building and Hillcrest Juvenile Hall once stood. With support from SMC Health, including BHRS and Public Health, Policy and Planning, this vision has continued to bloom into a space of transformation and renewal.

The UCCE co-leadership of the garden is a collaboration between 4-H, with Advisor Sally Neas and Community Educator Julio Contreras, and the Urban Agriculture and Food Systems Program, with Advisor Lucy Diekmann, as well as our collaborators at SMC, which includes Behavioral Health and Recovery Services, Public Health, Policy and Planning Department, and Juvenile Probation. Together, we are excited to revitalize the garden and shape its future. **CONTINUE READING...**

4-H





## **BOLD (Breathe, Organize, Leverage, Deliver) Workshop**

We are proud to acknowledge and celebrate the incredible accomplishments of our BOLD teen leaders, Elena, Sophia, Fynn, and Veronica, who led an outstanding workshop on November 17th. Ten participants engaged in a fast-paced, interactive session that was nothing short of inspiring. The youth leaders demonstrated exceptional teamwork, seamlessly handing off tasks and checking in with each participant. [READ MORE ...](#)

## **Welcome T'Nay Pham!**

We are thrilled to welcome T'Nay Pham as the new 4-H Program Coordinator for San Mateo and San Francisco counties. [READ MORE...](#)

**Elkus Ranch**





### **Rambo is in the house**

Elkus Ranch welcomed a new ram (male sheep) in early September and had a naming contest for him on social media. The winning name was Rambo. After Rambo's 30-day quarantine was completed, he stayed with Coriander and Pepper, two of our ewes (girl sheep) for four weeks. Now that the ewes are back living with the rest of the ladies in the main flock, Rambo has two wethers (neutered male sheep) as his roommates. And although Rambo is a young male, we are hopeful that we will see lambs (baby sheep) in the spring. Stay tuned for updates!

### **Tri-Donks have arrived!**

In late September, Elkus Ranch received a wonderful donation! A family of three miniature donkeys were generously gifted...[READ MORE](#)

### **Volunteer opportunities are rolling out at Elkus**

We have had our first of four scheduled quarterly volunteer dates for local high school students and ...[READ MORE](#)



## MFP Fall Highlights

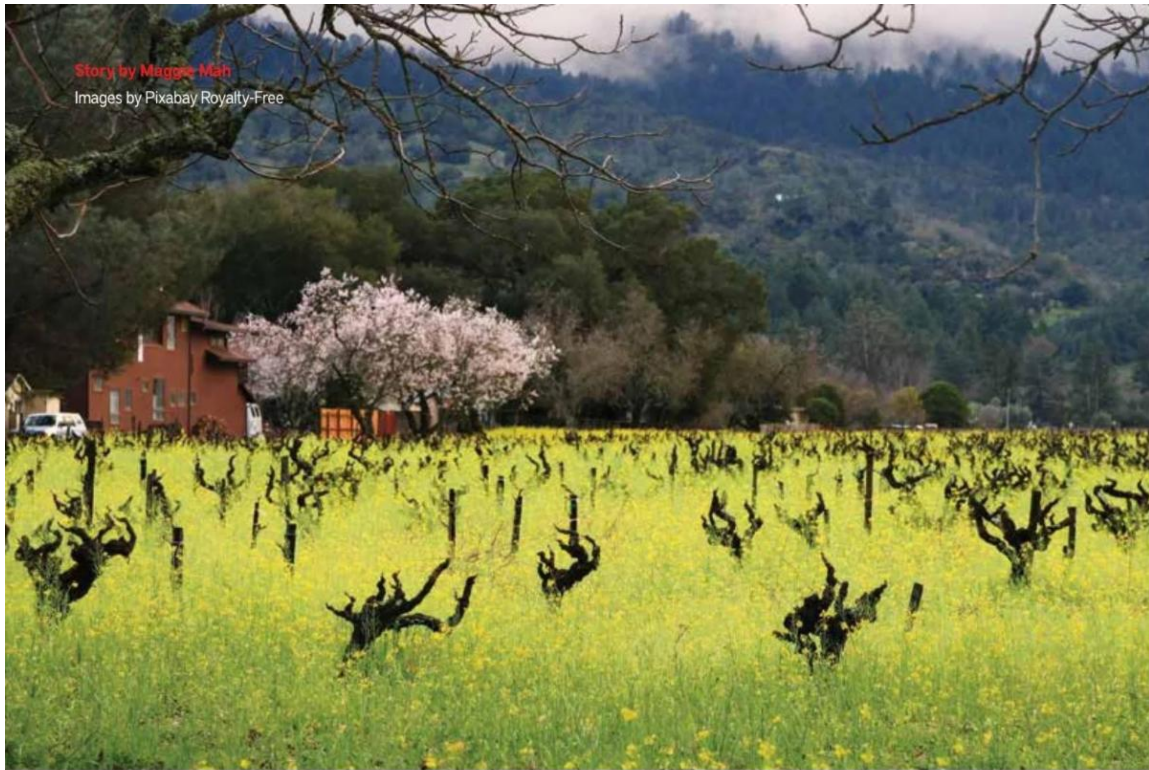
Autumn has been a busy season for the **Master Food Preservers**. Harvest season has brought many opportunities for us to share our knowledge and skills with the community. In September we held our first in-person workshop with the public at Elkus Ranch since the pandemic. Twenty participants joined our volunteers for a day of preserving and fermenting. In October, the MFPs participated in Ag Education Day at the Cow Palace and talked to hundreds of school children about California grapes and raisins. MFPs were at the Randall Museum Harvest Fair showcasing apples and all the delicious products that can be made with them. Our MFPs reached audiences across the Bay Area and country with our online workshops. We conducted virtual workshops on making marmalade, preserving pumpkin and planning your preserving calendar.

In 2025, we are looking forward to welcoming a new class of MFP trainees, continuing our monthly online workshop series and increasing the number of in-person, public workshops we offer. MFPs are particularly excited to offer a new workshop in

salmon canning in April—registration details will be available soon!

Pictured above: MFP Candace Bowers assisting youth at the Randall Museum's Harvest Fair.

## UC Master Gardeners



Story by Maggie Mah  
Images by Pixabay Royalty-Free

*Above: Mustard and other plants of the Brassica family have natural fumigants that help to protect grape vine roots from pests in the soil. Page 51 top: Certain varieties of grasses and grains are great for contributing organic matter that breaks down quickly to provide food for beneficial soil microbes. Page 51 bottom: Certain varieties of grasses and grains are great for contributing organic matter that breaks down quickly to provide food for beneficial soil microbes.*

### UC Master Gardener Outreach through Local Publications featuring MG Maggie Mah

UC Master Gardener educational outreach is growing through our partnerships with local publications in the communities that we serve. UC Master Gardener featured articles are full of useful information to home gardeners. Topics include Backyard Biodiversity, Inspirations for 2024, Educational Resources and history of the MG program, and many more. Here are a few recent ones:

**Coastside Magazine, Nov. 17, 2024** (article picture above)

#### **[Miraculous Cover Crops: Hardworking Plants Every Edible Garden Needs](#)**

The term, “cover crop” may sound a) not very exciting, and b) like something associated with large-scale farming. The fact is that these unassuming plants are amazing and can work miracles on even the smallest plots and raised beds. **...READ MORE**

**The Daily Journal, March 28, 2024**

featuring MG Maggie Mah's bio, educational aspects and history of the MG program

#### **[DJ Q&A: Master Gardener Maggie Mah](#)**

**Coastside Magazine, May 2, 2024**

#### **[Backyard Biodiversity: Saving the Planet One Garden at a Time - UC Master Gardeners of San Mateo & San Francisco Counties](#)**

Permission to share granted by Coastside News:<https://www.coastsidenews.com/>



**CalFresh Healthy Living UCCE San Mateo/San Francisco** has been wrapping the year up with projects and programs related to nutrition, physical activity, and gardening education across the two counties. We are thrilled to announce that the team is fully staffed with the recent hire of Kristin Cunningham and Mia Sasaki, our new full time community education lead and community nutrition educator, respectively. Both of these skilled staff members bring extensive experience in education and **SNAP-Ed program** implementation and in their short tenures have become invaluable assets to the team. With school is back in session educators are happy to return to our core work of direct education in classrooms across both San Francisco and San Mateo counties. Staff have been primarily leveraging the Let's Eat Healthy curriculum by the Dairy Council of California amongst others in grades K-5. **CFHL UCCE SM/SF** staff have continued work in early childhood education (ECE) centers in both counties teaching children (and sometimes their parents) how the food they eat affects their health and well-being using the Glow, Go, and Grow curriculum as well as the importance of regular physical activity with the **Coordinated Approach to Child Health (CATCH)** curriculum. Building off of successful summer workshops, the team has continued to teach adults various shopping, resource management, and cooking-related skills utilizing the Plan, Shop, Save, and Cook curriculum.

Perhaps the most exciting new development; thanks to their passion and experience, Mia has quickly expanded the team's garden-related portfolio. Though bolstering mutually beneficial relationships with both Ida B. Wells Continuation High School in San Francisco and Connect Community Charter (pictured here) in Redwood City (as well as further developing projects across both counties) Mia has quickly set our footprint on an expanding trajectory. **Teams with Inter-Generational Support (TWIGS)** has provided our primary educational structure, but has been creatively adapted for site-specific needs and conditions.

Policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change efforts continue across the counties with our work with cafeteria promotions, physical activity training for after-school YMCA staff, and general garden enhancements. Thank you to all our partners and participants for such a great year. The team wishes all a restful and grateful holiday season and looks forward to continued success and impact in the new year!



# UPCOMING EVENTS..

- **Master Gardener Education Table | Dec. 5th, 2024 - 9am-1pm** | Serramonte Farmer's Market
- **Pruning Without Fear: A Workshop for Beginners | Dec. 14th, 2024 - 10:15am-12:30pm** | Foster City Library
- **Master Gardener Table at San Francisco Botanical Garden's Gifts at the Garden | Dec. 14th, 2024 - 11am-5pm** | County Fair Building
- **4-H Winter Craft Fair | Dec. 15th, 2024 - 10am-1pm** | San Bruno 4-H Farm
- **Elkus Ranch Winter Camp | Jan. 2nd, 2024 - 9am-3pm** | Elkus Ranch
- **Elkus Ranch Winter Camp | Jan. 3rd, 2024 - 9am-3pm** | Elkus Ranch
- **Master Gardener School Garden Leaders Workshop | Jan. 25th, 2025 - 9am-12pm** | Oak Knoll Elementary School



## UC Cooperative Extension Offices San Mateo / San Francisco Counties

**Main Office:** (click for directions)  
Located on-site at UC Elkus Ranch  
1500 Purisima Creek Road  
Half Moon Bay, CA 94019

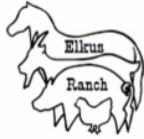
Email: [cesanmateo@ucanr.edu](mailto:cesanmateo@ucanr.edu)

**Master Gardener Helpline:**  
Open for in-person, walk-in visits per below. See our **website** for more details or submit any questions via the following:  
[https://ucanr.edu/mg\\_helpline](https://ucanr.edu/mg_helpline)

Website: <http://cesanmateo.ucanr.edu>

- Monday: 10am-1pm | **HMB**
- Thursday: 1pm-4pm | **RWC**
- Friday: 10:30am-1:30pm | **SFBG**

**NOTE:** our SF Botanical Garden Helpline day has changed from Tuesday to Friday as of Sept. 1st, 2024!



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