

# UC Cooperative Extension Central Sierra COVID-19 Response Report

*Serving Amador, Calaveras, Tuolumne And El Dorado Counties.*

## SUPPORTING FARMERS AND RANCHERS

UC Cooperative Extension academics continue to assist local farmers and ranchers through the pandemic crisis. On farm research trials in collaboration with local growers have very specific time-frames for implementing practices such as spraying, pruning, mowing, etc. and data collection during this period is essential for the success of the projects. Your UCCE Central Sierra Advisors, while following guidelines for working safely, continue vital research and outreach programs that are pertinent to foothill farmers, including:

- measuring annual forage production on annual rangelands;
  - developing control strategies for the rapidly spreading skeletonweed in local vineyards;
  - evaluating the effects of spreading compost on rangelands;
  - assisting growers with problem solving via one-on-one farm calls on Zoom or phone;
  - developing online airblast sprayer calibration training;
  - delivering Foothill Grape Day with UC viticulture experts via Zoom for no charge to attendees;
  - evaluating the efficacy of low drift nozzles for powdery mildew management;
- and much more.



*Specialist Akif Eskalen with a grower at Lava Cap*

Our goal is to assist local clientele at this difficult time so they can remain profitable and continue their agricultural lifestyle for generations to come.

## 4-H – LEARNING BY DOING



*4-H Presentation Days Online*

The 4-H slogan is “Learn by Doing.” In these uncertain times, we in the Central Sierra 4-H program have had to do just that to serve our communities. Every day, we are offering a new activity based on peer reviewed curriculum for our members and the public via social media. We have also taken in person events and made them virtual, such as Tuolumne County’s 4-H Fest. This event will be held virtually and include judging contests, project presentations and a foods competition.

Additionally, 4-H Staff in the Central Sierra have been working statewide to introduce an all new virtual presentation competition that has been teaching local youth skills to better lead in a more technological fashion. To help facilitate this effort, other Cooperative Extension Staff have volunteered to evaluate and help coordinate presentations through April and into May.

Our members and volunteers have been hard at work to serve their community as well. For example, in Tuolumne County one of our members has made it her goal to make 700 masks to give to members of the community. All of our counties are adapting our existing programs to continue in a virtual environment. We are connecting members and leaders though teleconferencing and live streaming. Even though we are all working from home, we never stop learning by doing!

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## UC MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

Although training was in week 9 of a 15-week course for new Master Gardeners, UC staff adapted quickly to move assignments, lectures and practicum to on-line platforms so that class was uninterrupted. Training classes graduated on April 30<sup>th</sup> resulting in 34 new UC Master Gardener volunteers in El Dorado, 8 in Amador County, and 24 for Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. Lake Tahoe is also excited to have 17 new trainees join us on our virtual training journey.



*Pre-virtual learning, trainees learn about irrigation installation from Master Gardener Sheri Burke at the Sherwood Demonstration Garden*



*Cancelled plant sales make way for creative community partnerships.*

## VEGETABLE SALES CANCELLED – FORGES NEW PARTNERSHIPS

The UC Master Gardeners work hard to organize annual plant sales. These sales are the sole fundraiser for the programs. In Amador County, the plant sale was scheduled for May 4<sup>th</sup>. With the cancelled sale, Master Gardeners had a huge supply of vegetable starts that needed to be shared with the community.

Master Gardeners were able to partner with a local nursery who was unable to find a supplier of vegetable starts because of COVID-19. Over 1000 peppers, tomatoes and other vegetables were dropped off to Ridge Road Nursery and starts sold out within two hours!

In the Lake Tahoe Basin we have partnered with UC Davis Tahoe Environmental Research Center and Slow Food Tahoe to host virtual High-Altitude Vegetable Workshops and vegetable plant giveaways at demonstration gardens.

## CENTRAL SIERRA VICTORY GARDEN PROJECT

In addition to Plant a Row for the Hungry which Master Gardeners in El Dorado county have been doing for many years, Central Sierra has launched a new Victory Garden Project. This project includes Tuolumne, Calaveras, Amador and El Dorado Counties. Volunteers were concerned that the more folks stay at home the more they may need to participate with others and connect. The goal is to get information on creating home gardens to the public through social media. Master Gardeners will share public education on gardening using UC resources, videos and collaboration throughout the four counties to educate the public.



*Home harvested vegetables from UC Master Gardeners*



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## LIVE PUBLIC FOOD PRESERVATION CLASSES

The UC Master Food Preservers of Amador/Calaveras Counties presented the first live public food preservation class with a live demo and a recorded video. Additional live classes using this format will be used as people continue to shelter-at-home. Short instructional videos are being prepared for distribution via social media and a UC Master Food Preserver YouTube channel.



*Pickled garlic from the first live class*

## ENSURING FOOD SAFETY AND FOOD PRESERVATION

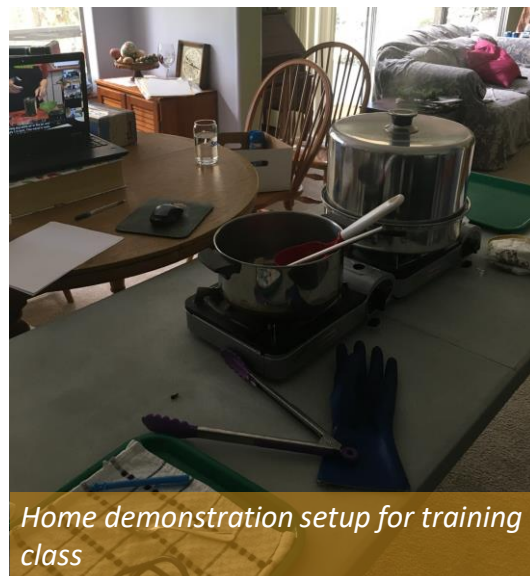
UC Master Food Preservers posted over 85 posts on Facebook since March 16, reaching almost 70,500 people. Content ranged from correct sanitizing, handwashing and food handling procedures, science behind canning food, reducing food waste with our regular Waste-Not-Wednesday posts, canning recipes, and ways to incorporate preserved food into meals. UC Master Food Preservers also contributed a monthly article in the Mountain Democrat newspaper about making jelly from commercial grape juice as a food preservation project to do at home with children. The Program Coordinator recorded two radio show programs on food safety with a focus on COVID-19 to be aired on the local radio show and to be used as part of a new podcast hosted by the UC Master Gardeners.



*Sharing tips for ensuring correct ratios of bleach and water for sanitizing surfaces*

## REMOTE NEW VOLUNTEER TRAINING

Staff began a remote version of the 2020 volunteer training program for the Amador/Calaveras program. Due to COVID-19 caregiver situations, only 5 people are attending the training classes. Students participate in live remote presentations and demos, can products at their homes to present in live show-and-tell sections of the class, complete online quizzes and do additional reading assignments. To date, new volunteers attended four remote classes covering program orientation, food safety, high acid canning, and pickling. The El Dorado training was in the middle of program delivery and postponed additional classes but are supplementing training with video and mentoring calls. A new [statewide food safety series of classes](#) was developed in conjunction with the Central Sierra program training needs that is now used statewide.



*Home demonstration setup for training class*

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## NUTRITION FAMILY AND CONSUMER SCIENCES

The Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences program created an online hub for food and community resources for the region during the COVID-19 crisis. This [webpage](#) centralizes information on local food assistance resources people may need (e.g., school meal sites, food banks, CalFresh/food stamps, WIC, Meals-on-Wheels, etc.) as well as information on food safety, home cooking, family gardening, and home-based physical activities for families who are sheltering in place. The program has also provided assistance to local farmers markets planning their operations for the year, so that markets can continue to provide essential fresh food to the community while modifying their operations to offer farmers and the public a safe shopping experience. Information on best practices to help market managers increase physical distance, control market foot traffic, and provide sanitation supplies has been shared widely.



The CalFresh Healthy Living-UC program has created online video lessons that teach the entire 9-unit USDA nutrition education curriculum Serving Up MyPlate for students in 1<sup>st</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> Grade. This curriculum and supporting virtual education is [now available](#) to partnering elementary school teachers to offer to their students. Other how-to videos on home gardening and cooking for kids are being created, and online workshops to teach adults how to cook and eat healthy during the current crisis are available. The program is also working with schools and local partners to develop garden starter kits to send home to interested families via current school meal distributions. These starter kits come with seeds or plant starts and information to support starting a successful home garden.



*Prescribed Fire Workshops online*

## FORESTRY AND PRESCRIBED FIRE

Though in-person prescribed fire workshops have been postponed until fall, landowners from previous workshops have contracted with a private burn boss to conduct a prescribed burn on their property in the fall and are busy with site preparation. Day three of our in person forest stewardship workshop on March 14th in Redding was reformatted as four one hour webinars over two weeks. We are working on moving our June stewardship workshop at Blodgett into online blended learning. Our goal is to continue our outreach and education as we head into the 2020 fire season. We continue to give interviews on issues with wildfire response during a pandemic to media including NPR, Outside Magazine and Business Insider. Our goal is to

to support landowners to not get behind on their fire hazard risk reduction activities because of the pandemic.

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