



Horticulture and Small Farms

Program Highlights

- ◆ Horticulture & Small Farms Programs provided **165 hours of training** to 655 farmers and ranchers in 2012-13.
- ◆ Since 2005, UCCE has trained **more than 3,350** farmers and ranchers in business, marketing, and sustainable production.
- ◆ Our Eat Local Placer and Nevada project has reached over **47,000** area consumers with information about seasonal local produce and where to purchase it.

Placer and Nevada Counties are home to a diversity of small family farms. We produce a wide variety of horticultural crops, including fruits, vegetables, nuts, and nursery crops. These small farms feed the growing demand for local produce. While overall agricultural acreage declines, the small farm community is growing. Despite the growth in small farms, local producers often can not meet the demand for local products. More farmers are needed, and as the farming community ages, the need for a new generation of farmers becomes more critical.

Most growers in Placer and Nevada Counties farm on small acreages. Keeping small farms economically viable is the key concern for the ag community. Connecting consumers to local farms and ranches is critical to that economic viability. Specific issues include recruiting and training new farmers; marketing and small farm economics; and using sustainable, environmentally sound practices to manage soil, water, and pests.



Trying out equipment at the Vegetable Production Workshop at Jim's Produce, Wheatland; April 2013.

The mission of the UC Cooperative Extension Horticulture and Small Farms Program is to:

- *Provide information, education, and technical assistance to help farmers develop and maintain economically viable farming enterprises.*
- *Provide opportunities that encourage growers to work together to address local problems and needs.*
- *Help connect growers with area residents and educate consumers about the importance of local agriculture and encourage them to support it by buying local produce.*



Beginning Farmer Training



Beginning Farming Academy field trip to Flying Mule Farm: Dan Macon explaining livestock management practices.



Market research at the Foothill Farmers' Market, Auburn; Beginning Farming Academy, April 2013.

ISSUE

The local food movement is driving in an increase consumer demand for locally grown food. It has also heightened interest in starting small farms. However, many beginning farmers and ranchers have little agricultural experience and need extensive advice and information to get started.

WHAT WAS DONE

In 2012-13, UCCE held two intensive 20-hour Beginning Farming Academy sessions. Farm Advisors and producer-trainers provide training which includes visits to local farms and farmers' markets. The Academy is partially funded by USDA Risk Management Agency and CDFA's Specialty Crops Block Grants; leveraging funds to increase services for farmers.

UCCE also provides individual consultations and advice to aspiring farmers and ranchers. We have a mentoring program which matches beginners with experienced producers and provides mentoring for a year. Regular e-mails to over 130 beginning farmers provide information, learning opportunities, and regulatory updates.

IMPACT

- 15 beginning producers jumpstarted their operations in Beginning Farming Academy, and 13 are being mentored by an experienced producer.
- Most Beginning Farming participants state their intention to change their planning to a more business-oriented approach as a result of what they learned in the Academy, increasing their chances of success.
- Over 600 aspiring farmers and ranchers participated in workshops targeted to new farmers.



Direct Marketing Education

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Placer County Agriculture



The diversity and high quality of local produce available in certified farmers' markets feeds a growing number of area residents. Marketing education helps producers increase sales and grow the customer base for local farm products.



Courtney McDonald, Auburn Foothill Farmers' Market Manager, explaining producer certificate to Marketing Academy participants.

ISSUE

Farms in the foothills are small, diverse operations, focused on producing fresh, high quality fruits and vegetables. Most of Placer/ Nevada's production is direct marketed. However, farmers often focus on production skills and neglect the marketing skills necessary for a successful farming business.

WHAT WAS DONE

UCCE works with individual growers, the Foothill Farmers' Market Association, and other organizations to help growers select crops and market them effectively. We teach an 18-week Direct Farm Marketing course at Sierra College, which reaches aspiring farmers and others considering farming. In a series of workshops at the Farm Marketing Academy, we provided practical training on increasing farmers' market sales, using nutrition information to increase sales, and tips for breaking into wholesale marketing. We also assist growers by providing information on suitable crops and market opportunities and publishing the annual local market wishlist.

IMPACT

- The Direct Farm Marketing class provided hands-on experiential learning about market research, marketing strategies, regulations and customer relations to 24 potential farmers and ranchers.
- Local certified farmers' markets continue to expand with increased product diversity, attracting new customers.
- More growers are exploring wholesale and other alternative markets as well.



Producer Education



Jim Muck demonstrating a cultivator tractor at the Breaking Ground Vegetable Workshop, April 2013.



Randy Hansen of Pine Hill orchards explaining Asian pear production.

ISSUE

Managing a successful small-scale farming or ranching operation takes a wide range of skills; not only production skills, but business, marketing, and risk management skills. There are few options other than UCCE in the foothill area for hands-on training appropriate for farmers and ranchers.

WHAT WAS DONE

In order to meet the training needs of farmers and ranchers, UCCE offers an array of workshops throughout the year. In 2012-13, we provided over 165 hours of training, including Farm Business Planning, an advanced business support group, and three marketing workshops. We also offered a range of practical, skill-building workshops including: commercial vegetable production, pruning fruit trees, and rejuvenating heritage olive trees. On-farm workshops allow experienced farmers to share their practical knowledge and skills with other farmers. UCCE also organized an Agricultural Resources Fair to connect farmers and ranchers with the agencies and organizations that serve them. Our workshops are supported by grants from the USDA Risk Management Agency.

IMPACT

- On-farm workshops effectively communicate best practices to growers. Based on experience and demonstration at field meetings, participants report adopting best management practices such as timely pruning and soil management.
- Transfer of skills from farmer to farmer is a critical part of building a strong agricultural community, and training the next generation of producers.



Pest Management Education



Steve and Lisa Pilz check for natural enemies in a mandarin tree; finding a wolf spider nest. Spiders are predators of many pest insects. Mandarin Field Meeting, June 2013.

...these workshops are very informative for me and beneficial to the environment...because of practices promoted that are not harmful to environment.

-IPM Workshop Participant



Natural enemies of pest insects, such as this preying mantis, can be attracted to a farm by planting insectary plants with nectar and pollen such as this Queen Anne's lace. These beneficial insects can help manage crop pests and reduce pesticide use.

ISSUE

Our mobile population and global economy means new pests are always moving in, posing imminent threats to local agriculture. This reality requires growers to be aware of new developments and constantly update their pest management knowledge and practices.

WHAT WAS DONE

In 2012-13, UCCE delivered a series of workshops on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) techniques and specific management practices for citrus, grape, and vegetable pests. More than 80 growers participated in the workshops. Through other workshops and field meetings, we also provided information on invasive pests such as Asian Citrus Psyllid and Huanglongbing disease in citrus, Spotted Wing Drosophila in cherries and berries, and European Grapevine Moth. IPM is also included in pruning workshops as pruning is a key pest management practice for many tree crops.

IMPACT

- Through e-mail, individual consultations, and on-farm meetings, UCCE helps growers prevent and manage new and existing pests, and reduce unnecessary pesticide use.
- In 2012-13, 136 producers participated in pest management workshops, field meetings, or seminars.
- As a result of UCCE field meetings and IPM workshops, increasing numbers of growers have planted insectary hedgerows and cover crops to attract natural enemies.
- Growers now use pruning as a pest management tool in many orchard crops, which reduces pesticide use.



Citrus Grower Education



Later season mandarins such as these Clementines can help extend the availability of local fruit. Variety trials help determine which cultivars are most appropriate for our foothill conditions.



Demonstrating proper pruning technique for citrus.

ISSUE

Mandarins are the signature crop of the foothills, but more and more mandarins are being planted in California. This increased production means that Mountain Mandarin® growers must continue to produce high quality fruit and market it very effectively, while dealing with new pests, increased regulation, and increasing costs.

WHAT WAS DONE

Regular mandarin association and field meetings help growers keep informed about effective practices, new technologies, and issues affecting citrus production. Field meetings in 2012-13 addressed issues such as gopher control, irrigation to mitigate effects of high temperatures, best pruning practices, as well as pest identification and management. We also collaborate with Sierra College to provide an 8-hour class for beginning citrus growers on the basics of growing citrus in the foothills. We have been conducting mandarin variety trials for several years to help growers extend their market season with varieties other than Owari Satsuma mandarins.

IMPACT

- Field meetings effectively communicate best practices to growers. Mandarin growers have rapidly adopted practices such as pruning, mulching, insectary hedgerows, and releasing natural enemies as a result of seeing them at field meetings.
- Orchard workshops also contribute to community-building among the growers, which helps them work together on marketing, pest problems and other issues affecting their industry.
- Many new citrus growers started out in the Sierra College citrus class, and have been able to establish their orchards and manage them effectively as a result.



Building Community



Mandarin growers sharing experiences with different types of microsprinkler irrigation at a field meeting.



New and experienced farmers discussing equipment use at on-farm vegetable workshop, April 2013.

ISSUE

Most area producers work alone on their farms and ranches, and have limited opportunities for networking with peers. Building community among producers is critical to information sharing and supporting each other in times of need. Many producers are sole proprietors, and when injuries and illness happen, the crop or livestock care cannot wait until the farmer is well again.

WHAT WAS DONE

UCCE has made it a priority to provide opportunities for farmers and ranchers to discuss issues, share concerns and exchange information. We hold on-farm meetings and "farmer-to-farmer" breakfasts to facilitate networking and information sharing. We also facilitate bringing the community together when a farmer is in need of assistance. Developing mutual assistance networks is a critical part of farm planning, and has been incorporated into many of our workshops.

IMPACT

- Over 90 farmers and ranchers attended the monthly "farmer-to-farmer" breakfasts. The breakfasts foster networking and building connections which strengthen the ag community.
- In spring 2013, a mandarin grower was very ill and unable to prune his orchard. In partnership with the Mountain Mandarin Growers' Association, we organized a pruning workshop in his orchard. Eighteen mandarin growers learned about pruning techniques and we pruned the entire orchard in less than a day.



Foothill Farming Website

ISSUE

Access to information on production, marketing, and business management is fundamental to the success of beginning and experienced farmers and ranchers. The internet provides a wealth of information, but it is often not appropriate to foothill conditions or does not address critical issues for our foothill farming community.

WHAT WAS DONE

Our Foothill Farming website, <http://ucanr.org/foothillfarming>, was built in to fill this information gap. We continue to expand the information provided and the site has become the go-to resource for farmers and ranchers in the foothills and beyond. It is a key contact point for beginning farmers and ranchers to discover the resources and training available to them in this area.

IMPACT

- The Foothill Farming website has averaged about 1,980 page views and 778 visitors per month over the last year.
- More than 58% of the visitors to the website are new visitors, showing that it continues to be a good outreach tool for our programs. On average, visitors spend almost 3 minutes on the site, so it is clearly providing useful information.
- More and more farmers and ranchers find their way to UCCE information and training through the website. It has become a key referral route for new clientele.





Eat Local Placer & Nevada Counties



UCCE has sponsored 23 tasting events in Placer and Nevada Counties to date.

ISSUE

Most consumers are disconnected from the people who grow their food. Similarly, farmers and ranchers often have no connection with the families they feed. Despite a vibrant local food movement in Placer and Nevada Counties, only 2 percent of local residents purchase locally grown fruits and vegetables on a regular basis. Increasing consumption of fresh fruits and vegetables can improve health and reduce certain chronic diseases. Increased produce sales can also improve the economic viability of local farms and ranches.

WHAT WAS DONE

UCCE received a Specialty Crop Block Grant from the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA) to create the ***Eat Local Placer and Nevada Counties*** project with the dual objectives of increasing consumption of local produce to improve the health of residents and increasing sales of local produce to support local farms. Since the project started in December 2012, we have reached more than 47,000 local consumers through tasting events, newspaper articles, online resources, cooking demonstrations and other activities.

IMPACT

- The project has developed and distributed 11 recipe cards featuring local produce.
- We have distributed \$5,465 in produce vouchers to local consumers. To date, \$3,205 has been redeemed by local farmers.
- The project has purchased more than \$1,600 in produce directly from Placer and Nevada County farmers.
- Through purchases and voucher programs, the project has injected more than \$5,000 into the local farming economy.



We have distributed more than 1,300 recipe cards featuring seasonal recipes and nutritional information on local produce, to local consumers.



Eat Local Placer & Nevada Outreach

ISSUE

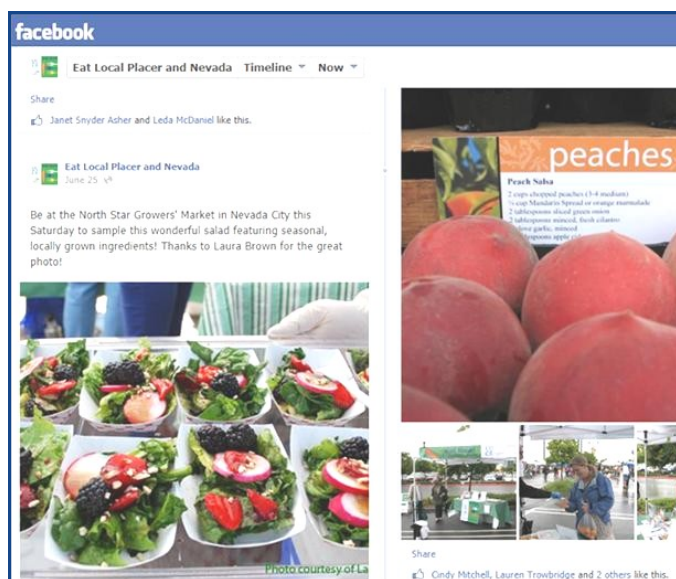
Consumers are increasingly turning to internet and social media resources to connect with local farmers and food. Tech-savvy home cooks look for new recipes, and families use the internet to plan their activities. At the same time, local farmers and ranchers are working to build community and increase marketing opportunities.

WHAT WAS DONE

As part of our CDFA Specialty Crop Block Grant, UCCE Placer/Nevada developed online tools to increase awareness of and access to locally produced fruits, vegetables and nuts. The Eat Local Facebook page and website help connect farmers with local customers by providing recipes, links to local food resources, and information on events. The "Meet your Farmer" Community Dinner in Placer County brought more than 100 residents and farmers together for a locally-grown meal. We have also trained 20 community volunteers to promote local produce and healthy eating.

IMPACT

- The Eat Local Placer and Nevada Facebook page reached an average of 355 people per week since its launch in January 2013. www.facebook.com/EatLocalPlacerAndNevada
- UCCE has developed toolkits for producers to integrate Eat Local marketing materials and web resources into their own marketing efforts.
- The "Meet your Farmer" Community Dinner in Placer County raised \$925 for a Food Bank Farmers' Market Voucher Program, leveraging grant funds to meet community needs.



In just 6 months, our Eat Local Facebook page has attracted 224 "likes" and a reach of 355 per week.



Launched in March 2013, the Eat Local Placer and Nevada website features seasonal buying guides, recipes and a calendar of events.