



MASTER GARDENERS & COMPOSTERS

Program Highlights

Welcomed 45 new Master Gardener Volunteers into our programs

220 certified Master Gardener volunteers giving over **14,000 hours** of service

Over **13,000 people** received gardening composting information through Master Gardener outreach and education

Over **50 workshops** given by Master Gardeners on various gardening and composting topics

The UC Placer-Nevada Master Gardener Program provides volunteer training and horticultural knowledge to enhance home landscapes and garden experiences while striving to improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

The UC Master Gardener Programs in Placer and Nevada Counties began in 1983 to meet the demands of the growing population and mitigate one-on-one requests to Extension staff for home gardening and related information.

Interest in home gardening and urban horticulture continues to grow. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and landscape/nursery crops are now the third largest agricultural crop in California. UC Master Gardeners identify issues and needs of Placer and Nevada County residents, and develop educational activities to address these concerns in the areas of:

- *Water Wise Gardening*
- *Firesafe Landscaping*
- *Pest Management*
- *Vegetable Gardening*
- *Prevention and Diagnosis*
- *Recycling Garden Waste*
- *School Gardens*
- *Perennials and Flowering Shrubs*
- *Soil and Irrigation*
- *Community Gardens*

With the goal of shifting public perceptions of yard and garden debris from “wastes” to “resources,” the University of California Cooperative Extension’s volunteer Master Composters have engaged the public in recognizing the importance of organics management through composting, vermi-composting, and shredding/chipping/mulching. These activities alone can divert between 20 and 35% of a family’s garbage from the landfills and have helped Placer and Nevada Counties meet state mandated diversion rates.



DEMONSTRATION GARDENS

ISSUE

With a “growing” interest in gardening in our communities comes the increased need for more Master Gardener educational venues to help educate the public on good gardening practices that lead to success in the garden and landscape. The best way to teach the public about good gardening practices is to demonstrate those practices in addition to talking about them.

WHAT WAS DONE

Both Master Gardener programs have installed and maintained Demonstration Gardens for the purpose of showcasing good gardening practices. In each county, the Demonstration Garden plays an important role in educating the public through the hosting of public workshops and creating a gathering space for the Master Gardener volunteers themselves to learn and experiment. A calendar of workshops was created and distributed in the community announcing the many learning opportunities at each garden in the form of public workshops and garden events.

IMPACT

The Master Gardener programs in both Placer and Nevada Counties held many public workshops at their Demonstration Gardens this past year. These workshops allow community members to not only learn about the topic presented but also bring their own questions and network with other gardeners in the area. In 2013/14, the Master Gardeners put on over 30 workshops at their Demonstration Gardens reaching over 500 gardeners in our communities. Evaluations were collected for workshops and the response was almost unanimously positive about the quality of the workshops and the Demonstration Gardens themselves. In an effort to enhance both garden spaces, the Master Gardeners are looking ahead to add more features and signage in the Demonstration Gardens over the next year.



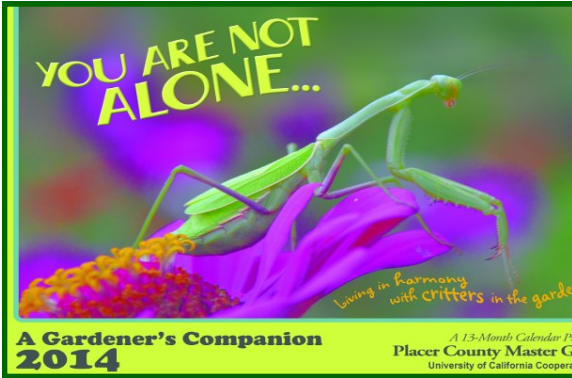
Master Gardener volunteers set up their Annual Plant Sale fundraiser at the Nevada County Demonstration Garden in Grass Valley where hundreds of local plant lovers get their vegetable starts for the upcoming growing season.



Master Gardener volunteers in Placer County give a public workshop at their Demonstration Garden in Auburn.



HOTLINE



The Master Gardeners use information collected from the Hotline to develop new outreach materials for the public.

After speaking with a Master Gardener on the Hotline, one caller stated, "This is such a valuable service. Thank you for volunteering to help gardeners!"



What's wrong with my plum tree? A good example of the types of email inquiries the Master Gardeners receive every week.

ISSUE

When local gardeners encounter plant problems in their landscapes, they seek a reliable and unbiased source of information to help them solve the problems and avoid them in the future. When these problems occur, gardeners need answers and need them quickly.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Master Gardeners in both Placer and Nevada Counties continue to offer a "Hotline" for the general public to assist them in their gardening efforts. In the past, this "Hotline" was phone based with folks calling in with their garden issues. Now, gardeners can email into the office with their problem and attach pictures to help aid in diagnosis. Also, the "Hotline" is staffed by Master Gardener volunteers on a regular schedule so folks can come in and discuss gardening as well.

IMPACT

- Over **750** people received information from the Master Gardeners on the "Hotline" in Placer and Nevada Counties.
- Many first time callers and/or visitors remark that now that they know the service exists, they will continue to use it in the future.
- The "Hotline" not only provides a valuable service to local gardeners in our communities but also serves as a way volunteers can earn "Continuing Education" hours to enhance their research and diagnosis skills.
- The "Hotline" serves as the most consistent public interface between the Master Gardener programs and the public throughout the year.



COLLABORATIONS



Master Gardeners at 2014 Earth Day event in partnership with Roseville Utility Exploration Center.

In the spirit of community building, the Master Gardeners have expanded their educational venues through collaborations with various cities and local organizations.



Master Gardeners answer questions at community events like the Home and Garden Show hosted by The Union Newspaper.

ISSUE

The mission of the Master Gardener program is to spread research-based gardening and composting information to the public to help them grow healthy plants. Thanks to the University of California, the Master Gardeners have plenty of good information at their fingertips; however, to get this out to the public, the Master Gardeners collaborate with other local organizations. In this way, collaborating with interested parties allows for expansion into previously underserved communities.

WHAT WAS DONE

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have collaborated with local cities, non-profits, schools, and businesses to bring gardening education to all areas of our counties. Each partnership looks a little different and offers a unique type of outreach to our communities.

IMPACT

The Master Gardeners have increased the number of county residents they reach through collaborations with entities such as:

- City of Auburn
- Roseville Utility Exploration Center
- Nevada Irrigation District
- Resource Conservation Districts
- Various local schools
- Placer County Water Agency
- Placer Nature Center
- Grower's Markets
- CA Native Plant Society

These partnerships continue to grow and bloom!



DROUGHT EDUCATION

ISSUE

Master Gardener programs look to their communities to identify new issues and then create educational outreach and gather resources to help understand and address these issues. At the top of the list this year is the current state of drought conditions in our communities as well as the greater state of California. As a program that supports home gardening efforts, this issue quickly became our center of attention.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Placer County Master Gardeners gathered resources from around the state and created an extensive list of documents on their website concerning gardening during a drought. In addition, they decided that the theme for their next annual calendar project be “California Dreaming: Beautiful Gardens with Less Water”. In this way, they can create a lovely calendar with very pertinent information. The Nevada County Master Gardeners will be working with Nevada Irrigation District on revamping their current turfgrass dominated landscape into a drought tolerant landscape and have also been spreading resources around the community to help gardeners deal with less water for their gardens.

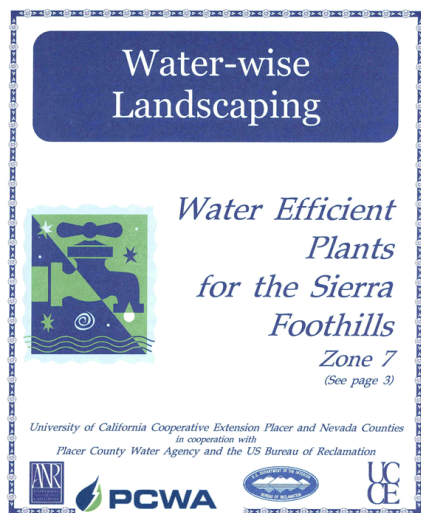
IMPACT

As more and more questions come in to the Master Gardener offices regarding the drought conditions, we are poised to have a variety of resources at hand to share with the public. From written materials like the annual calendar to web resources online to demonstrating what a water-efficient landscape looks like, the Master Gardeners have done an excellent job quickly developing resources to meet the needs of our communities. In this way, they serve the home gardening community a full plate of options when inquiring about how drought conditions affect their gardens and what to do about it.



The Placer County Master Gardeners have focused their 2015 annual calendar on “Beautiful Gardens with Less Water”.

From a satisfied customer: “The Master Gardeners provide such a valuable service to our local community of gardeners”.



The Master Gardeners have gathered resources on water efficiency and have a webpage to address drought conditions.



SENIOR COMMUNITY GARDEN



The Senior Community Garden plots produce a lot of produce. Some of the surplus is donated to the Auburn Food Closet.



*Placer County Master Gardeners
Edible Demonstration Garden.*

From a Senior Gardener, “The opportunity to garden here is something I really appreciate, because I live in an apartment, and I don’t even have a balcony for containers.”

ISSUE

There are many senior citizens in our counties who live in senior housing, apartments, and other homes that lack outdoor space for gardening. They do not have the opportunity to experience the numerous benefits that gardening offers in the form of physical, mental, and emotional exercise. In addition, in some senior living situations, there are very few people to socialize with on a regular basis.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Senior Community Garden was developed and offered as a space for seniors to garden and socialize. The University of California Cooperative Extension partnered with the County of Placer to transform an unused portion of an athletic field into a community garden. This partnership resulted in a fenced garden area, irrigation installation, shed placement, and the creation of 30 plots with pathways in between.

IMPACT

The Senior Garden has all 30 plots under cultivation and produces a large amount of fresh produce for the senior gardeners who tend it. The garden not only provides a place to grow fresh food, but also serves as a gathering spot for seniors to bring their friends, socialize, and create new relationships. There is constantly a waiting list for the plots in the garden, and it has been written about in the local paper.

In addition to the Community Garden, the Placer Master Gardeners have carved out a little section within the overall garden for an Edible Demonstration Garden. This space is being developed to demonstrate different growing techniques and will serve as an educational venue for the volunteers to teach the public. There is also a composting area and fruit trees planted within the demonstration site.