



MASTER GARDENERS & COMPOSTERS

Program Highlights

Trained **42** new Master Gardener Volunteers for our 2 programs

240 certified Master Gardener volunteers giving over **14,500 hours** of service

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

Over **55 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.





MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER TRAINING



Master Gardener volunteers in training learn about straw bale gardening at the Fair Oaks Horticulture Center. Field trips during the training support in class content giving trainees the opportunity to learn and see gardening methods in action.



Master Gardener trainees learn hands-on propagation techniques in a training class. By combining lecture and hands-on activities, trainees learn and absorb information more efficiently. Plus, they get new plants!

ISSUE

With a “growing” interest in gardening in our communities comes the increased need for more Master Gardener volunteers to help educate the public on good gardening practices that lead to success in the garden and the landscape. Furthermore, as the drought continues, Master Gardener volunteers are a crucial resource for the public regarding watering their gardens wisely.

WHAT WAS DONE

In September 2014, recruitment began for the 2015 Master Gardener Volunteer training beginning in January 2015. Over 100 people attended the informational meeting about the program with 84 eventually applying for 45 spots offered in the class. After interviewing and selecting trainees, the class began in January and continued for 16 weeks until graduation in May.

IMPACT

In May 2015, 42 new Master Gardener volunteers were welcomed into our 2 programs. Each of these volunteers commit to giving at least 50 Volunteer hours the first year of service in the program. This volunteer service commitment equates to 2,100 volunteer hours that will be provided to the gardening public in Placer and Nevada Counties.

In addition to providing education to our local gardeners, these new volunteers are also ambassadors for our program and the University of California Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources. During the training, a relationship between our campus affiliate (UC Davis) and our County Master Gardener programs is nurtured and strengthened. In this way, we not only serve local gardeners but also participate in gardening issues around the region.



NEW OUTREACH



The Nevada County Master Gardeners participate in the Soroptomist Garden Tour by either offering their own gardens for the tour or by staffing gardens to impart garden education to the public.



The Placer County Master Gardeners now attend two farmers markets—one in Auburn and one in Roseville—to spread gardening information to different communities with different gardening challenges.

ISSUE

As more and more people plant gardens and tend to their landscapes, the Master Gardener program must continually strive to meet the “growing” demand for gardening education. Traditional outreach has been wildly successful but there are always new opportunities to get involved with other local organizations to spread the information beyond traditional audiences.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Master Gardeners in both Placer and Nevada Counties continue to seek out new venues and opportunities in the area to expand their educational outreach. In Nevada County, the Master Gardeners are participating in the annual Soroptomist Garden Tour which highlights a few local gardens for the local public. In this way, local gardeners get inspired, get new ideas and learn about good gardening practices. In Placer County, the Master Gardeners have expanded their farmers market presence into Roseville. Traditionally, they have (and still do) attend the Auburn farmers market. With a growing interest in gardening, they decided to expand into a more urban area to reach clients they otherwise would not interact with consistently.

IMPACT

When Master Gardener programs expand their outreach into new areas or add additional outreach venues in the same area, the volunteers report that many people say that this is the first they have heard of the program. This increased awareness of our programs is exactly the idea behind expanding outreach. As more and more people know of the program, more local residents rely on the Master Gardeners to help with their gardening challenges. Furthermore, these venues serve as ways to interact with other organizations which can lead to important future collaborations.



DEMONSTRATION GARDENS



Nevada County Master Gardeners get ready for their big Spring Plant Sale at their Demonstration Garden. The Master Gardeners raise all the plants and the proceeds help support the organization.



Placer County Master Gardener Kathy Netto gives a public workshop in the Demonstration Garden in Auburn. These workshops continually attract large audiences as more people learn about us.

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.

Demonstration gardens can be a great way to help people learn more about gardening because they can see and experience the practices in person. Also, these gardens provide a venue for public workshops, social gatherings and fundraising activities.

WHAT WAS DONE

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have both created and maintained demonstration gardens in their respective counties. A tremendous amount of volunteer time is spent in these gardens to make sure they are ready to help local gardeners learn.

IMPACT

Over 35 workshops are given between the two Master Gardener groups at their Demonstration Gardens. This translates to over 800 people that have received information at these venues. These gardens don't only serve the public; they also serve as places where current Master Gardener volunteers can earn their volunteer and continuing education hours. These hours are required to remain active in the program.

Some other highlights of the Demonstration Gardens:

- Serve as a venue for field trips for local schoolchildren, local garden clubs and other organizations.
- Serve as a social gathering spot for the Master Gardener monthly meetings in the summer.
- Gardens are collaborative efforts between the Master Gardeners and Nevada Irrigation District in Grass Valley and Placer County in Auburn.



DROUGHT EDUCATION



10 TIPS FOR VEGETABLE GARDENING WITH LESS WATER



Compost, compost, compost

Adding organic matter to the soil increases its water holding capacity.



Mulch, mulch, mulch

Covering the surface of the soil decreases the rate of evaporation up to 50% and cuts down on thirsty weeds.



Choose crops you like to eat

Limit your vegetables to the ones your family likes and will eat.



Plant only as much as you can eat

Limit the number of plants to a reasonable amount for your uses.



Plant closer to shade between plants

Sun on soil increases evaporation. Shade your beds with your veggies. Plant in blocks, instead of rows and reduce spacing between plants.



Inspect irrigation often

Look for leaks and wasted water. Be sure water is getting to the roots of your plants.



Apply water slowly to the base of plants

Be sure your water only goes to the vegetable plants' roots. Water deeply and less often to encourage roots to go deep into the soil.



Water early or late

There is less water loss in the cooler times of day.



Check soil moisture

Before you water, look at and feel the soil to check dryness, not just at the surface, but 4-6 inches down.



Plant in containers

Less soil needs less water. Water is directed right to plant roots. Put a bucket in your shower and use shower "warm up water" to capture and use water that otherwise would go down the drain. Mix 30% compost into container soil.

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 Master Gardeners in both county programs ramped up drought education in all of their outreach. Weaving water efficient landscape practices into workshops, presentations, hotline calls and community events, the Master Gardeners spread the word about gardening in a drought. Information was posted on their websites, bookmarks were created with simple water saving tips, and social media posts concerning the drought increased over the past year. Furthermore, in local newspapers, articles were published written by Master Gardeners to address water wise gardening.

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.





SENIOR COMMUNITY GARDEN

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.

