



MASTER GARDENERS & COMPOSTERS

Program Highlights

270 certified Master Gardener volunteers giving over 16,000 hours of service .

Over 15,000 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 and 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 percent of a family’s garbage from the landfills and have helped Placer and Nevada Counties meet state mandated diversion rates.



MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER TRAINING

ISSUE

With a “growing” interest in gardening in our communities comes the increased need for more Master Gardener volunteers to help our local gardeners solve their gardening problems. Furthermore, in any volunteer organization, as projects expand in scope and quantity, the need for more volunteers to fill the needs of the organization becomes a high priority.

WHAT WAS DONE

In September 2016, recruitment began for the 2017 Master Gardener volunteer training. An informational meeting was held and the application process followed. After reviewing the applications and interviewing the applicants, 42 “trainees” were selected to begin the volunteer training in January. The training consists of 16 weeks of instruction with a different class every week. UC advisors, specialists and master gardener volunteers lead the classes and seek to teach not only gardening content but also diagnosis techniques. After all of the classes are completed, the trainees graduate and formally become a part of their local Master Gardener group.

IMPACT

In May 2017, 42 new Certified UC Master Gardeners were welcomed into our 2 programs. Each of these new members has agreed to give at least 50 hours of volunteer service within their communities. 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, as agents of the University of California, they also represent the University and are part of a larger effort going on statewide.



The Master Gardener volunteer training spans 16 weeks and requires a tremendous commitment from those taking the classes. In 2017, every trainee that began the volunteer training graduated and is now active in the program.



During the Master Gardener training, there are field trips that focus on certain elements of the gardening curriculum. Here, the trainees visit the Material Recovery Facility in Roseville to hear about their large scale composting operations.



FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES

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. In order to function efficiently and do the outreach they want to do, the groups must raise funds to support their goals. The Master Gardener program receives no funding from any external sources; that is, all funds come from their own fundraising activities.

WHAT WAS DONE

The Master Gardeners in Nevada County raise funds through two plant sales a year and the publishing of their own “Nevada County Gardening Guide” which is sold at various venues. The Master Gardeners in Placer County raise their funds through an annual Mother’s Day Garden Tour and the publishing of an annual calendar which is sold at various venues. These fundraising channels require constant attention and upkeep to maximize their fundraising potential and the educational outreach folded in to the activities.

IMPACT

For years, the Master Gardeners in each program have witnessed an incredible amount of support from the community when it comes to attending their fundraising events and purchasing their publications. More and more people show up every year for our plant sales and garden tour. This allows the groups to advertise all they offer at these venues and continually increase the number of community members that know about the services of the Master Gardener volunteers. Also, as the numbers of people grow, so do the funds. The Master Gardener groups are responsible stewards of the funds they raise and put the money to good use in their multitude of projects.



The Nevada County Master Gardeners get ready for one of their fundraising plant sales. Even with all the competition in the community, locals still come to buy from the Master Gardeners.



The Placer County Master Gardeners at one of the gardens on the garden tour. This event mobilizes most of our volunteers to staff the multitude of gardens on the tour.



DEMONSTRATION GARDENS



The Placer County Master Gardeners carved out a Vegetable Demonstration garden within the senior community garden in Auburn. This venue provides educational workshops for the public and a gathering spot for the Master Gardener group.



The Nevada County Master Gardeners started developing a demonstration garden back in 1990 with a few members, some land donated by NID, and a lot of manual labor!

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 36 workshops are given between the two Master Gardener groups at their Demonstration Gardens. This translates to over 850 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.



DIAGNOSING PLANT PROBLEMS

ISSUE

Master Gardener programs are guided by the desire to help local gardeners experience success in their gardens. A big part of facilitating success in the garden is the ability to diagnose plant problems accurately. At our hotline stations in our offices, at farmers market venues across the counties, and at community events the Master Gardeners attend, local gardeners approach the Master Gardener volunteers with plant problems and the often asked question, “What’s wrong and what should I do?”

WHAT WAS DONE

The Master Gardeners in both county programs participate in the initial volunteer training where they learn the basic science of how plants grow and what to look for when diagnosing plant problems. This skill of being able to diagnose plant problems takes constant learning and lots of experience. Through advanced trainings, field trips and University sponsored continuing education opportunities, the Master Gardener volunteers hone their skills in the realm of plant problem diagnosis. Often, plant problems are shared with the larger membership to elicit input. This not only serves to help the clients but also the entire organization as the members are exposed to more and more plant issues and their solutions.

IMPACT

The Master Gardeners serve hundreds of requests for plant diagnosis at a variety of venues. These submissions help the volunteers get better and better at plant diagnosis while simultaneously helping the organization keep up with the pest issues going on in the region. Clients receive accurate information and also learn the resources available for them through the Master Gardener program. Our hotline stations at each county office take calls, walk-ins and email questions. We have developed a reputation for accurate diagnosis of plant problems in a short amount of time.



Master Gardeners in training learn all about plant parts and how plants live and function. This training serves as the foundation for further work and study as the classes go on for 16 weeks.



The Master Gardeners in each county receive many samples of plants with issues. Here is an example of a raspberry plant that did not set fruit. What’s wrong and what should be done?



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.

