

2023 & 2024

**UC Master Gardener  
Program**

# IMPACT REPORT

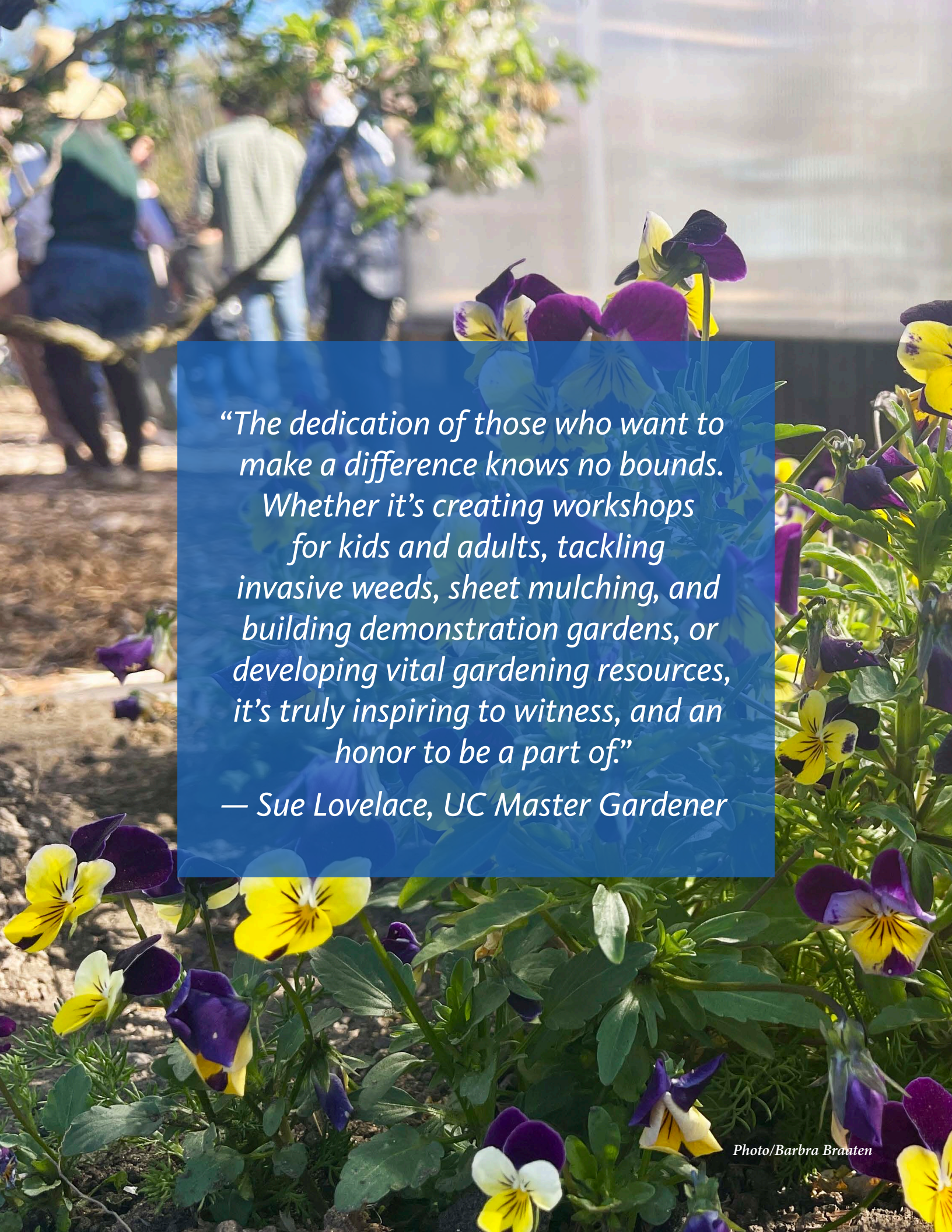


**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
Agriculture and Natural Resources

UC Master Gardener Program







*“The dedication of those who want to make a difference knows no bounds. Whether it’s creating workshops for kids and adults, tackling invasive weeds, sheet mulching, and building demonstration gardens, or developing vital gardening resources, it’s truly inspiring to witness, and an honor to be a part of.”*  
— Sue Lovelace, UC Master Gardener

Photo/Barbra Braaten

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Dear Friends and Supporters,

It is with immense pride and gratitude that I welcome you to our latest biennial impact report. The past two years have been filled with remarkable achievements and inspiring stories that reflect the dedication of our volunteers and the resilience of our community. This report encapsulates the breadth of our impact, showcasing the diverse initiatives we have undertaken to promote conservation, community engagement, and practical gardening solutions.

As we look back, we celebrate the meaningful contributions we've made: from halting the spread of invasive species and enhancing environmental awareness in schools to our collaborative efforts in preparing landscapes for wildfire resilience. Our commitment to teaching the next generation about the importance of pollinators and sustainable gardening practices continues to grow.

In this report, we are particularly excited to share stories that reflect our innovative approaches and community partnerships. You will find inspiring accounts of our gardening programs in prisons, where we empower individuals through horticultural education. Additionally, our community science initiatives have engaged volunteers in vital work identifying and monitoring invasive species. The enthusiasm of young gardeners in our school garden projects, where children learn to grow their own food, is a testament to the future of sustainable practices.

As an organization, we remain steadfast in our commitment to serve all Californians. We have broadened our training for both staff and volunteers, and our program—review committee has been instrumental in identifying opportunities to better serve a diverse clientele. These efforts are not just initiatives; they are integral to our mission and the communities we aim to uplift.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to each of you for your invaluable contributions. Your passion and dedication make our work possible, and I am continually inspired by the collective impact we create. As you read through this report, I hope you feel the gratitude I hold for our volunteers, leaders, and supporters—each of you plays a vital role in our journey.

Thank you for being a part of our community. Together, we are making a lasting difference.



*Missy Gable*

Missy Gable  
Director | UC Master Gardener Program



UC Master Gardeners of Los Angeles County at the Santa Fe Community Garden in Long Beach, Calif. Photo/Elena Zhukova



**34K**  
TOTAL  
TRAINED  
VOLUNTEERS

**6,328**  
ACTIVE  
VOLUNTEERS

**994K**  
HOURS  
DONATED

**\$37M**  
VALUE OF  
VOLUNTEER  
SERVICE

Photo/Jackie Garcia, Orange County

## our story

The UC Master Gardener Program began in 1980 with a simple idea: empower everyday people to make a difference through gardening. Fast forward to today, and the program has flourished into a network of 6,328 active volunteers and nearly 34,000 total trained UC Master Gardeners across 52 counties in California.

Each UC Master Gardener brings a unique story and a shared commitment to giving back. They delve into horticulture training, learning not just how to grow plants but also how to nurture connections.

Whether it's helping a family plant their first vegetable garden or teaching drought-friendly landscaping, UC Master Gardeners are at the forefront of our mission to conserve resources, protect the environment, and build resilience in the face of our changing climate.

We support people on growing their own food and gardening more sustainability. Recognizing the diversity of California's people and landscapes, we tailor our outreach to meet the unique needs of our communities. From hands-on workshops to one-on-one advice, the program offers a range of opportunities to connect with gardeners of all experience levels. Our volunteers:

- host educational workshops that help participants to garden sustainably
- answer questions by phone or email, helping residents grow fruits, vegetables, and flowers or manage garden pests
- provide hands-on demonstrations at school gardens, community spaces, and public demonstration sites
- share horticulture skills with youth and adults in detention centers, seniors in memory care facilities, and veterans at military-serving organizations

### volunteers by county

#### *Single-county programs*

Alameda 204  
Amador 67  
Butte 98  
Calaveras 85  
Colusa 21  
Contra Costa 256  
El Dorado 156  
Fresno 199  
Glenn 12  
Imperial 22  
Lake 18  
Los Angeles 380  
Madera 43  
Marin 390  
Mariposa 76

Mendocino 25  
Merced 43  
Napa 177  
Nevada 111  
Orange 313  
Placer 159  
Riverside 273  
Sacramento 232  
San Bernardino 180  
San Diego 350  
San Joaquin 130  
San Luis Obispo 133  
Santa Barbara 81  
Santa Clara 332  
Shasta 50  
Solano 149

Sonoma 253  
Stanislaus 68  
Trinity 11  
Tuolumne 103  
Ventura 189  
Yolo 128

#### *Multi-county programs*

Del Norte-Humboldt 51  
Inyo-Mono 61  
Kings-Tulare 94  
Lake Tahoe Basin 42  
Monterey-Santa Cruz 134  
Plumas-Sierra 12  
San Francisco-San Mateo 193  
Sutter-Yuba 53



# our mission

*“To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California.”*

## delivering the UC ANR mission

UC Agriculture and Natural Resources (UC ANR) cultivates thriving communities, sustainable agriculture, resilient ecosystems, and economic prosperity in California through development and sharing of equitable and collaborative science-based solutions that have national and global impact.

- working towards a community that supports all people
- protecting the state’s natural resources
- safeguarding abundant and healthy food for all state residents
- developing a qualified workforce
- building climate-resilient communities and ecosystems
- promoting healthy people and communities

UC ANR PUBLIC VALUE	UC MASTER GARDENER FOCUS AREA	UC MASTER GARDENER TOPICS
Protecting California’s natural resources	Sustainable landscaping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Right plant, right place</li><li>• Green waste</li><li>• Pest management</li><li>• Pollinator-friendly gardens</li><li>• Water conservation</li></ul>
Safeguarding abundant and healthy food for all Californians	Food gardening	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Growing edible plants</li><li>• Expanding varieties grown</li><li>• Reducing produce loss</li><li>• Food security</li></ul>
Promoting healthy people and communities	Community well-being	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Health benefits of gardening and green spaces</li><li>• Spending more time outdoors</li></ul>
Building climate-resilient communities and ecosystems	Climate resilience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fire-wise landscapes</li><li>• Urban greening</li><li>• Informed communities</li></ul>



UC Master Gardeners Nena Niessen (left) and Mark Cheung (right) of Orange County in the Youth Demonstration Garden at the South Coast Research and Extension Center located in Irvine, Calif. Photo/Elena Zhukova



# our commitment

We are proud to continue our work to strengthen outreach efforts across the UC Master Gardener Program. Our mission is to improve the lives of all Californians through gardening. Ensuring meaningful access to research-based gardening information and support, regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, age, socioeconomic status, formal education or other factors, is our responsibility and privilege. We have been actively working to promote equal opportunity to gardening information and experiences for all Californians in several ways.

**In 2023 & 2024, the UC Master Gardener Program:**

- **...reduced barriers to education and training opportunities.** We continue to work on providing resources in multiple languages to ensure that language differences do not prevent people from participating in the program. In Orange County, volunteers hosted a series of six gardening courses in both English and Spanish. The model promotes self-sufficiency, resilience in times of crisis and community-well-being through experiential education in container, backyard, and community gardening. Additionally, we are creating gardens and event locations that are welcoming and inclusive for all participants, regardless of their physical abilities. This includes expanding the range of activities and projects that are specifically designed for children, seniors, and people with disabilities. In San Luis Obispo County, volunteers employed unique strategies to increase program visibility and attract new clientele, including offering low or no-cost courses like their Victory Garden workshop series.
- **...partnered with local governments, schools, and other community-based organizations to promote gardening as a tool for community well-being.** By leveraging resources and supporting partners in areas where they identify needs, we cultivate beautiful partnerships. For example, in Sonoma County with support from local government officials, UC Master Gardeners transformed a fire-damaged open space into the Los Guilicos Demonstration and Teaching Garden, an ADA-compliant, native, water-wise, fire-wise, wildlife-friendly garden for adults and children from area Title 1 schools. The UC Master Gardener Program of San Mateo and San Francisco Counties’ school garden team designs and delivers training for school garden leadership, including teachers and parents from Redwood City to Daly City.
- **...focused efforts on increasing the diversity of the program’s volunteer base.** Through outreach and recruitment efforts, the program strives to attract more diverse volunteers who bring a wide range of experiences and perspectives. This helps to broaden the program’s reach and ensure that we are representative of the communities we serve. To measure progress toward parity and accountability to accessibility goals, we conducted our first volunteer demographic survey in 2024. Early results suggest that we improved upon national data with regard to diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, and gender. Additionally, our newest program in Imperial County, represents the most diverse volunteer community across all metrics - a promising trend. We look forward to identifying and implementing strategies to ensure the equitable distribution of garden education resources across California communities.



Photo/Saoimanu Sope



## PROMOTING HEALTHY PEOPLE &amp; COMMUNITIES

## planting seeds of hope



Harvesting wax beans at San Diego's Youth Transition Campus. Photo/April Lowe

Gardening and green spaces are powerful tools for healing and transformation, especially in rehabilitation settings. The United States has one of the highest per-capita incarceration rates globally, with California serving as a significant hub of mass incarceration within the country. In 2019, the three-year recidivism rate was 42%, for incarcerated populations, therapeutic gardening programs have been linked to a 94% reduction in recidivism rates, as they teach critical life skills, promote emotional resilience, and inspire personal growth.

Research shows that even short periods of exposure to nature can significantly reduce stress levels and improve mental health by reducing cortisol levels, heart rate, and blood pressure. These statistics underscore the importance of innovative projects, like those led by the UC Master Gardener Program, which bring the life-changing benefits of

gardening to justice-involved youth and adults.

In the heart of San Diego's Youth Transition Campus (YTC), a vibrant 8,000-square-foot garden is redefining what rehabilitation looks like for justice-involved youth. Against the backdrop of raised beds, a mini orchard, and the hum of pollinators, young women aged 13-20 are reconnecting with themselves and imagining new futures, one seed at a time. Every Saturday, UC Master Gardeners teach lessons on sustainability, organic gardening, and environmental stewardship. Girls take these lessons to heart, often incorporating their newfound knowledge into their reentry plans. For one participant, the lessons are deeply personal, "I don't care if it's just one pot; I'm going to have a garden wherever I live after I leave." Her sentiment echoes the garden's core philosophy—that nurturing life in the soil can inspire a belief in one's potential.

***"If you don't water the grass, it's not going to grow. I look at the garden and look at it as my life. I need to take care of myself to thrive." - YTC Participant***

UC Master Gardeners in San Diego County have engaged with more than 5,600 participants since the project began in 2012, reflecting the program's far-reaching impact. This success is built on a strong partnership between the UC Master Gardener Program, the San Diego Probation Department, and the County Office of Education. Together, they have created a space that promotes food security and nutrition, but also serves as a resource for emotional healing, skill-building, and personal growth.

At the women's campus at Elmwood Correctional Facility in Santa Clara County, the UC Master Gardener Program offers a 12-week beginner gardening course each spring and fall, providing more than 200 incarcerated women with hands-on experience in vegetable gardening, composting, soil health, and pest management. In collaboration with Elmwood staff and male inmates from the men's campus, a small but thriving garden was built featuring five raised beds, drip irrigation, and compost bins. Beyond gardening, the program integrates mindfulness practices and gentle exercises like Chi Gong and rock painting, emphasizing both physical and mental well-being.

***The impact has been profound, a pre and post program survey revealed a 250% increase in participants feeling peaceful, while feelings of anxiety, worry, or fear decreased by nearly 93%.***

One participant, who has been at Elmwood for an extended period and taken the course multiple times, has even begun assisting UC Master Gardeners in teaching lessons, demonstrating how gardening can foster leadership and personal growth.

(Continued on page 13)



UC Master Gardeners Kathy Hanson (far left), Edith Lim (front left) and Nancy Grove (far right) alongside women at the Elmwood Correctional Facility in Santa Clara County. Photo/Elmwood Staff



In Tuolumne County, the Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility Garden combines growing plants with emotional rehabilitation. Photo/Nancy Bliss



## Planting Seeds of Hope

(Continued from page 12)

The Elmwood Garden has plans to relocate and expand to a significantly larger space on the women's campus. This new garden will feature a diverse mix of edible and ornamental plants, native and low-water species, and a variety of pollinator-friendly flowers. The food grown will be sampled by program participants, incorporated into inmate meals, and donated to local food banks, extending the garden's impact beyond the facility walls. This expansion reflects a long-term commitment to integrating gardening into rehabilitation, providing more space for learning, healing, and community.

In Tuolumne County, the Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility Garden combines growing food with emotional rehabilitation. Surrounded by grape vines and berry bushes, youth are taught the art of gardening and the value of patience, teamwork, and perseverance. UC Master Gardener volunteers, like Jim Bliss, serve as mentors and role models, helping participants see beyond their current circumstances.

***"The garden reminds me of my family—it's like having a piece of home here." - Mother Lode Regional Juvenile Detention Facility Participant***



UC Master Gardeners from left to right, Edith Lin, Katie Koch, Laura Clark-Moore, Nancy Kawakita, and Jacqueline Raine celebrate with beginner gardening course students on their final day of class. Photo/Elmwood Staff

The project also incorporates a meditation garden, complete with koi fish and pollinator plants, offering a tranquil space for youth to reflect and reset. Privileges to work in the garden are highly coveted, with even probation officers joining in to support the initiative. "The feedback from the youth and staff is extremely positive. They look forward to the UC Master Gardeners every week. Many of the youth have never seen many plants and have no idea how their food is grown," explains program coordinator Debbie Powell, "many have never tasted fresh produce directly out of the garden."

In San Diego, Santa Clara, and Tuolumne counties, these gardens address recidivism by reducing stress, teaching critical life skills, and fostering emotional resilience. With recidivism rates in California reaching 42%, the reduction associated with therapeutic gardening underscores the profound potential of these efforts. The work being done in these counties and countless others across California serves as a blueprint for how green spaces can transform rehabilitation centers into places of learning and growth. As the UC Master Gardener Program continues to partner with local agencies, its impact ripples outward — offering not just gardens but a renewed sense of hope.

## PROTECTING CALIFORNIA'S NATURAL RESOURCES

# invasive scouts

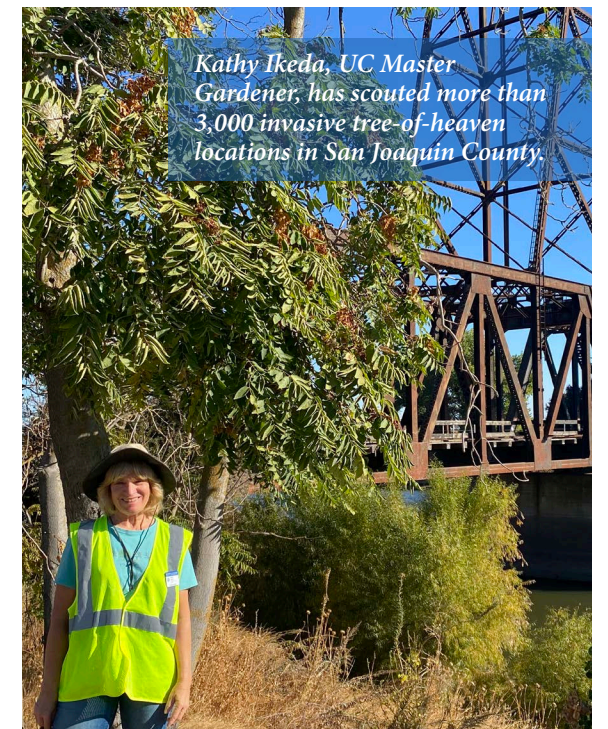
California's diverse ecosystems and landscapes are under constant threat from invasive plants and pests that disrupt native habitats, endanger wildlife, and jeopardize our food supply. These unwanted intruders arrive in surprising ways, tucked inside produce shipments, hiding in camping gear, or introduced through well-intended but harmful landscaping choices. Once established, invasives can spread rapidly, outcompeting native species for vital resources like water, sunlight, and space.

The numbers are staggering. According to the UC Riverside Center for Invasive Species, "on average, California acquires around nine new species of macro-invertebrate per year, of which around three will become pests. This is a rate of one new species every 40 days." The impact isn't just environmental, it's economic. Invasive pests cost California's agriculture industry an estimated \$3 billion annually in crop losses and damage.

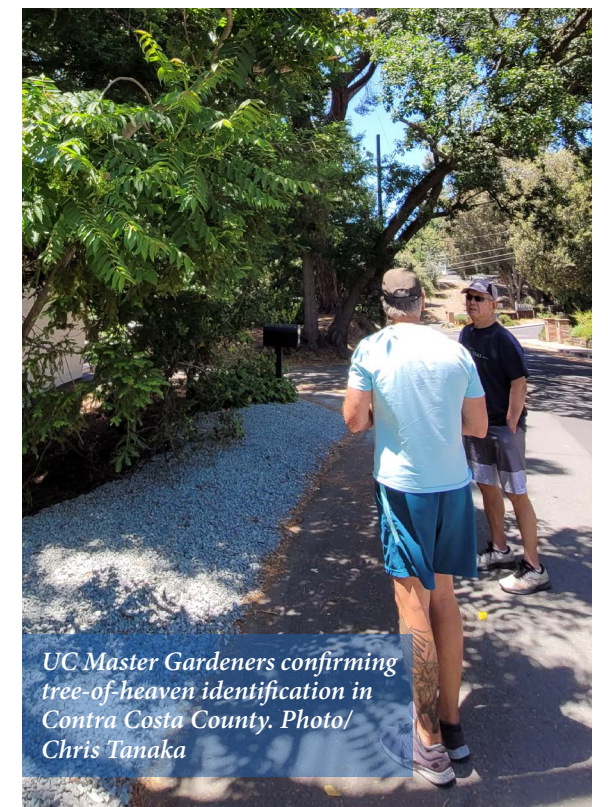
The UC Master Gardener Program offers hope on the front lines of this fight, educating communities, promoting responsible gardening practices, and working on projects that help detect and manage invasive species before they become established. Through partnerships with the California Department of Food and Agriculture (CDFA), UC Integrated Pest Management Program (UC IPM), and citizen science initiatives, UC Master Gardeners are playing a critical role in protecting California's landscapes and biodiversity.

An emerging invasive pest, the spotted lanternfly (*Lycorma delicatula*), has mobilized UC Master Gardeners across the state.

(Continued on page 15)



Kathy Ikeda, UC Master Gardener, has scouted more than 3,000 invasive tree-of-heaven locations in San Joaquin County.



UC Master Gardeners confirming tree-of-heaven identification in Contra Costa County. Photo/Chris Tanaka



## Invasive Scouts

(Continued from page 14)

The spotted lanternfly, an invasive leafhopper, is currently devastating crops in the eastern United States and poses a significant risk to California's agriculture. These insects target essential crops including grapevines and fruit trees, making early detection before establishment crucial.

The spotted lanternfly's preferred host is the tree-of-heaven (*Ailanthus altissima*), an invasive, fast-growing tree that aggressively outcompetes native vegetation. To mitigate the potential spread of this destructive pest, UC Master Gardeners are working in collaboration with the CDFA to identify and map tree-of-heaven locations. UC Master Gardeners have identified 76,000 tree-of-heaven across more than 5,000 locations statewide. "I have tree-of-heaven in my neighborhood and it's sprouted from roots in my backyard so I know how insidious it is. I'm highly motivated to eliminate it from our county," shared one UC Master Gardener. By increasing awareness of where these trees are established, this effort helps inform monitoring and management strategies to prevent the spotted lanternfly from gaining a foothold in California.

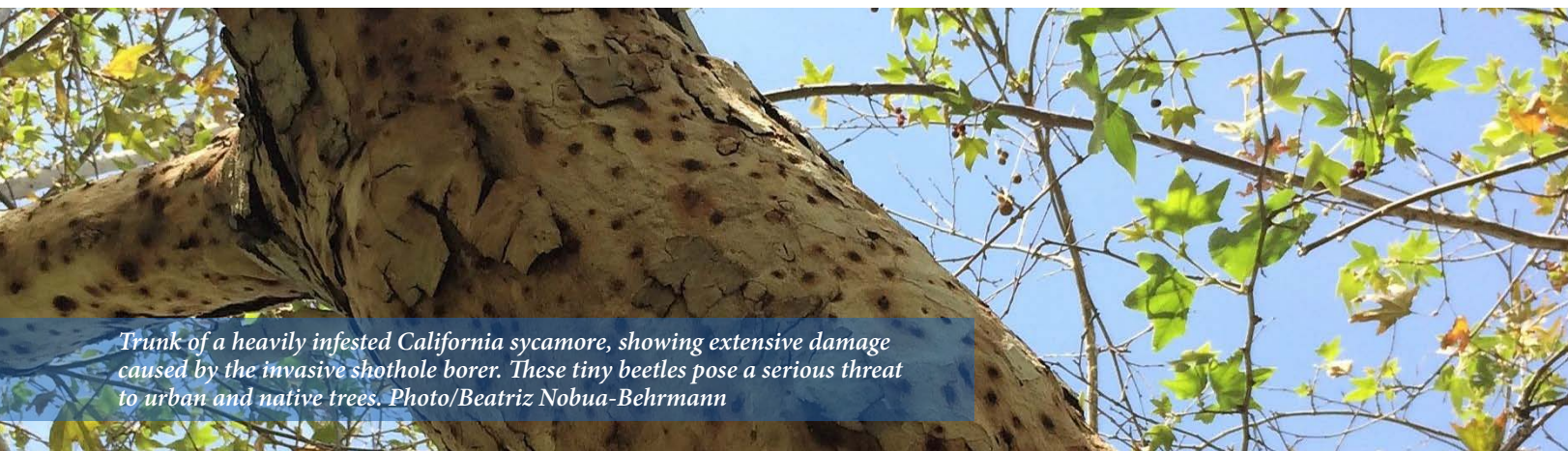
In late 2023 the detection of another invasive pest, the shothole borer in San Jose underscored the critical importance of

early intervention. Despite its tiny size, no larger than a sesame seed, the shothole borer poses a significant threat to fruit, shade, and ornamental trees and shrubs. It tunnels into trees, introducing a fungus that serves as its primary food source. As the fungus spreads, it causes a disease that can kill branches or entire stand of trees.

Drawing upon over a decade of experience in Southern California, where shothole borers have caused widespread devastation, UC Master Gardeners are playing a crucial role in helping communities recognize early signs of infestation before the pest becomes established. Their efforts are a key component of early detection that relies on strong collaboration between dedicated volunteers and scientific experts.

***"Because experts across the broader UC ANR network have many years of firsthand experience with this invasive pest, we are able to draw on their practical know-how to guide our monitoring, management, and public education efforts." - Sara Davis, City Forester for City of San José***

The potential consequences of inaction are severe. Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann, UC Cooperative Extension Urban Forestry Advisor for Los Angeles and Orange counties, illustrates the impact, "In one regional park, about 500 trees had to be removed in under a year. That kind of devastation occurred



Trunk of a heavily infested California sycamore, showing extensive damage caused by the invasive shothole borer. These tiny beetles pose a serious threat to urban and native trees. Photo/Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann

in many locations—a whole street might suddenly lose 90% of its trees." Alongside the UC Environmental Stewards Program, UC Master Gardeners are trained to learn how to identify and report infested trees with up to 96% accuracy. As one volunteer put it, they are "part of the solution," keeping watch today to safeguard the environment for our future.

In San Diego County, what began as a collaborative research project between UC Cooperative Extension and UC Master Gardener volunteers revealed an unexpected threat to California's native bee populations. The African tulip tree (*Spathodea campanulate*), prized for its vibrant orange and yellow blooms, was discovered to be harmful to native pollinators. Through data collection done by UC Master Gardeners, Eric Middleton, PhD, Area Integrated Pest Management Advisor, found multiple dead native bees and numerous other dead insects inside African tulip tree flowers. "In 2022 and 2023 we sampled ~50 trees, checked ~9,500 African tulip tree flowers, and found a total of 1,214 dead insects inside, including 241 dead bees," reports Middleton.

***"I was happy to participate in an activity that could bring about greater public awareness of potential risks to native species when introducing exotic plants -- gorgeous though they may be -- into the environment." - Mary Manaster, UC Master Gardener of San Diego County***

For Ventura County residents, citrus trees are more than just part of the landscape—they are a source of pride. So when the Asian citrus psyllid emerged as a serious threat, the community needed answers. UC Master Gardeners stepped up, determined to help residents before it was too late. Recognizing the urgent need for education, longtime volunteers Bonnie Ojai Brown and Linda Haque immersed themselves in state-level training and began sharing critical information with the public. Their passion led to the creation of the UC Master Gardener



UC Master Gardeners, Marla Yaeh (left) and Maria Clark (right) of Ventura County. Photo/Dave Strong

Program of Ventura County's Invasive and Beneficial Pest Outreach Group, dedicated to invasive species outreach and education.

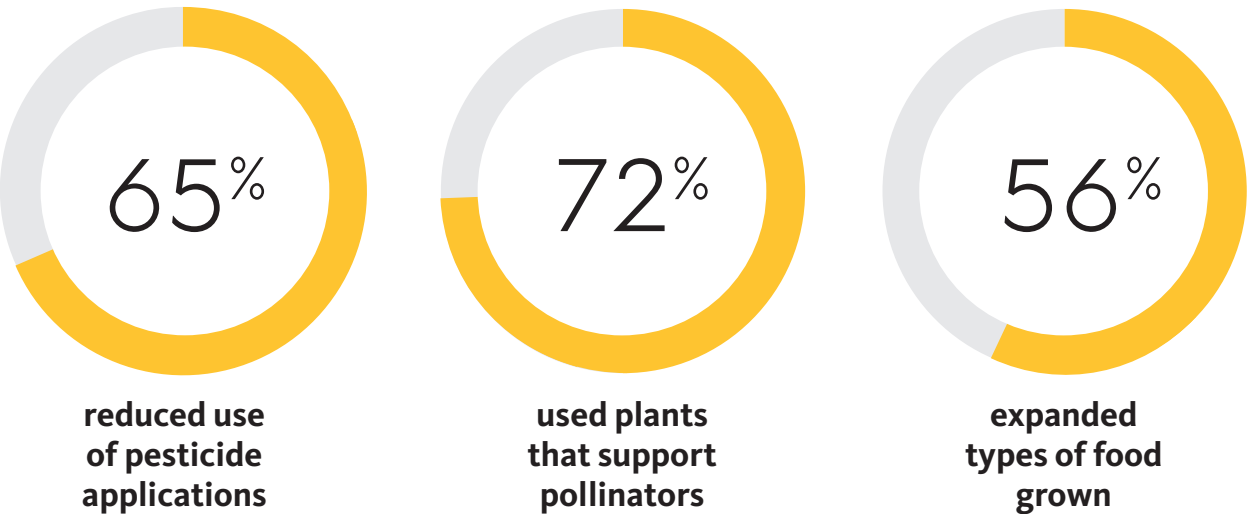
Through partnerships with the CDFA and mandatory training for all of Ventura County's UC Master Gardeners, Asian citrus psyllid awareness became a key message in every public presentation, reaching thousands across the county. The help desk fields questions, demo gardens showcase sustainable pest management strategies, and research-backed materials ensure that every resident who attends one of their workshops leaves with the knowledge to help protect their trees.

***"I'm a boots on the ground volunteer that likes to talk to people one-on-one about invasive species. It is wonderful to be able to speak to the public and educate them about the least environmentally toxic method to save the environment and manage a pest program in the garden."- Bonnie Ojai Brown, UC Master Gardener of Ventura County***

Ventura County's efforts have been so impactful they are now expanding their work to include queen whitefly and mosquito control in partnership with vector agencies. UC Master Gardeners continue to prove that community-driven education is one of the most powerful tools in the fight against invasive species.



# our impact



UC Master Gardeners are dedicated to supporting communities by building partnerships that foster sustainable gardens and green spaces. Through collaboration with local organizations, schools, and neighborhoods, they help create lasting environmental and educational benefits.

The numbers in this impact report reflect their commitment—whether through volunteer hours, community-driven garden projects, or fresh produce donations to local food banks, their collective efforts are making a meaningful difference across California.

**Fiscal Year 2022-23**  
Total Volunteer & Continuing Education Hours: 484,368  
Active Volunteers: 6,267  
Value of Volunteer Service: \$18,076,614\*

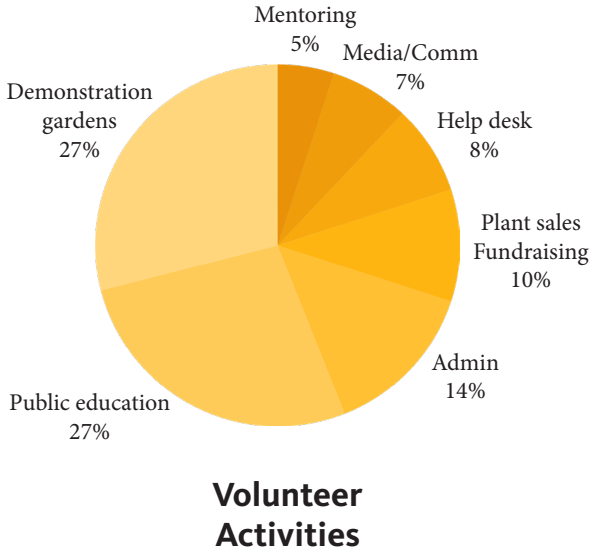
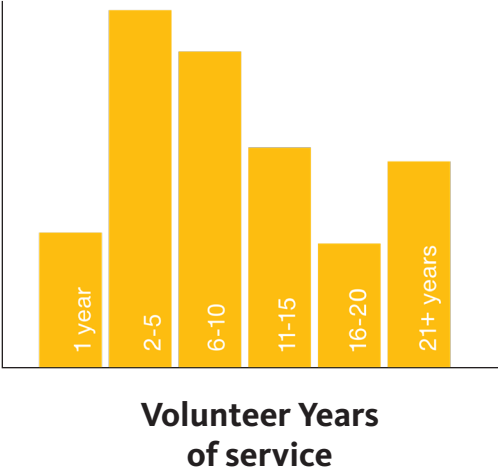
**Fiscal Year 2023-24**  
Total Volunteer & Continuing Education Hours: 510,060  
Active Volunteers: 6,328  
Value of Volunteer Service: \$19,693,417\*

**Total Face-to-Face Contacts Served**  
910,832

**Total Educational Events**  
5,250

**All-Time Impact Summary**  
Total All-Time Volunteer & Continuing Education Hours: 17,792,266  
Total All-Time Trained Volunteers: 33,712

\*According to Independent Sector, the California value of volunteer time was estimated at \$37.32 per hour (2022) and \$38.61 per hour (2023).



We surveyed attendees of public education events to assess changes in gardening behaviors. This report includes data from respondents across public education events statewide.

## RIGHT PLANT, RIGHT PLACE

70% improved plant selection based on size, sun, water needs, and maintenance

## PEST MANAGEMENT

60% reduced pesticide applications

57% avoided or removed invasive plants

47% followed pesticide label instructions

75% monitored for insects, weeds, or diseases

## WATER CONSERVATION

65% used mulch

63% selected low water-use plants

28% reduced turf areas



## PROMOTING HEALTHY PEOPLE & COMMUNITIES

# growing together



UC Master Gardeners Marilyn Howard (left) and Eloyd Rodriguez, (right) inspecting a new crop of lettuce. Photo/Thurman Howard

Across California, UC Master Gardeners are proving that green spaces and gardens grow more than plants—they grow community. Through partnerships, the UC Master Gardener Program expands access to gardening resources in all communities, creating spaces that nurture relationships and traditions. From tribal lands in Riverside County, to inclusive gardening in El Dorado County, and a high school farm feeding families in Orange County, these projects showcase the profound impact that gardening can have on individuals and the broader community.

In Riverside County, UC Master Gardeners and the Soboba Band of Luiseño Indians worked together to bring a vision to reality. The tribe had been gardening for countless generations but needed assistance in restoring their historically large crop yields.

To meet their goals, Jessica Valdez, a Tribal Archaeologist, and Eloyd Rodriguez, a Cultural Garden Specialist, worked alongside UC Master Gardeners such as Thurman and Marilyn Howard. Together they conducted soil tests, improved irrigation, and implemented integrated pest management (IPM) practices to control pests. UC Master Gardeners emphasized sustainable and organic gardening methods, aligned with the tribe's traditions, to promote long-term garden health.

Since the partnership began, the Soboba Cultural Garden has tripled its crop yield, producing more than a ton of fresh produce annually for the tribal community. Beyond improving food security, this collaboration has led to the first Soboba tribe member Eloyd Rodriguez becoming a UC Master Gardener volunteer.

***“This project makes me feel very blessed and honored to be a part of [the] teamwork.”— Eloyd Rodriguez, UC Master Gardener of Riverside County***

Nestled in the Sierra Nevada foothills, another garden partnership is transforming lives. The “Cross Pollination, Growing Abilities” project is a collaboration between the UC Master Gardener Program of El Dorado County, UC CalFresh Healthy Living, and Mother Lode Rehabilitation Enterprises (MORE), a nonprofit supporting individuals with disabilities.

Together, the team works to design and deliver inclusive gardening opportunities that engage and challenge MORE clients. UC Master Gardeners develop hands-on lessons tailored to participants' abilities, providing opportunities to build independence, job

skills, and social connections. Participants learn about sustainable gardening, and harvest crops they later use in cooking classes.

***The impact builds confidence. “I love to work in the garden,” one participant shared, while another added, “I like worms!”***

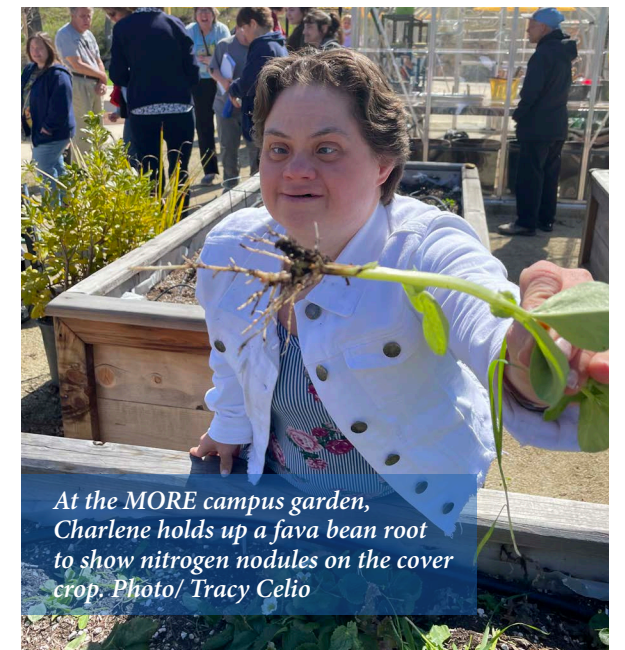
The Giving Farm at Westminster High School in Orange County is a unique high school Future Farmers of America program that operates an 8-acre farm with Solutions for Urban Agriculture and other community partners. It produces fresh food for the Orange County Food Bank while teaching youth about sustainable agriculture. UC Master Gardeners Maria Gutierrez-Garcia, Linda Lane, Todd Nicholson, Larry Wright, and many others have contributed thousands of volunteer hours rejuvenating and managing their fruit orchard and creating a new pollinator garden to support beehives for honey production.

***“Our mission is to produce as much food for the food bank while educating the youth – high school level, homeschoolers, elementary school.” – Larry Wright, UC Master Gardener of Orange County***

Working with Westminster High School and Solutions for Urban Agriculture alongside

community partners including the Orange County Food Bank, AmeriCorps, and corporate volunteer groups, the Giving Farm continues to be a space of giving - and receiving - garden knowledge, produce, time and energy

From tribal traditions to educational programs, from inclusion initiatives to food security efforts, these gardens bring communities together one person and one plant at a time!



At the MORE campus garden, Charlene holds up a fava bean root to show nitrogen nodules on the cover crop. Photo/ Tracy Celio



UC Master Gardener Ed Andrade (second from right) cleaning pruning tools alongside Westminster High School students. Photo/ María Gutiérrez-García



# gardeners with heart

Gardeners with Heart recognizes UC Master Gardeners who go above and beyond in four key areas: **Food Gardening**, where volunteers increase food access and people grow their own produce; **Sustainable Landscaping**, where they champion water-wise gardening, composting, and pollinator-friendly spaces; **Community Well-Being**, where they extend outreach to communities and the mental and physical health benefits of gardening; and **Climate Resilience**, where they lead efforts in fire-wise landscaping, urban heat island mitigation, and native plant gardening.



## BARBARA DAVIDGE

Monterey-Santa Cruz Counties

*"It is truly inspiring to think we can address food insecurity and provide people an opportunity to enjoy the wholesome benefits of gardening."*—Barbara Davidge, UC Master Gardener



## EDITH LIN

Santa Clara County

*"With dedication and care, Edith has helped women at Elmwood find joy, confidence, and empowerment through gardening. She nurtures hope and resilience in every participant."*—Katherine Uhde, Coordinator



## HECTOR VERA-URIBE

Stanislaus County

*"Hector works throughout the county to provide support in English and Spanish for vegetable gardening, leading to improved food access in Stanislaus County."*—Anne Schellman, Coordinator



## CLIO TARAZI

Sonoma County

*"Clio assembled a team of more than 20 Master Gardener volunteers to restore a garden from a charred wasteland into a functional [...] outdoor classroom."*—John Dennis, UC Master Gardener



Photo/Massimo Paolini, Santa Clara County

**Volunteers are the heart of our program, bringing knowledge, dedication, and passion to communities across California. Gardeners with Heart recognizes those who go above and beyond to educate, inspire, and make a lasting impact.**

## 2023

Dana Aguero, Sonoma County  
Marion Cantor, Yolo County  
Kelly Christensen, Orange County  
Joanne Crawford, Orange County  
Barbara Davidge,

Monterey-Santa Cruz Counties  
Michael Davis, El Dorado County  
Pat Decker, Sonoma County  
Kimble Deleon Goodman,

Los Angeles County  
John Duran, Fresno County  
Chrissy Freeman, Nevada County  
Noreen Goff, Amador County  
Maria Gutierrez-Garcia, Orange County  
Donna Halker, Orange County  
Lesley Harvell, Sutter-Yuba Counties  
Diane Hernandez, El Dorado County  
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Freshly harvested carrots at the Soboba Cultural Garden located in Riverside County. Photo/Eloyd Rodriguez



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The impact made by the program in counties across the state would not be possible without our incredible network of program coordinators, academic advisors, county directors, and volunteer leaders (listed in alphabetical order by county for the current program year).



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