

UC Cooperative Extension



San Luis Obispo & Santa Barbara County News

Science-based solutions for healthy and resilient communities, food systems, and environments

December 2025

Message from the UCCE Director

Welcome to our final newsletter of 2025

When we launched this monthly newsletter, our goal was to keep our communities informed and engaged in creating knowledge and resources in agriculture, natural resources, youth development, and community health. Each edition helps us learn and improve, and we hope you find something useful every month.

2025 brought many changes and challenges across government and science, where UCCE operates. These challenges helped make us razor focused on our mission to mobilize the best in UC research and local experience to improve lives. This year also brought opportunity; we welcomed new staff, including a 4-H Program Assistant, a Disaster Resilience Advisor, and a new 4-H Advisor. And we said goodbye to longtime Oak Woodland Specialist, [Bill Tietje](#) who retired after 30 years of service.

Adapting to local and global challenges has always been central to our work at UCCE. By combining robust science with local knowledge, we co-create solutions that matter. Please enjoy our December newsletter with grant opportunities, resources for growers and some updates on what is happening in our community education programs. We look forward to connecting with you in 2026. Happy Holidays to you and your loved ones!

Shannon Klisch, UCCE Director

Winter Holiday

Our office will be closed for the Winter Holiday
Thursday, **December 25th** and
Thursday, **January 1st**. We will
reopen and resume normal business
hours on Friday December 26th and
Friday, January 2nd.



UCCE Advisor Updates

Central Coast Nursery & Floriculture Meeting

January 14, 2026
12:00 - 1:00 PM

**Speaker: Santa Barbara County Ag Commissioner,
Jose Chang**

Location: Carpinteria, CA

****Address provided at registration****



This is an opportunity for nursery and floriculture professionals from across the region to share knowledge, discuss challenges, and establish common goals. Lunch will be provided.

This meeting is hosted by:

Emma Volk, Production Horticulture Advisor @ University of California
Cooperative Extension

Stephanie Stark, Santa Barbara Deputy Agricultural Commissioner

Contact Emma, evolk@ucanr.edu or (805) 212 0495, with any questions

[Register Here](#)

Transition to Organic Webinar Series for Crop Producers

A weekly webinar series to walk you through the organic transition process

Dates: Every Wednesday from January 14 – March 18, 2026*

Time: 12:00 – 1:15 PM (presentation + Q&A)

Optional Office Hours: 1:15 – 2:00 PM

Hosted by: Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF), the UC Organic Agriculture Institute (OAI) and UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE)

Registration: Required

Cost: Thanks to our funders this series is offered at no cost.

Location: Virtual (Zoom link provided upon registration)

Questions?: Contact Grace Jackson (grace@caff.org) or Katharina Ullmann (kullmann@ucanr.edu) or call (530) 786-0224

Each session will include Spanish and Hmong interpretation.

Cada taller incluirá interpretación simultánea al español.

Yog koj hais lus Hmoob, caw kog tuaj koom lub rooj cob qhia txog kev ua teb (thamabxaj) organic, peb txhais ua lus Hmoob thiab.

More information and a link to register can be found on this [website](#).



UC Organic Agriculture Institute
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources



UC Cooperative Extension
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Agriculture & Natural Resources

The Plant/Pest Environment in Santa Barbara/Ventura Counties



Author: Ben Faber

I've often heard it said that it's the soil that makes these two counties so appropriate for agriculture. Well, there are some pretty terrible soils here, as well as wonderful ones. The USDA has a classification for soils that describes all soils in the world. It's based mainly on the rock it is formed from (the parent material), how long the soil has been sitting in place and exposed to weathering.

Photo Credit: UC ANR IPM: [Citrus Pest Management Guidelines](#)

[Read More Here...](#)

Disaster Resilience

Santa Barbara's Monique Limón Elected as President Pro Tempore of the CA State Senate

UCCE Disaster Resiliency Advisor, Lilian Thaoxaochay, attended a reception on December 9, 2025, in celebration of [Senator Monique Limón's election](#) as the 50th President Pro Tempore of the California State Senate. Senator Limón is the [first Santa Barbaran, mother, and Latina to hold this role](#). She represents the 21st Senate District which includes all of Santa Barbara County and parts of San Luis Obispo and Ventura Counties.

Senator Limón notably chairs the Senate Natural Resources and Water Committee – and has championed ecological grazing (SB 675) and prescribed burns (SB 1101) for wildfire management.

The reception was held at [The Hub](#) in downtown Santa Barbara and was co-hosted by the [Santa Barbara Community Environmental Council](#) which has been a long-time leader and supporter of climate smart practices and strategies for farmers and land stewards in the region, and the [California](#)

Climate and Agriculture Network (CalCAN). CalCAN is a statewide network that advances state and federal policy on climate solutions with an emphasis on farms and agriculture. They are guided by a Stewardship Council, Farmer Advisory Council, and Science and Technology Advisory Council which includes several Central Coast **[professionals, farmers, and UCANR advisors](#)**.



Photo Credit: Tia Kordell, Community Environmental Council Limon Reception group photo

Grant Opportunities for Farmers

San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara County farmers, food producers, and community partners interested in applying to research, demonstration, or incentive grants to improve climate resiliency may contact: Lilian Thaoxachay, Disaster Resiliency, Planning, and Policy Advisor for assistance on applications and proposals at lilthaox@ucanr.edu or (805) 441-4119.

Have a disaster resiliency story you'd like to share? Contact Lilian at lilthaox@ucanr.edu or 805-441-4119 to be featured.

Subscribe to the blog by clicking [here](#).

UCCE Community Education Programs

CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE hosts interactive information booth at the Holiday Food for Families Event

Healthy School Pantry – El Camino Jr. High

The UCCE team joined a long-standing community partner for the revived Healthy School Pantry event, a pre-COVID tradition that brought families together each month for resources and support. They hosted a warm, welcoming table focused on Thanksgiving food safety, sharing tips on proper turkey handling, thawing, cooking, and storage. Families enjoyed a culturally responsive recipe tasting and a fun spin-the-wheel activity that highlighted key

holiday safety messages. The event strengthened community trust, reflected the partner agency's appreciation for ongoing collaboration, and provided families with practical, approachable tools to prepare safe, healthy holiday meals.

[Read More Here...](#)



Families arrive at El Camino Junior High School Thursday during the Santa Maria-Bonita School District holiday food drive.

Photo Credit: Randy De La Peña, Contributor



Families wait in line Thursday at El Camino Junior High during a holiday food drive held by the Santa Maria Bonita School District.

Photo Credit: Randy De La Peña, Contributor



Produce and vegetables were distributed Thursday during a holiday food drive at El Camino Junior High School in Santa Maria.

Photo Credit: Randy De La Peña, Contributor



UC Master Gardeners

The UC Master Gardeners have been working with the Central Coast Zoo to develop a pollinator demonstration garden and teach visitors about regionally specific plants, pest management and encouraging beneficial insects and pollinators. According to Atascadero Director of Community Services Terrie Banish, "the project will contribute to the beautification of a main corridor area in the city, enhance the appearance of nearby neighborhoods and businesses, and create a more inviting and walkable environment."

Read more about the project in this [New Times article](#)



Photo Credit: BUTTERFLY BOULEVARD Atascadero is committing \$88,000 to build a native pollinator garden along Highway 41, aiming to create a stable stopover for migrating butterflies while revitalizing a prominent stretch of roadway. Credit: FILE PHOTO BY CHRISTOPHER GARDNER



UC Master Food Preservers



UC Mater Food Preservers collaborate with CalFresh Healthy Living, UCCE to teach youth nutrition and food preservation lessons in Santa Barbara county at a local elementary school Photo Credit: dehydrated corn harvested from the school garden, used to make popcorn. UCCE Volunteer



In San Luis Obispo county, UC Master Food Preservers educate the public on food resource management at local food banks, an essential skill especially when SNAP funds were reduced during November. UC Master Food Preserver volunteers shared helpful information on how to use foods given at distribution sites and will continue this work in the coming months. Photo Credit: UC Master Food Preserver booth at food bank distribution. UCCE Staff

Funding Opportunities



Urban Agriculture Microgrant Program (Deadline: January 2, 2026) – Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) is awarding \$10,000 microgrants for projects that **“enhance the viability of urban agriculture”**. Eligible applicants are growers and farmers, community-based, for profit and non-profit organizations, and local governments, and schools operating within 25 miles of an urban area (50,000+ people). For application instructions - click [HERE](#). This funding is made available due to [Prop 4](#).



Sustainable Agriculture and Food Systems Small Grants Program (Deadline: January 14, 2026) – The **UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program (UC SAREP)** is accepting proposals for projects which span research, education, and outreach as well planning. Examples of [previously awarded projects](#) can be found on their website along with the [application instructions](#).



Supplemental Disaster Relief

Program (SDRP, Deadline: April 30, 2026) – The **USDA Farm Service Agency (FSA)** began accepting applications on November 29, 2025, for *Stage 2* of SDRP for producers with uninsured

or shallow drought-based losses from 2023 and 2024 that were not previously covered by *Stage 1* of SDRP. Applicants who receive funds from this program must purchase federal crop insurance or NAP coverage for the next two available crop years at the 60% coverage level or higher. For more information about San Luis Obispo County, contact the Templeton Office (65 S Main Street, Suite 106, Templeton, CA) at (805) 434-0398. For more information about Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties, contact the Santa Maria Office (920 E Stowell Road, Santa Maria, CA) at (805) 928-9269.

Come Work for UCCE

Cottage Foods Operations Education Specialist:

This is a statewide program that can be based in San Luis Obispo, Camarillo, or Ventura

For more information and to apply, [Click Here](#)

Agricultural Education Specialists:

Hansen Agricultural Research and Extension Center in Camarillo

For more information and to apply, [Click here](#)

Partner Resources

The Cachuma Resource Conservation District works in partnership with the USDA Natural Resource Conservation Service, a branch of the federal government, and many other agencies, organizations, business and landowners. One of our primary purposes is to support and promote economically viable and environmentally sustainable farming and ranching operations.

We have a dedicated team of partners, staff, and professional experts available to assist the community.

More information can be found at this website:

<https://www.rcdsantabarbara.org/>

UCCE in Ventura, Santa Barbara, and San Luis Obispo counties improves the lives of local residents by working with growers, families, volunteers, and partners to advance science-based solutions in agriculture, natural ecosystems, community health, and youth development.

Your support helps in many ways.

Thank you.

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