UC Master Gardener
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

ROOTED IN MARKETING

February 2026

Greetings!

This issue of Rooted in Marketing marks the start of our third year—thank you for all the feedback along the way. We love seeing how your communications continue to grow and evolve.

Looking ahead, we're shifting Rooted's publication to the middle of the month to better balance competing priorities. Beginning in March, you'll receive Rooted on the second Tuesday of each month. We'll also be sharing content inspiration guides two months in advance to give you more time to plan ahead. This issue includes inspiration for both March and April.

We hope Rooted continues to be a helpful resource. If there are topics you'd like us to cover in the coming year, please let us know—we're always glad to hear from you.

Here's everything you can find in this month's issue of *Rooted in Marketing*:

- Accessibility - Why all the fuss?
- Branding reminder on common mistakes
- Resources - Accessibility TIps
- March & April content inspirations
- Upcoming & previous training

If you have any questions or need help with marketing, join our weekly office hours, ask questions in our private Facebook group, or email us. We're here to support you.

Happy Gardening! 💗
Melissa & Barbra
UC Master Gardener Program
Statewide Communications Team

Why accessibility matters

Accessibility is a fundamental part of how the UC Master Gardener Program serves Californians. It ensures that the research-based information we share—through websites, newsletters, social media, videos, and educational materials—can be accessed and understood by everyone in our communities.

Accessibility supports a wide range of people, including those with low vision, color blindness, hearing loss, mobility limitations, cognitive or learning disabilities, attention disorders, brain injuries, and age-related changes in vision, hearing, or memory. It also benefits people with temporary disabilities and those accessing content in less-than-ideal conditions, such as on mobile devices or in noisy environments.

Clear structure, readable text, captions, descriptive links, and plain language improve usability for everyone—not just people who identify as having a disability.

Accessibility is a legal requirement

Accessibility is not a UC ANR or UC Master Gardener initiative. It is a federal requirement. In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice finalized updates to Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), clarifying that digital content created or shared by public entities must be accessible. As a public institution, the University of California is required to comply with these regulations, and they apply to all UC-affiliated programs.

UCOP outlines the University's responsibilities and approach to compliance through its Electronic Accessibility policy and resources. Additional clarification is available in the UCOP Digital Accessibility FAQ.

What content is covered

The updated ADA regulations apply broadly to digital content used to communicate with the public, including:

- county and statewide websites
- blog posts and gardening guides
- social media posts and graphics
- videos and recorded webinars
- newsletters and email communications
- PDFs and downloadable documents
- online forms and registration pages

UC ANR provides specific guidance for ANR-managed websites, including expectations for page structure, images, links, and document use. Join us on Wednesday, February 4th, to learn more about the new UCANR website guidelines. See the training section below for Zoom details.

Standards and timeline

Digital content must meet Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level A and AA standards, which define how to make content perceivable, operable, understandable, and

robust for users with disabilities. The full standard is available at w3.org/TR/WCAG21.

The compliance deadline for public entities, including the University of California, is April 24, 2026. Building accessibility into everyday workflows now—rather than retrofitting content later- reduces risk and makes compliance more manageable.

Why this matters

Failure to meet accessibility requirements can result in formal complaints, required content takedowns, or legal enforcement. Beyond compliance, inaccessible content creates barriers for community members and weakens trust in UC programs as public-serving institutions. Accessibility directly supports the UC Master Gardener mission to extend research-based knowledge to all Californians. It is not about perfection, but about making thoughtful, consistent choices that allow more people to benefit from our work.

Support and resources

UCOP, UC ANR, and the UC Master Gardener Program provide guidance and tools to support accessible communications:

- UCOP Electronic Accessibility
- UCOP Digital Accessibility FAQ
- UC ANR website accessibility guidance
- UC Master Gardener accessibility resources
- WCAG 2.1 standards

Accessibility is part of how we meet our legal obligations and how we ensure the UC Master Gardener Program remains inclusive, credible, and effective statewide.

Branding reminder on common mistakes

Thank you to everyone for your quick adoption of the new UC Master Gardener branding. It has been great to see the new logo used consistently across counties over the past few months. Your efforts are helping reinforce a unified UC Agriculture and Natural Resources identity statewide.

As with any rebrand, there is a learning curve. We have noticed a few common logo uses that are not brand-compliant. Because the guidelines for this logo set differ from the previous version, we want to highlight a few important reminders.

Key logo guidelines to keep in mind

- UC ANR has not created county-specific versions of the UC Master Gardener logo. Counties may not create their own versions or add county names to the logo.
- Do not alter the logo - changes to color, layout, proportions, text, or graphic elements are not allowed.
- The social media logo mark (icon only) is intended for use as a social media profile image or as a supplemental logo. For all other uses—including social media graphics, flyers, presentations, and web content—the full logo must be used.
- The logo should be large enough to be clear and legible on social media, flyers, documents, etc. If the logo must be reduced to the point where it is no longer legible, it should be omitted from the graphic.

Using the correct logo consistently is essential to the UC Master Gardener rebrand and to maintaining a clear connection to UC ANR. Consistent application builds recognition, trust, and credibility across all programs.

Thank you for your continued support and care during this transition. As we move forward, we will follow up with county coordinators when logo uses don't align with the guidelines, to offer support and clarification as needed. Your attention to brand consistency plays an important role in strengthening the UC Master Gardener Program statewide.

Resources: Accessibility Tips

Tip 1: Headings (Structure)

Core skill: Use proper headings to structure content

Why it matters
Headings allow screen reader users and keyboard users to understand, skim, and navigate content efficiently. Without proper headings, documents and web pages are read as one long, undifferentiated block of text.

What to do (2-minute action)
Use the built-in Styles or Headings menu in your software (Word, Google Docs, PowerPoint, web editors) instead of manually formatting text with bold or font size.

Key reminders
- Use headings in logical order (Heading 1 → Heading 2 → Heading 3)
- Use only one Heading 1 per page
- Never skip heading levels

Learn more
- Siteimprove Learning Hub (For Staff Only): [Headings](#) (Formatting for Content Contributors)
- University of Minnesota ODA: [Headings overview](#)

Tip 2: Lists (Structure)

Core skill: Use true lists—not manual formatting

Why it matters
Assistive technologies announce how many items are in a list and allow users to move between items efficiently. Manually typed dashes or numbers don't provide this structure.

What to do (2-minute action)
- Use the built-in bulleted or numbered list tools
- Nest lists properly when needed

Where this matters most
Emails, reports, training materials, web content

Key Reminders
- Use real list tools - use Word, Outlook, Google Docs, or CMS bulleted/number list buttons--not typed dashes, asterisks, or numbers.
- Typing "-item" or "1) item" looks like a list visually, but screen readers don't recognize these as lists.

Learn more
- University of Minnesota ODA: [Lists](#)

Content Inspiration - March & April

Here is your content inspiration and Content Calendar for March & April 2026. Moving forward, you will receive content inspiration 6 weeks out, now that Rooted will be published in the middle of the month. The Content Calendar is set up to post three times a week on social media, using the buckets: education, inspiration, and promotion. As always, both of these documents are just suggestions! Please add or change the topic as needed. If you have questions, please email Barbra Braaten at bbraaten@ucanr.edu

March Social Media Inspiration

You can find inspiration for your March social media content, including the start of the National Garden Book Month, the first day of spring, and more.

- Download the March Inspiration Guide
- Download the March Content Calendar

April Social Media Inspiration

You can find inspiration for your April social media content, including the start of the National Volunteer Month, National Gardening Day, and more.

- Download the April Inspiration Guide
- Download the April Content Calendar

Upcoming Marketing Training & Events:

Webinar: New UC ANR Website Guidelines
Wednesday, February 4 at 11:00 a.m. (PT)
https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/93981376578?pwd=JkJny4sLZWSXMOFrsh9e0kkdZMgCAh.1
Meeting ID: 939 8137 6578
Passcode: 364614

Office Hours: UC Master Gardener Communications
Every Tuesday, 11 am -12 pm
Zoom link:
https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/96405979243?pwd=F6p7QLOzFIlgPZQIq1hbsdoXZwmHl9.1

Previous Recordings

From Spreadsheet to Spotlight in One Sheet
youtu.be/Apx1WFCO60A (June 2025)

Volunteer Communicator Orientation

youtube.com/watch?v=XutHQatDGmg (Oct. 2024)

Newsletter Best Practices
youtu.be/9uEOFPC2WvU (Jul. 2024)

Social Media Accessibility Guidelines
youtu.be/d1XAnZCcHyU (Aug. 2024)

Rooted in Marketing Past Issues: https://link.ucanr.edu/rooted

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Private Facebook Group for UC Master Gardener Communicators

Join

Subscribe to get the monthly issues of "Rooted in Marketing"

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Thanks for reading this month's issue! If you are unable to access this content due to a disability, please email bbraaten@ucanr.edu for assistance.

Our Mission
"To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California."

To support clarity and accessibility, this newsletter was edited with the assistance of artificial intelligence. All content reflects UC Master Gardener Program standards and review. If you need this information in an alternative format, please contact us and we will work with you to meet your needs.

The University of California Agriculture & Natural Resources (UC ANR) is an equal opportunity provider and employer.