



UC Master Gardener
University of California
Agriculture & Natural Resources

OUR VISION

Cultivate
environmental
stewardship
one garden at a time



Sonoma County Master Gardeners in The Children's Garden at the Los Guilicos Demonstration and Teaching Garden in Santa Rosa. Vegetables from the garden are donated to the Valley of the Moon Children's Center.

Our Vision

The University of California Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County provides research-based information in response to local community needs.

Our vision is to cultivate environmental stewardship one garden at a time. Sonoma County Master Gardener volunteers educate home gardeners about many topics including how to:

- Incorporate sustainable food gardening and landscape practices
- Cope with drought and improve water conservation
- Address fire resilience
- Adopt best practices in pest management

Educational Outreach

Sonoma County Master Gardeners reach the community in many different ways so people can learn how when and where they prefer. We have extensive video resources on our YouTube channel and website and social media outreach via Facebook and Instagram.

We connect one-on-one with community members through our:

- Information Desk online and at the UC Cooperative Extension (UCCE) Sonoma office
- Workshops, lectures and local farmers markets
- Home visits through our nationally recognized Garden Sense program

We have demonstration gardens located throughout Sonoma County that showcase best practices in sustainable landscaping and food production. Volunteers also focus on food security in partnership with several community gardens. Increasingly our offerings are available in both Spanish and English.



CONTACT

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EDUCATING the community with advice to grow by

Information Desk

Are you puzzled why the leaves on your lemon tree are turning yellow or what pest is devouring your tomato plants?

Sonoma County residents can contact us with garden-related questions by phone, email or in-person at our Information Desk at the UCCE office in Santa Rosa. During 2025 the Information Desk received nearly 575 inquiries.

Sonoma County Master Gardener volunteers staff the Information Desk to provide customized answers to home gardening questions, diagnose garden problems, and promote sustainable gardening practices using research-based information from the University of California and other academic or government institutions. Our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) specialists work with the Information Desk team to solve garden problems using the principles of IPM.

Master Gardener Laura Southworth has volunteered at the Information Desk since 2017. “The most common pests we see are aphids, thrips, and spider mites. Over and under watering is the most common environmental issue. “There can be a complex combination of factors affecting plant health, so solving that puzzle in order to recommend sustainable solutions is a fun, fascinating process.”

“The desk is very similar to my 30+ year profession as a pathologist analyzing specimens and rendering a diagnosis, often with the aid of a microscope,” says Master Gardener Michael Kambour.



Master Gardener Michael Kambour examines a specimen at the Information Desk in Santa Rosa.



Library Talks

The partnership between our Library Talks and Sonoma County Library reflects a shared commitment to community education, environmental stewardship and equitable access to knowledge.

For more than 30 years, Master Gardeners have offered free educational programs at library branches throughout the county, providing residents with trusted research-based information on sustainable gardening,

water conservation and food production.

The collaboration has expanded to include a demonstration garden, seed sharing, plant swaps and children’s programs connected to library activities. Together, these efforts create hands-on opportunities for people of all ages to learn about and connect with the natural world.

During 2025 we had 18 public education events at Sonoma County libraries and marked an exciting milestone: the first ever Master Gardener talk at the Roseland Regional Library. The presentation by Sonoma County Master Gardener Dr. Jeffrey Pierce about growing fruit year-round in Sonoma County drew a standing-room-only audience, reflecting strong community interest.

This enduring partnership between Master Gardeners and the Sonoma County Library continues to empower residents to garden successfully, care for the environment, and strengthen community ties.

Left photo: Sonoma County Master Gardener Dr. Jeffrey Pierce shares tips for growing avocados during a Library Talk at the Sebastopol Library.

Press Democrat Partnership

Sonoma County Master Gardeners have shared gardening information with the public since 1982. Over time, how and what we share has evolved due to technological advancements and changes in the environment.

Today Master Gardeners sow garden-related advice in multiple ways including social media, our website, public workshops and lectures, webinars, and information tables at farmers markets and other venues. Two additional tools help us pursue our mission to cultivate environmental stewardship one garden at a time: a monthly email newsletter and articles in the Pulitzer Prize-winning Santa Rosa Press Democrat newspaper.

Our first Press Democrat Gardening Advice article, that was published in February 2021, was about European mistletoe brought to Sonoma County by Luther Burbank. Our Gardening Advice articles, which are written and edited by Sonoma County Master Gardeners, are published on the second and fourth Saturday of each month in the Home & Garden section of the Press Democrat and are typically in a Q&A format. Our checklist of timely monthly garden tasks are published on the first Saturday of every month.

“Our goal is to answer common questions home gardeners have with information that’s reader friendly, informative and research-based,” says Master Gardener Debbie Westrick, leader of the Gardening Advice project team.

Our E-Blast newsletter is distributed monthly to 5,700 people. Each issue features coming events and topics such as food gardening, fire-wise landscaping, weed and pest management, and California native plants. Our YouTube videos, monthly garden tips and book reviews are also featured in E-Blast.

Local Partnerships

Sonoma County Master Gardeners partner with other community-based organizations to deliver programs to the public that are rooted in research-based information. Topics shared across the county include food gardening, IPM, climate change, California native plants, and fire-wise landscaping.

Farmers Markets

147 Information tables at farmers markets



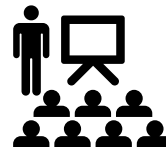
Sonoma County Fair with Sonoma Water

713 fair attendees visited the water-wise garden over 10 days



Sonoma County Library

18 lectures held at Sonoma County libraries



Harvest for the Hungry



35 informational videos created

Resilient Landscapes Coalition

16 sustainable defensible space workshops



Sonoma Ecology Center

453 kids attended Children’s Garden workshops



Sonoma Water

Over 2,700 Garden Sense visits since program inception



During 2025, Sonoma County Master Gardeners wrote 37 articles that were published in the Santa Rosa Press Democrat. Five of those articles were translated for the Spanish-language newspaper La Prensa.

Community Feedback

An Inspiration

"I'm new to having a native garden. I planted mine about a year and a half ago. I feel like I still have so much to learn. I truly love all the content you publish here. It's all so informative. Keep up the great work! You're inspiring me and hopefully others to plant natives!"

P.S. I can't wait to see everything start to bloom this spring. My native front yard is looking awesome!"

— Facebook follower

A Rooted Experience

"For the last 15 years our Master Gardener partners have prepared the Children's Garden at Sonoma Garden Park with such care that there's always something 'growing on' for every elementary class field trip which makes learning about cotton, peanuts, and seasonal fruits and vegetables a very rooted experience in our education program."

— Tony Passantino, Sonoma Ecology Center Education Program Manager

Manageable First Steps

Thank you so much! It's nice to have some manageable first steps to take for our yard. It makes the whole process feel less overwhelming."

— Garden Sense program client

Grateful for Support

"We are so grateful for the Master Gardeners' vision and support at Sebastopol Center for the Arts. We look forward to another great year working with your team."

— Serafina Palandech,
Executive Director

Field Trip Takeaways

"Thank you for showing us the garden and letting us plant seeds."

"I learned how a worm bed is made."

"I learned about bats and pollinators."

"The lavender made me feel calm."

— Schoolchildren who attended a field trip at the Los Guilicos Demonstration and Teaching Garden in Santa Rosa

Seedling Success

"This is sooo helpful! Thank you very much. From now on I will cover the seedlings to keep the pesty leafminer flies away. And, now I can plant chard again!"

So grateful,
Molly

[Email from an Information Desk client who was seeking a pesticide-free solution]

COLLABORATING to nurture community relationships



Heritage Corn Project

The Heritage Corn Project is a cross-cultural collaboration in Sonoma County that blends citizen science with ancestral heritage. The project was born from a singular vision: to explore the cultural, historical, and botanical journey of corn while fostering deep community roots.

Our primary purpose is to provide bilingual education on the “long story of corn”—from its origins in Mexico to its vital role in modern nutrition and botany. By testing whether Mexican heritage corn varieties can thrive in northern latitudes, Sonoma County Master Gardeners and community partners at Bayer Farm created a living classroom for sustainable agriculture.

The project reached diverse audiences through bilingual workshops, a commemorative book and shared harvest meals. Successful yields across four trial sites prove that heritage crops are vital tools for building community resilience and honoring cultural history.

The impact is best summarized by Sonoma County Master Gardener Sue Lovelace: “I will never look at corn without thinking of the 4,000-year journey it took from Mexico through our country. Bringing heritage corn to light means rediscovering the true history of our land.”

Garden Specialist Jonathan Bravo, Master Gardener Electra de Peyster and Bayer Farm volunteer and former Master Gardener Michael Knappman with heritage corn at Bayer Farm in Roseland.

Portable Container Gardens

The Portable Container Gardens program expands access to fresh, nutritious food by bringing hands-on container gardening education into clinics, schools, housing sites and other trusted community spaces across Sonoma County.

Through bilingual workshops delivered in partnership with local nonprofits, Sonoma County Master Gardeners and community educators teach people with limited space how to grow herbs and vegetables in upcycled containers.

From 2023 to 2025, Portable Container Gardens progressed from a small pilot to a well-established seasonal program in high demand. In 2025, the program delivered 12 free community workshops and reached 730 participants.

The program primarily serves Spanish-speaking families, low-income households, elders and renters who experience disproportionate barriers to food access and gardening education. Delivering workshops in familiar, trusted locations has resulted in strong participation, repeat engagement, and positive feedback from both participants and partner organizations.



Community members plant herbs and vegetables in containers at a Portable Container Garden workshop held at the Petaluma Health Center.

EMPOWERING adaptation to a changing climate

Resilient Landscapes Coalition

The Resilient Landscapes Coalition is a partnership formed in 2019 between Fire Safe Sonoma, Sonoma Ecology Center, Habitat Corridor Project and Sonoma County Master Gardeners to educate the community on sustainable defensible space.

This collaboration, funded by the County of Sonoma Vegetation Management program, achieved the following during 2025:

- 10 in-person workshops around the county,
- Information tables at 5 public events,
- 6 virtual workshops, and
- 15 new videos.

Coalition partners also maintain a website with in-depth information on balancing fire preparedness in home landscapes while valuing the ecosystem services home landscapes provide.

During the June 1, 2025 Wildfire and Earthquake Expo, Coalition partners set up a demonstration garden at the Sonoma County Fairgrounds to illustrate appropriate plant selection and hardscape options in the three defensible space zones. We were included as part of a Channel 7 news report about the event!



Resilient Landscapes Coalition members and Master Gardener volunteers answer questions at the 2025 Wildfire and Earthquake Expo. This annual hands-on event helps Sonoma County residents be better prepared for the next wildfire or earthquake. The Expo is the largest in-person emergency preparedness event in Sonoma County.



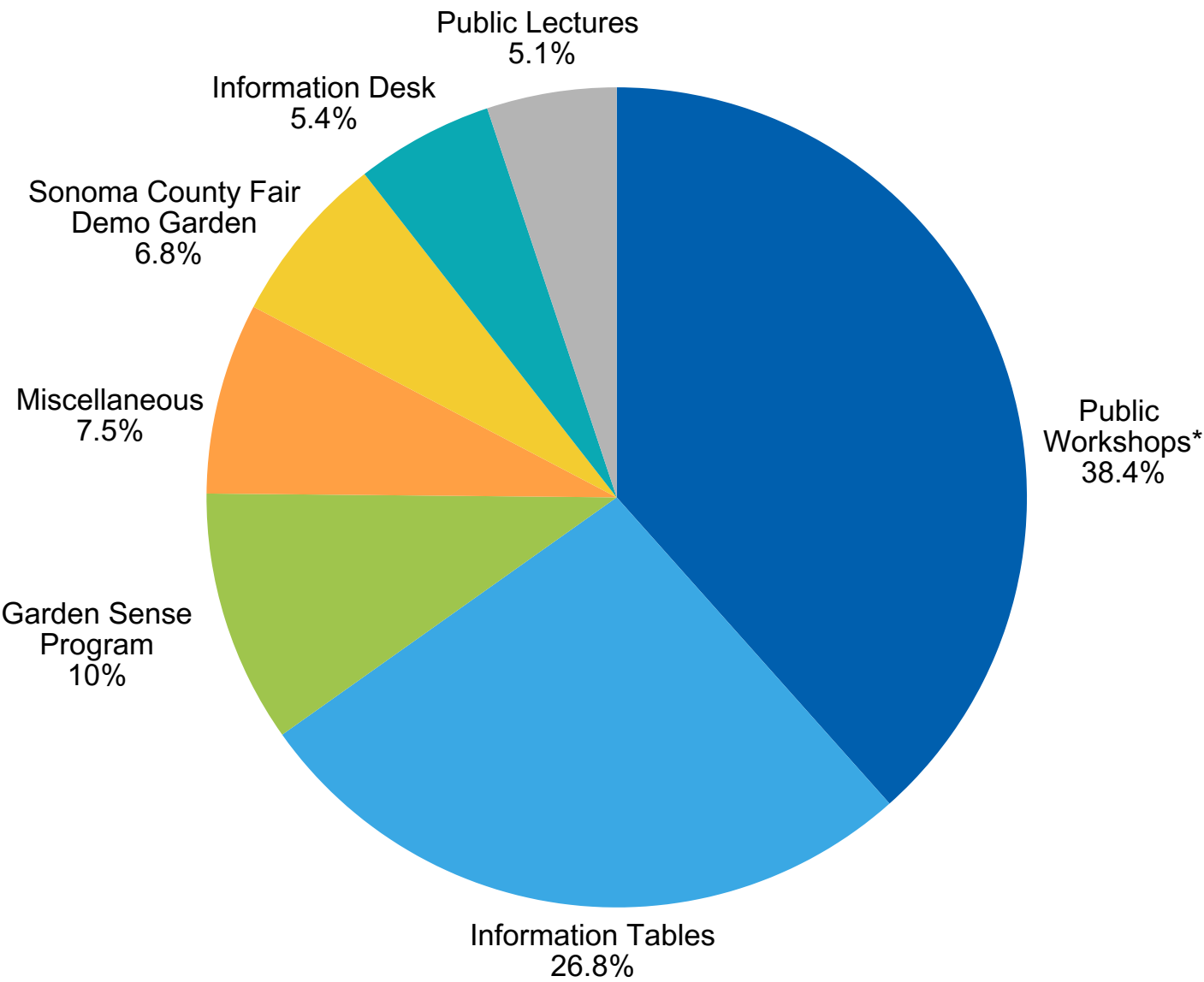
From left: Sonoma County Master Gardeners Leslie Hart and Kim Nielsen-Glynn conduct a Garden Sense visit at a client's home.

Garden Sense Program

The Garden Sense program, a 12-year partnership between the UC Master Gardener Program of Sonoma County, Sonoma Water and the Sonoma-Marín Saving Water Partnership, provides an opportunity for Sonoma County residents to get personalized information and guidance on converting their landscapes into something more sustainable, more fire-wise and less thirsty — but still beautiful.

Trained consultants travel in pairs to residential properties to discuss clients' garden goals. They educate residents on how to reduce their landscape water use with low water use plants and efficient irrigation techniques while balancing the important ecosystems landscapes provide.

During the 90-minute visit, the consultants discuss sustainable garden practices that use less water and can provide a quick sketch of landscape ideas. Conservative estimates on water savings as a result of the Garden Sense program since the program launch in 2014 are 283,276,136 gallons of water!



Contacts with the Community

- Public Workshops: 4,049*
- Information Tables: 2,820
- Garden Sense Program: 1,051
- Miscellaneous: 795
- Sonoma County Fair Demo Garden: 713
- Information Desk: 572
- Public Lectures: 539

Total Contacts = 10,539

**Includes our Portable Container Gardens workshops and workshops at seven Demonstration Gardens.*

During 2025, Sonoma County Master Gardeners connected with 10,539 community members.

The Story of 2025 in Numbers

Social Media & Newspapers

- YouTube subscribers: **2,300***
- Facebook followers: **8,910***
- Instagram followers: **2,900***
- “Garden Advice” columns in local newspapers:
 - The Santa Rosa Press Democrat: **37**
 - La Prensa Sonoma: **5**

* As of 12/31/2025

Garden Sense Program

- Clients: **262**
- All-time client visits: **2,735**

Staff Support

- Half-time County-funded Program Coordinator
- Half-time County-funded Administrative Assistant

Volunteers & Volunteer Hours

- Active volunteers: **224**
- Volunteer hours: **17,635**
- Value of volunteer hours: (\$40.14/hour): **\$707,869**
- All-time volunteer hours: **517,927**
- All-time value of volunteer hours: **\$20,789,590**

Fundraising

- Individual donations: **\$65,462.18**
- Grant funding:
 - **Sonoma Water: \$50,000** over 2 ½ years to support our Garden Sense water conservation educational outreach program.
 - **United States Forest Service: \$32,000** annual funding in support of our Sudden Oak Death (SOD) citizen science program tracking the spread of SOD in Sonoma County.
- Directed donations:
 - **\$10,000** for school field trip bus transportation
 - **\$10,000** for native plant garden development
 - **\$15,000** for the Portable Container Gardens project



“Our Master Gardener Program demonstrates the power of local investment and community passion. Dedicated volunteers empower home gardeners through research-based education, environmental stewardship, and community connections that benefit future generations.”

— Lauren Cartwright, UCCE Area Director serving Marin, Napa and Sonoma counties

Thank You!

Your gift helps us grow!

\$10,000+

- Anonymous (2)
- Cathy & Chuck Williamson

\$1,000+

- Tami Stolte
- Sidney Levy
- Sheila Mutter
- Pam Vana-Paxhia
- Jackson Family Wines, Inc.

\$500+

- Anonymous
- Clio Tarazi
- William Klausing
- Kim Roberts
- United Methodist Women

\$100-\$499

- Anonymous (13)
- Sharon Baer
- Cynthia Bailey
- Janet Bair
- Jennifer Bard
- Jennifer Block
- Kathleen Conover
- Nancy Creveling
- Linda Davis-Reed
- Christopher Downing
- Amy Dyer
- Janet Enright
- Mary Enright
- Penelope Fink
- Clare Gallardo
- David Gradek
- Carolyn Green
- Winifred Grelis
- Elizabeth Hambrecht
- Healdsburg Garden Club
- Julie Hébert
- Diane Judd
- Michael Kambour
- Elizabeth Karrer

\$100-\$499

- Marcia Keasler
- Caroline Koss
- Linda Lampson
- Lorraine Linstrom
- Thomas Luster
- Cheryl Lysell
- Deborah Matteri
- Kathryn McGeorge
- Stephanie Miller
- Susan Morohashi
- Lynn Mumaw
- Kimberly Nielsen-Glynn
- Barbara Oddone
- Kateryna Pryor
- Jean Schlesinger
- Sequoia Landscape Materials, Inc.
- Suzie Shield
- Laura Southworth
- Raymond St. Francis
- Phyllis Turrill
- Debra Ward
- Jim Winter
- Ellen Zaslansky

Under \$100

- Anonymous (12)
- Laura Adams
- Richard Addison
- Shirley Allen
- Joanne Backman
- Frank Bailey
- Catherine Barrett
- Sally Barton
- Michael Batton
- Diane Bedecarre
- Ann Benson
- Elizabeth Berry
- Ellen Boulanger
- Warren Braverman
- Tobi Brown
- Katie Bruun
- Lauren Cartwright
- Gina Cloud
- Shirley Davis

Under \$100

- DJ DeProspero
- Claire Enright
- Megan Enright
- Gregory Fairbrother
- Carly Glogovac
- Michael Glogovac
- Paula Glogovac
- Mary Gomez
- Green Thumb Garden Club, Inc.
- David Grossblat
- Judith Hoaglund
- Sally Holland
- Diana Jameson
- Doreen Jansen
- Rosemary Johnson
- Rory Kalmar
- Rachel Kligerman
- Felicie Leech
- Myron London
- Anne Lowings
- Jenny M
- Marilyn Madrone
- Allison Malnar
- Mary Mariani
- Anne McInerney
- Margrit Mueller
- Oakmont Garden Club
- Sarah Owings
- Jeff Pierce
- Judy Pike
- Deborah Platt
- Redwood Empire
- Rose Society
- Bruce Robinson
- Jude Sharp
- Susan Shinomoto
- Janice Sinclair
- Lizzy Snyder
- Catherine Sparks
- Paul Stange
- Carla Tarazi
- Peggy Van Patten
- Julia Van Soelen
- Robert Williams
- Linda Zala

In-Kind Donations

- Canyon Rock
- DEI Trucking
- Dunn Edmonds
- Emerisa Nursery
- Ewing Irrigation
- Friedman’s Home Improvement
- Gaddis Wholesale Nursery
- Grab N’ Grow Soil Products
- Harmony Farm Supply & Nursery
- Herc Rentals
- Hunter Industries
- Mead Clark
- MIX Garden
- Oliver’s Market
- Peaceful Valley Farm & Garden Supply
- Petaluma Market
- Recology
- Renee’s Garden Seeds
- St. Francis Winery & Vineyards
- Soiland Grading LLC
- Wyatt Irrigation Supply



Why I Give

My dedication to the Master Gardener Program is driven by passion and environmental responsibility. I volunteer and donate because I want to empower individuals to make a sustainable difference in the world in their own yards.

By teaching people how to grow food and nurture plants, Master Gardeners are promoting biodiversity, engaging in crucial water conservation, and actively combating climate change. Having dedicated so much time and energy, I want to ensure the Master Gardener organization has the necessary resources to maintain its vital educational outreach for generations to come.

— Sonoma County Master Gardener Dan Schurman

Help us Have a Growing Impact

Scan the QR code or visit tinyurl.com/34jtknr7 to learn how you can support the Sonoma County Master Gardener Program. Your tax-deductible donation helps us achieve our vision of cultivating environmental stewardship one garden at a time. Thank you!

