

I am feeling guilty wanting to grow vegetables with the drought in its 4th year.

Janet. Paso Robles.

By Jutta Thoerner UCCE Master Gardener

We can grow our own vegetables, even this year. Consider the reduced carbon foot print when you shop in your backyard. Then there is your commitment to reuse water from your household that otherwise just goes down the drain, and your ability to apply garden techniques to reduce the amount of water needed. These are reasons for you to have a garden. Here are some tips that many of our Master Gardeners adopted last year in our demonstration garden.

Plant half of the area in your garden with almost the same amount of plants. How? By reducing the space between the rows and plants. Interplant, and then interplant again.

No tomato plant should be without basil nearby and radishes and carrots love growing together.

Any time you cut or pull a plant to harvest, replant in that spot.

Mulch heavily to keep soils cool and preserve water.

Never water any plant unless you have checked the soil moisture. Use a small shovel or the longest Phillip's head screwdriver you can find to digging down to 30 inches to check the soil moisture around the root zone.

The bucket in your shower is a reality, not just something you read about in the paper anymore.

Share your harvest with a gardening friend. Are you good at growing tomatoes, but cucumbers, not so much? Trading vegetables will ensure that nothing spoils in the garden.

Checking irrigation drippers and timers will prevent costly water leaks.

We as Master Gardeners will continue to work on reducing the water we apply in our gardens again this year, raising the question: How much water do we really need to grow food?

