

# UC Cooperative Extension in Santa Barbara County

HEALTHY FOOD SYSTEMS • HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS • HEALTHY COMMUNITIES • HEALTHY CALIFORNIANS

## FROM THE FIELD:

“It was great! I appreciate the actual Master Gardeners being here to answer specific questions.” -Quote from Santa Barbara Public Library event in April on ‘Soil Preparation.’



Annual Meeting of the UC Master Gardeners of SB County

## UC MASTER GARDENERS

The UC Master Gardeners of Santa Barbara County honored volunteers who have contributed their time to improving home gardening practices in the community. Kenneth Folstrom received his Platinum Badge for completing **2,500 hours**. Also honored for **1,500 hours**: Janet Rogers; **750 hours**: Trudy Adair-Verbaas; **250 hours**: Kathy Bowers, Debbie Knauf; and **100 hours**: Cindy Davis, Russ Baldocchi, Kathy Gleason, Dave McDonald, Debbie Knauf, and Cathy Oliverson. In 2023 UC Master Gardeners reached 1,041 residents in Santa Barbara County *contributing to the protection of natural resources, improved home gardening practices, and community health.*

## RANGELAND MANAGEMENT

Rangeland and Natural Resources Advisor, **Royce Larsen’s** ongoing forage production monitoring project has been used by the USDA and Agricultural Commissioner for drought declarations and drought relief programs and, increasingly, the monitoring of fine fuels for wildfire risk. One of Larsen’s monitoring sites is close to the Lake Fire on Zaca Station Rd. This site saw two years of above average rainfall with 31.4” in water year 22-23 and 21.5” in 23-24, or 205% and 141%, respectively. Consequently, data from 23-24 show increased forage production (6927 lb/ac., 130% higher than average) which is good for ranchers, but also increases the risk of wildfires. Increasingly, agriculture is being recognized for its role in wildfire risk reduction. A recent study by UCCE researchers shows that grazing on private and public lands can lower fire hazard by reducing fine fuels, reducing fuel continuity, and slowing shrub encroachment (Ratcliff et al., 2022). According to Larsen, “It is important to keep the ranching industry viable for many reasons, but one important reason is that ranchers can help reduce wildfire risks.” *This work contributes to the protection of natural resources and improved land management.*

Forage production monitoring site in 2016

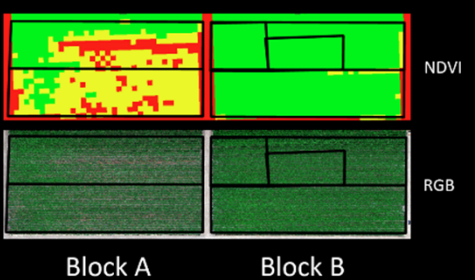


Same site in 2024



## INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT

Integrated Pest Management Advisor, **Chris Greer**, worked with collaborators from USDA, UC, and CSU to develop site-specific soilborne pest management systems in strawberries. Pre-plant variable fumigation rates were prescribed for different areas of strawberry fields based upon disease risk factors, including disease incidence and severity in the previous crop as documented by unmanned aircraft system imagery. Field areas determined to be at lower risk of severe disease development received lower fumigation rates. Using this system increased disease management efficiency by reducing total applied pre-plant fumigant while maintaining strawberry yields. *This practice, if implemented widely, has the potential to increase ecological sustainability and support agricultural efficiency and profitability.*



Strawberry field imagery. NDVI is a graphical depiction (green = healthy plants, yellow = stressed plants, red = dead or non-plant material). RGB is what the human eye sees.

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**UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA**  
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