

Production Horticulture Area Advisor, Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties

Position Description:

The Production Horticulture Area Advisor will be responsible for conducting research, extension and education programs in the areas of floriculture, nursery and protected (controlled-environment) agriculture, with the goal of improving production and economic viability of these industries in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties. The Advisor will communicate regularly with clientele and be responsive to their needs. A minimum of a Master's degree in an agricultural discipline such as environmental/ornamental horticulture, plant science, pest management, urban agriculture or related field is required. The position requires knowledge and experience in plant science and computer-controlled management technologies used to optimize plant growing systems, plant quality, high-intensity production systems, and production efficiency in controlled environments (greenhouses, hoop houses, hydroponics, etc.).

Justification:

Nursery stock (bedding plants, ground cover and turf, fruit and nut trees, herbaceous perennials, potted plants, propagative material, vegetable transplants, and woody ornamentals) and cut flowers are the top 3 and 4 agricultural commodities, respectively, in Ventura County, with a combined annual value of \$227 million, produced on over 5 million sq ft of greenhouse space and 3,700 field acres. In Santa Barbara County, nursery stock and cut flowers are valued at \$124 million, grown on 7 million sq ft of greenhouse space and 991 field acres. These numbers do not include greenhouse Cannabis production, which is a \$195 million industry in Santa Barbara County, and now also allowed in Ventura County. Critical issues facing the greenhouse and nursery industry include pest and disease management, invasive species, water quality and use efficiency, soil and fertility management, energy efficiency and carbon neutrality, computer-controlled technology, regulations and agriculture/urban interface issues. This position is critical for improving the environmental and economic sustainability of this sector.

Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties are also home to two UC Master Gardener Programs representing 275 certified volunteers. These programs offer impactful public education, especially in priority areas such as endemic and invasive species, water quality and quantity, and protecting natural ecosystems. The Advisor is expected to utilize the volunteer network, empowering them to amplify the Advisor's research and messaging, and thereby reach the 200,000 residents between the two counties. This position is one of eight positions included in the Environmental Horticulture (EH) Cohort list of recommended Advisor and Specialist positions due to its capacity to build programs and leverage resources and impacts at the state and local level. This position is aligned with all five ANR Strategic Initiatives (Endemic and Invasive Pests and Diseases; Sustainable Natural Ecosystems; Sustainable Food Systems; Healthy Families and Communities; and Water Quantity and Quality).

Extension: The Advisor is expected to develop and deliver programs using existing knowledge and new knowledge derived from an active applied research program. A needs assessment will be required to identify clientele, key issues and prioritize research projects. The extension program is expected to be relevant by providing content that meets clientele needs through targeted outputs in print, popular media, social networks, public presentations, field days, and web-based products. The Advisor will interact with various clientele groups, such as the Santa Barbara County Flower and Nursery Growers Association, the California Cut Flower Commission, the Plantscape Industry Alliance, Farm Bureau,

and the Agricultural Commissioner in both counties. Other client groups include PCAs, CCAs, and governmental agencies. The Advisor will also collaborate within the existing network of county-based Environmental Horticulture (production and user) Advisors and with the UC Master Gardener Program.

Research: The Advisor will be expected to conduct independent and collaborative applied research in commercial nurseries, greenhouses and UC research facilities, including Hansen REC. This research will be issue-based, directed toward pragmatic solutions to critical issues in the industry, especially related to water quality and use efficiency, pest management, and energy use. The Advisor is encouraged to use research opportunities for hands-on training. Outputs from research will include peer-reviewed journal articles, popular articles, technical reports, articles for newsletters, special publications such as identification and pictorial guides, and web-site postings, journals, and blogs.

ANR Continuum:

The Advisor will develop research and education linked to the needs of industry commodity groups in cooperation with local and statewide CE advisors and specialists, and aligns with linked workgroups, program teams, and the statewide IPM program and Master Gardener program. Locally, the advisor will work closely with the IPM Area Advisor (Chris Greer) in SLO/SB/VC Counties and the Entomology Advisor (TBD) in Ventura and Los Angeles Counties. They will collaborate with the Environmental Horticulture/Plant Pathology Advisor (Jim Downer) in Ventura County.

Network External to ANR: The Advisor will network with AES faculty, state and federal agencies, such as the California Department Food and Agriculture, California Department of Pesticide Regulation, Cal EPA, EPA, and USDA. The Advisor will also network with commodity groups, farm bureaus and agricultural commissioners in Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties.

Support: UCCE Ventura County will provide administrative support, office space, phone line, internet access, and a vehicle. UCCE Santa Barbara will provide program support and will offset vehicle costs.

Other support: Financial support is competitively available from federal, state, and regional IPM grants, commodity boards, foundations, CDPR and CDFG grants, and gifts in support of research and extension. Other sources of research funding are the Thelma Hansen Fund and Ventura County funds as part of the 2020-2040 General Plan implementation.

Location: The position will be based in Ventura County. The Advisor will be administratively responsible to the UCCE Ventura County Director and programmatically responsible to the Santa Barbara and Ventura County Directors.

Developed and proposed by: The position was jointly developed by the UCCE Ventura County and Santa Barbara County academic staff and directors, with support from the UC ANR Environmental Horticulture Program Team, the UC Master Gardener Director, and the Santa Barbara County Flower and Nursery Growers Association. The position is strongly supported by the Ventura County Agricultural Commissioner, the Ventura County Farm Bureau, the Santa Barbara County Agricultural Commissioner, the Santa Barbara County Farm Bureau, and the Santa Barbara County Flower and Nursery Growers Association.