



MASTER GARDENERS/ COMPOSTERS

The UC Placer-Nevada Master Gardener Program provides volunteer training and horticultural knowledge to enhance home landscapes and garden experiences while striving to improve and preserve the quality of our natural environment.

The UC Master Gardener Programs in Placer and Nevada Counties began in 1983 to meet the demands of the growing population and mitigate one-on-one requests to Extension staff for home gardening and related information.



Interest in home gardening and urban horticulture continues to grow. Gardening is the most popular hobby in the United States, and landscape/nursery crops are now the third largest agricultural crop in California. UC Master Gardeners identify issues and needs of Placer and Nevada County residents, and develop educational activities to address these concerns in the areas of:

- **Water Wise Gardening**
- **Firesafe Landscaping**
- **Pest Management**
- **Vegetable Gardening**
- **Prevention and Diagnosis**
- **Recycling Garden Waste**
- **School Gardens**
- **Perennials and Flowering Shrubs**
- **Soil and Irrigation**
- **Community Gardens**

With the goal of shifting public perceptions of yard and garden debris from “wastes” to “resources,” the University of California Cooperative Extension’s volunteer Master Composters have engaged the public in recognizing the importance of organics management through composting, vermi-composting, and shredding/chipping/mulching. These activities alone can divert between 20 and 35% of a family’s garbage from the landfills and have helped Placer and Nevada Counties meet state mandated diversion rates.

Program Highlights

- ◆ **195 certified** Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ **Over 10,000 hours** of service were provided by Master Gardener volunteers
- ◆ The Master Gardeners gave **49** workshops and participated in **20** community events
- ◆ **Over 9,500 people** received gardening composting information through Master Gardener outreach and education



Placer Senior Garden



Senior Garden plots grow food, flowers, and friends!



Peaches ripen in the sun within the Senior Garden.

Issue

There are many senior citizens in our counties who live in senior housing, apartments, and other homes that lack outdoor space for gardening. They do not have the opportunity to experience the numerous benefits that gardening offers in the form of physical, mental, and emotional exercise. In addition, in some senior living situations, there are very few people to socialize with on a regular basis.

What Was Done

A Senior Community Garden was developed and offered as a space for seniors to garden and socialize. The University of California Cooperative Extension partnered with the County of Placer to transform an unused portion of an athletic field into a 30 plot community garden. This partnership resulted in a fenced garden area, irrigation installation, shed placement, and the creation of 30 plots with pathways in between.

Impact

The Senior Garden has all 30 plots under cultivation and produces a large amount of fresh produce for the senior gardeners who tend it. The garden not only provides a place to grow fresh food, but also serves as a gathering spot for seniors to bring their friends, socialize, and create new relationships. There is constantly a waiting list for the plots in the garden and it has been written about in the local paper.



Composting Education



Master Gardeners teach residents how to turn their "waste" into a valuable garden "resource".

One of the workshop participants said, "Amazing information and delivery. I never thought I would enjoy seeing things rot so much, but this is great!"

Issue

It is estimated that up to 40% of the waste that is buried in landfills is compostable. These organic materials can be diverted from the landfill and processed in backyard compost piles by homeowners. It can then be utilized as a soil amendment to improve soil fertility and drainage. Many homeowners have never composted and do not know where to begin.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners, in conjunction with Placer and Nevada Counties, offer composting workshops and free information to county residents. The workshops are given throughout the year in many different venues across the counties. Over 30 workshops were given between Placer and Nevada Counties in the past year of work.

Impact

- Master Gardeners gave over 25 workshops to over 1,000 local residents.
- Composting information was distributed to local nurseries, local community centers, schools, and homeowners.
- Over 200 compost bins were given away to workshop attendees to get them started on composting at home.
- Composting continues to be a workshop that always attracts a good number of attendees.



Master Gardener Collaboration

In these times of limited resources, working in conjunction with other organizations can bridge the challenging gaps that arise and allow us to move forward together.

Issue

There is a need for community organizations focused on education and outreach to network, share resources, and collaborate on projects as much as possible to get their messages out to the greater public in multiple venues.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties sought out local organizations to collaborate with on various projects. Depending on the nature of the project, the Master Gardeners work with other community organizations to deliver information with them or through them and, in turn, many of these organizations also benefit from the Master Gardener volunteers' talents, networks, and knowledge.

Impact

- Master Gardeners in Placer County partnered with Placer Nature Center, the City of Auburn, and the Roseville Utility Exploration Center (City of Roseville) gave a series of gardening and composting workshops at each of their venues.
- Master Gardeners in Nevada County partnered with the Nevada County Department of Sanitation to give composting workshops to support the concept of resource efficient landscaping exemplified at the Full Circle Demonstration Garden.
- Master Gardeners in both counties collaborate with the local Farmers' Market organizations and attend markets to distribute information and answer home gardening questions.



Master Gardener volunteers at the Growers Market helping local residents solve their gardening problems.



Demo Gardens / Placer & Nevada



The Master Gardeners host an annual Tomato Tasting combined with public workshops for residents.

The idea of a Demonstration Garden is to show our clientele how to do something rather than simply telling them how to accomplish it.

Issue

There is a need for a public garden venue where Master Gardener outreach and information can be seen and heard.

What Was Done

The UC Master Gardeners of Placer and Nevada Counties have public demonstration gardens to exhibit their knowledge in a hands-on approach. In Nevada County, the Demonstration Garden is mature and has been developed over a long period and is truly a comprehensive teaching garden. In Placer County, the volunteers have identified a site and begun the process of development of a edible demonstration garden.

Impact

- Master Gardeners in Nevada County give over 20 workshops a year at their demonstration garden, reaching over 500 residents
- Master Gardeners in Nevada County give tours of their demonstration garden to local and visiting groups and have been an inspiration to other Master Gardener groups starting their own gardens.
- Master Gardeners in Placer County have already held workshops about “Starting a Garden” in conjunction with their own demonstration garden creation.



Master Gardener Training

***From a recent Master Gardener graduate:
“The Master Gardener Training exceeded all my expectations; I thoroughly enjoyed the classes and I am thrilled to be part of the Master Gardener program and look forward to sharing my knowledge with others!”***

Issue

There is a need for reliable, research-based gardening information within our local community. Whether rural or urban, home landscapes are constantly being developed, shaped and created. During these processes, home gardeners seek resources to help answer their garden related questions.

What Was Done

In October, 2010, recruitment was initiated for a Master Gardener Volunteer Training to take place from January, 2011 through May, 2011. Over 80 local residents applied for 40 spots in the class. After interviewing and selecting, 40 volunteers began their training in January, 2011. After 16 weeks of training on various gardening topics, 40 Master Gardeners graduated on May 6, 2011.

Impact

After completing the Master Gardener Training, the 40 new Master Gardener graduates begin their volunteer service. Each volunteer will complete at least 50 hours of volunteer service within the existing Master Gardener Program in the upcoming membership year engaging in outreach and education in the community. This results in at least **2,000 hours** of volunteer service within our communities.



The Master Gardener Training is a 16 week training with one course a week. Here, the tables are set and the classroom will soon be filled for the first class.