



It's Fair Time: Hot Dogs, Herbs and Gardening How-Tos

By Charlie Basham

UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County

At high noon tomorrow the annual El Dorado County Fair opens its gates for a four-day run of family fun and entertainment. This year there are plenty of things to see and do: watch the 70th annual John M. Studebaker International Wheelbarrow Races; eat massive amounts of hot dogs and tacos; enjoy the carnival rides and contests; check out an eclectic mix of animals; and explore the fair's Agriculture/Horticulture Department's exhibition and education programs coordinated by the UCCE Master Gardeners of El Dorado County.

This year's ag and horticulture displays showcase the winners in the "Show What You Grow" competition in the "Flowers and Plants" and "Fruits and Veggies" categories. There are divisions for adults, teens, youth, and 4H/FFA in each category.

The Master Gardener information desk, exhibits and educational programs will all be located in the El Dorado Savings Floriculture Building, near the county history museum.

The "Flowers and Plants" category include cut flowers, fresh or miniature flower arrangements, potted plants, dry arrangements, fresh flower table settings, lavender and cut flowers. The "Fruits and Veggies" category include fruits, vegetables, herbs, berries, nuts and other garden produce.

Every day of the fair the Master Gardeners will be giving brief “how-to” gardening talks and demonstrations. These talks will be presented free by local experts and the topics range from fire safety to beekeeping.

One particularly important topic this year explores fire wise landscaping. The experienced presenters will tell how to balance outdoor gardening aesthetics and safety to increase chances a property and home can withstand a wildfire.

Other programs include tips for safe gardening; a ‘how to’ on raising bees in El Dorado County; the correct way to prune fruit trees for the best fruit production; worm composting; edible landscaping; and container gardening. A complete schedule of the daily programs can be found on the fair’s website at <http://www.eldoradocountyfair.org/schedule.html#top>.

Throughout the fair, several Master Gardeners will be in the Floriculture Building and available to answer your garden questions. Their job is to solve your problem by researching the issue and providing practical advice and scientific-based gardening information.

Your Master Gardeners of El Dorado County are volunteers and extensively trained, tested and certified under the direction of the University of California Cooperative Extension. Plus, they receive year-round training on topics such as horticulture, soils, water, entomology, plant pathology, integrated pest management, plant problem diagnosis, sustainable landscape management practices, and plant propagation.

There is no public education Master Gardener class this Saturday, Jun 14th -- we’ll see you at the fair! If you can’t make it to the fair, Master Gardeners are available to answer your questions every Tuesday through Friday, 9 a.m. to noon, by calling (530) 621-5512. Walk-ins are welcome at our office, located at 311 Fair Lane in Placerville. When you’re at the office not only can you talk to a master gardener you can check out the many free gardening information flyers, Pest Notes, and fact sheets we provide.

For more information about our public education classes and activities, go to the Master Gardener website at http://ucanr.edu/sites/EDC_Master_Gardeners/. Sign up to receive their online notices and e-newsletter at <http://ucanr.edu/mgenews/>. You can also find them on Facebook.

Water Saving Information

To help you with our state’s on-going water conservation efforts the Master Gardener organization, through the UC system, has compiled several helpful tips regarding home gardening and irrigation:

http://cagardenweb.ucanr.edu/Drought/Drought_Gardening_Tips/