

2015 Annual Report



**University of California Cooperative Extension
Los Angeles County**



County Director's Message

2015 was another great year for UC Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County. We served thousands of youth and families and hundreds of communities through our research and extension efforts. The activities that our researchers and staff have engaged in have addressed some current and pressing issues in the county, such as childhood obesity, restoration of the Los Angeles River and the polyphagous shot hole borer infestation. In addition, UC Cooperative Extension is in front of emerging trends in urban agriculture, working with the Los Angeles Food Policy Council to help address ordinance and capacity issues regarding growing food in urban communities.

As California continued to face its worst drought in decades in 2015, I am proud to report that UC Cooperative Extension was there to serve as the intelligent resource for residents, agencies and policy makers who were all trying to make sense of the harsh realities of a drought and move forward. Our researchers and experts held workshops and symposia to inform residents and government officials on how to maintain landscapes and gardens in a drought environment, and our UC Master Gardener volunteers taught thousands of residents how to

grow food with limited water and space as well as the appropriate soil. Their efforts were a tremendous benefit to county residents.

I am honored to represent UC Cooperative Extension locally. I value the commitment and dedication of our staff to create, engage and support LA County residents in areas of nutrition, youth development, natural resources and urban agriculture. It is my promise that we will continue to be a resource and convener of timely, relevant research and information for all residents.



Finally, I want to thank our supporters and sponsors. Without their contributions, we would not be able to reach as many people as we have. Thank you.

I hope you enjoy going through our 2016 Annual Report. We are proud of our success stories included in this report and very proud to share them with you.

With appreciation,

A handwritten signature in brown ink, appearing to read "Keith Nathaniel". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Keith Nathaniel, Ed.D.

Mission Statment

UC Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County develops and implements community-based educational programs that address the critical needs of the county's diverse and multiethnic population. Staff and volunteers provide and encourage the use of current research-based information in the areas of nutrition, family and consumer science; youth development; urban gardening; commercial horticulture; agriculture; and natural resources.

4-H Youth Development

4-H is all about making a positive difference in the lives of young Los Angeles County residents. The program changes lives, encourages achievement and cultivates leadership skills by identifying local youth needs and then applying innovative and effective solutions. Young people are engaged in hands-on science, leadership and community service. Whether they are volunteering at a local nonprofit organization or launching rockets in competitions, the kids are growing and learning together.

In March, the 4-H program held its annual LA County 4-H Field Day/Fashion Revue at Mount San Antonio College in Walnut, Calif. Field Day is a flagship event for the 4-H program. Sixty three 4-H members, from Pomona to the Antelope Valley, came together to connect and showcase their skills. The largest event



is the public speaking competition and categories included demonstrations, educational displays, interviews, interpretive readings and prepared speeches, to name a few. In addition, members modeled or displayed their fashion creations. In this category, each youth described special

features of the garment and highlighted interesting information as he or she introduced the piece.

In October, 4-H hosted its annual Pet and Science Symposium at Belvedere Park in East Los Angeles. In all, 350 children and adults attended to interact with and learn from pet care experts and community organizations. Kids were able to get their faces painted and participate in an experiment, exploring the motion physics of distracted driving, with 4-H youth development advisor Keith Nathaniel. In addition, hands-on activities were made available to attendees, from shearing a sheep to milking a cow. As in past years, the Los Angeles County Department of Care and Animal Control provided low-cost vaccination and chipping services.

As a 4-H youth advisor, Nathaniel tries to understand how the program helps youth become responsible citizens, leading healthy and productive lives. As such, he has been examining ways 4-H increases the opportunities for the development of social capital (ties and connections that allow people to gain access to opportunities, positive experiences and support) for the participating youth. It is widely understood now that these are helpful to transition successfully into adulthood.



In 2015, he conducted research on the contribution of 4-H participation to the development of social capital in youth. He was also involved in a project to institutionalize inter-cultural competence of staff to better serve the diversity of clientele.

Currently, there are 21 4-H clubs in just about every geographic region of Los Angeles County, which includes one at the Los Angeles Air Force Base in El Segundo. The clubs offer projects in animal science, biological science, civic engagement, environmental education, health and leadership.

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Nutrition, Family and Consumer Sciences

UC Cooperative Extension's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) is dedicated to providing community-driven, research-based nutrition education to low-income Los Angeles County families. Our nutrition educators—trained in basic nutrition and food-related topics by nutrition specialists from the University of California—are reaching out to adults in community settings and to youth in classrooms. The goal is to help families make positive behavior changes and make good nutrition choices to improve the nutritional quality of the meals they serve their families. Understanding multiple cultural and social factors that influence participants' habits, they are able to suggest healthier alternatives.



In 2015, our educators conducted an eight-week nutrition education, healthy lifestyles curriculum, "Eating Smart, Being Active," to more than 1,300 adults. Participants acquired a deeper understanding about food, basic nutrition and fitness. Along with learning about food, they learned different ways to get moving and to how to shop and save. Many participants reported that they increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables and

saved more money at the grocery store. In addition, they reported being more aware of food safety issues when handling food.

In order to extend nutrition education to children, we also implement Youth EFNEP. It targets children of limited-resource families

through schools and youth organization groups. In 2015, staff reached more than 10,000 children in Los Angeles County and increased their basic knowledge of nutrition and physical activity. Staff worked closely with local teachers and other education extenders to deliver messages of healthy eating habits, healthy snacks, physical activity and safe food handling practices.



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Master Gardener Program

UC Cooperative Extension's Master Gardener volunteers expand the University of California's ability to reach and assist Los Angeles County residents with non-biased, research-based information. Along with general gardening knowledge, they disseminate information about integrated pest management, water quality and conservation, composting, sustainable landscaping, adaptive gardening and fire-resistant gardening practices. They are also teaching the next generation of residents how to produce the foods that will keep their communities healthy and sustained.



In 2015, our Master Gardeners served 22,422 adults and 60,226 children in communities and schools throughout Los Angeles County. They educated and trained the public, conducted demonstrations, responded to phone and email requests and helped establish community gardens and projects. In number of hours, they volunteered a total of 10,570 hours! We are very proud of this number and of our volunteers.

Acceptance into our annual training program is very competitive. Class size is limited to 50, and we usually receive more than 200 applications per year. In order to maintain an active membership as a Master Gardener, they must volunteer at least 50 hours during the first year. After the first year, they must volunteer at least 25 hours and participate in 12 hours of continuing education. In 2015, 55 new Master Gardeners graduated from



our three-month intensive program. They joined the army of 300 active Los Angeles County Master Gardeners that are working to strengthen community bonds and promote healthy landscapes. Also, we were pleased to offer our Master Gardeners a special, additional class on drought-wise gardening in August, as the drought continued to challenge general growing conditions. (continued on page 6)

Master Gardener Program



In June, Yvonne Savio (Master Gardener program manager) retired after 21 years of working to grow an impressively large crop of gardener volunteers. She worked with hundreds of gardens in schools, communities, senior centers and homeless shelters to get gardening information to those who needed or wanted it. Rather than recruiting gardeners interested in volunteering, she looked for *volunteers interested in gardening*. That small change in approach helped create our unique gardening program. We are very

thankful for her contribution to the world of gardening and our success.

Although Savio's retirement marked an end of a significant era for UC Cooperative Extension in Los Angeles County, the Master Gardener Program continues under the guidance and leadership of Rachel Surls (sustainable food systems advisor) and Valerie Borel (program coordinator).

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Sustainable Food Systems



Urban agriculture has been changing the landscape of cities across the nation for years now. A new crop of urban farmers are turning vacant lots, backyards and other urban spaces into places where food is grown. However, farmers face challenges when establishing a garden in the city. Many face daunting issues such as land security, access to water and contaminated soil, to name a few. Acknowledging these challenges, many local governments are creating urban agriculture-friendly policies that support urban farming and assist farmers in finding creative solutions.

UC Cooperative Extension, through Rachel Surls (sustainable food systems advisor) looks for ways to support urban farmers in Los Angeles and assist local residents in their efforts to grow food for their families and communities. In 2015, she met with staff from Los Angeles County's CEO office and several county departments to discuss how to implement California Assembly Bill 551, which allows landowners in metropolitan areas to receive tax incentives for using their land for agriculture. Surls

assisted staff at LA County's Department of Health to plan their implementation of California Assembly Bill 1990, which defines who or what is a community producer and authorizes them to engage in direct sales of their produce. She co-wrote a policy brief on California urban farming, "Meeting the Needs of Urban Agriculture in California," which she presented at a League of California Cities meeting in April. The brief is available at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/UrbanAg/files/215416.pdf>.

Surls conducted several projects to raise awareness of urban farming and help urban farmers develop necessary skills. She co-organized two educational bus tours in cooperation with the UC Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program. The first was a youth-led tour of urban farms, which highlighted the



role of young people in urban agriculture. Local partners were the Social Justice Learning Institute in Inglewood and Community Services Unlimited in South LA. The second tour was directed toward helping small and urban farmers find new markets. Twenty-five farmers met with potential buyers, including caterers, restaurateurs and wholesale market managers.

Surls organized workshops on gardening, soil health, soil testing and composting. In January, she worked with the office of Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas (LA County District 2) to organize and conduct a Master Gardener-led workshop on container gardening for residents at the 2nd District's annual Empowerment (continued on page 8)

Sustainable Food Systems



Congress gathering. In October, working with partners at the Growing Experience in Long Beach, she helped organize a half-day seminar on food waste recycling and composting at the Carmelitos Housing Development in Long Beach. The guest speaker was Will Allen, a nationally rec-



ognized practitioner of urban agriculture and founder of Growing Power in Milwaukee, Wis. Participants learned the basics of turning waste, such as yard clippings and food scraps into a high-quality soil amendment.

Surls worked with farm advisor Andre Biscaro and program representative Valerie Borel and capped the year by completing the publication of their study on urban soils. The publication examines soils in urban agriculture as well as how to test, remedy and manage them in gardens and urban farms. You can find the article at <http://ucanr.edu/sites/UrbanAg/files/197207.pdf>.



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Environmental Horticulture

UC Cooperative Extension environmental horticulturists are enthusiastic, hands-on experts in urban landscape trees and shrubs, recreational turf, athletic fields, efficient water use and integrated pest management. They are experts in the valuable “green industry” economy of Los Angeles County.

Don Hodel, environmental horticulturist, identifies problems and seeks out solutions for his clients in the professional landscape industry as well as homeowners. He does this by extending the practical, research-based information he has gathered over many years. For Hodel, 2015 was another busy year of educating the public about trees. He conducted many workshops on planting, pruning and selecting trees at various community locations throughout Los Angeles County. He also extended information on new pests and diseases in the area. California’s drought continued to be a prevalent topic during discussions of how to keep trees alive and healthy with more local water restrictions.



Dennis Pittenger, area environmental horticulture advisor, conducts education and applied research programs that address landscape problems in Southern California. He is recognized regionally and nationally for his work in landscape water management. As such, water management information from his

research and education programs have been incorporated in the development of public codes and programs, water purveyor policies and practices utilized by landscape and design professionals. In 2015, he provided drought management information and guidance to LA County Public Works staff. The goal was to

improve their skills in managing the irrigation system of trees in the county’s public street medians.

Janet Hartin, environmental horticulture advisor, focuses her work

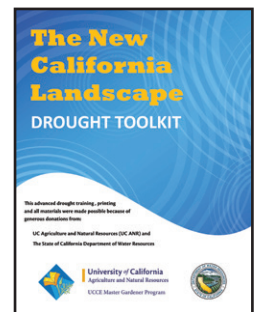
on sustainable landscapes and green-waste management. In 2015, much of Hartin’s work focused on the drought. She prepared and distributed drought toolkits for county residents. The kits included information about how to conserve water, keep plants alive and use graywater.

As an advisor, Hartin also conducts research and publishes articles about her work. In 2015, she served as first author on three articles about the drought: “Top Ten Ways to Conserve Water in Your Landscape and Garden in LA County,”

“Keeping Landscape and Garden Plants Alive Under Drought and Water Restrictions,” and “Use of Graywater in Urban Landscapes.” She served as principal



investigator, with Dave Fujino and Loren Oki of UC Davis, on a large multi-site contract with the California Department of Water Resources. They set up demonstration sites to show how landscape water waste can be reduced through proper plant selection, use of mulch and proper irrigation scheduling. Five of the six sites were located in Los Angeles County. She also served as cooperator on the Climate-Ready Trees project with principal investigators Greg McPherson (US Forest Service) and Alison Berry (UC Davis). She helped develop the plant palette of low maintenance, drought-resistant, underused tree species that will be planted in a park in Los Angeles and evaluated over a 20-year period for their attributes.



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Integrated Pest Management

Our Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program provides practical information and training on pest management techniques and identification for a broad range of pests. Offering nonbiased research-based information, our program is a valuable resource in Los Angeles County, widely recognized by residents and pest management professionals. Our IPM advisors help solve problems while minimizing risks to people and the environment. Rather than eliminating pests, they focus on long-term solutions, such as making the host or location less attractive to pests.

In 2015, Cheryl Wilen (area IPM advisor) continued to work with leaders of the Los Angeles State Historic Park, near downtown Los Angeles, to provide guidance and recommendations in the development and management of the park's IPM program. In addition, she discussed procedures and products used in managing pest populations. The park has been and continues to be a valuable recreation and education site in the heart of Los Angeles (adjacent to iconic Chinatown).

In July, UC Cooperative Extension was pleased to welcome Siavash Taravati as area IPM advisor based in Los Angeles County. His program and work focus is on structural and urban IPM.

Prior to joining us, Taravati was a research assistant at University of Florida's Tropical Research and Education Center in Homestead, Fla. There, he worked on the biology and management of rugose spiraling whitefly, an invasive species found for the first time in the U.S. in 2009. He also gained

experience in growing and maintaining vegetables, ornamental plants and shade and fruit trees. Taravati reared several pestiferous and beneficial insects such as whiteflies, scales, lady beetles, lacewings and parasitoids.

Taravati earned a doctoral degree in entomology at the University of Florida, a master's degree in biology at Ferdowsi



University of Mashhad, Iran, and a bachelor's degree in biology at the University of Tehran, Iran.

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Natural Resources

Los Angeles County is an internationally recognized center for biological diversity and contains a wide variety of ecosystems that include marine communities, deserts and mountain-top forests, and more common chaparral and coastal sage habitats. It is also home to about 10 million people and growing.

Sabrina Drill, natural resources advisor and associate director of the UC California Naturalist program, plays an important role in the stewardship of Los Angeles County's natural resources. She



serves as a technical resource and raises the environmental awareness of organizations and residents through her natural resources program (http://celosangeles.ucanr.edu/Natural_Resources/) and her information-dissemination efforts.

UC Cooperative Extension recognizes the importance of connecting young people from urban communities to natural habitats. Our national, state and local parks are open spaces and living classrooms to cultivate the next generation of stewards. In 2015, Drill helped train participants in the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority's Bridge to Park Careers program. This important program prepares low-income young adults for careers with the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority

and California State Parks. On April 18, nine residents from local urban communities graduated and became certified UC California Naturalists as well as National Association for Interpretation guides before a crowd of family members and friends. California Senate President pro Tempore Kevin de Leon and other community leaders were there to recognize them. We are also pleased to report that all nine graduates were offered employment by

the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. Additional UC California Naturalist courses were held at the LA Conservation Corp's SEALab Aquarium in Redondo Beach and at the Dominguez Rancho Adobe Museum.



As the polyphagous shot hole borer infestation continued to spread in Los Angeles



County, Drill continued her efforts to spread important information to organizations, professionals and residents so that they are able to understand and manage this pest problem in urban and wildland areas. The beetle drills into trees and inserts fungi that are harmful to the host tree, causing dieback symptoms, and in some cases, eventual death. Drill also presented information at conferences and hosted professional trainings and working groups.



Significant efforts are being made to revitalize the iconic LA River. The vision is to enrich the quality of life for residents by creating enhanced green spaces (natural areas and parks) and better recreational facilities. Aiding this effort, Drill worked with local environmental and community groups to promote recreational fishing in the river. She helped survey fish in the LA River in order to guide aquatic habitat restoration projects at various sections of the river (Glendale Narrows, Sepulveda Basin and at the river mouth in Long Beach).

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Agriculture

As the farm advisor for Los Angeles County, Andre Biscaro works closely with high desert growers, local agencies and other UC Cooperative Extension advisors and specialists to develop cost-effective and sustainable practices. He considers the challenges associated with increasing production costs, water-use restrictions, agriculture-urban interface and a growing population.



In 2015, Biscaro conducted research on crop production issues that pertain to growers in the high desert area. His activities focused on alfalfa variety and density as well as issues surrounding soil fertility improvement, pest control options and nutrient-use efficiency. He also hosted field days for local growers, focusing on issues of dust control and crop watering and rotations.



Contact

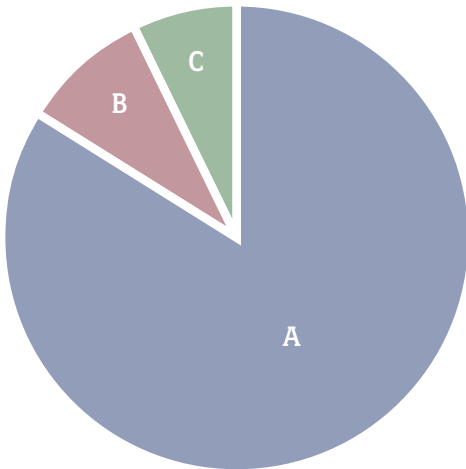
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Funding and Thank You

Thank You to our Volunteers

Also, a big “Thank You” goes out to our wonderful volunteers. UC Cooperative Extension’s volunteers are an important part of the organization. Their active participation keeps our programs successful; and every year, they continue to amaze us with their dedication and passion for improving the lives of Los Angeles County residents.

Funding Sources



A. University of California 84% *

B. County 9%

C. Gifts, Contracts and Grants 7%

* Includes ANR General Funds, Endowment Funds, Federal Funds and Statewide Cooperative Extension Support.

Thank You to our Donors

UC Cooperative Extension gratefully acknowledges the wonderful support of individuals, organizations and foundations listed below. Their commitment and generosity are critical to the development and success of UC Cooperative Extension’s programs.

California Department of Water Resources

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Karen Jenne

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Los Angeles County

National 4-H Council

Renewable Resources Extension Act

UC Global Food Initiative

UC Integrated Pest Management

US Forest Service, State and Private Forestry

US Department of Agriculture

From the Campus to the Community



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