

Garden Tour Features Public Education Sites

University of California Cooperative Extension - Central Sierra, Master Gardeners of Tuolumne County - has hosted its annual garden tour for 20 years. But, this year's tour is different, featuring three different kinds of gardens—home gardens, schools gardens and public education sites. Be sure to visit each site to get an idea of the "**Changing Times, Changing Gardens**" that exist in Tuolumne County. The tour kicks off at **10:30 a.m.** on **Sunday, May 31; sites are open until 4:00 p.m.** The theme reflects California's drought, warming temperatures and difficulty in maintaining a traditional landscape with its over-dependence on water and non-native plants.



Public education sites—unlike home gardens, which are privately owned and school gardens for the use and education of students—are focused on providing information to adult members of the community. The two public education sites chosen for this tour will offer information to help local residents deal with increased garden problems caused by California's drought. The public education sites featured this year for your exploration are the Innovation Center and the Master Gardener Demonstration Garden.

The Innovation Center is located on the third floor of the former Tuolumne General Hospital building. As a site devoted to technology and innovative business development in Tuolumne County, it will offer an area where master gardeners will provide specific information for those garden tour attendees who own wells. In addition to exploring the Innovation Center, be sure to check out the tucked-away garden with raised beds being developed as well as FoCuS (Foothill Collaborative for Sustainability) and the Sierra Foothill Beekeepers' Association.

At 11:00 a.m. at the Innovation Center, Al Dahlstrand (geologist, mine engineer, master gardener and rainwater catchment system expert) will talk about "The Health of Your Well." He will also teach how to build a well-sounding device for under \$50. If you miss Al's talk, his information will be available at the Innovation Center all day during the tour. Information will also be provided about use of gray water, managing your well water, and Tuolumne County's Emergency Water program for wells that run dry.





The master gardener Demonstration Garden will offer a cool and shady respite from a busy day of garden touring. Lemonade, iced tea and water will be served along with home-made cookies to boost your energy. Restrooms are available. In addition, this year the Demonstration Garden will host other garden-related organizations. Stop by to browse information from The Audubon Society and purchase a book or birdhouse. The Sierra Foothills chapter of the California Native Plant Society will offer advice on adding California native plants to your garden. Find information about fire-safe

landscaping and water conservation from the U.S. Forest Service, Highway 108 Fire Safe Council, Tuolumne Utilities District, and many more.

Another area of interest on the tour will be provided by Columbia Nursery. In addition to its beautiful plant offerings, it will provide restrooms, lunch for purchase in its on-site café and live music beginning at 3:00 p.m.

As you tour this year's varied sites, be mindful of a few tips for additional comfort and ease:

- Bring a hat, sunscreen, and water. Wear comfortable walking shoes. It's likely that the weather will be sunny and warm.
- Carpool if possible.
- Plan a lunch break and pit stops. Restrooms will not be available at home garden sites.
- Bring a camera to record plants and landscape treatments you especially like. Ask permission from the Master Gardeners on duty before taking any photos.
- Stay on marked paths.
- Do not clip or injure plants in anyway.
- No smoking. No pets. No strollers. No food. No litter.
- Turn off your cell phone or at least put it on 'vibrate' mode so everyone can enjoy the gardens.
- Take only one copy of any available handout.

Garden tour tickets, are \$10.00 per person and are available from any Tuolumne County master gardener or at the following locations: Columbia Nursery on Parrotts Ferry Road, Columbia; Sonora Lumber, South Washington Street, Sonora; Nature's Whole Food Depot in Standard; The Nest in Twain Harte; Antiques, Etc. on Washington Street in downtown Sonora; and the University of California Cooperative Extension Office at 52 North Washington Street, Sonora. Tickets can also be purchased on-line at <http://ucanr.edu/tuolumnegardentourtickets2015> .

The descriptive articles and photos describing the annual garden tour are produced by a collaborative effort between Master Gardener volunteers and site owners.