



Hello Melissa,

Happy March, all! The year is flying by and has been jam-packed. This month, we are covering many topics, including getting ready for National Volunteer Month and a new website platform!

Here's everything you can find in this month's issue of *Rooted in Marketing*:

- April content inspirations
- National Volunteer Month - let's celebrate!
- IWP - Homepage best practices
- The rise of Facebook spam
- Social media platforms - where to focus
- Instagram image changes
- Resources: Images
- Upcoming & previous training

If you have any questions or need help with your marketing, join our weekly office hours, ask questions in our private Facebook group, or email us. We are here to support you.

Happy gardening! ☐

Melissa & Barbra

UC Master Gardener Program

Statewide Communications Team

Content Inspiration - April

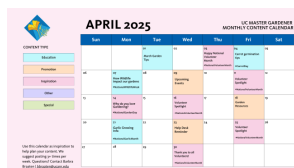
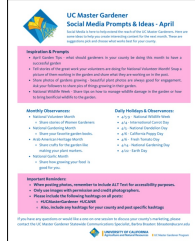
Here is your Content Inspiration and Content Calendar for April. The Content Calendar is set up for posting three times a week to social media using the buckets: education, inspiration, and promotion. As always, both of these documents are just suggestions! Please add or change the topic as needed. If you have questions, please email Barbra Braaten at bbraaten@ucanr.edu

April Social Media Inspiration

Find inspiration for your April social media content - it's National Volunteer Month and National Gardening Month!

- [Download the April Inspiration Guide here](#)

- [Download the April Content Calendar here](#)



National Volunteer Month - let's celebrate!

April is National Volunteer Month, and it's time to celebrate our amazing UC Master Gardeners! These volunteers play a key role in our communities by running workshops, creating beautiful gardens, answering helpline questions, and supporting local garden projects.

This month, we want to highlight their valuable work. While we appreciate them year-round, April is a special time to showcase their efforts. Let's come together to recognize their impact!

Acknowledging our volunteers is essential. Sharing their stories helps attract new volunteers and shows the public the education and resources we provide. When we appreciate their contributions, we encourage them to stay involved and strengthen their commitment to our communities.

Here are some of our favorite ways to spotlight volunteers through our communication channels.

Social Media: Quick Impacts with Broad Reach

Social media is a great way to recognize volunteers. A simple yet effective strategy is to share a quality photo of a UC Master Gardener in action, along with a brief description of their impact and a consistent hashtag like #UCMGVolunteerSpotlight.

Newsletters: Connecting Volunteers to Seasonal Themes

Your newsletter could include a "Volunteer Victory" section that highlights volunteer achievements in relation to seasonal gardening activities.

Blogs: A Deeper Look into Volunteer Impact

Blog posts provide an opportunity for more in-depth storytelling about the contributions of volunteers. Consider adopting a "day in the life" approach by shadowing a UC Master Gardener during a helpline shift, workshop, or garden maintenance day. These behind-the-scenes glimpses help readers appreciate the expertise and dedication that

volunteers bring to their roles.

Focus on capturing specific moments that illustrate how volunteers connect with community members and address gardening challenges. Including direct quotes adds authenticity and personality to these stories, while also highlighting each volunteer's unique perspective and motivation.

Video: Bringing Volunteer Stories to Life

Even simple smartphone videos can effectively convey a volunteer's passion and impact. Short testimonials featuring UC Master Gardeners discussing their favorite projects or most meaningful interactions create engaging content for social media, websites, or presentations.

To encourage storytelling rather than just sharing facts, consider asking questions like: What surprised you the most about becoming a UC Master Gardener? Which project has had the biggest emotional impact on you? What gardening advice do you find yourself sharing most frequently with community members?

You don't need to implement every strategy at once. Begin with one platform where you're already comfortable. Send a simple three-question form to volunteers, select one compelling story, and share it thoughtfully. Focus on quality over quantity—an authentic, impact-focused story on a single platform will resonate more than rushed content across multiple channels. Remember that volunteer stories are most effective when they highlight specific contributions and tangible community impacts. By focusing on how UC Master Gardeners enhance your community's gardens, knowledge, and quality of life, you'll create recognition that feels meaningful to volunteers while inspiring continued engagement with your program.



Homepage best practices - Getting ready for Drupal

As we prepare to transition from Site Builder to Drupal, many of you have questions about adapting your county's homepage to the new platform. While Drupal offers many advantages, it's important to note that the layout is different with only one column. Some familiar features, like the events calendar and blog roll functionality, won't be available immediately on your homepage. These features may be added in future updates, but for now, we have an opportunity to rethink what makes an effective homepage.

Embracing Simplicity: Why Less Can Be More

The shift to Drupal is the perfect time to embrace homepage simplicity—not just because of platform limitations but because simpler websites often better serve our visitors. Research shows that websites with clear, focused homepages have:

- Higher visitor engagement
- Lower bounce rates
- Better mobile experiences
- Improved accessibility for all users

When visitors arrive at your homepage, they're typically looking for specific information—not browsing everything your program offers. A streamlined homepage that quickly directs them to what they need creates a more satisfying experience.

Essential Elements for Your New Homepage

As we wait for the IWP migration to be completed and to finally get access to our new sites, this is a great time to begin thinking about your Drupal homepage design. Consider prioritizing these key elements:

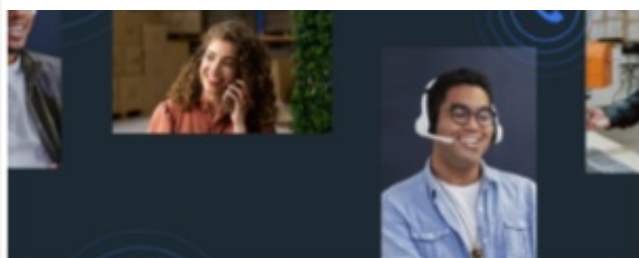
1. **Clear Program Identity** - Make it immediately obvious that visitors have arrived at a UC Master Gardener Program website. Include your county name, the UC Master Gardener logo, and a brief (1-2 sentence) description of the program's mission.
2. **Primary Call-to-Action** - What's the single most important action you want visitors to take? Whether it's contacting your helpline, finding upcoming workshops, or accessing gardening resources, feature this prominently with a clear button or link.
3. **Seasonal Gardening Guidance** - Consider featuring timely gardening information that changes quarterly. This shows that your site is current and immediately provides value to visitors without requiring multiple clicks.
4. **Contact Information** - Include helpline hours, email contacts, and the office location to make it easy to reach your program.
5. **Focused Navigation Menu** - Limit top-level navigation to 5-7 essential categories. Consider what your website analytics show as the most-visited pages when deciding what deserves primary navigation placement.

Detailed Guidance Coming Soon

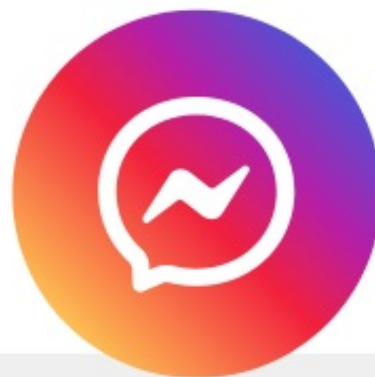
We will also be providing you with UC Master Gardener specific Drupal instructions, templates, and county examples when the platform launches. In the meantime, focus on content strategy and information prioritization rather than technical details. Also, make sure you go through all the training on the [UCANR IWP site](#).

We understand that change can be challenging, especially when familiar features aren't immediately available. However, this transition offers a valuable opportunity to create a more focused, user-friendly website that better serves your community's needs. Also, remember that the website will continue to evolve, and we will get more functionality over time.

If you have specific questions as you begin planning your homepage redesign, please contact Barbra Braaten | bbraaten@ucanr.edu



Meta Business Support



Important Warning From Meta:

The Rise of Facebook Spam

You might have noticed an increase in messages to your Facebook page recently. Don't worry about those Facebook messages warning that "Your Facebook page is scheduled for permanent deletion due to trademark infringement" - they're just spam! We've been hearing from many people about these messages, and we want to reassure you that your page is perfectly fine. These fake warnings are circulating everywhere, with some page owners receiving 2-3 of them every day. Feel free to ignore them, delete them, or mark them as spam. Know you're definitely not alone in dealing with this annoyance, we get them, too!



Social Media Platforms - Where to Focus

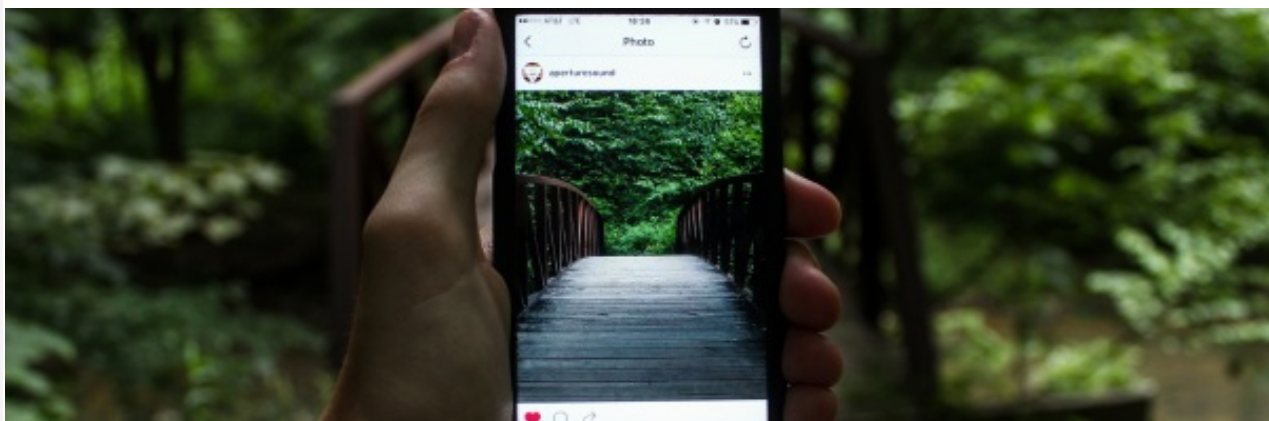
Many of you have asked about joining newer platforms like Bluesky or leaving Twitter/X or Meta platforms. It's exciting to see all these new options popping up, but before jumping in, let's consider what makes sense for our situation.

Here are some important factors to consider before adding a platform like Bluesky:

- Does the audience align with our target demographics? If not, would transitioning or dividing focus impact your reach
- Is our current content adaptable to the platform, or would it require additional resources to create new types of content?
- What is our current engagement and reach on Facebook, Instagram, and other platforms? Could introducing a new channel dilute or enhance our efforts?
- Do we have the bandwidth to manage another social media channel effectively, or would this place additional strain on volunteers and staff?
- Are our current followers showing interest in platforms like Bluesky, or are they more engaged on existing channels?
- Is Bluesky likely to grow as a relevant platform for your content type, or is it too early to tell?

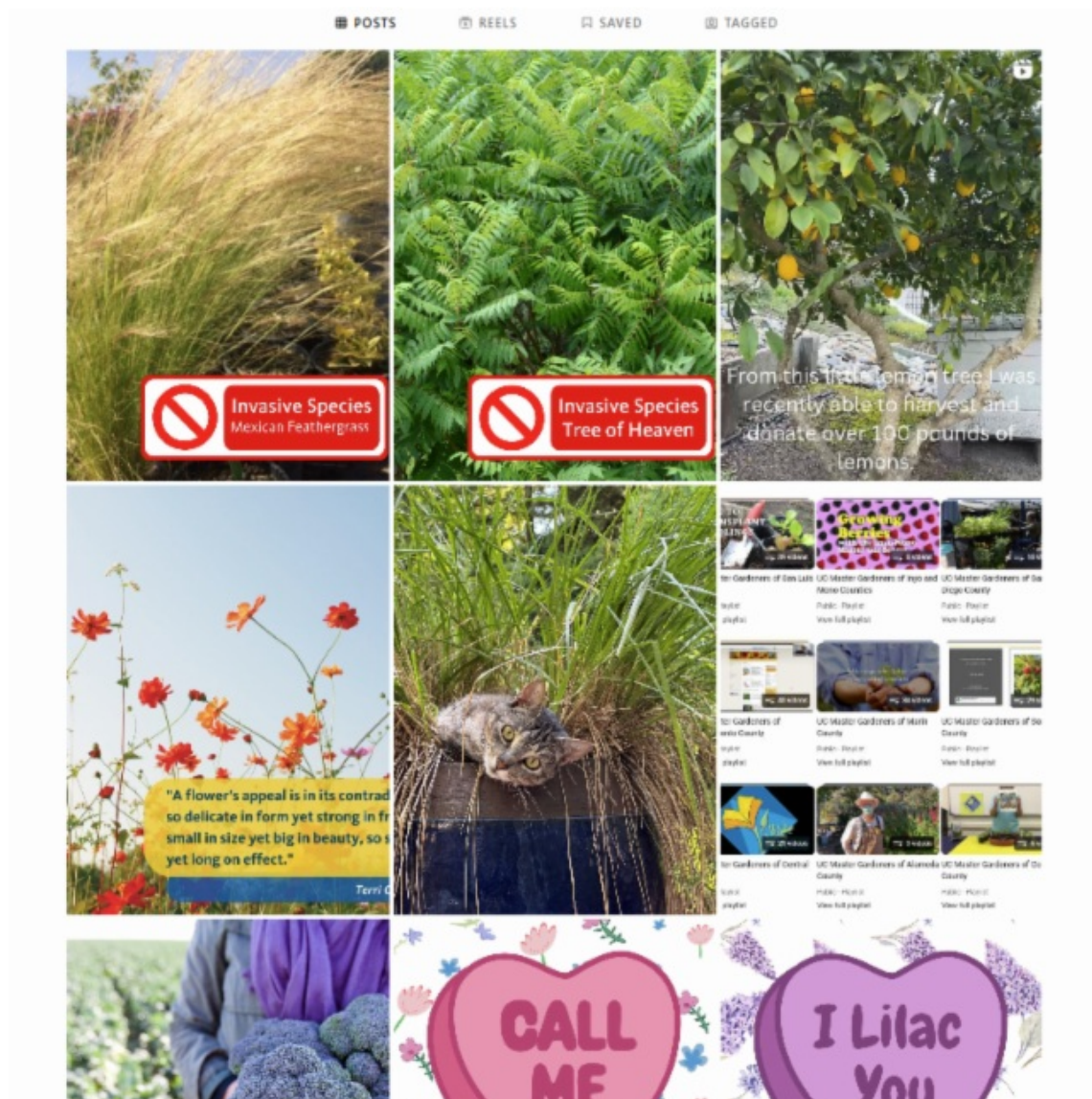
We want to support whatever decision works best for your county's needs and resources. There's no rush to be on every platform - sometimes focusing on doing a few channels really well is more effective than spreading too thin! If you are considering leaving a platform, consider joining the new platform first to build up your audience before leaving the old one.

If you have further questions or would like to talk through options, please contact Barbra Braaten | bbraaten@ucanr.edu



Instagram Feed Changes

If there is one constant about social media is that it is always changing! The latest big change in the social media world is that Instagram has changed the size of images. Previously all images showed up in our profile feed as squares now they are a 4:5 rectangle.



What does this mean for you - first, don't worry about going back to change older posts. While they may look a bit odd in the feed right now (for example, the quote getting cut off on the middle graphic on the left), it's not worth the time to go back and fix them. One thing you can do if you have preset graphics you reuse on a regular basis is resize them from a square to a 4:5 rectangle. Any new images should be done at that size as well.

To help make this a bit easier, we have updated our Event Templates for the web to the updated size. You can find them on Canva here:

Style 1 - https://www.canva.com/design/DAGfkqFxD0w/xA3C9MNbywd814_5UgdGnA/view?utm_content=DAGfkqFxD0w&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Style 2 - https://www.canva.com/design/DAGfktMWXEU/ENVn77CFhk0nGAZfzs8R0Q/view?utm_content=DAGfktMWXEU&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

Style 3 - https://www.canva.com/design/DAGfkundcY8/P9L8XA-9qtf5jWQ1bljHpA/view?utm_content=DAGfkundcY8&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview



Resources - Images

With the transition to the new website platform, many counties have been asking where to source high-resolution images that we have permission to use. Here are some of our favorite places to find great images:

- Use your photos first (from staff & volunteers)
- [Canva](#)
- [Pexels](#)
- [Pixabay](#)

We always want to prioritize photos taken by volunteers and staff. Most importantly, we must make sure we have copyright approval for all images we use. To learn more about copyright, please watch the [Volunteer Communicator Onboarding](#).

Drupal has a new Primary Image that is available on all our new website pages. This image is very large, and images moving over from Site Builder will look extremely pixelated. Use the Canva Template we created to make sure your images are the right size for our new Primary Images.

Website Primary Image: https://www.canva.com/design/DAGdsGva5-l/m5naCNTSOiDNGne65WjjXA/view?utm_content=DAGdsGva5-l&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium=link&utm_source=publishsharelink&mode=preview

If you have any questions or need help using Canva, please contact Barbra Braaten | bbraaten@ucanr.edu

Upcoming Marketing Training & Events:

Web: mgcoord.ucanr.edu/Events

Office Hours: UC Master Gardener Communications

Every Tuesday, 11 am -12 pm

Zoom link:

<https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/94197406576?pwd=DVS1uISHgtonzsLAarPS8WnxR2TAic.1>

Previous Recordings

Volunteer Communicator Orientation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XutHQatDGmg> (Oct. 2024)

Newsletter Best Practices

<https://youtu.be/9uEOFC2WvU> (Jul. 2024)

Social Media Accessibility Guidelines

<https://youtu.be/d1XAnZCcHyU> (Aug. 2024)

Rooted in Marketing Past Issues:

February (general tips) <https://conta.cc/42IUaxQ>

March (general tips) <https://conta.cc/3UzVpaH>

April (media training, sharing social media posts & more) <https://conta.cc/42ZToqH>

May (UC ANR Giving Day tips) <https://conta.cc/3JsyrvB>

June (newsletters) <https://conta.cc/3yJIUS9>

July (accessibility) <https://conta.cc/3VFiZ4M>

August (content strategy) <https://conta.cc/3LPxzIC>

September (video) <https://conta.cc/47daWl6>

October (graphic design) <https://conta.cc/3N5WXnT>

November (Giving Tuesday) <https://conta.cc/4fkVPsw>

December (year end) <https://conta.cc/3Z1X9tN>

January (starting the New Year) <https://conta.cc/49RlfNe>

February (sharing impact) <https://conta.cc/4jG922o>

Private Facebook Group for UC Master Gardener Communicators

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Our Mission

Thanks for reading this month's issue! To submit questions, topic suggestions, or feedback, email Statewide Communications Specialist Barbra Braaten at bbraaten@ucanr.edu.

"To extend research-based knowledge and information on home horticulture, pest management, and sustainable landscape practices to the residents of California."



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