

Meetings and Announcements

Job Opportunity: Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator - Fresno, CA

The Volunteer Coordinator uses professional community educational program concepts to manage and enhance the Master Gardener Programs (MGP) in Fresno and Madera Counties. Major duties include planning and organizing local activities, providing leadership to volunteers, evaluating program results, recruiting and training volunteers, working with partner institutions and organizations, fiscal control and compliance with University of California (UC) policies, and identifying and serving underrepresented constituencies in the community.

The Coordinator also works collaboratively with the Statewide UC MGP to maximize the public service and outreach of county-based programs, consistent with the mission of the Statewide UC MGP and UC ANR's Strategic Initiatives.

This position will promote, in all ways consistent with the other responsibilities of the position, accomplishment of the Affirmative Action goals established by the Division.

To apply, go to: <https://jobs.ucop.edu/applicants/Central?quickFind=60806>

Closing Date: January 15, 2018

36th Annual Landscape Management Seminar

The 36th Annual Landscape Management Seminar is scheduled for February 7, 2018, at Hodels. Visiting speakers include Maggie Reiter of UC Cooperative Extension, Fresno, who will speak about turf diseases. We'll have a noon demonstration, updates on laws and regulations, and updates on vertebrate pest problems. Abate-a-Weed is cooperating as a sponsor for this meeting and is handling registration. There are eight hours of PCA credit available for this meeting, including two hours of laws.

Spring Horticulture Class--Ridgecrest

A spring horticulture class is to be offered in Ridgecrest with cooperation of the Indian Wells Valley Water District (IWWVD) and the East Kern Resource Conservation District. The focus will be plants and water conservation. The class will begin February 13, 2018, and be held at the IWWVD office.

Spring Horticulture Class--Tehachapi

I am working toward offering a spring horticulture class in Tehachapi. If you live in that area and have an interest in such a class, please contact me.

Winter Irrigation for Home Landscapes, Gardens, and Orchards

December was very dry. The need for water in a landscape varies from summer to winter by about a factor of 10. The December-January period sees the lowest demand from plants at about one or two hundredths of an inch per day, and so irrigation clocks can be adjusted so the system runs perhaps once per week. In many years, it has been possible to shut off irrigation during winter, since plant needs are taken care of by rain. But not this year. It is advisable to run irrigation weekly or so until we do get rain, both for plants and to replenish the soil reservoir.

Roof Rats

Rats are troublesome, unnerving, and damaging pests, and readily adapt to life in urban areas. While Norway rats occur in all of the contiguous 48 states, the range of roof rats is limited to warm-winter areas, including southern states and the Pacific coast. Roof rats are common in Bakersfield and no respecter of a neighborhood's socioeconomic status. Rather, availability of habitat, especially mature landscaping, is perhaps the most important determinant of their presence. Simple measures can limit their occurrence around homes and commercial buildings. If control is needed, acting quickly can limit a population buildup.

Roof rats are about 4-6 inches in length, not including the tail. They are agile climbers and may be seen during the day running along the top of fences or power lines, although they are more active at night. Roof rats prefer feeding and nesting sites above ground, which may include shelf areas in garden sheds, in dense vegetation, in garages above the rafters, or in attics where they can gain entry. Signs of roof rat presence include droppings, smudge marks along rafters, or indications of feeding. These animals prefer a diet of nuts and fruits, including citrus, with avocado as a favorite. Hollowed-out oranges, partially eaten nuts in the tree, and markings of front teeth can indicate rat activity. Occasionally roof rats will chew the tender bark on upper limbs of fruit trees. Another indicator is unusual interest in certain areas of a home landscape by a pet dog or cat, including efforts to paw or climb to investigate a new scent.

All pest animals need food, water and habitat, including areas safe from predators (outdoor cats can be very effective predators) and for nesting. Therefore, denial of easily obtainable food and favorable habitat will limit their presence. Many studies have shown that habitat modification is a key to limiting rat populations, since even after a vigorous trapping or baiting program the population can rebound unless habitat is denied. Around Bakersfield, dense groundcovers or vines on fences or trees make excellent habitat, such as English or Algerian ivy, star jasmine, and creeping fig. The latter provides a food source as well in the figs it bears. To limit rat habitat, vines and groundcovers should be thinned. Trees should be cut back so branches are two feet or more from buildings so rats cannot easily gain access to roofs. Also, wood piles, brush, household outdoor storage (junk) should be neatly stacked and placed so rats do not have easy paths to protective cover and food. Open dumpsters and trash cans provide ready sources of food, as do pet food dishes

outside—one might be feeding the whole neighborhood population if dog or cat food is left outside at night. Trash cans should be covered and food limited to what a pet will eat. For buildings, exclusion is the most important control measure. Holes or openings 1/4 inch or larger should be sealed with wire, wire mesh, metal, or hard material such as concrete. Soft materials such as caulk or wood can be gnawed through.

If a single animal is found, direct population control can be begun since roof rats can produce 3-5 litters per year with 5-8 young per litter. Control inside buildings is a subject in itself; the following comments will focus on the outdoor environment.

Traps are effective if placed and baited properly. Rats are very aware of changes in their environment and will avoid new objects, so traps should be placed directly in runways, including tacking to trees or fences where the animals are known to pass. Baits can include nut meat, dried fruit, or bacon. Tying the bait to the trigger will prevent snatches of the food, and if the trap is sprung without catching the rat, it will be very difficult to catch that rat again. Pre-baiting is often helpful, which means fastening the bait but not setting the trap. Thus, the animal becomes familiar with the trap and becomes accustomed to pulling on the bait. Once skittishness is diminished—the bait is taken once or twice—the trap can be set. Trapping programs should be short and decisive, meaning multiple traps set in most or all the places where activity has been noticed. Obviously, traps should be set where pets or children cannot reach them.

Baits can be very effective, but be sure to follow label directions for effectiveness and safety. For roof rats, baits may be placed above ground where children and pets will not encounter them. Baits are sold as feeding trays, bait packs, or in paraffin blocks that may be tacked to trees. Some baits may require multiple feedings for an effective dose to be accumulated, which means a continuous supply of the bait. Again, read the label when using any pesticide product for instructions and safety precautions.

Glue boards are a better control tactic for mice than for rats. Ultrasonic generators and repellents have not been shown to be effective in research trials.

For additional information, the Pest Note entitled *Rats* is a peer-reviewed source of practical information about rat biology and control and is available at the UC IPM website, <http://www.ipm.ucdavis.edu>. Kern County Mosquito and Vector Control is another valuable source of help. You can request that an inspector come to your house and help you identify possible entry points as well as changes to make around your house and landscape.

More Meetings and Announcements

Return to Chernobyl, April, 2018

I am now finalizing our group composition for a return visit to Chernobyl. Chernobyl, Ukraine, was the site of a nuclear accident almost 32 years ago. Since that time, the ecosystem in the affected area (the “Zone”) has recovered remarkably. Several people have said they would like to visit, but did not have previous opportunity. We have plans for a return visit April 15-20, 2018. We anticipate access to areas not previously visited, and there have been developments in the social and cultural aspects of the Zone as well. Please contact me if interested at jfkarlik@ucdavis.edu.

John Karlik
Environmental Horticulture/Environmental Science

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