ROOTED IN MARKETING

April 2025

Hello Melissa,

Happy April! Spring is here, and there has been a lot of change happening. The new website platform Drupal has launched, and we are all working hard to get our websites up and running. Warm weather is on its way, along with our beautiful summer gardens!

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

- May content inspirations
- UC ANR Giving Day
- IWP Updates
- AI 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 - May

Here is your Content Inspiration and Content Calendar for May. 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
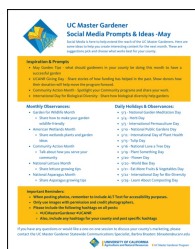
May Social Media Inspiration

Find inspiration for your May social media content, including National Herb Day, Tulip Day, & National Plant Something Day!

- Download the May Inspiration Guide here

UC ANR Giving Day, May 15-16

UC ANR Giving Day is just around the corner on May 15-16! The 24 hours of giving help us connect the power of UC research and extension with local communities. So, how do you make UC ANR Giving Day work for your program?

The first step is to tune-in to the webinar on **Thursday, April 3 at 11AM.** ["UC ANR Giving Day: How to Make Your Mark](#)." Register your participation and receive gift notifications by **May 1,** [register here.](#)

Next, set a goal and develop a plan. The more specific you can be with your goals, the easier it is to tell that story to your followers. People donate funds because they care about something; you want to tell a story to help them care about your needs. Make your request for funds specific and personal. Telling *your* story will be the most important aspect of your marketing strategy.

Once you have a goal and plan in place, it's time to filter that message into general communication messages. Thankfully, Emily Delk will send out the Campaign-In-A-Box Toolkit at the beginning of April. Use this toolkit as a starting point with pre-written communication messages. These are great options to use, but they are high-level and generic messages. To get the best results, you will want to tweak these messages to be specific to your goal.

For example, one of the messages in the Editorial Calendar might be:

> *"Join us on May 15-16, noon to noon, for the excitement of our 24-hour online giving campaign as we invite support of our mission to extend research-based knowledge and information on home gardening, pest management, and sustainable landscaping practices to the residents of California. Click to learn more! #GivingDay donate.ucanr.edu/givingday"*

You could tweak that to be:

> *"Join us on May 15-16, noon to noon, for the excitement of our 24-hour online giving campaign as we invite <u>support to revamp our youth demonstration garden in ABC City so we can share the wonders of gardening with even more local schools.</u> Click to learn more! #GivingDay donate.ucanr.edu/givingday"*

Tweaking the communications in the toolkit makes UC ANR Giving Day messages more powerful and personal to your community. The toolkit also includes images and links to

Canva templates. We highly recommend using the Canva templates and creating graphics with photos from your demonstration, school or community gardens, and your projects. Again, the more personal you can make things, the more powerful they will be!

While tweaking your message and graphics is the best option, if you don't have the time or support to make that happen, the messages and graphics in the Toolkit are wonderful. Don't opt out of participating if you don't have time to tweak things. Share the general messages; you never know what you might get if you don't try.

Check out the latest issue of The Scoop here for all your Giving Day needs. Don't forget to promote our UC ANR Giving Day campaign with the new **Zoom backgrounds!**

If you have questions or need help with your plan, please reach out to:
Barbra Pushies | bpushies@ucanr.edu

IWP Updates

Drupal is now live, and our websites have a whole new look. If you haven't already checked out the new website platform, we highly recommend you do! While we are very excited to have a new platform, it has been a bit of a bumpy transition. Here are some things we have learned in the last couple of weeks while updating our sites:

- **Links -** Many links did not migrate correctly, specifically links to files. The IWP team is working on this and should have a fix soon. Please check your websites for broken links.

- **VMS Links** - Please check any links to your website in VMS. They will need to be updated

- **Social Media** - Please check links on social media accounts to make sure they still go where you want them to.

- **Primary Images** - These images on our pages are for photos ONLY, no graphics or photos with text.
    - The primary images are a wonderful opportunity to add more beauty to your pages and share images from your gardens. We highly recommend using the primary image on your main pages and events.
    - IT put in generic primary images on many pages; some of these do not match our area of expertise. Please update your primary images to represent your county programs. Use photos of your demo gardens, events, or local landscapes. Learn how to update this image in our How to Set Up a Simple Homepage in Drupal doc here.
    - The images get turned into thumbnails in the Content Hub/Search, and people are more likely to click on a link if there is an image. The primary image is quite large. Please use the Canva template here to make sure your image is sized correctly. We don't want any blurry or pixelated images, just beautiful garden spaces.

- **Blog Authors** - When selecting an author for your blog in Drupal, the only options currently are UC ANR staff. Unfortunately, this doesn't work when volunteers write many of our blogs. We have made an enhancement request but do not have a timeline for this fix. Until we get an update, we recommend putting the author's name in first, then a return before starting the actual copy of the blog.
  - Example: Author - Jane Doe, UC Master Gardener of Poppy County Volunteer

- **Events** - Please put all events in as the "event" content type.
  - There are a lot more options for promotion and engagement if you have your events in the Content Hub/Search as events. You can learn how to do this in our [How to Create an Event in Drupal doc here](#).
  - We have gotten many questions about the event types and which ones to use. This may be updated by the Content Governance Committee in the future, but for now, this is what we suggest:
    - Conference - multi-day educational events
    - Meeting - internal events
    - Webinars - educational events online
    - Workshops - educational events outside

- **Tagging best practices** - We have added a new tagging guideline document to the [Box resource folder here](#).
  - Tagging is extremely important on this new site. Do your best to make sure you use accurate tags, but do not overtag.
  - Please note that tagging guidance and updates will come from the Content Governance Committee once they are up and running. We will be able to request new tags in the future.

- **Known Issues** - You can keep up on known issues and what has been fixed on the [IWP training site here](#).

Thank you all for your patience and support as we continue to figure out the quirks and new features of Drupal.

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

AI Images

UC Master Gardeners have earned their trusted reputation by consistently providing accurate, research-based gardening information and support. Recently, there has been a rise in the use of AI-generated plant images in various gardening communications. While this approach may seem efficient, using these artificial representations instead of authentic photographs doesn't fully align with the program's educational mission and commitment to real-world gardening guidance.

When it comes to visual resources, real photographs of plants offer several advantages over AI-generated images:

Accuracy
Real photographs capture the true characteristics of plants, including subtle variations in color, texture, and growth patterns that AI may miss or misrepresent. UC Master Gardeners need to demonstrate exactly how plants appear in actual growing conditions.

Educational integrity
While AI images may seem like a practical solution for decorative elements, using authentic photographs reinforces our commitment to evidence-based education. Even decorative images on blog posts and websites contribute to the learning experience of our community members.

Authenticity
When people visit UC Master Gardener websites or read our blogs, they trust that the information—including visual elements—represents reality. Using real photographs throughout our communications maintains consistency in our commitment to authenticity.

Local Conditions
Photographs taken in local gardens reflect the unique growing conditions of each county. These images help gardeners understand what plants actually look like in their region rather than idealized versions that may not be achievable locally.

Opportunities for Education
What begins as a decorative image often becomes an educational opportunity. A real photograph of a flowering sage might prompt questions about pollinator attraction or water conservation that wouldn't arise from an AI representation.

While AI technology offers convenient alternatives, UC Master Gardeners' commitment to research-backed education extends to our visual communications as well. By prioritizing real photographs—even for decorative purposes—we remain true to our mission of providing authentic, practical gardening guidance based on actual experience and research.

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=DVS1ulSHgtonzsLAarPS8WnxR2TAic.1

Previous Recordings
Volunteer Communicator Orientation
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XutHQatDGmg (Oct. 2024)

Newsletter Best Practices
https://youtu.be/9uEOFPC2WvU (Jul. 2024)

Social Media Accessibility Guidelines
https://youtu.be/d1XAnZCcHyU (Aug. 2024)

Rooted in Marketing Past Issues:
February (general tips) https://conta.cc/42lUaxQ
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/3LPxzlC

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
March (Spotlighting Volunteers & IWP) https://conta.cc/41zu1wz
Special Edition IWP https://conta.cc/4ixmgNC

Private Facebook Group for UC Master Gardener Communicators

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

Our Mission
"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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