UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA
Agriculture and Natural Resources

ROOTED IN MARKETING

October 2024

Hello Melissa,

Happy October! We've got an exciting issue of Rooted for you this month, packed with helpful tips and resources. In this edition, we're diving into graphic design best practices, with a focus on creating eye-catching graphics.

But first, we're excited to announce a brand-new webinar for volunteer communicators. If you're a volunteer involved in communications or marketing, join us on Oct.30 at 11 am, for the Volunteer Communicator Orientation webinar. But don't worry if you can't make it live—it will be recorded and available to watch later. Check out the Zoom link in the "Upcoming Training" section at the bottom of this newsletter.

Here's what else you can find in this month's issue of Rooted in Marketing:

- November content inspirations
- Principles of graphic design
- Customizing your design - flyers vs web graphics
- Graphic design - do's & don'ts
- Tips & tricks - using Canva templates
- Resources - branding toolkit
- Upcoming & previous training

The statewide program is working on our 2024 Impact Report and end-of-year appeal, and we need YOUR help to make it shine! Do you have great photos showcasing the amazing work happening in our gardens and communities? We'd love to feature a diverse representation of counties this year! **Please submit your photos to our shared Box folder here**.

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 help!

Happy Gardening!
Melissa & Barbra
UC Master Gardener Program
Statewide Communications Team

Content Inspiration - November

It's time for the November Inspiration Guide. Remember, these are just inspirational ideas; these are not requirements. Pick and choose what works for you! If you have suggestions on

November Social Media Inspiration

Find inspiration for your November social media content, celebrate gratitude, Native American Heritage, and more!

Download the November doc here.

The Basics of Good Graphic Design

Graphic design isn't just about making things look pretty—it's a powerful tool that helps you communicate effectively and engage your audience. Whether creating flyers for upcoming events or social media posts to share gardening tips, good design can make all the difference in how your message is received. Investing time in improving your design can lead to higher engagement, better event attendance, and a greater return on your efforts.

Let's look at a few simple tips that can help you create more engaging designs:

What's the goal of your design?
Before you start designing, ask yourself: What do I want people to do when they see this? A well-thought-out design will help guide your audience toward that goal. By making your message clear and the next steps easy to follow, you improve your chances of a higher return on investment (ROI)—more attendees or more social media engagement.

The importance of negative space (empty space)
Negative space refers to the empty areas between the different elements in your design. Using this space wisely makes your design cleaner and easier to understand. A cluttered design can overwhelm your audience, causing them to scroll past or ignore it altogether. By creating breathing room around your content, you guide your audience's eyes to the critical information, increasing their chances of taking action.

Make it accessible for everyone
Good design is inclusive. Not everyone experiences your design the same way, so making it accessible is vital to reaching a wider audience. For example, using clear fonts, high-contrast colors, and considering colorblindness ensures that everyone can read and engage with your materials.

Use high-quality images

Images can convey emotions and information faster than words. Clear, high-quality images make your flyers and posts look professional, while blurry or pixelated photos can turn people away. Good visuals increase trust and make your designs more engaging. Always make sure that the images you use are used with permission.

Fonts and font sizes matter
Fonts do more than display text—they set the tone for your design. Using clean, simple fonts makes your materials easier to read and understand. Too many fonts can confuse your audience and make the design look messy. Sticking to one or two fonts ensures consistency and professionalism. Likewise, using the right font sizes ensures your information is readable, whether on a flyer or a smartphone. Fonts should be no smaller than 12 points on web graphics.

Keep branding consistent
Consistency is key to building a recognizable and trustworthy brand. By consistently using the program's colors, logos, and fonts, you create a sense of familiarity with your audience. A consistent look across all your flyers and posts also makes your program seem more professional, which increases trust and encourages higher engagement over time. Think of it as building a relationship with your audience—trust leads to action.

Good graphic design isn't just about looks; it's about communicating effectively and maximizing the impact of your message. When your designs are clear, professional, and engaging, they help you reach more people and achieve your goals, whether driving attendance, spreading awareness, or gaining new volunteers. By using these simple design principles, you'll create materials that don't just look good but also help grow your program's reach and success.

If you have questions or would like someone to look at a current design project, please contact Barbra Braaten | bbraaten@ucanr.edu

Customizing Your Design - Flyers vs Web Graphics

While it might be tempting to use a single flyer across all platforms—social media, email, and printed materials—customizing your design for each is essential. This ensures your message is clear, resonates with your audience, and suits the context of each platform.

Each platform has unique characteristics. For example, social media is fast-paced and requires immediate impact, while printed materials can provide more detailed information since readers are typically more focused. By tailoring your graphics, you enhance your audience's engagement.

One common issue we see is the use of information-heavy flyers designed for print (letter-sized flyers) on social media. While these designs may work well as flyers or on a bulletin board, they often fail on platforms like Facebook or Instagram. Social media users scroll quickly through their feeds, and if they encounter an image filled with tiny text and links, they are likely to keep scrolling.

Creating Social Media-Friendly Graphics

- **Keep it minimal.** Social media graphics should contain minimal information. Focus on the key details—what's happening, when, and where—and leave out lengthy explanations and paragraphs.
- **No links in images,** remember, links embedded in images don't work on social media. Instead, put important links and additional details (like how to register) in the post's caption. This allows users to quickly access the information they need without frustration.
- **Clear, direct calls to action.** Focus on a simple and direct call to action. For example, "Join us on Saturday!" works better than a lengthy explanation of the entire event agenda. The goal is to catch interest and prompt viewers to take action without overwhelming them with information.

When you create a separate design for each platform, you ensure your audience gets the right amount of information in a way that's easy to digest. At the end of the day, your goal is the same—getting people excited about your event or important information—but how you present it should change depending on the platform.


Tips & Tricks: Using Canva Templates

Creating multiple designs for an event can feel overwhelming, and we have some new event flyer templates to help make that easier!
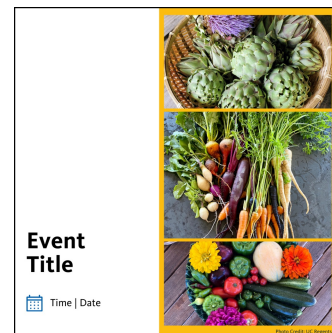
Below are three web graphic templates for social media, calendar events, and websites, as well as three flyer templates for printed flyers only. You can access and edit the files below through Canva. If you don't already have an account, you can get one for free.
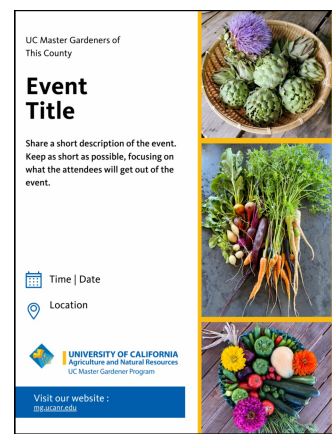

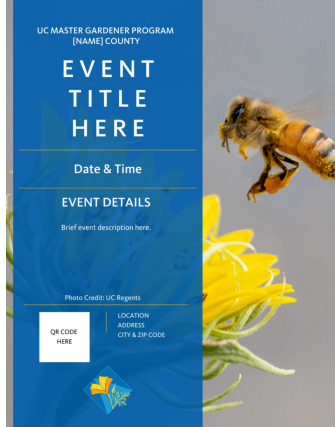[Style 1 Web Graphic Canva Template Link](#)
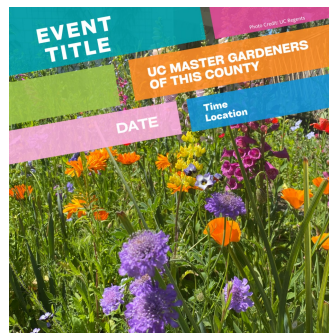
[Style 2 Web Graphic Canva template link](#)

[Style 3 Web Graphic Canva template link](#)

Each template comes with an instruction page that explains the areas to customize. You can reuse these templates as many times as you'd like. Let us know if you find these helpful and if there are any other templates you would like to see from the statewide office. Enjoy!

Graphic Design Do's & Don'ts

Let's look at some graphic design pieces and see how they work or don't.

DON'T include all the information on your social media graphic.

The "Fall Plant Sale" flyer is hard to read. The text is too small, and when posted on social media, it's even harder to see, especially when placed over illustrations. There's too much information crammed in, making it unclear what action you want people to take. Also, screen readers can't access the information since all the details are on the flyer itself.

Keep your social media graphics simple with minimal text. Share more details in the post's caption or link to your website. Make sure your graphic is easy to read and highlights just one main message or call to action.

DO use limited text on your graphics.

The "Fruit Fight" image is a great example of keeping your graphics simple. The critical information is easy to read, the photo ties in with the topic of the class being promoted, and it's clear and simple.

Color blocking is a great way to get text readable over an image. This image includes the minimum of the event information - the rest can be included in the copy of the post or on the website.

DON'T crowd your graphic.

When looking at the "Pollinator Census" graphic, it's hard to tell what the most important information is. There isn't a clear call to action, and it feels overcrowded.

Less is more on social media. As people scroll quickly, you want your main message to stand out and grab their attention.

DO use negative space

This "CSU Green School" graphic makes good use of negative space and uses a photo to enhance the text. Placing the main message in the sky makes it easy to read and complements the image. It also communicates the main point without overcrowding the graphic. It's clear, simple, and easy to read.

Resources - Branding Toolkit

As you are working on new graphic design pieces or looking to update older ones, the UCANR Branding Toolkit is available to help make things easier. Check here to make sure you have the most up-to-date assets, including.:

- **Logo:** Check to ensure you are using the most up-to-date version of the UC Master Gardener and UC ANR logo. Never alter its proportions or colors. Make sure it's placed prominently and consistently across all materials.
- **Color Palette:** Our signature blue & and gold, plus complementary colors, reflect our values and create a cohesive visual identity.
- **Fonts:** Use the specified fonts for headings and body text. Consistent typography ensures that our messages are easily legible and consistent across various platforms.

Consistency reinforces our identity and helps build trust with our audience. When people encounter a familiar and unified brand, they're more likely to connect with and trust the UC Master Gardener Program. Interested in a review of your branding or materials? Contact Melissa Womack | mgwomack@ucanr.edu

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Upcoming Marketing Training & Events:
Web: mgcoord.ucanr.edu/Events

Volunteer Communicator Orientation
Wednesday, October 30, 11 am - 12 pm
https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/97427303302?pwd=vTPOwepEMe3OsAV35yduHXXSzuHxmY.1

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

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

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."