



Figure 1. Fair Oaks demonstration orchard in summer 2001, with the ¾-acre community garden in the background.



Figure 2. Heavily laden 3-year-old Asian pear fruit bush. Fruit bushes have the potential for high yields in small spaces, without the need for ladders.

Fair Oaks Horticulture Center

Chuck Ingels and *Judy McClure*

Introduction

Fair Oaks Orchard Demonstration Project. In 1998, the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment Fund established the Fair Oaks Orchard Demonstration project (see [Slosson report, 1998-1999](#)). The goal of this project was to provide the public with hands-on instruction in how to grow fruit trees in the home garden. The project is a cooperative effort between the Sacramento County UC Cooperative Extension and the Fair Oaks Recreation & Park District. It is located in Fair Oaks Park, which is on Fair Oaks Blvd. just south of Madison Ave. The orchard is adjacent to the Fair Oaks Community Garden, which has 43 individual garden plots (Fig. 1).

Instruction is provided in variety selection and sequential ripening, planting, training, pruning, drip irrigation, mulching, budding and grafting, and organically acceptable pest management. An emphasis is placed on methods of keeping trees small enough to work with from the ground. These “fruit bushes” also enable the gardener with limited space to plant multiple species and varieties that ripen over the course of the summer (Fig. 2).

Goals and Objectives

Expansion to Fair Oaks Horticulture Center. Another grant was awarded by the Elvenia J. Slosson Endowment Fund for 2000-01 to expand the project to include table grape and berry demonstration vineyards,

trellised fruit trees, tree trunk topiary (arborsculpture), a vegetable research area, and eight additional community garden plots. In addition, the Fair Oaks Recreation & Park District and an individual donated \$5,000 each, which were used to construct a storage shed and an arbor.

To propagate the grapevines and to educate Master Gardeners about propagation, the [UCD Viticulture & Enology Dept.](#) assisted us in grafting 34 varieties onto ‘Freedom’ rootstocks. The vines were planted in April 2000 and most vines produced substantial crops in 2001, which the public tasted at the August “Harvest Day 2001” (see below). The public is also instructed in cane vs. spur pruning, canopy management, and control of powdery mildew.

In the winter of 2001, many varieties of blueberries, blackberries, raspberries, and other berries were planted (Fig. 3). Demonstrations are given on planting, trellising, and pruning. In this area, eight Asian pear trees of different varieties were also planted and an 8-ft. trellis constructed. Tree trunks and branches are being trained to create unusual designs, such as circles, spheres, cubes, menorahs, and spirals (Figs. 4 and 5). Other arborsculpture designs are being created as well.

Educational Activities. Seven Saturday workshops are offered by UCCE Master Gardeners and the UCCE Environmental Horticulture Advisor throughout each year on a variety of topics related to growing fruits and vegetables (Fig. 6). Flyers are posted in nurseries and other locations, and workshops are announced in *The Sacramento Bee*. Master Gardeners are trained for each workshop’s topics by the EH Advisor the weekend before the workshop. About 25 Master Gardeners par-



Figure 3. Raspberries growing vigorously in summer 2001. Other berries planted include blackberries and blueberries.

ticipate in workshops and other activities at the horticulture center. In the first year, three workshops were held, with an average attendance of about 20, but the number of attendees has increased each year. Average attendance at workshops in 2001 is around 70, but on two occasions attendance was more than 150. At the end of each year, we meet to evaluate that year's workshops and to plan workshops for the next year.

We also sponsor the annual Harvest Day, which has educational presentations and booths staffed by local and statewide horticulture organizations. The event takes place on the first Saturday in August. Attendance at Harvest Day has increased each year; at the 2001 Harvest Day, over 250 people attended.

Discussion

The Fair Oaks Horticulture Center is a hands-on facility that has provided excellent training opportunities for both Master Gardeners and the public. Workshops are increasing in attendance and the proficiency and speaking ability of Master Gardeners are improving. The project has widespread community support and fits in with the park district's desire for the park to serve as a horticultural teaching center. Other Master Gardener groups have toured the site in order to help them create similar facilities in their counties.

Future Expansion. In 2001, we were awarded a \$92,774 **CALFED** grant from the Calif. Dept. of Water Resources to create a water efficient landscape demonstration on an additional half-acre of land at the site. The Fair Oaks Water District has now joined the Fair Oaks Recreation & Park District in sponsoring the horticulture center.



Figure 4. Young Asian pear shoots being trained in the shape of a cube. The three shoots will be grafted at the top of the cube, and the PVC tubing will be cut and removed later.



Figure 5. Grafts on two rungs of a 3-sided pluot ladder. The top graft was made in the summer of 2000, and has fully healed. The bottom graft was made in summer 2001; it is held firmly in place by tie tape, and is prevented from drying out with grafting wax.

The goal of the water efficient landscape project is to develop four "backyard landscapes" – California native, Mediterranean, contemporary, and common variety landscapes. The four major landscapes are meant to represent typical residential yards and they will display different designs and plant themes. Each of the backyard landscapes will employ and demonstrate the fundamentals of a water efficient landscape, including: planning and design, soil and drainage improvement, efficient irrigation, water efficient turf grasses, low water-use plants, mulching, and appropriate maintenance. In addition, the edible theme of the horticulture center



Figure 6. UC Master Gardener Bill Hollins demonstrating how to prune young grapevines at the January 2001 workshop.

will continue in the demonstration landscape with the incorporation of water efficient fruit trees, herbs and other edible plants throughout the various “backyards.” We anticipate having many workshops, which will be held by Master Gardeners as well as various groups and colleges. The site will be open to the public and signs will be installed for self-guided tours.

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