



Greetings!

September is here, and as gardens across much of California are feeling the stress of summer heat, it's the perfect time to focus on one of your most powerful communication tools – newsletters! Whether you're sharing tips for helping gardens survive the late-summer heat, planning for fall planting, or keeping your community connected during the quieter gardening months, a well-crafted newsletter can help you reach and engage your audience effectively. This month, we're diving deep into newsletter best practices to help you create content that your readers will actually want to open and read.

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

- October Content Inspirations
- Newsletter Best Practices
- From Newsletter to Social Media
- New Instagram Updates
- Upcoming & Previous Training

If you have any questions or need help with marketing, join our weekly office hours, ask questions in our private [Facebook social media group](#), or email us. We are here to support you.

Happy gardening! ☐

**Melissa & Barbra**

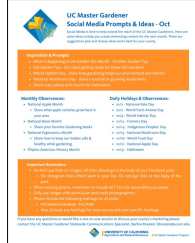
UC Master Gardener Program

*Statewide Communications Team*

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## Content Inspiration - October

Here is your Content Inspiration and Content Calendar for September. 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](mailto:bbraaten@ucanr.edu)



Find inspiration for your October social media content, including National Book Month, Apply month, and our favorite Halloween - share those spooky plants!

- [Download the October Inspiration Guide](#)
- [Download the October Content Calendar](#)



## Newsletter Best Practices

Newsletters remain a cornerstone of effective marketing and communications. With 93% of people checking their email every day and over 92% of internet users in the United States using email, newsletters provide an essential way to reach community members who may not be active on social media. Here are the proven best practices that drive engagement and build lasting connections.

### Consistency—Your Foundation for Trust

Sending your newsletter on a regular schedule builds trust and anticipation with your audience. Whether you choose monthly, bi-weekly, or quarterly—stick to it, even during quieter periods. Consistency signals reliability to your readers and makes content planning much more manageable. Pro tip: Create a content calendar at the beginning of each quarter to map out themes and key topics ahead of time.

### Content—Quality Over Quantity Every Time

Your newsletter should blend educational value with community connection. The most effective approach combines research-based gardening information with local event promotions and volunteer spotlights. Instead of cramming everything into one email, focus on 2-3 key topics that truly matter to your readers. Link to recent blog posts with compelling previews that explain the value and include clear calls-to-action that guide readers to learn more.

### Format—Clean, Clear, and Scannable

In our inbox-heavy world, simplicity wins. Design your newsletters to be easily scannable with clear visual hierarchy. Use 14pt font for body text and 18pt for headings—going larger isn't necessary and can overwhelm mobile readers. Stick with black text on white backgrounds for maximum readability, and let your vibrant garden images provide the color and visual interest.

### Images—Show, Don't Just Tell

High-quality images transform newsletters from informational to inspirational. Garden

photography captures the beauty of your work and motivates readers to engage with your program. Ensure images are properly sized for your email platform and always include descriptive alt text. Remember: a picture of a thriving vegetable garden often does more to promote your program than paragraphs of text.

### Accessibility—Design for Everyone

Beyond color contrast, true accessibility means considering all your readers' needs. Add meaningful alt text to every image so screen reader users can fully engage with your content. Use clear, descriptive headings that help people navigate your newsletter efficiently. Consider including a text-only version link for those who prefer or need simplified formatting.

### Mobile-First Mindset—Design for Small Screens

With over 70% of emails now opened on mobile devices, design for smartphones first. Keep subject lines under 40 characters, use single-column layouts, and ensure buttons are large enough for finger taps. Test how your newsletter looks on different devices before sending—what appears perfect on your computer screen might be unreadable on a phone.

### Subject Lines—That Actually Get Opened

Your subject line determines whether your carefully crafted newsletter gets read or deleted. Be specific and benefit-focused: "Spring Pest Prevention Tips for Your Tomatoes" performs better than "March Newsletter." Avoid spam triggers like excessive punctuation or ALL CAPS, and consider personalizing with your county name to increase local relevance.

Ready to take your newsletter to the next level? For personalized guidance on your county's newsletter strategy, contact Barbra Braaten to schedule a one-on-one consultation. Our weekly Communications Office Hours (Tuesdays, 11 AM - 12 PM) also provide ongoing support for all your marketing questions.



## From Newsletter to Social Media: A Month of Content Made Easy

Creating fresh social media content every week can feel overwhelming when you're already managing newsletters, events, and community programs. But your monthly newsletter can provide all the social media content you need. With a strategic approach, one well-crafted newsletter can fuel an entire month of engaging posts.

### Why This Strategy Works

**People Need Repetition:** Marketing experts know it takes 7-10 touchpoints before someone takes action. Your newsletter reaches subscribers once monthly, but social media lets you reinforce those same valuable messages throughout the month in bite-sized pieces.

**Drive Traffic Back to Your Content:** Social media posts should work as appetizers, giving people a taste while encouraging them to visit your website or read your full newsletter. Include calls-to-action like "Read our full newsletter for more seasonal tips" or "Visit our website to register."

**Save Time with Smart Recycling:** You've already done the research and writing. Now just



break that content into smaller pieces and adapt it for different platforms. This saves hours while maintaining quality.

## Transform Your Newsletter Content

**Break Down Educational Articles:** Turn "5 Spring Garden Tasks" into five separate posts throughout the month. Add engaging questions like "Have you started your spring pruning yet?" Pull out statistics: "Did you know mulching can reduce water needs by up to 50%?"

**Extend Event Promotion:** Create multiple posts from one event: initial announcement, what you'll learn, meet the instructor, registration reminder, and post-event follow-up with photos.

**Feature People and Stories:** Volunteer spotlights and success stories from your newsletter generate high engagement on social media. People love celebrating their community.

**Share Resources Strategically:** Post one recommended resource per week with context: "This week's recommendation: [website]. Perfect for [specific problem]. Check our newsletter for more resources!"

## Your Simple Workflow

**Step 1:** After publishing your newsletter, spend 15 minutes identifying 8-10 pieces of content that could become social media posts.

**Step 2:** Sort your newsletter content into the three content buckets:

- Educational: Garden tips, seasonal advice, how-to information, plant facts
- Inspirational: Volunteer spotlights, success stories, beautiful garden photos, community achievements
- Promotional: Events, workshops, resources, program announcements

**Step 3:** Use your newsletter content to fill gaps in your monthly content calendar. We recommend posting 3 times weekly minimum (1x educational, 1x inspirational, 1x promotional), but feel free to post more when you have great content. Your newsletter typically provides enough material for 8-12 additional posts throughout the month. Use these to supplement the content calendar suggestions you receive monthly through Rooted or to fill days when you need extra content.

**Step 4:** Create posts by adapting newsletter content for your chosen platform. Always include calls-to-action, driving people back to your newsletter or website.

**Step 5:** Start with your most active platform. Once this becomes routine, expand to others using the same content, adapted for each platform's style.

Your newsletter represents hours of valuable work. Don't let it reach people just once a month. With strategic repurposing, your newsletter becomes the foundation for consistent, engaging social media content that serves your community all month long.



## Resources: Instagram's New Features

Instagram recently rolled out three game-changing features that could significantly enhance

how UC Master Gardener programs connect with their communities and share valuable gardening knowledge.

## The New Features

**Repost/Share Function:** Users can now repost public Reels and feed posts directly to their followers' main feed, with the ability to add personal notes or commentary. Reposts appear in a dedicated "Reposts" tab on profiles and are recommended to followers' feeds.

**Instagram Map:** This location-sharing feature allows users to share their recent active location with chosen friends and discover location-based content from others. Users can explore content from interesting locations and see what friends and creators are posting from specific places.

**Enhanced Friends Tab in Reels:** Now available globally, this tab shows public Reels that friends have liked, commented on, reposted, and created.

## How UC Master Gardeners Can Leverage These Features

**Amplify Educational Content:** The repost feature allows Master Gardener programs to easily share and amplify successful gardening tips, plant care advice, and seasonal guidance from other educational accounts or community members. Programs can add their own expert commentary to reposts, providing additional context or region-specific advice.

**Showcase Local Gardens:** Using Instagram Map, Master Gardener programs can highlight demonstration gardens, community plots, and successful local gardening projects by location. This helps community members discover nearby gardening resources and connect with local growing efforts.

**Build Community Networks:** The enhanced Friends tab creates opportunities to see what gardening content resonates with followers, helping programs understand their audience's interests and discover trending gardening topics within their community.

**Event Promotion:** Programs can use location tagging and the map feature to promote workshops, garden tours, and educational events, making it easier for community members to find and attend local gardening activities.

These features represent Instagram's push toward more social discovery and community building—exactly what UC Master Gardener programs need to cultivate stronger connections with their gardening communities.

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## Upcoming Marketing Training & Events:

### Office Hours: UC Master Gardener Communications

Every Tuesday, 11 am -12 pm

Zoom link:

<https://ucanr.zoom.us/j/96405979243?pwd=F6p7QLOzFIlgPZQlq1hbsdoXZwmHI9.1>

### Previous Recordings

#### From Spreadsheet to Spotlight in One Sheet

<https://youtu.be/Apx1WFCO60A> (June 2025)

#### National Volunteer Appreciation Month

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQxIxS1c5jg> (April 2025)

#### 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:** <https://link.ucanr.edu/rooted>

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**Private Facebook Group for UC Master Gardener Communicators**

**Join**

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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](mailto: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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