

Volume 2 Issue 2

February 2026

The RECap

A newsletter from South Coast Research and Extension Center
and UC Cooperative Extension Orange County



January sure flew by...you know what they say, time flies when you're having fun! We kicked off the new year by hosting a group of farmers who were attending the American Farm Bureau Federation annual meeting in Anaheim, and the OC 4-H Program hosted a very successful Food Fiesta event! Make sure to read the event recaps below.

Featuring:

- Event Recap
 - Program Updates
 - In the Media
 - Pro Tips
 - Upcoming Events
-

In this issue, we are also excited to share some news articles featuring our advisors and programs, as well as several upcoming events related to beekeeping, forestry, and wildfire!

Plus, we are planning an avocado pop-up sale, so keep an eye out on [Instagram](#) for the sign-up link because bags are limited!

Lindsey Pedroncelli, PhD
Interim Director, South Coast REC

P.S. If you do not wish to receive this newsletter in the future, please unsubscribe at the bottom of this email.

Event Recap

American Farm Bureau Federation Annual Meeting

On January 13, South Coast REC hosted a group of about 55 farmers from around the United States who were in Anaheim for the annual [American Farm Bureau Federation meeting](#).

Attendees had the opportunity to take a tractor tour of the center, where they learned about the history of South Coast REC as well as current research being conducted at the

center. Attendees interacted with all of the cooperative extension programs and researchers based at South Coast REC, getting a feel for the type of work that we focus on in urban Orange County. Though it was an unseasonably warm January day, attendees enjoyed tasting some fresh SCREC-grown citrus and learning from our research and extension experts.

It was so special to host farmers from around the nation and be able to share with them all that we do at South Coast REC and UCCE Orange County! Thank you to Saul Rios with the California Farm Bureau for helping to coordinate this event.



SCREC Director Lindsey Pedroncelli welcomed guests and gave a brief overview of UC Agriculture and Natural Resources, UC Cooperative Extension, and the Research and Extension Center System before leading the group on a tractor tour.



Niamh Quinn, Human-Wildlife Interactions Advisor, had taxidermy vertebrate pests on display, as well as a rat trap photo booth! (Scroll to the bottom of the newsletter to see the photo booth in action.)



Urban Agriculture Technology Advisor, Grant Johnson (left), talking with OC Bee Team Apiary Co-Manager, Becky Touchette (right).



Event attendees posing in front of the SCREC backdrop.



Visiting in January meant that attendees got to taste a few varieties of fresh citrus!



Rita Jakel (right), OC 4-H Program Coordinator, talks with event attendees.

OC 4-H Food Fiesta 2026 Taste the Elements, a Great Success!

Congratulations to our participants and thanks to our friends who helped at the event, especially some new friends who helped evaluate the events! You got to see some amazing talent from some creative and articulate youth!



Cupcake Wars creative entry.



Evaluators sample a dish.



That's a lot of Cupcake Wars entries!



Fiesta table setting entry.

Program Updates

South Coast Stewards Volunteer Program

Now accepting applications!

If you're looking for a place to learn about small scale regenerative farming and orchard care, this is the volunteer opportunity for you!



Meet other like-minded volunteers who join us weekly to work outside to assist in sowing, transplanting, harvesting, greenhouse propagating, and much more!

This is a fantastic opportunity to learn, teach, work outside, and meet new friends. This is our first planned recruitment for 2026.



Here are the details:

- Volunteers must be 18 years of age and complete a LiveScan background check
 - There is a two-year commitment to volunteering with the South Coast Stewards
 - Volunteers must complete required training and at least 50 hours of service annually
- Applications will be accepted until February 14th. After our review process, you will be notified by February 28th.

To register, please visit: <https://surveys.ucanr.edu/survey.cfm?surveynumber=47516>



South Coast Stewards assisting at the pumpkin u-pick at South Coast REC in October 2025.

4-H Youth Development Program

Calling for help from our friends again!

We need evaluators for Field Day and Fashion Revue and we need some help with our Leadership Development - Career Exploration Series.

Field Day & Fashion Revue 2026 is coming on Saturday, March 14 at SCREC. Evaluators are needed for all kinds of presentations like interpretive reading,



persuasive speech, mock job interviews, cultural arts and more. Have a knack for sewing and the fiber arts? We need evaluators for Fashion Revue too. Interested? Contact ocfieldday@gmail.com and someone will contact you to help match you to a contest.

Our **Leadership Development – Career Exploration Series** will be hosting panels of professionals over the next few months. Professionals will share their career path and details of their field. Interested? Contact oc4leadership@gmail.com and someone will contact you to schedule you.

In the Media

'It is scary': Oak-killing beetle reaches Ventura County, significantly expanding range



A goldspotted oak borer emerges from a tree. (Shane Brown)

[Beatriz Nobua-Behrmann](#), the Urban Forestry and Natural Resources advisor for Orange and Los Angeles Counties, was interviewed in this article about gold spotted oak borer and its recent spread into Ventura County.

[Read it here](#)

Diggin' it: UC South Coast Research Center is elbow deep into composting



Isaac Novella, the senior operations manager at OC Waste Recycling, left, Noel De Sota and Bill Brooks, both master gardeners, analyze the compost mixture at the teaching garden at the South Coast Research and Extension Center in Irvine. (James Carbone)

This article highlights the partnership between the [UC Master Gardeners of Orange County](#), [South Coast REC's](#) Soil Health and Organic Materials Management Advisor [Natalie Levy](#), and [Orange County Waste and Recycling](#), featuring their work at the Master Gardener's compost demonstration site at South Coast REC.

[Read it here](#)

Just released! UC ANR's Year in Review for 2025



[Watch it here](#)

Pro Tips

Tips, tricks, and advice from our program experts

Preserving Citrus without Canning



Orange County residents take pride in our connection to citrus, but the volume of fruit our backyard trees produce can be overwhelming! Here are a few easy ways to preserve citrus without special equipment:

- Dried citrus zest: wash, dry and zest citrus skin only (avoid the white pith) into a bowl. Cover loosely and allow to air dry. Store dry zest in an airtight container. Use in sweet and savory recipes to add citrus flavor.
- Citrus salt: add 1 Tablespoon citrus zest to $\frac{1}{2}$ cup flaky sea salt and mix well. Spread into a thin layer on a cookie sheet and bake at 220°F oven for 1 hour, stirring every 15 minutes. Cool, then store in an airtight container.
- Frozen citrus juice cubes: fill a clean, dry ice cube tray with citrus juice and freeze. Transfer cubes to an airtight container and store in the freezer. Use when recipes call for juice.
- Frozen whole citrus: instead of making citrus juice cubes, freeze the zested citrus whole in an airtight container. Thaw in a bowl before juicing.

For more tips, and information on our upcoming classes and events, sign up for our email list here: [Add Me To Your Email List \(MFP Orange County\)](#)

Follow us on social media:

[FaceBook UCCE-Master-Food-Preserver-OC](#)

[Instagram MasterFoodPreserversOC](#)

[Jennifer Borges](#) is the new Program Coordinator for the Master Food Preservers of Orange County. She can be reached with questions or inquiries at jhborges@ucanr.edu. For quick answers to your food preservation and safety questions, contact the MFP Helpline: uccemfp@ucdavis.edu

Upcoming Events

Avocado Pop-Up Sale

We will be hosting an avocado pop-up sale with pick-up on **February 19th and 20th**. A sign-up link will be sent out soon, with the number of available bags dependent on harvest.



Follow us on [Instagram @UCSouthCoast](#) to be the first to hear about pop-up sales!

Sign-up link and more info **COMING SOON!**

Orange County Bee Team Apiary Tours

Explore the world of honey bees and their habitat with our Certified California Master Beekeeper Program (CMBP) Instructors. After this tour, participants will be able to:

- Explain how to light a hive smoker.
- Describe a complete hive inspection.
- Identify eggs, larvae, and capped brood.
- Distinguish hive food sources.
- Identify the queen, worker, and drone.



Date(s):

April 24, 2026
May 1, 2026
May 9, 2026
May 23, 2026
June 5, 2026

June 20, 2026
June 26, 2026
July 11, 2026
August 29, 2026
September 11, 2026



Time: 9:00 AM – 11:00 AM

Location: [7601 Irvine Blvd. Irvine, CA 92618](#)

Cost: \$25.00 per person

Registration: Space is limited – All participants must register & prepay online by credit card only <https://surveys.ucanr.edu/survey.cfm?surveynumber=47372>

Age Requirements: Children 12 – 16 must be accompanied by a registered adult; Ages 16-18 with parent signature.

Questions?

Contact Tammy Majcherek at tjmajcherek@ucanr.edu or (949) 653-1824

[Register Here](#)

FREE post-Fire Webinar: post-Fire Resilience in Giant Sequoias

When: Thursday February 12, 6-7:30 PM

Where: Zoom

[Learn more and register.](#)

Join UC ANR's Post-Fire team for a webinar all about giant sequoias post-wildfire!

This free learning opportunity will feature the latest research from [UC Berkeley Cooperative Extension Specialist Kristen Shive](#). Join to learn more about:

- Sequoia adaptations to fire and impacts of modern wildfires
- Managing Sequoia groves for future resilience
- Reforestation: How/When
- Management perspectives from agency professionals



Webinar is open to all members of the public.

[Learn more and register](#)

FREE Forest Stewardship Webinar: Biochar Applications for Forest Landowners



When: Wednesday February 25, 6-7:30 PM

Where: Zoom

[Learn more and register.](#)

Join UC ANR's Forest Stewardship program for a special session focusing on biochar applications!

This webinar will feature speakers [Cindy Chen, UC ANR Woody Biomass Advisor](#); [Nadia Hamey, Registered Professional Forester](#); and [Kenneth Scherer, Executive Director of the Biochar Coalition](#).

Join the webinar to learn more about biochar, including:

- Biochar products, markets, and barriers
- Current scientific research
- Promises and pitfalls of using biochar as a forest management tool at scale
- The Ring of Fire: practical application for small forest landowners

This webinar is free and open to all members of the public.

[Learn more and register](#)

Forestry Institute for Teachers: 2026 Summer Sessions

The 2026 summer Forestry Institute for Teachers program registration is currently open! FIT is a long-standing collaboration between [California Society of American Foresters](#) & [University of California Cooperative Extension](#) made possible through critical support from [California Department of Forestry and Fire Protection \(CAL FIRE\)](#) and a mosaic of state, federal, industry, tribal, and nonprofit partners.



🌲 Ready to take your teaching beyond the classroom?

This summer, the Forestry Institute for Teachers (FIT) invites you to join one of four immersive FIT sessions — week-long professional learning experiences designed for both formal and nonformal PreK-12+ California educators.

Each session combines hands-on field instruction with insights from forestry and natural resource experts, giving you fresh tools to bring environmental education to life in your classroom or program. Plus, it's a chance to connect with peers from across the state who share your passion and curiosity for forest stewardship.

🗺️ Choose your adventure:

- 📍 El Dorado FIT | June 14–20
- 📍 Tuolumne FIT | June 22–28
- 📍 Humboldt FIT | July 11–17 (WAITLIST)
- 📍 Shasta FIT | July 19–25

🌟 Space is limited — apply today!

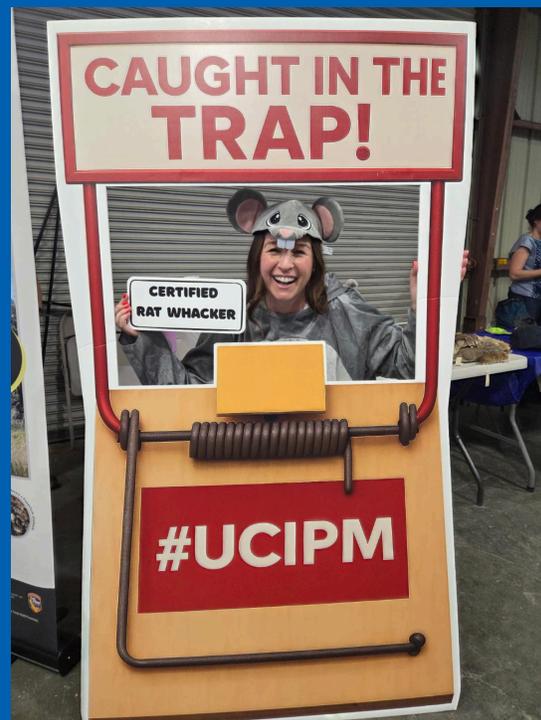
🔗 <https://www.forestryinstitute.org>

[Learn more and register](#)

Thanks for reading!

Here's South Coast REC Director, Lindsey Pedroncelli, "caught in the trap!"

Make sure to check out [UC IPM](#) for all of your integrated pest management needs.



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