

Master Gardener: Trials Garden in Oakland By the Alameda Master Gardeners Oakland Tribune correspondents

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Editor's note: Once a month, we will feature information, tips and advice from the Alameda County Master Gardeners. This month, the Master Gardeners explain their Trials Garden at Lake Merritt.

ALAMEDA COUNTY Master Gardeners offer a variety of help to home gardeners at our Trials Garden, found among the community gardens at Lake Merritt.

Visitors can learn how to garden organically as Master Gardeners test varieties of vegetables to see what grows best in this marine-influenced climate. This summer, the Master Gardeners tested a number of vegetables.

"We tried five varieties of cherry tomatoes," Master Gardener Sam Foushee says. "Sungold, Sweet Million, Green Grape, Chadwick's Cherry and Yellow Pear. Sungold was far and away the most productive and most flavorful."

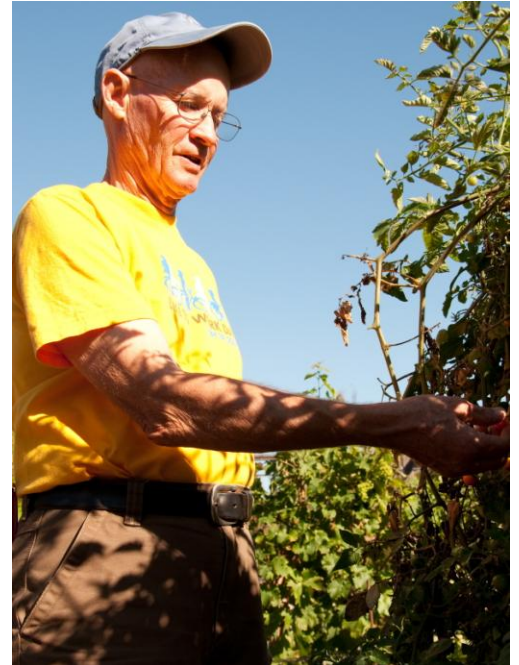
Master Gardeners are removing summer crops of tomatoes, peppers, beans and squash and planting kale, broccoli, lettuce, peas and other cool-season crops. Some beds also are being planted with cover crops that will enrich the soil for spring planting.

The Trials Garden also features plants from the Alameda County Master Gardener publication, "Outstanding Plants for Alameda County." At the garden, visitors can pick up a copy of the brochure with examples of beautiful, drought-tolerant, low-maintenance plants and see several growing.

Some parts of the garden are planted to attract butterflies, bees, beneficial insects, and birds that benefit the garden as they pollinate the plants, control pests and add beauty and interest. Master Gardeners can offer advice on appropriate plants to attract wildlife.

Home gardeners can get recommendations for water-saving irrigation and can learn about vertical growing, planting in containers and other techniques to maximize yield in their garden space. Visitors also can learn about how compost is made.

For more information on the Alameda County Master Gardeners or for gardening tips, go to acmg.ucdavis.edu/.



If You Go:

What: Lake Merritt Trials Garden

Where: Lakeside Garden Center Gardens, 666 Bellvue Ave., Oakland

Details: Master Gardeners are available at the garden, weather permitting, 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. Wednesdays year round.

Directions: Bellvue Ave is one-way off Grand Avenue on the north side of Lake Merritt. After turning on Bellvue and passing Children's Fairyland on the right and the lawn bowling club on the left, the Garden Center building is next on the left. The entrance to the garden area is just past the building, and the Trials Garden is in the center of the overall garden area.