

Natural Resources Conservation Service

Soil and Plant Science Division

Soil Survey Region 2



Sonora, California, MLRA Soil Survey Office

Outreach to Master Gardeners of Tuolumne County

Purpose

In late 2018, the University of California County Extension Master Gardeners of Tuolumne and Calaveras Counties expressed enthusiasm to learn more about the endemic soils of the area, including information on soil formation, differences in fertility and behavior, and related issues. They also expressed interest in the recently published Soil Survey of the Central Sierra Foothills Area, California, Parts of Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties (CA630). This interest was recognized by the MLRA office as a good opportunity to promote soil survey and to educate an interested and engaged audience of community leaders about how to use Web Soil Survey.

On March 5, 2019, MLRA Soil Scientists Cathy Scott and Julie Baker made presentations to the monthly general meeting of the Tuolumne County Chapter of Master Gardeners in Sonora, California. Julie first gave a general overview of soils in the area as seen through the prism of the five soil-forming factors. The factors were used to illustrate the differences in soils throughout Calaveras and Tuolumne Counties. Cathy then gave an introduction to Web Soil Survey and demonstrated its capabilities and flexibilities. Handouts were provided to interested participants on how to retrieve soil survey data using Web Soil Survey, and contact information was provided in case additional support was required from the MLRA.

Both presentations were received enthusiastically and appreciatively by the audience of 40 or more participants. The presenters entertained many questions during the hour-long presentation period. The audience was particularly engaged in the topic and receptive to the information because of the program of education required of Master Gardener members.

A similar joint presentation is scheduled for the Calaveras County Chapter of Master Gardeners in San Andreas, California, on April 16.

Key Outcomes

After the meeting, there were several follow-up questions and interactions with group members. Many were eager to go home and try Web Soil Survey, and others expressed great interest in learning more about the soils of the area. Possible future discussion topics included soil amendments and fertilizers, soil chemistry, soil physical characteristics, the role of organic matter and composting, and more on the soil-and-plant relationships in the area. The group also requested a speaker for one of their public field days at their demonstration garden.

This interaction was the first step in what promises to be a valuable, ongoing partnership between the MLRA soil survey office and an educated, engaged group of citizens eager to learn more about managing and interacting with the soils.

