



# Cultivating Inclusion News

Jan-Jun 2024



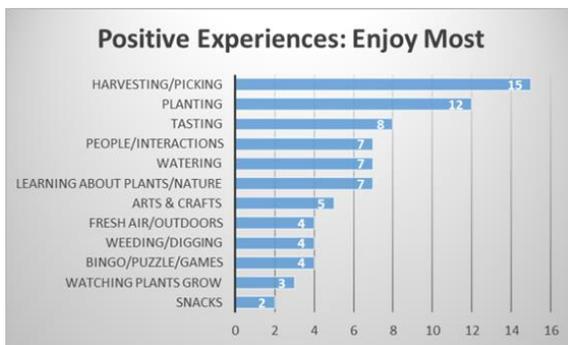
A lot has happened during the first half of 2024. Activities related to the planning grant were in full swing. This is a one-year \$10,000 grant that Temecula, Elsinore, Anza, Murrieta Resource Conservation District ([TEAM RCD](#)) received from the National Association of Conservation Districts ([NACD](#)) to work with Cultivating Inclusion. The grant helps Cultivating Inclusion form a core advisory group made up of experts from the TEAM RCD, [Mission RCD](#) and the University of California Agriculture and Natural Resource (UCANR) [Master Gardener Program](#). This team conducted site assessment and community needs survey and provided volunteer training and gardening advice. These activities will culminate in a business plan to help further Cultivating Inclusion's aspiration to become a model of small-scale urban agriculture for special needs populations.

## Community Needs Survey

The survey results from 6 local food pantries reveal the needs for good quality produce and the types of produce desired by their customers. Cultivating Inclusion has taken the feedback into consideration when selecting what to grow this spring such as tomatoes, squash, zucchini, cucumber and potatoes. Our survey of Job coaches resulted in 37 responses that are very helpful in future program planning such as popular activities and challenges experienced by our special needs participants. Thank you to those who provided the valuable feedback!



Harvesting lettuce at Cultivating Inclusion Farm, photo taken in Jan 2024



xxxx pounds of produce donated so far this year!!



**History:** Cultivating Inclusion Farm is the brainchild of four dedicated women with special needs children. With a vision of helping young adults with special needs develop practical skills in a garden setting, they started this project in Fall 2015 with the support of the City of Murrieta. The garden became a 501(c)(3) non-profit with public charity status in June of 2018.

**Mission:** To provide garden space for special needs adults to connect with nature and have agricultural experience by growing and caring for produce which in turn is donated to local food banks.

## Orchard Update

In January 2024, UCANR Master Gardener Thurman Howard delivered 10 young fruit trees donated by Tom Spellman from Dave Wilson Nursery and brought his fellow master gardeners, Larry Dodson and David Frelinger along to provide hands-on training on how to plant fruit trees. Larry Dodson, whose expertise is in fruit tree planting and caring, shared his knowledge and interesting tips. Our volunteers learned a lot of



Fruit Tree Planting demonstration

Young nectarine, 5 months later

new information that day and we are grateful for having these new trees to replace those that have died off. On May 18<sup>th</sup>, 9 volunteers from [TEAM Rubicon](#) came to the farm to help with pruning, weed whacking, and fruit picking in the Orchard. An amazing amount of work got done that day. Thank you TEAM Rubicon!

Farm assessment conducted by the ag irrigation tech from Mission RCD has identified several areas that need improvement in the orchards including irrigation delivery, water pressure and soil health. Cultivating Inclusion will be working with TEAM RCD and USDA Natural Resource Conservation Districts (NRCs) on these issues in the near future.

## Volunteer Training

Two workshops were organized for Cultivating Inclusion volunteers by the Mission RCD Natural Resources Program Manager. We learned the how-to guide for starting and germinating seeds and about native plants and pollinators.



Pollinators workshop presented by a biologist from California Department of Fish and Wildlife



Seed starting workshop presented by a UCANR master gardener



TEAM Rubicon volunteers



Planting seeds, making arts, learning about bugs, harvesting and having fun. It's another good day at Cultivating Inclusion Farm. Come join us!!



Cultivating Inclusion farm is open weekdays from 9-11 a.m. 39775 Alta Murrieta Dr, Murrieta. For a tour or to volunteer, call Mary Ann Tams [\(951\) 296-7756](tel:951-296-7756).