

Impacts of research, and *Cal Ag*

California Agriculture has been part of my class at Butte College for 12 years. The course is "The Ecology of Insect and Disease Management." Many articles fit the curriculum, but the value of the journal goes far beyond its content.

In an era of \$100-plus texts, instructors need to think carefully about what they require of students. *California Agriculture* is free; copies, as well as back issues, are online, so I can assign readings from it with a clear conscience. The research articles challenge students and force them to reexamine past practices by emphasizing the importance of developing better methods to meet future needs. The thematic format of each issue opens their eyes to the broad impact that research has on our daily lives — and for some students, it suggests future careers in agricultural research. Perhaps a subtler but equally important use of the journal is as a model for report writing. The articles, along with their illustrations and graphics, are examples of the way scientific reports should be prepared.

The journal has been invaluable in my class and again my thanks for keeping it going.

Herbert R. Jacobson
Associate Instructor, Butte College

Public access to UC Giannini libraries

I was pleased to see that *California Agriculture* has embarked on the digitization and development of its entire archive, going back to 1946, enabling full text and metadata searches. Through this project, the journal will make decades of peer-reviewed research openly accessible to the public.

Readers of *California Agriculture* may also wish to know of two specialized libraries in agricultural and environmental economics, located at UC Berkeley and UC Davis. Both are open to the public as well as to students and faculty on each campus, and are staffed by professional librarians who provide e-mail, phone and in-person research assistance in these subject areas.

The Giannini Foundation of Agricultural Economics Library at UC Berkeley is the oldest university agricultural economics library in the United States. It offers a digital archive of faculty research papers and a print collection of books, journals and rare unbound materials, including technical reports, historical trade journals and government documents (<http://are.berkeley.edu/library>).

The UC Davis Agriculture and Resource Economics Library also offers a specialized collection of unbound materials, books and scholarly, trade and popular journals. The ARE library has created a digital collection of United Farm

Workers contracts and is currently digitizing the Cost and Return Studies for crops and commodities published by UC Cooperative Extension (<http://arelibrary.ucdavis.edu>).

Susan Garbarino
Librarian
Giannini Foundation Library
University of California, Berkeley

Sustainable includes ignition-proof

Thank you for "UC Cooperative Extension helps people cope with Southern California wildfires" (January-March 2008) by Robin Meadows.

We farm sustainably, and our farm plan calls for eventual conversions to fireproof structures. The ignition-proof home exhibits three features: a noncombustible envelope or outer shell; no ember entry (which can occur through unsealed tile roofs); and firewall protection for the structure in all doors, windows and walls. A stuccoed straw-bale wall, made by California's rice growers, is rated a 2-hour firewall.

Our solarized well/tool shed, with its panels and Outback power inverter, is ignition-free and fireproof. The pump runs during outages. We recommend an interconnect system with battery backup rather than garbage cans. Also, hot tubs make good water-storage tanks.

Defensible space defends against flame contact, not falling firebrands and ember entry (see article by Jack Cohen http://www.nps.gov/fire/download/pub_pub_modelingpotential.pdf). "Fire-resistant plants" is a flat-out myth.

Bud Hoekstra
Berry Blest Farm
San Andreas

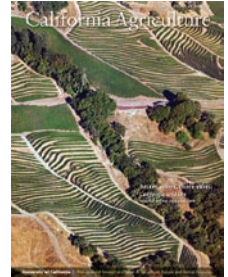
Winter gardens

I planted several vegetables late in 2007 with little hope of success. I was wrong. Several of them — including cabbage, beets, mustard greens, and dill — had enough warm weather to germinate and establish roots. In Arizona these vegetables can use the entire winter to grow. They do not go dormant or die off. I hope this is useful to California gardeners. What has been published on this?

Nicholas Terebey
Phoenix, Arizona

Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator Pam Geisel responds:

You have discovered the joys of the winter gardens: few weeds, little to no watering and few pests! For approximate planting dates of many cold-hardy crops, see the Master Gardener Handbook (page 351, table 14.2). To order: <http://anrcatalog.ucdavis.edu>.



January-March 2008
California Agriculture

RSVP

WHAT DO YOU THINK?

The editorial staff of *California Agriculture* welcomes your letters, comments and suggestions. Please write to us at 6701 San Pablo Ave., 2nd floor, Oakland, CA 94608 or calag@ucop.edu. Include your full name and address. Letters may be edited for space and clarity.