

**Master Gardener Volunteer Program**

University of California Cooperative Extension  
San Diego County

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**Category: Senior/Disabled Audiences****Name of Project: Gardening Education at Braille Institute, San Diego****Project Description:**

**Introduction:** Gardening Education at Braille began as an outreach from the Horticultural Enrichment Committee within San Diego's Master Gardener program. The committee wanted to identify venues to do outreach for older adults, since the MG program already had an active School Gardens Committee working with children. The Braille Institute was contacted in September, 2003, and asked if they would be interested in having MGs develop an education program for adults who attend their classes. Many of the adults in attendance are seniors, and all have some form of sight impairment. Most of the attendees suffer from macular degeneration, and have various degrees of partial sight.

The Braille Institute was very interested in having MGs develop a series of classes for their program, and the committee started working with Braille and developing ideas in December, 2003. The committee worked to brainstorm topics and how to present the material to this special population. The first 7-week series of classes were scheduled for May and June, 2004, and another 15 week series was completed in December 2004, after a summer break.

**Methods:** Each class topic was taught twice in one week to two different groups. There were usually two instructors, and 2-4 helpers for each 90-minute session, depending on its complexity. Each class usually had 8-10 attendees.

Much thought was given to how to make these classes relevant and interesting for sight-impaired people. No visual aids were used, other than the plants themselves. Usually the lesson involved demonstrating a technique, gardening practice, or garden knowledge, and then constructing the work session so participants could experience the lesson for themselves, by touch or feel, with assistance. A list of covered topics follows:

Winter Vegetables

Topiaries and Miniature Gardens