



MISSISSIPPI STATE
UNIVERSITY™

EXTENSION

MISSISSIPPI MASTER
GARDENER PROGRAM:
A Management Guide

*Learning, Sharing,
and Growing Together*



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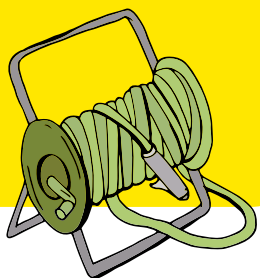
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SECTION ONE:

Introduction



MISSION STATEMENT

The Mississippi Master Gardener program, an educational program of Mississippi State University Extension, uses trained volunteers, under the guidance and supervision of county Extension agents, to enhance public education in consumer horticulture.

PURPOSE OF THIS MANAGEMENT GUIDE

This guide offers information and suggestions for successfully beginning and managing a county Master Gardener program. Included are explanations of the following county Master Gardener coordinator responsibilities:

- Understanding the program concept
- Conducting a needs assessment
- Displaying familiarity with current program policy
- Managing the program, including:
 - » Scheduling training sessions
 - » Recruiting
 - » Hosting training sessions
 - » Empowering volunteers
 - » Reporting and evaluating the program and its results

SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL USE OF THIS GUIDE

Placing the guide's contents in a three-ring binder will ensure organization and easy access, while making it possible to remove sections or pages when needed. If you feel information contained in this guide would be helpful to your Master Gardeners, please duplicate and distribute relevant sections as you see fit.

In the back of this guide, you will find a section for your own county Master Gardener program records. You might include association minutes, project proposals, and programs in this section, as well as other materials you want to have handy for your own reference.

PROGRAM CONCEPT

The Master Gardener program provides horticultural training to individuals in exchange for expertise and service in support of Extension's educational efforts in home horticulture. This program is designed to increase the availability of consumer horticultural information and improve the local quality of life with community horticultural projects.

WHO ARE MASTER GARDENERS?

Master Gardeners form an organization of highly qualified and concerned people who are capable of implementing a wide range of activities that are useful to the community. It is imperative that this potential resource pool be understood and managed to meet Extension's goals. In making the decision to establish a Master Gardener program, individuals must not only consider the time and effort necessary to begin and maintain the program, but also, more importantly, how the Master Gardeners will be used.

It is inappropriate to consider these volunteers as free labor that is useful in handling the less demanding aspects of Extension's workload. Master Gardeners are trained to help with the work of the Extension office, and they are loaded with potential that must be harnessed in the best possible way. When Master Gardeners are recruited, not only do they bring their horticultural skills, but they also bring a variety of other abilities in areas such as teaching, public speaking, management, design, analysis, human relations, and mass communication.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

- To develop educators to expand Extension's ability to disseminate horticultural information to the local community.
- To develop community programs related to horticulture. Depending on the needs of the community, these programs might include landscape improvement activities with civic groups, horticultural therapy projects with nursing homes, or home demonstration gardens designed to improve living conditions of low-income groups.
- To enhance 4-H programs by supporting 4-H Junior Master Gardener clubs and horticultural 4-H projects.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network that is administratively self-sufficient.

Methods for implementing these objectives include:

- Recruiting and training volunteers to help area residents solve their horticultural problems by working directly with residents or by working to create information to distribute through news outlets, direct mail, and social media.
- Recruiting and training volunteers to work with special groups within the community, such as garden clubs, civic organizations, school children, the special needs community, elderly people, homebound people, and low-income families and communities.
- Recruiting 4-H garden club leaders from the Master Gardener volunteers.
- Identifying the administrative positions necessary to maintain the Master Gardener program and filling these positions with volunteers who are able to direct the activities of the program.

MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM HISTORY

National History

Excerpted from "The Master Gardener Program, A WSU Extension Success Story: Early History from 1973" by David Gibby, William Scheer, Sharon Collman, George Pinyuh. Used with permission from the Washington State University Extension Service.

Washington State University Cooperative Extension traditionally assigned horticulture faculty to county offices as part of the Agriculture, Home Economics, and 4-H outreach education programs. The emphasis of the horticultural programs was crop production. It was not until rapid urban growth and the burgeoning interest in gardening that Extension began to develop programs emphasizing urban horticulture.

In 1971, David Gibby and Bill Scheer, area Extension agents, started separate assignments in the major metropolitan areas represented by King and Pierce Counties. They focused, respectively, on urban and commercial horticulture. Public demand for information about plant problems was so intense that it made educational programming for either of them virtually impossible.

Initially, administrators suggested that getting information out via mass media would solve that problem. The resulting television and radio gardening shows put on by Gibby served only to make the public more aware that the Extension office was the place to get help. Consequently, Gibby and Scheer met to explore other avenues to most effectively address the needs of the backyard gardener.

Among approaches considered was the concept of attracting and training volunteers to serve the urban audience. This appeared to be the most feasible option as it would free Gibby and Scheer from constantly reacting to public demand and allow them to be proactive in fulfilling educational needs. Recruitment would require a careful selection process.

An appropriate and distinguished title would also be necessary. As both Gibby and Scheer had worked in Germany, acquiring language proficiency and understanding of the culture, they knew that Germans bestow titles for hard-earned proficiency levels in various crafts. The top proficiency level in horticulture is denoted by "Gartenmeister," which they anglicized as "Master Gardener." This title would be appropriate for volunteers who had received extensive training.

The volunteer concept was discussed many times before it was taken to various subject matter specialists at the Western Washington Research and Extension Center in Puyallup. The specialists initially rejected the idea of training volunteers.

To test the viability of the concept, Gibby, in 1972, organized a trial clinic at the Tacoma Mall featuring specialists to see if the public demonstrated interest in receiving gardening information. In preparation he wrote articles for the Tacoma papers and aired spots on television. The results were far better than specialists had expected. They were now convinced and committed to help train volunteers. Gibby was now able to take the project to the next level.

Gibby had arranged for Steve Lorton, with Sunset Magazine, to cover the trial clinic. Lorton wrote an article for the Northwest edition under the caption "Wanted: Expert Gardeners to Become Master Gardeners." There were about 600 initial inquiries. Gibby interviewed all applicants and accepted 300.

The next step was to develop a training curriculum. Subject matter was to include culture of ornamental plants, lawns, vegetables, and fruits; control of plant diseases, insects, and weeds; and safe use of pesticides. Sessions were to be held eight hours per day, one day a week, for five weeks. At the end of training, volunteers were required to pass subject matter exams, as well as an exam for pesticide licensing by the Washington State Department of Agriculture. Master Gardeners were then committed to volunteering a specified number of hours working with the gardening public.

The first training sessions in King County took place at the Renton Library, and in Pierce County at the Tacoma Grange Hall during the spring of 1973. Later that same year, training was provided in the eastern Washington city of Spokane, making the new program a statewide endeavor.

It is not possible to name all who have made significant contributions to this program over the years. The list includes many faculty members and dedicated program assistants who started Master Gardener programs statewide and deserve much credit. As time progressed, the program received the credibility and recognition it well deserved.

There are now 3,100 volunteers across the state. They staff plant clinics in 105 communities at 171 locations. Each Master Gardener receives approximately 60 hours of training and gives back a minimum of 50 hours of free public service in horticultural assistance to his or her community. Some have served actively in the program for more than 20 years. They are grass-root educators who extend the service of the University to more than 300,000 people each year.

The horticulture master volunteer concept is so effective that it has spread throughout the United States and several provinces of Canada. It has been adopted by various other disciplines of University Extension such as food preservation, clothing and textiles, animal husbandry, and resource conservation (e.g., Master Food Preserver and Safety Advisors, Clothing and Textile Advisors, Livestock Advisors, Master Composters, Beach Watchers, and Waste Warriors).

Mississippi History

The first Master Gardener programs were established in Hinds and Harrison Counties in 1991 and 1992. The first Master Gardeners were certified in December 1992. The Master Gardener State Association was formed on May 17, 1998. A state charter was ratified, and a copy of the original charter is included below. The purpose of the state association is to promote responsible horticultural practices in accordance with the research and recommendations of Extension.

MISSISSIPPI MASTER GARDENER STATE ASSOCIATION CHARTER

Article I

Name

The name of this nonprofit organization is the Mississippi Master Gardener State Association.

Article II

Purpose

Section 1. The purpose of this organization is to promote responsible horticultural practices in accordance with the research and recommendations of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Section 2. Process. The methods and techniques to accomplish this objective on a statewide level are as follows:

1. Recommend standard training materials.
2. Encourage the annual Master Gardener certification process.
3. Develop standard horticultural programs that aid the community throughout the state.
4. Organize, sponsor, and encourage participation in the annual Mississippi Master Gardener Conference.
5. Continue to identify deficiencies in the program and recommend change.
6. Provide opportunities for association members in different areas of the state to meet and exchange similar horticultural interests.
7. Promote continuing horticultural education among Mississippi Master Gardener Association members.
8. Encourage Mississippi Master Gardeners to join and participate in this statewide organization.
9. Promote a Master Gardener enrollment program that encourages applicants interested in serving the community.
10. Assist Master Gardeners in fulfilling their basic volunteer commitments.

Article III

Membership

Section 1. Membership is open to certified Master Gardeners, Master Gardeners, Master Gardener interns, associate Master Gardeners, and friends of Master Gardeners.

Section 2. The voting right is limited to certified Master Gardeners and Master Gardeners.

Section 3. Definitions. A certified Master Gardener is a member who completed a minimum of 40 hours of Master Gardener training from the Mississippi State University Extension Service and 40 hours of volunteer service, and has completed 20 hours of volunteer service and 12 hours of continued (advanced) training as approved by the county Extension agent during the last reporting period. Master Gardeners completing their initial 40 hours of service are excluded from the last requirement for their first year only.

A Master Gardener is a member who has successfully completed 40 hours of Master Gardener training and 40 hours of volunteer service as approved by the county Extension agent. Interns who have successfully completed their education and volunteer in other states, and who are approved by the county Extension agents, are also Master Gardeners.

Master Gardener interns are trainees who have not completed their education and/or volunteer hours.

Associate Master Gardeners are MSU Extension agents in the horticultural and agricultural research departments and county coordinators.

Friends of Master Gardeners are spouses and friends designated by Master Gardeners in good standing. Members in good standing are any members who have paid the required dues during the current fiscal year (July 1 through June 30).

Section 4. The required dues amount will be determined by the majority of the board of directors. Associate Master Gardeners and friends of Master Gardeners will not pay dues.

Article IV

Board of Directors

Section 1. Each of the six areas of Mississippi will appoint one member to the board to represent that area for 2 years. In the event an area representative is unable to complete a given term, that area is responsible for filling that void for the remainder of the 2-year period.

Section 2. The board of directors of this association shall consist of six officers from the six areas of Mississippi and the state Master Gardener coordinator. The six positions on the board are president, vice president, secretary, treasurer, programs director, and training/education director. Election to these positions will be made by the board members for each 1-year period.

Article V

Duties of the Officers

Section 1. The president shall:

- Preside at all board meetings and conferences.
- Appoint all subcommittees.
- Work with the treasurer on the budget.
- Cosign checks with the treasurer.
- Assist the area representative hosting the current annual conference.

Section 2. The vice president shall:

- Assist the president.
- Attend subcommittees at the president's request.
- Assume the duties of chairman of the charter and bylaws subcommittee.
- Secure and reserve the meeting rooms and necessary furnishings.
- Assist the area representative hosting the current annual conference.

Section 3. The secretary shall:

- Maintain and publish the minutes of the meeting.
- Be responsible for all correspondence.
- Keep an updated list of all members of the organization.
- Be a member of the newsletter committee.
- Assist the area representative hosting the current annual conference.

Section 4. The treasurer shall:

- Receive all dues and monies for the association.
- Maintain a two-party checking account along with the president and state Master Gardener coordinator.
- Give an accurate treasurer's report at all board meetings.
- Present financial records for audit on a quarterly basis to the state Master Gardener coordinator.
- Assist the area representative hosting the current annual conference.

Section 5. The programs director shall:

- Coordinate with the six area representatives on the successful local programs that can be standardized throughout the state.
- Submit completed programs, including material and manpower requirements, to the state Master Gardener coordinator for statewide distribution.
- Assist the area representative hosting the current annual conference.

Section 6. The training/education director shall:

- Promote the standardization of training materials.
- Address deficiencies in basic and advanced training sessions.
- Keep board members aware of nearby state and national Master Gardener conferences.
- Publish and update a list of public and private gardens, arboretums, and similar areas of interest to Mississippi Master Gardeners.

Article VI

Conduct of Business

The business of the Association shall be governed by "Robert's Rules of Order Revised."

We, as a committee of the duly selected representatives of Master Gardeners throughout the state of Mississippi, propose this charter as our own to Mississippi State University Extension Service for approval.

Signed,

Sarah Loeb, Secretary January 4, 1999

Patrick LaNasa, January 4, 1999

Sally Brown, January 4, 1999

Ed Fandel, Chairman, February 11, 1999

Joan McClatchy, April 14, 1999

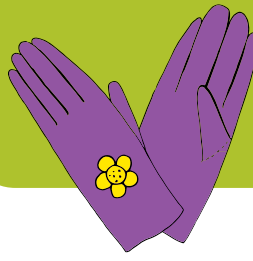
Freddie Rasberry, State Coordinator, February 11, 1999

Brenda McCrory, January 4, 1999

Michael D. Quart, Asst. Dir./SPL-ANR, April 27, 1999

Note: This is the original Mississippi Master Gardener State Association charter. The current version is available through MMGA.





SECTION TWO: *Needs Assessment*

Does your area need a Master Gardener program? Although there may be people in your area who would like to participate in a horticultural course offered through your office, it is important to assess if your area needs the volunteer work that would result from the program. There are two groups of people immediately involved in a Master Gardener program: Extension employees and the volunteers who will enroll in the program. Keep in mind that the program is designed to produce competent volunteers to help you disseminate horticultural information to the public. Master Gardener training is not designed to be a free course with no obligations on the part of the recipients.

ASSESSING YOUR COUNTY'S NEED FOR A MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Before making the decision to implement the Master Gardener program, county directors can answer the questions below to determine if their area has horticultural projects that could be accomplished by trained Master Gardeners.

1. Do you need help answering phone requests for horticultural information during the gardening season?
2. Is there a demand on your time to talk to garden clubs and conduct plant clinics?
3. Do you need help with publicity and information processing as they relate to horticulture?
4. Are there community needs for horticultural projects such as 4-H clubs or public landscaping that are unmet due to a lack of trained, willing workers?
5. Would people in your area who are interested in gardening be willing or able to pay for the project materials used in a Master Gardener program?
6. Will you be willing to devote the time needed to implement the program? (In subsequent years, as volunteers gain experience and assume program leadership, the time you devote to facilitate the program may decrease or change in scope.)

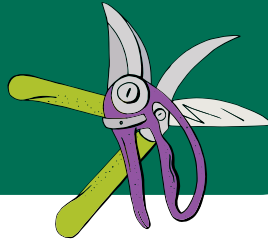
If the answer to most of the above questions is "yes," then a Master Gardener program may be very useful in your area. Once you have established a need for the program, write job descriptions for potential volunteers based on projects identified. The projects you identify as potential projects for your program must be educational, noncommercial horticulture, and they must be within the scope of Extension's mission. Be as specific as possible and estimate the amount of time required to accomplish each job. This task will force you to examine your goals and understand the flow of work in your office. After these steps, you are ready to schedule training, recruit applicants, host training, and empower volunteers to assist you with identified projects!

CONSIDERATIONS FOR STARTING THE PROGRAM

After making the decision to implement the program, here are some aspects to consider:

- Be aware that the greatest expenditure of your time and the smallest return of competent help will occur in the first year of the program. You will be very busy organizing the program, generating publicity, setting up training sessions, and starting projects and activities.
- You are responsible for scheduling and hosting in-person training sessions. Check with neighboring counties to see if you could cooperate and hold a multi-county training. See Section 5 Training Curriculum on page 26. Annual statewide online training is another option.
- From the very beginning of the program, the trainees must realize this is a volunteer program. They are being trained specifically to represent Extension and help disseminate gardening information through projects approved by the County Master Gardener Coordinator (CMGC), not simply to improve their gardening skills.
- To help emphasize this point and provide a good start for the program, a county Master Gardener association with elected officers should be formed from this first trained class once enough participants have reached certification level. In following years, you should be able to call on these "veteran" Master Gardeners to mentor the interns. Identifying these potential leaders early in the implementation of the program will help ensure continued support of the program from year to year, enabling the program to move toward self-sufficiency.

SECTION THREE: *Management Techniques*



Although training seems to be the greatest step toward starting a Master Gardener program, of equal or more importance is the management and maintenance of the program.

Once you have identified the need for a program and developed a plan of action, including project identification and job descriptions to accomplish those projects, you have already begun managing the program. Congratulations! You are well on your way to implementing the program! Techniques for continuing successful management include recruitment, training, retention, reporting, and evaluation.

GENERAL MANAGEMENT TECHNIQUES

This section contains information on general techniques and ideas to help you manage the county program.

The horticultural training provided through the Master Gardener program must be high in quality. Excellent training motivates volunteers to join the program and helps volunteers value the training they receive. Only when a program is managed properly can it provide training and knowledge to meet the needs of the community, so management is key to a program's success.

The CMGC is the adviser and administrator of the county Master Gardener program, and, as the Extension representative in the county, he or she is the final authority on its Master Gardener program. The coordinator must manage the overall program to meet the parameters of Extension and accomplish its goals. Successful Master Gardener programs rely heavily on volunteer management and leadership.

Each county has its own identity based on size and volunteer base. A well-managed program will eventually be able to function well without constant supervision of the CMGC. The idea is to accomplish the goals of the operation by using the entire program. If one person becomes indispensable, it only hinders the operation when that person leaves the program. If the CMGC leaves the position, the Master Gardeners need to be able to continue without this person until the position is filled again.

Managing the Organization

The Master Gardener program must be managed as efficiently as possible in order to satisfy volunteers' needs and meet Extension's goals.

The first step of planning begins when job descriptions are created for the volunteers. Once Master Gardeners become a valuable part of your workforce, it makes sense to include them in the goals and plans of the office. The business world has discovered that workers are more efficient and happy when they have an identity within the organization and can contribute to the goals of the enterprise. Again, volunteers gain nothing but satisfaction from meeting the program's goals, so CMGCs should strive to make their programs as fulfilling and productive as possible. These volunteers are worth a great deal of money as unpaid workers, and they are often invaluable as representatives of Extension.

Organizing requires delegation to decide how to get the job done. Delegation is one of the most difficult jobs of management. When delegation is used as a tool, individuals can use their particular strengths and creativity to enrich their programs. Unique individuals will produce unique programs across the state. Remember, it is to the CMGC's advantage to learn to delegate. Here are some reasons why:

- Some volunteers may know more than you do about a particular subject or job. They might consider your trust a reward for their work.
- A qualified volunteer's good performance points to the fine job you are doing as a coordinator. After all, you organized and initiated the program and recruited the volunteer.
- By delegating, you are not only getting the job done, but you have made it possible for someone else to achieve an accomplishment.

When you decide to delegate, remember:

- Clearly define responsibilities. Be sure you are in agreement concerning areas where this person can function freely, and also agree on the limits of his/her responsibilities.
- Delegate tasks clearly and practically.
- Choose appropriate people for assignments.
- CMGCs and volunteers must work together to set goals and standards of performance. Expectations must be clearly defined. Do not lower standards for volunteer staff because that may be insulting to a good volunteer.
- Give accurate and honest feedback; people want and deserve to know how they are doing. This is an opportunity to give recognition and encourage growth. Allow risk-taking and mistakes.

- Whenever possible, promote those who are responsible for carrying out significant portions of the program by giving them a voice in the decision-making body.
- Delegating means you entrust a project or task to another person. It is important to truly hand over full responsibility because most responsible people do not appreciate someone constantly checking on their work.

Staffing simply means choosing the right workers to do the job. By encouraging participation from the first training session, you are able to determine the best job for each volunteer. Delegating means assigning tasks and allowing the workers to accomplish those tasks. This is best done by putting effort into good job placement and then displaying your confidence in the volunteers' ability to do their jobs. A coordinator wants to have control over the program and its goals, but the coordinator does not need to domineer volunteers in an inappropriate way. If Master Gardeners are doing the same work year after year, you may want to reassess the amount of control you have over the program. Evaluation is the best tool for good program control because it accurately assesses strengths and weaknesses.

Managing the Volunteers

Understanding Motivation

We already know that Master Gardeners have a strong interest in gardening and enough free time to commit themselves to training and volunteer hours. Other than that, what brings them to the program, and what do they want from it?

Volunteers are seeking meaningful activities that will make an impact on the world around them and enrich their own lives. The Master Gardener program is an ideal place for volunteers to satisfy these desires. It is important to provide real jobs, not mere time-fillers, for the Master Gardeners. Since they are not paid, the satisfaction from a job well done is essential.

As you know from working with paid staff, placing the right person in the right job is essential. Work motives are often related to three needs: **achievement, power, and affiliation**. These motives display themselves through behavior, and an observant manager identifies these motives in workers and assigns appropriate jobs to suit these motives.

The goal of an achievement-motivated person is success, and they prefer to work alone, guide their own work, and set their own goals. They consistently produce high-quality work and accomplish what they set out to do. They challenge themselves but do not attempt to do the impossible. The achiever often will show signs of strong organizational ability, a willingness to complete a job without further supervision, and a desire for feedback on job performance.

Power-motivated individuals primarily want to influence others and are very concerned about their positions and reputations. These people freely give advice and want to see others follow their direction. Their personalities are usually aggressive, and they are often opinionated. The power-motivated individual will lean toward structures that are quite organized, have a carefully spelled-out organizational power structure, and hold high regard for status and prestige within the organization. This person is likely to be assertive (if not aggressive) in behavior and will try to gain power through leadership or persuasive tactics.

Affiliation-motivated people need to be with others who enjoy their company. These people are friendly, caring, and want to be liked. They work best with others rather than alone, and they prefer management to be friendly rather than authoritative. This kind of individual will exhibit an open, genial manner, deep concern for people as individuals, and the need to work within a group. A real desire for personal relationships with other workers and the supervisor also characterizes this volunteer.

Assigning Jobs to Fulfill Motivation

Following training, Master Gardeners will primarily be engaged in service activities, so their job assignments are crucial to their involvement in and enjoyment of the program. Sometimes jobs are assigned randomly, but assigning jobs based on personality or motivation can make the work more appropriate and enjoyable for the volunteers. If the work satisfies the volunteers, they will be an asset to the program and will continue working.

For example, a county office may receive a high number of calls requesting gardening information, leading to the formation of a Master Gardener program in that county. Then participants may be automatically put on phone duty when that is not their strength or does not accommodate their personalities. This not only wastes the diverse talents of the volunteers but also neglects the development of innovative projects for the community.

The talents and strengths of volunteers may become clear as soon as program development begins. Budding scientists will reveal their interests at plant clinics, and they could be considered candidates for beginning an office lab to identify plant problems. Master Gardeners who put in overtime discussing the details and latest findings on rose development could establish a speakers' bureau to promote specialization.

In order to successfully place the volunteers in the most suitable positions, you must get to know them. This can begin during the recruitment and application process. The application forms can be designed to begin this process.

Promoting active participation from the beginning is also a great help. There are small jobs that clearly need to be done at the very first training session. Assigning new Master Gardeners to set up audiovisual equipment, distribute handouts, or call the group back from a break encourages participation. These first jobs might be handled on a volunteer basis. By taking an active role, no matter how small, at the beginning, trainees will learn that their job is not passive.

As training progresses, the CMGC will have ample time to get acquainted with the volunteers, especially if the training provides some extra time before or after sessions for social mixing. Keeping the three motivational types in mind, the CMGC needs to identify personality types and match them with appropriate jobs.

Observing Behavior

It is difficult to list specific types of jobs that are best for each motivational type because each person's skills and talents are different. While it may seem that working on a newsletter may be just the thing for the achievement-motivated person, that won't work if the achievement-motivated person does not enjoy writing. As a manager, the CMGC must consider talents, skills, motives, and personalities in matching jobs with volunteers.

To design and redesign jobs, the CMGC must determine each job's motivational content. If no one ever wants to do a certain job, consider why that job is not very appealing. Keep in mind that the job itself is the main reward for the volunteer. There is no financial gain, no medical leave or vacation time, and there may not even be a parking space for the volunteer!

Jobs can be modified through enlargement, enrichment, or simplification. Enlargement can mean increasing the number and variety of tasks; however, two or three meaningless tasks do not equal a single meaningful job. Job enrichment refers to delegating functions that were previously considered managerial and can occur at any level of responsibility. Enrichment could also mean including the worker in planning and evaluation procedures. Simplification involves combining tasks or even eliminating some tasks. In simplifying a job, get rid of tasks that are simply "busy work."

Throughout the training, it is important for the CMGC and current Master Gardeners to actively communicate with participants. This will make participants more comfortable in getting involved with the county Master Gardener group. Active communication is especially important in the online training.

RECRUITMENT

It is critical that recruitment focus on prospective members who will complete their working commitment to the county. When a program is rewarding, it will retain volunteers for many years. Remember, diversity strengthens the group; a variety of genders, races, ages, and backgrounds makes a more productive, interesting group.

Tools for recruitment

1. Develop a brochure.

Create a colorful, informative brochure describing the individual county Master Gardener program. In the brochure, ask prospective members self-assessment questions aimed at volunteerism (Do you like to garden? Do you have 4–6 hours per month to volunteer for Master Gardener projects?).

Place these brochures in the county Extension office and in local nurseries. If the production of a county-specific brochure is not possible, use Extension Publication 3592 *Mississippi Master Gardener Volunteer Program: A Quick Guide*.

2. Advertise the Master Gardener program by every available avenue:

- Social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram)
- Local chamber of commerce
- Newspapers
- Garden clubs
- Radio and television
- County fairs
- Senior citizen organizations (AARP, RSVP)
- Other Extension groups such as Extension homemaker clubs and 4-H clubs

Consider using some of the following tools: posters, pamphlets, news releases, information cards, and so forth. Make sure the local newspaper is notified of club events and special projects.

1. Encourage members to recruit members.

Members recruiting new members is an effective method of finding new Master Gardeners. Members should invite prospective candidates to meetings, special events, workdays, or tours. When possible, encourage active members to speak to civic organizations, schools, garden clubs, and church groups about Master Gardeners. Make brochures available to all audience members at these functions. Contact the state coordinator's office for a copy of the Master Gardener commercial for advertising. Visibility is the key.

2. Conduct an interview.

After recruitment has resulted in a group of potential volunteers, your selection committee may interview these candidates. This committee includes the CMGC and may include Master Gardener representatives from various areas of the county. Their collective knowledge and specific interview of the prospective member will provide a base of information for candidate selection. During the interview process, emphasize the definition and importance of volunteerism. Give the applicant a clear overview of the policies and expectations of the Master Gardener program.

RETENTION

Master Gardener Mentors

A mentor is a trusted counselor or guide. As a Master Gardener mentor, your primary tasks will be to encourage new interns to learn as much as possible during training, get to know fellow MGs, join project teams, and get involved. You are the personal contact for the intern to help and support as needed until they are certified.

Goals of the Mentor Program

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere, guidance, and support to MG interns during the 40-hour training and their first year in the program.
- Increase retention in the county MG program. Once interns are trained, we want them to become long-time volunteers.
- Remind interns of the responsibility to volunteer and invite them to various activities.
- Encourage attendance at monthly meetings, workdays, and social events.
- Encourage interns to enter service hours into the reporting system in a timely manner.

Requirements of Mentors

- Complete MG training.
- Be certified and active in the county program.
- Have a friendly, encouraging personality.

Matching Interns with Mentors

The CMGC will pair up interns and mentors following the beginning of class. Criteria to consider include:

- Project and horticultural interests of the intern.
- Personality.
- Gardening skills.
- Prior work experience.

Once assigned an intern, contact them as soon as possible to exchange contact information. Establish the best way to keep in touch (phone, email, etc.). Discuss expectations between mentor and intern. Record time spent mentoring as volunteer service. Good mentors ensure that new volunteers integrate into the program, become involved in projects of their choice, and stay involved.

Note: If serious concerns arise, immediately alert your CMGC.

Know Your Members

In order to retain members, consider their interests and abilities when assigning work duties. Keep age and physical limitations in mind, and offer less active roles to those who physically need them. Keep records of attendance, and follow up with any members who seem to be losing interest.

Always recognize Master Gardeners as individuals who come from all religions and walks of life. When celebrating holidays, be careful to make the parties interdenominational in nature. Consider having a harvest party, winter fest, or spring festival. Be considerate.

Approved Projects

Annually review approved projects for value and significance. Make sure the projects provide enough work for all members to meet their service-hour requirements. The service will be more rewarding if members feel they are instrumental in the success of a worthwhile project. Provide as much variety as possible in project assignments. Allow members to change projects to maintain interest through a variety of tasks. Think of additional ways members can gain hours if they are unable to fulfill regular requirements.

Rewards

Make Master Gardener meetings and workdays fun and rewarding.

- Have informative programs at scheduled meetings.
- Have potluck dinners and social get-togethers.
- Have brown-bag lunches or refreshments at workdays.
- Consider rewards for members at 5-year intervals.
- Recognize all new members at their inaugural meeting with a party.
- Select a Master Gardener of the Year.
- Select a Project of the Year.
- Recognize officers and committee chairs in newsletter biographical sketches.
- Honor Master Gardeners for personal achievements.

An active social committee could be responsible for these activities and other special events throughout the year.

Newsletter

Keep all members and other county programs informed by publishing a newsletter. Be as people- and project-oriented as possible. Include photographs of special members and projects. Include a calendar of events with information about major workdays, tours, and educational opportunities. Provide pertinent local gardening information and list new horticulture books and articles. Some county associations publish their own newsletters. This is encouraged, but these publications need to be monitored from time to time for appropriateness and accuracy.

Field Trips

Select a field trip committee to plan tours to local gardens or other places of gardening interest. Consider day trips to nurseries or weekend trips to major points of interest. Encourage Master Gardeners to interact with each other. Field trips can also be educational opportunities when coupled with a speaker.

Be Friendly

Encourage friendliness among members with these tactics.

- Provide incentives for wearing nametags.
- Encourage visiting among members at meetings.
- Form a "we care" committee to phone absentees and send cards.
- Use a buddy system between project committee members.
- Use the secret pal concept for birthday recognition.
- Promote friendship among members by joining together to prepare for and attend state, regional, and national Master Gardener functions.
- Be a family!

For more information on finding and keeping good members, call other counties and find out what works for them. Also, look for information on the website, and use email to contact other county programs. Make use of statewide get-togethers such as state meetings and leadership training as prime times for networking.

REPORTING AND EVALUATING

An effective manager realizes evaluation is one of the chief tools of good management and uses this tool to direct the organization to better, more significant goals. An ineffective manager views reporting and evaluating only as paperwork to be done. Accurate reporting and evaluating not only reveals the success of the program, but it also furnishes evidence that the program is valuable. In explaining the program to the paid staff, community, or volunteers, the numbers reveal the amount of money saved by citizens, the number of people seeking and receiving service, and the special population served. These numbers also present a convincing case for continuation and support. Future planning benefits greatly from evaluation of previous programs.

Master Gardener Recordkeeping Program

The Master Gardener Recordkeeping Program is the chief mechanism for evaluating individual and group service. Every county with a Master Gardener program is required to complete an annual report of Master Gardener service. This report is made with the Master Gardener Recordkeeping Program. For instructions on obtaining and using this program, contact India Crews (india.crews@msstate.edu) in the MSU Extension Center for Technology Outreach. Complete and submit the annual report to the State Master Gardener Coordinator by the date specified on the report (last working day in December).

MG Volunteer Reporting: Entering New MGs in System (for CMGC)

1. Go to webapps.msucare.com.
2. Select the MG app.
3. Save it to the desktop.

OR

4. Use Mozilla FireFox or Google Chrome, not Internet Explorer.
5. Go to extension.msstate.edu.
6. Hover on the Community tab; a dropdown menu will appear.
7. Scroll down to Leadership; another dropdown menu will appear.
8. Slide over to the right and down to the Master Gardener tab. Left click on it.
9. Look to the right side of the screen under Related Links. Click on Master Gardener Reporting System.
10. Save it to the desktop (multiple methods).

To enter the reporting system, click on Extension Professional, then County, then fill in your username and password (same as MyState).

Complete the Duo process.

Go to Add New. Enter the requested information for each MG (name, address, email, etc.). Enter the MG's number and password. Use your county organization code number and then the MG's number. Example for Lee County (which is county 41): The code ID will be 41055 (55 indicates this is the 55th person to be a Master Gardener in that county). The MG number must be 5 digits total. Example 2: If the new MG is the third MG in Lee County, their number will be 41003.

Next, enter the password. It is recommended to use the first 5 letters of their first name followed by the first letter of their last name and then the county code number. Examples for Lee County (county code 41): Susan Smith's password would be susans41; Michael Smith's would be michas41.

Keep a running list of Master Gardeners' numbers and passwords. This will help if they forget their information. And it will help when entering the next MG because you will need to know what number to start with. These numbers are also used on the annual treasurer's report used to submit dues.

Extension's Master Gardener Individual Activity Report Form

The annual report is compiled from the data on Extension's Master Gardener Individual Activity Report Form, which the Master Gardener completes on a regular basis. This report can be completed by entering your information in the web application. The web app can be downloaded from Extension's Master Gardener website (<http://extension.msstate.edu/community/leadership/master-gardener>) and works on both desktop and mobile systems.

It is the Master Gardener Coordinator's responsibility to make sure individual Master Gardeners report only approved activities and service.

MG Volunteer Reporting: How to Enter Hours

On smartphones and tablets:

1. Click on the internet icon.
2. At the top of the screen, enter webapps.msucare.com. All MSU apps will appear. Click on the Master Gardener icon. It will open the login screen.
3. To save the app to your cell phone, click on the square with an up arrow icon at the bottom of the screen. Several options will appear; click on Add to Home Screen. Name the icon and click done.
4. Enter your MG number and password, then click Log In. Do not change your password!
5. Proceed to Step 5 below.

On laptops and desktops:

1. Open Mozilla Firefox or Google Chrome (Explorer doesn't work with this program). You may have to look under All Programs at the bottom left of the screen to find these. If this doesn't work, go to Google and enter the URL from step 2.
2. At the top, enter webapps.msucare.com. All MSU apps will appear. Click on the Master Gardener icon to open the login screen.
3. To add the app to your computer, click on the three dots, the star, or the hamburger button at the top right of the screen. Then choose Save as Bookmark, Save Page As, or Add to Desktop. Name the page and click save/done.
4. Click on Master Gardener and enter your MG number and password, then click log in. Do not change your password!
5. Click on Edit Profile. Check the information, make any changes, and click Save.
6. From the Main Menu, click Add New. The screen to enter information appears.
7. The Start Date for most activities is one date. Click on the calendar icon and select the dates the activity started and ended. Most activities start and end in the same month. If an activity started in an earlier month, click on the arrow to the left of the month and continue as above. It is recommended to enter activities on the day they occur. The date will automatically be highlighted in light blue.
8. Next, scroll down to Please Select a Category and select the desired option. These category options are set by the State MG Coordinator.
9. Next, scroll down to Please Select a Project and select the desired option. These project options are set annually by the County MG Coordinator.
10. Click in the description area and briefly describe what you did. Examples: installed plants, maintained plants, registration assistance.
11. All educational activities go under Education hours. List entries to the nearest half-hour. Travel time to an education event goes under Service. Example: You attended an educational function for 1 hour, and it took 30 minutes (.5 hour) to drive there and back. Enter "1" for Education and ".5" for Service.
12. All service-related activities go under Service hours. Everything except education goes in this category. Example: You worked in a greenhouse for 2 hours, and it took 1 hour to drive there and back. Enter "3" for Service.
13. Scroll down to Value Added. This is used if you spent personal money on something that helped the MG program and you did not get reimbursed. Examples: money spent on groceries to cook a meal, or buying potting soil or other items.
14. Scroll down to Miles Traveled. This is round-trip mileage for any event attended, only if you are the driver. Use only whole numbers when reporting miles.

15. Under Contacts, only count contacts when presenting a program, assisting an individual, or speaking to a group. Never count contacts for simply attending an event. Count contacts based on the sign-in sheet. If no sheet is available, make a best estimate.
16. Click the submit button.
17. Go back to the main menu. If you need to add another entry, click Add New and continue from step 7 above.
18. **When you are finished entering hours, click the Logout button at the top right. You MUST click the Logout button for the system to update the entries.**

To check hours entered (under Print Records):

1. Print Activity for Current Year shows a detailed listing of all activities for the current year.
2. Print Archive for All Active Years sums up hours and mileage for each year as an active MG. This report can be used to verify hours from a different county. You must log in with your MG number and password from each county to print the report.
3. Print Activities for Selected Dates lets you choose a date range to view a detail of activities. Reporting starts the day MSU employees return to work, not on January 1.

Supplemental Evaluation

It is recommended that the CMGC devise other means besides the annual report to accurately measure the success of the county program. Evaluation is practical because it indicates the impact of the program and the factors that influenced it. The Master Gardener Project Evaluation Form in Section 6 on page 32 is helpful for assessing projects.

The evaluation procedure needs to be planned at the same time goals are established in the initial stages of the program. Then data can be gathered while the program is in action. Involve volunteers in planning and goal-setting so they will understand the importance of recording data. If your program's goal is to provide \$100,000 of horticultural information to the public, then the volunteers need an efficient and relatively easy system to gather data about the financial value of the information they provide.

Goals are not always attached to large numbers. Perhaps your Master Gardeners would like to serve a previously neglected segment of the community. For example, their goal might be to provide horticultural therapy to the members of a sober housing facility, or to start several 4-H garden clubs.

Make evaluation meaningful. Measure the ways your goals were achieved, and make sure evaluations are timely. Some events need to be reported rapidly, and others should be assessed after a given time period, such as 6 or 12 months.





SECTION FOUR: *Policies*

This section includes statewide Mississippi Master Gardener policies. Every county Master Gardener program should follow these policies. Individual counties may set additional policies that apply to their county programs as needed. The designated CMGC, typically the county director, conducts the Mississippi Master Gardener program at the county level.

The State Master Gardener Coordinator acts as the state leader of the program. Some of the duties of the state coordinator are:

- to provide direction to the program statewide.
- to oversee the educational training program.
- to serve as adviser to the state Master Gardener board.
- to provide assistance and support to the CMGC.

County directors with a horticulture focus area may act as Master Gardener training instructors in their districts.

As an Extension educational program, all facets of the program, including budget, project approval, communications, training, and volunteer supervision, are under the direct supervision of Extension. Extension encourages the formation of local Master Gardener associations to maintain a relationship with volunteers and to assist the CMGC in meeting the consumer horticulture educational needs of the community. The CMGC will serve as an adviser to the local Master Gardener association.

Extension supports the mission, goals, and objectives of the Mississippi Master Gardener Association, a separate entity, to provide additional continuing education to Master Gardeners statewide. All certified Mississippi Master Gardeners, regardless of affiliation with local Master Gardener associations or the Mississippi Master Gardener Association, represent the mission and policies of Extension.

CERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Upon acceptance into the program, volunteers are designated Master Gardener interns. In order to become a certified Master Gardener, interns must:

1. Sign the Memorandum of Agreement (Section 7 page 37). Signing this document is mandatory for each Master Gardener trainee. This is for the protection of both the prospective Master Gardener and Extension. Keep this signed document on file in the county office. (For the online course, the Memorandum of Agreement is part of the registration process.)
2. Complete the 40-hour training course. Attendance is required for all class meetings (excused absences can be made up under the direction of the CMGC).
3. Complete the internship volunteer service hours. Interns must complete and document a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service activities within 1 year of their training. The CMGC will help facilitate this process. Documentation should be filed through the CMGC's annual report to the State Master Gardener Coordinator.

If an online participant completes the Home Gardening Course and then wishes to become a Master Gardener, the CMGC can request the required materials to complete the Master Gardener training. The State MG Coordinator will provide a link where the three remaining classes can be viewed, and the final exam and evaluation can be completed. The participant can then print the certificate of completion for the Master Gardener Volunteer Training and begin volunteering with a county group. No money will be refunded for the additional cost of having taken the Home Gardening Course.

RECERTIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

Each year after certification, Master Gardeners must fulfill a minimum of 32 hours to remain classified as active Master Gardeners.

1. Twenty of these hours are to be project or service hours through any service project approved by the CMGC.
2. Twelve of these hours must be education hours. Determining the number of learning hours to allot for various educational activities is the responsibility of the CMGC. Any educational opportunities that will enhance the Master Gardener's dissemination of horticulture information may be considered by the CMGC toward these hours.
3. Documentation of the fulfilled requirement should be made in the CMGC's annual report to the State Master Gardener Coordinator.

COUNTING VOLUNTEER HOURS

This is the official list of categories and what counts as Master Gardener volunteer service. Anything not on this list must be preapproved by the CMGC in conjunction with the State Master Gardener Coordinator.

- A. Service Hour Options: All projects must be preapproved by the CMGC. The majority of service hours should be obtained by working on group projects. No more than 25 percent of service hours may be obtained working on a project as an individual volunteer.

One-on-one technical support/phone calls/home visits, etc.: When you speak with a person about a home horticultural issue.

Projects: Installing/maintaining gardens or demonstration areas and other preapproved county projects. These county preapproved projects can be found in the reporting system. CMGCs may add projects for their specific situations under this category. The CMGC should update this list each January.

Presentations: Teaching a class, presenting a program, participating in an educational field day, etc., whether to other Master Gardeners, the public, or others. Reasonable prep time, such as research, creating a PowerPoint presentation, making copies of publications, etc., can be counted. For all first-time-taught programs, 5–6 hours is enough prep time. For all succeeding programs taught, 1 hour is enough prep time. **A copy of your presentation must be pre-approved and on file with the CMGC before being presented.**

Writing: Columns or articles for newspapers, newsletters, or magazines, if you are not being paid. Reasonable research and prep time of up to 3 hours can be counted if the article is published.

Master Gardener support, organization, or administration: Attending monthly association meetings, assisting the county Extension office with anything non-horticulture related, registration at meetings, preparing a meal or dish for an event, etc. Master Gardeners are expected to attend as many monthly meetings as possible to stay informed of the group's activities.

Youth: This category takes priority over all others in the reporting system! If you work with youth (18 and under), be sure to record it under this category. Youth field days, 4-H events, Project Achievement Days, Junior Master Gardener programs, Boys and Girls Clubs, school classrooms, etc. ALL of these are automatically entered under the YOUTH category.

- B. Education Hour Options: All must be preapproved by the CMGC. No more than 20 percent of total education hours should come from activities such as personal reading, educational television programs, or non-Extension events.

Education: Earn hours for attending educational classes, programs, field trips, etc. These could be presented in person, via Zoom or other webinar, or by another method, but they must be presented by a group that uses sound, research-based evidence as its source (such as an Extension Service). The information taught must be relevant to Mississippi's growing climate and/or to volunteering.

- C. Counting Instructions:

Counting hours: Log in whole or half hours only. Round up or down to the closest half- or whole-hour mark.

Counting contacts: If attending a presentation, event, meeting, etc., you do not count ANY contacts; count only your time. If you are presenting a program, making a home visit, talking to a client, etc., count ALL people in attendance as contacts.

Counting mileage: Count mileage ONLY when you are the driver! Document round-trip mileage for each event you drive to.

Record mileage in whole numbers only (no half-miles). This driving time counts as volunteer service time for both the driver and passengers.

For safety reasons, it is recommended to always have at least two Master Gardeners working together on any activity. They can help one another if a crisis occurs. Master Gardeners should never be alone with youth or elderly clients at any time!

MG WRITING GUIDELINES FOR MEDIA

Audience

- Usually writing for a broad audience with a mix of beginner and seasoned gardeners.
- Use words that are familiar to the audience and avoid jargon and technical terms. For example, use "trees and shrubs" rather than "woody ornamentals."
- Write at an appropriate education/knowledge level for the audience.

Style and point of view

- Keep the audience in mind. Provide an answer to a question or solve a problem.
- The writing should be about the client, the problem faced, and information that can help.
- If writing answers to questions people search on the Internet, use the terms they use, so that it is Internet "search friendly." The more questions answered in one article, about the same topic, the better.
- The article does not need to read like an FAQ (unless it really is an FAQ).
- Use active voice whenever possible. For example, "Purchase an instrument to measure light." Not, "An instrument to measure light can be purchased."
- May use first-person voice, especially when sharing advice from your own gardening experience. For example, in a review of the types of celery and how to grow them, the author has a favorite cutting celery, so they wrote: "My favorite cutting celery is 'Affina'."
- Bullets are helpful if listing plants or giving step-by-step instructions.

Newsworthiness

- Feature gardening trends, new plant cultivars, or hard-to-find plants, and include steps to achieve success.
- Do not write about any political subject as a Master Gardener representative!
- Do not discuss your opinion of the news.
- It is OK to repurpose previously written content. Review it to ensure the information is still relevant to the readers and up-to-date.

Integrity

- Remember all information must be research-based!
- Present information through the lens of your own gardening experience.
- Do not plagiarize! If you need to cite information, follow *Chicago Manual of Style* guidelines.

Length

- Concise writing is best. There is no set length for a good article. It should adequately convey the message and provide enough detail to solve the problem.

Guidelines for Frequently Used Terms

- Write “MSU Master Gardeners of X County” rather than “X County Master Gardeners.” Technically, they are MSU Extension Master Gardeners, not that county’s Master Gardeners.
- Spell out numbers one through nine (except in measurements; for example, 5-gallon bucket).
- The single quotes around cultivar names appear inside punctuation, whereas regular quotation marks appear outside. For example: He said, “My favorite cutting celery is ‘Affina’.”
- For MSU publications, temperature should be written as in these examples: 75°F, 30°C, 70 to 80°F or 70–80°F.

Botanical nomenclature:

- The first time a plant is introduced in an article, write the common name and include the botanical name in parentheses immediately after. Within the article, you can switch back and forth to avoid monotony.
- Exceptions would be plants like tomato—it would be somewhat pretentious to write about tomatoes as *Solanum lycopersicum*. It might add interest to your article to identify the botanical name of a plant, but then stick with the common name after.
- There are some exceptions to this rule, but generally you should give the common name (all lowercase unless the common name includes a proper noun), followed by genus and species name italicized and in parentheses. For example, German iris (*Iris germanica*); sweet woodruff (*Galium odoratum*).
- Plants are usually known by their cultivar names. Cultivar names are not italicized but are capitalized, and the specific name is contained within single quotes. For example, *Cercis canadensis* ‘Forest Pansy’.

Varieties and other hybrid rules:

- Varieties of naturally occurring plants that reproduce true to type are identified like this: White redbud (*Cercis canadensis* var. *alba*). Note that “var.” is not italicized or capitalized.
- Seed mixes are a mix of several cultivars and do not need to be set off in single quotes. For example: *Zinnia elegans* Berry Basket Mix.
- Interspecies cross would have an “x” in the middle. Saucer Magnolia (*Magnolia* x *soulangiana*) is a cross between *M. denudata* and *M. liliiflora*.
- Note that, once you have identified a genus the first time, you can abbreviate it thereafter, as in the example in the previous bullet.
- An intergeneric cross is preceded by an “x” and followed by the new genus epithet without a space in between. For example, the cross of foamflower (*Tiarella* spp.) and coral bells (*Heuchera* spp.) is written: x*Heucherella*. Most often, it would be followed by a cultivar name written in the typical fashion (upper case, not italicized, with single quotes); for example: x*Heucherella* ‘Alabama Sunrise’. In both cases, the “x” is not italicized or capitalized.
- If you are talking about genera (multiple species of a genus), write the botanical name followed by “spp.” For example, *Astilbe* spp. In the case of *astilbe*, its common and botanical name are the same.
- If you’re unsure of what species or cultivar an individual plant is (for example, the tag is long gone), you can identify it simply by its genus followed by “sp.” For example: An image might have a pretty phlox, and you can just call it *Phlox* sp.
- Do not capitalize or italicize spp. and sp.

An excellent reference for proper nomenclature is the Missouri Botanical Garden website at <http://www.missouribotanicalgarden.org/>

Source: Carol Papas, Penn State Extension Master Gardener, Allegheny County; Rayden Weber, Marketing Specialist, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences; Amanda E. Kirsten, Proofreader/Copy Editor, Penn State College of Agricultural Sciences.

USE OF THE MASTER GARDENER TITLE

The title “Master Gardener” is recognized nationally, but it has no service or trademark status. However, the title “Mississippi Master Gardener” or “Mississippi State University Extension Service Master Gardener” is used by Extension to indicate a person who has been trained and certified through the Extension program. Mississippi Master Gardeners are expected to use their title when doing unpaid volunteer educational work for Extension. When individuals cease active participation, their designation as Master Gardener is void.

Master Gardeners are advised neither to advertise their names or places of business, nor be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardeners. The Master Gardener program is an Extension public service program. Appearing for a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or implying Extension endorsements of any product or business is inappropriate.

Master Gardeners may not solicit money for public speaking. Unsolicited monies and reimbursements for expenses should be donated to the local Master Gardener fund. Gift items may be accepted.

INACTIVE STATUS AND MG TRANSFERS

Inactive Status/Leave of Absence

An inactive MG volunteer is one who is currently unable to achieve the required 20 service hours and/or 12 education hours and would like the opportunity to become active again in the future. The following policies apply to their return:

1. Must be in good standing, having completed the original commitment of training, exam, and volunteer service.
2. May rejoin within 3 years of going inactive. Anyone inactive more than 3 years must retake the new MG training course at full cost.
3. While inactive, you may occasionally volunteer, but these hours do not count toward a year of certification. Only years of active service reported count toward the next longevity pin.

Out of State Transfers

Master Gardeners who move into Mississippi from Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, or Tennessee may join a county program once the County MG Coordinator (CMGC) contacts the former Extension office to confirm the MG was currently active according to that state’s requirements.

Master Gardeners transferring into Mississippi from any other state must take the Mississippi Master Gardener training course at full cost.

County Transfers within Mississippi

When a current active MG moves to another county within Mississippi, the new CMGC should contact the former CMGC and confirm the MG is currently active (having reported the minimum number of education and service hours during the previous year). Once confirmed, the MG will be assigned a new MG number. The MG number and password from the previous county should no longer be used.

HORTICULTURAL RECOMMENDATIONS BY MASTER GARDENERS

When making horticultural recommendations, including the use of chemicals—insecticides, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides—Mississippi Master Gardeners must follow published Extension recommendations. Refer questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on commercial crops to the CMGC.

Master Gardeners can refer plant culture problems not specifically covered by Extension recommendations to the CMGC. Cultural problems are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations, so experienced Master Gardeners may suggest nonchemical treatments they consider appropriate. If that recommendation is based on personal experience, Master Gardeners should state clearly that they are speaking for themselves and are not necessarily presenting the opinion of Extension. Problems may also be addressed by suggesting treatments covered in horticultural reference books and materials. When making a recommendation from a specific source, Master Gardeners should cite the reference book or material.

USE OF THE MASTER GARDENER LOGO

Master Gardener groups may use the Master Gardener logo on printed pieces, T-shirts, pins, and other items. However, it is recommended that the Extension wordmark appear in conjunction with the Master Gardener logo. It is against university policy to change or alter the Extension wordmark in any way. County Master Gardener associations can have their own logos for use in local programs, but to develop statewide recognition and promotion of the program, the use of the state Master Gardener logo is encouraged.

NAME BADGES AND CERTIFICATES

After participants complete 40 hours of training, the CMGC should request intern name badges so these participants can be identified as such. The CMGC will submit a Creative Communications Request with Agricultural Communications through this link: <https://msues.sharedwork.com/requests>. Use the “files to upload” option within the request to provide a document with the complete list of interns. Intern badges will be delivered within 2 to 3 weeks. If you have any questions about the ordering system, please contact Kay Swoope at (662) 325-2262.

1. Put the county name(s) in the “project title” box so your order can be accessed or referenced quickly.
2. Specify that you are requesting an intern name badge.
3. Provide the list of Master Gardeners’ names as they should appear on the badge.

4. Specify the year to appear on the badges.
5. Provide the name and address to send badges. This is very important, especially with multi-county training that included participants from several counties.

Once the MG intern completes and reports their 40 hours of service, the CMGC will email their names and year certified to the State MG Coordinator. Permanent name badges and certificates will be ordered every other month.

For permanent name badges, certificates, or lost/damaged name badges, email jeff.wilson@msstate.edu. Indicate in the email subject line that this is a permanent name badge or replacement badge order. Replacement orders will not be processed until a check for \$5 for each is mailed to NMREC, Susan McGukin, P.O. Box 1690, Verona, MS 38879. Make checks payable to MSU Extension.

SCHEDULING TRAINING

It is the responsibility of the CMGC to schedule in-person training sessions. This includes providing facilities, scheduling instructors, providing materials and supplies, and fulfilling other requirements of hosting training. The CMGC should attend all training sessions in order to introduce the instructors and make sure training is running smoothly. Attending every session allows time for the CMGC to get to know the participants' unique abilities and personalities. This interaction time will assist the CMGC when matching individuals with suitable jobs.

The Master Gardener training course must be at least 40 hours and cover the core curriculum outlined in this manual. It is recommended that training take place only if there are at least 10 interested participants. Counties can work with other nearby counties to combine their training courses and maximize resources. It is generally recommended that two or three counties train together. If a county trains individuals from another county that does not have an official program, those individuals are considered members of the county program in which they trained. If the neighboring county is participating in multi-county training, these Master Gardeners are considered volunteers in their home county's Extension office. The issue of where volunteers will serve should be resolved before acceptance in the program.

Participants who miss a class due to an emergency or another situation must attend the next available class. This is handled at the discretion of the CMGC. The State MG Coordinator schedules annual online trainings.

BASIC STRUCTURE OF COUNTY ORGANIZATIONS

This section contains examples of how a county Master Gardener program may be organized. Each county has its own identity and will be different from other counties. Use this information to guide the development of your own county program. It is also helpful to contact county agents and officers in other counties to learn how their programs are organized and how they operate.

Officers

The number, type, and duties of officers are usually stated in the bylaws of the organization. Some counties choose to have few officers, while others prefer more. Most county Master Gardener programs have a president, secretary, and treasurer at the very least. Other possible officer positions include vice president(s), record-keeper, and immediate past president.

Committees

Committees are sometimes listed in the bylaws of the organization, but more frequently they are formed after the bylaws are written. Committees can often be broken into three different types: standing committees, project committees, and ad hoc (or special) committees. Standing committees are needed for internal operations, including budget, training, membership, public relations, newsletter, social, scrapbook, and contact committees. Project committees work on community projects, such as school enrichment, courthouse gardens, and youth garden projects. Ad hoc committees fulfill short-term needs.

To avoid confusion, you may want to use the term "committee" to describe a standing committee and "project group" for a project committee. Some examples of possible committees follow.

Standing committees:

- Budget — Prepares annual budget, determines funding needs, recommends amount for dues, and holds fundraising events as needed.
- Training — Plans Master Gardener training (with the CMGC), arranges speakers for training, helps interview and select trainees, sets up training room, and prepares refreshments for training.
- Membership — Solicits new members, encourages participation of current members, acts as mentor for newest members.
- Public relations — Notifies media of special events, workdays, and fundraisers.
- Newsletter — Prepares internal newsletter for the organization.
- Social — Plans and coordinates social events.
- Scrapbook — Maintains scrapbook of all Master Gardener activities on paper or electronically.
- Contact — Informs members about workdays, field trips, and other activities.
- Program — Arranges educational programs at monthly meetings.
- Field trips — Plans and coordinates educational field trips.

Project committees:

These committees are active on an annual basis, depending on the yearly approval of projects.

- Beautification projects — Designs, constructs, and maintains public landscaping projects.
- County fair — Assists with check-in, display, judging, and checkout of horticultural exhibits at the county fair.
- Speakers bureau — Presents educational gardening programs to other community groups, such as senior citizen groups, garden clubs, and homemaker clubs.
- School enrichment — Presents educational gardening programs to school groups.
- Extension office — Responds to horticulture-related requests at the county Extension office. Assists with preparation and distribution of Extension newsletters.

Monthly Meetings

Most county Master Gardener programs hold monthly meetings. A few counties do not meet during the summer months, and often a holiday party or social event is held in December in place of the regular business meeting.

The monthly meeting is extremely important to the Master Gardener program. It is the primary way members stay informed of the group's activities. The monthly meeting is also when most decisions affecting the group are made. All Master Gardeners should be strongly encouraged to attend and participate in the monthly meetings.

Many counties have an educational presentation in conjunction with the regular business meeting. This is a good way to maintain interest in the meetings. The educational presentation may be made before or after the business meeting. If the speaker will not be staying through the business meeting, it is advisable to present the speaker first so that he or she may leave when finished. The allotment of learning hours for attending educational presentations is at the discretion of the CMGC.

Order of Business

The basic order of business should resemble the following:

1. Call to order.
2. Reading and approval of minutes.
3. Reports from officers (including treasurer's report), boards, standing committees.
4. Reports from ad hoc committees
5. Special orders of business (matters demanding special priority).
6. Unfinished business (matters previously introduced but not completed).
7. New business (new matters up for discussion).
8. Adjournment.

Parliamentary Procedure

Parliamentary procedure is an orderly method of efficiently and effectively conducting business. When group members get into long discussions about topics that do not relate to the business at hand, or when the group gets sidetracked on another subject, the efficiency and effectiveness of the meeting declines. By using basic parliamentary procedure (found in *Robert's Rules of Order Revised*), the group can address current business matters, preserve harmony in the group, and reach agreeable decisions.

There are five basic principles of parliamentary procedure:

1. Only one subject can be considered at a time.
2. Each proposal presented entitles every member to free and full debate.
3. The will of the majority must be carried out, but the rights of the minority are protected.
4. Every member has rights equal to every other member.
5. Business and discussion should follow rules of courtesy.

Quorum

A quorum is the minimum number of members of an organization that must be present at a meeting to officially transact business. A quorum must be present to hold an official meeting. If a quorum is not present, the group should schedule another meeting. Check your organization's bylaws concerning the definite number that constitutes a quorum.

Making a Motion

A motion is a proposal to bring a subject to the group for discussion and action. Follow these procedures to properly make a motion:

1. The member rises and addresses the chair: "Mr./Madame President (or Chair)."
2. The chair recognizes the member.
3. The member states, "I move that ... (states motion)"
4. There is a second to the motion.
5. The chair states the motion: "It has been moved by (name) and seconded that..."
6. Discussion takes place.
7. The chair says, "If there is no further discussion, the motion is ... (restate motion)."
8. The chair says, "All of those in favor of ... (state motion) say 'Aye.' Those opposed say 'Nay.'" The vote takes place.
9. The chair states the results of the vote: "The motion is carried," or "The motion is denied."

Amendments

Amendments are used to change or modify motions. There are three methods of amending motions. They are: (1) striking out a certain word or words; (2) adding a certain word or words; (3) substituting a word, phrase, clause, or new motion. Amendments must be relevant to or have a direct bearing upon the motion the amendment seeks to change. Debate on an amendment is limited to discussion of the amendment, not the original motion. An amendment must be seconded. To properly amend a motion, use the procedures in the following example:

1. The member rises and addresses the chair: "Mr./Madam President (or Chair)."
2. The chair recognizes the member.
3. The member states, "I move to amend the motion by substituting the word 'November' for 'December.' "
4. There is a second to the motion.
5. The chair states, "It has been moved and seconded to amend the motion by substituting the word 'November' for 'December.' "

This would make the motion read 'The club will host an open house during the month of November.' Is there any discussion?"

Group Discussion

If the motion is debatable, every member has the right to debate. The chair refrains from debate while presiding. The chair carefully determines the order in which members are recognized, giving first opportunity to the person who proposed the motion. Discussion should be related only to the motion being considered. The chair must recognize a member before the member addresses the group.

Dues and Fundraising

Deciding when to collect dues can be tricky. County groups now have the option of adding the first year's dues to the cost of the training course. Most counties will probably collect dues after the annual review of members' service and learning hours, which takes place before the annual report is due on December 15. You need to know who is still eligible to be a Master Gardener before asking for dues.

Master Gardener groups need to analyze their budgets on a yearly basis, before beginning any fundraising activities. Groups should have a specific plan for how they intend to spend the money raised by a fundraising project. Plan how to spend the money before the fundraiser to prevent conflicts later.

The finances of community service organizations such as Master Gardeners are very different from personal finances. Saving money is not necessary in community service organizations. Many groups do not need to hold fundraisers since expenses for their projects are paid by other organizations, such as city or county governments, chambers of commerce, utility companies, or corporate sponsors. It is preferable to have a funding organization for all Master Gardener projects.

WEBSITE

The Mississippi State University Extension Service maintains a Master Gardener website at <http://msuext.ms/mg>.

This site has general information about the program, including publications, news, and annual reports.





SECTION FIVE: *Conducting Training*

As stated elsewhere in this document, the responsibility of scheduling and hosting training sessions is the job of the CMGC.

PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

Providing an appropriate, comfortable setting is essential to creating a positive learning environment.

- Provide clear directions to the meeting place.
- Before the appointed time for the meeting, set up enough chairs to accommodate the crowd.
- Check the quality of lighting; the audience should have enough light to take notes and see slides or a TV screen.
- Acoustics are also important. Make sure things like a public address system and extension cords are available if needed. Also control outside noise as much as possible.
- Nametags are useful, especially at initial meetings.
- In winter, coat racks can be provided.
- Once the meeting time arrives, be aware of room temperature and ventilation. Even the best speaker will have a difficult time holding the audience's attention if they are falling asleep or shivering.

In addition to making the physical environment just right, also pay attention to the participants.

- Welcome attendees, and greet speakers to put them at ease.
- During meetings, involve the audience through democratic leadership with plenty of opportunities to voice opinions.
- Since time is valuable, start and end meetings on time, as stated in announcements and invitations.

MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM FEE AND DISPERSION OF FUNDS

There is a one-time charge for participation in the Mississippi Master Gardener program. To address several issues concerning the state Master Gardener board and the CMGC, and to meet the requirements governing the handling of monies by the Mississippi State University Extension Service, the Extension director approved a standardized fee structure.

1. For in-person trainings, Master Gardener trainees must pay a one-time \$125 fee (checks made payable to the county Master Gardener Association). This association collects all fees and handles dispersion of funds. In those counties with no association, one will be formed from the class being trained.
2. For online trainings, the \$125 fee is paid online during registration.

Dispersion of fee—please read carefully.

The \$125 fee breakdown will be as follows:

The county MG Association will write two checks:

Check one: Payable to MSU Extension in the amount of \$75 per trainee (printing cost, new name badge cost, and funds to support state program).

Mail to: North Mississippi Research and Extension Center
Attn: Susan McGukin
P.O. Box 1690
Verona, MS 38879

Please include note that check is for X number of MG manuals for X county.

Check two: Payable to Mississippi Master Gardener State Association (MMGA) in the amount of \$20 per trainee to cover 1-year membership in state MG association.

Please include in this check the 20 __ state association dues for current Master Gardeners in your county, if you have not already sent these to the association. MMGA dues are \$20 for the first year and \$10 yearly after that. Deadline for annual dues is March 1 of each year, but they can be paid earlier. Dues collected at fall training sessions are for the following calendar year.

Enter the new members' contact information, plus the other MGs in your county if including their dues, into the Excel spreadsheet found at the MMGA website: <http://msmastergardener.org/managing-memberships>. DO NOT ALTER this spreadsheet. Email the spreadsheet to the MMGA chair. To find this contact information, visit the MMGA website: <http://msmastergardener.org>

NOTE: Membership in the MMGA is encouraged but has no impact on the active status of the Master Gardener as a certified MSU Extension Master Gardener. This is determined by the reporting of hours into the MSU Extension online reporting system.

The balance of the fee (\$30) is retained by the county to offset expenses of hosting the training (refreshments, three-ring binders). Please remember that you have the option to add the county MG association's yearly dues to the program fee.

For online trainings: All fees are collected by the State MG Coordinator. The first year's MMGA dues are withdrawn and mailed directly to MMGA. Funds due (\$30 per participant) to counties are mailed after completion of the training.

TRAINING CURRICULUM

The training curriculum was revised in 2021 and includes lesson plans with more complete instructions for teachers, as well as hands-on activities and demonstrations to more actively engage the student in the learning process. Resource material lists, current recommendations and procedures, and a standardized test on the material covered in class are also included.

Training curriculum subjects and authors are listed below:

Subject	Credit hours	Instructor
Introduction	1	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Botany	2	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Soils	2	Dr. Larry Oldham
Urban Trees	2	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Honeybee Care	2	Dr. Jeff Harris
Plant Propagation	2	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Entomology – Fruits and Veggies	2	Dr. Blake Layton
Entomology – Turf/Ornamentals	2	Dr. Blake Layton
Plant Diseases	4	Dr. Alan Henn
Ornamentals	4	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Turfgrass	4	Dr. Jay McCurdy
Vegetables	3	Dr. Rick Snyder
Weed Science	4	Dr. John Byrd
Fruits and Nuts	4	Dr. Eric Stafne
MGs as Educators	1	Dr. Jeff Wilson
Recordkeeping	1	Dr. Jeff Wilson
<i>Total hours</i>	40	

Training should begin with the first three sessions in the order given if taught in person. The remaining subjects can be taught in any order. Additional hours of required instruction can be filled by guest lecturers, visits to points of horticultural interest, or by other means as determined by the CMGC. Courses are usually offered once or twice each week, at a convenient time for trainees. An open-book online test will be administered to each participant at the end of training. This test will be used as a tool to determine the trainee's knowledge, and gauge their knowledge and ability to use their notes, handouts, and manuals. Passing or failing is determined by the automatic testing system. Participants must score at least 70 percent correct to pass.

PUBLICIZING TRAINING SESSIONS

Well before the training dates, county coordinators need to send news releases announcing that applications are being accepted. In the news release, include an application deadline that will give you ample time to screen applicants and send letters of acceptance or rejection. Sometimes it is best to combine a solicitation of applicants with a picture and short article about a current Master Gardener project to get people's attention. A sample news release is found in Section 7 on page 35.

INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS

Interviews are encouraged to ensure that people are not admitted to the program who are unable to fulfill the 40-hour volunteer commitment or who do not have a desire to do volunteer work. Each year, the group of trainees will be different. One year may include many extroverts who are aggressive in running public programs; the next year may be filled with quieter types who are better at planning, writing, and other behind-the-scenes work. Fortunately, nearly all Master Gardener programs experience a veteran return, with volunteers who have already completed their commitment and who come back year after year. These people give a continuity and stability to the organization that can be reassuring to new trainees.

Some CMGCs may feel uncomfortable using an interview process because of the Extension philosophy of being open to everyone. However, these applicants are being selected to volunteer and serve Extension clients. By choosing the best applicants, you are ensuring the best service for clients.

Many Master Gardener programs have too many applicants due to the popularity of the program, making it necessary to screen applicants. There are a variety of ways to go about screening. In-person interviews can be helpful, and, in some programs, current Master Gardeners are involved with this process.

Application forms with appropriate questions are another method used in some counties. Design questions so that applicants reveal their personalities, interests, and abilities, instead of giving the answers they think are wanted. One screening method is to consider rejecting applicants who do not list a desire to volunteer among their reasons for wanting to join Master Gardeners.

TRAINING TIMELINE

The following training timeline is a suggested tool to aid the CMGC in organizing and scheduling an in-person Master Gardener training session.

1 Year Before Training

- Determine the needs of your office. What are the projects that volunteers are needed to do? Develop job descriptions for these volunteers. How many volunteers are needed and how many hours of work are available? Develop a plan of action to implement the program.
- Survey the population to determine interest in the program.
- Notify the State Master Gardener Coordinator of your interest in holding training sessions.
- If possible, arrange cooperative training with adjoining counties. A minimum of three adjoining counties is optimal. A minimum of 20 participants is recommended, with a suggested maximum of 50 per training session.

6 Months Before Training

- Schedule training session dates, times, and locations. Classes can be held one 8-hour day per week for 5 weeks; or one or two 4-hour sessions per week for 5 or 10 weeks. Nights and weekends are an option, but consider this carefully. If your county needs daytime help, will these volunteers be available?
- Schedule instructors for all sessions. Due to limited travel budgets and scheduling constraints, give all instructors plenty of advance notice.
- Decide on the number of volunteers you can train.
- Begin publicizing the program and sending out application forms (see example in Section 7 on page 36).

2 Months Before Training

- Continue to make application forms available. The cut-off date for applications should be 1 month before training begins to allow time for interviewing applicants.
- Advertise the program.
- Begin interviewing potential Master Gardeners. It is important that each candidate be interviewed. The goal is to train continuing volunteers, not just to give them a good gardening education. While it is hard to turn away volunteers, there may be class-size limitations, and some may just want to take the class and not do any of the work. Employ returning Master Gardeners to help in this process in future years.
- Make your finalized order for all training materials and arrange for delivery or pick-up.

1 Month Before Training

- Notify all applicants of their acceptance or rejection to the program.
- Notify participants of the training schedule, location, directions, and other important information.
- Confirm and remind instructors of their commitment to the training program. Send them a copy of your program with directions to the meeting site.
- Purchase binders for manuals and make plans to provide refreshments for each session. Use workshop funds to obtain these supplies.

2 Weeks Before Training

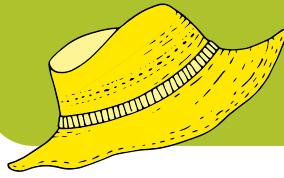
- Have all Master Gardener students complete and sign the MOA before starting the training.
- Order student manuals and student/instructor thumb drives online through the publication system at <https://intranet.extension.msstate.edu/forms/publications-ordering-system>. Each item has its own publication number, as follows:
 - » P2356 Master Gardener Student Kit (includes student manual and thumb drive)
 - » M1641 Master Gardener Instructor Thumb Drive
- Order each item and indicate the number needed of each. These can be on a single order. Indicate in the memo section how you wish to receive your materials. If picking up, indicate the date you would like to pick up. If having items shipped, indicate that in the order.
- Once a class has been formed, send a Word document to jeff.wilson@msstate.edu with the following information:
 - » county
 - » class roster (name, address, email, and phone number)
 - » beginning date of training

3 Weeks Before Training Ends

- Order intern nametags if needed. Be sure to identify the appropriate county name for each applicant, especially if you are hosting a multi-county training.
- Prepare the class for the final test.

Final Session

- Provide the link to the online final exam (provided by the State Coordinator).
- Pass out intern nametags.
- Encourage participants to complete the evaluation online (same link as exam).
- Schedule a meeting with the new Master Gardeners.
- Celebrate graduation with your new Master Gardeners!



SECTION SIX: *Project Guidelines*

Projects are approved on a yearly basis. All projects are evaluated and reconsidered for approval at the end of the service year. The CMGC gives the final approval of projects and service hours. It is recommended and desirable that Master Gardeners have input in the project approval process. Approved Master Gardener projects should be consumer horticulture educational activities and fall within the scope of Extension's mission.

EXAMPLES OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE AND PROJECTS

- Plant clinics
- Certified Master Gardener instruction
- Office work involved with distributing home horticultural information
- Home horticultural answering service (phone hotline, email)
- Demonstration and teaching gardens
- Newsletter editing
- Speakers bureau projects
- New class coordination
- Leadership roles in county or state organizations
- Research
- 4-H youth gardening projects (Junior Master Gardener, 4-H horticultural projects)
- Community beautification or landscaping projects

When the Master Gardener program originated, the main function of Master Gardeners was to aid county Extension agents in answering home horticulture-related questions. In many counties, this activity continues to be the most important contribution of Master Gardeners to the county Extension office.

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Purpose:

To extend MSU Extension's educational programs in the areas of horticulture, gardening, and small-scale food production.

Duties:

Staff clinics, demonstrations, and workshops for the general public on gardening, trees, shrubs, lawns, plants, insects, and related topics. Cooperate with and assist the county Extension staff with preparation and production of specific educational resources, including media materials and home horticultural classes. Keep appropriate records.

Requirements:

- Available to participate in an intensive plant science training program.
- Available to devote a minimum of 20 hours of Master Gardener volunteer service.
- Knowledge and skills in basic ornamental horticulture, gardening, and related areas.
- Able to effectively communicate with the public by telephone, personal and group contact, and written correspondence.

Supervision:

Volunteers report to the Extension agent in charge of the Master Gardener program unless otherwise stated. The agent provides supervision and support; assigns, reviews, and assesses work; provides in-service training based on the needs of the Master Gardener; and provides office space, a telephone, and any other necessary support. The agent will also provide information on professional improvement opportunities.

Some other possible opportunities include, but are not limited to, the following:

Volunteer office staff	Horticultural office assistant	Demonstration gardener
Volunteer coordinator	Horticultural news writer	County fair worker
Tree aid	Horticultural events coordinator	4-H volunteer leader
Senior citizen program aid	Graphic artist	4-H Arbor Day coordinator
Plant clinic staff	Garden tour guide	4-H School Garden coordinator
Neighborhood plant expert	Garden lecturer	Community beautification project worker
Neighborhood garden observer	Special needs citizens program aid	Project coordinator

COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION, LANDSCAPING, AND GARDENING PROJECTS

One of the main purposes of the Master Gardener program is to work on community improvement projects. Project work is often one of the most rewarding aspects of being a Master Gardener, and it is tempting for a county program to agree to help with every proposed project. However, before agreeing to take on a project, the CMGC and the Master Gardeners should evaluate the usefulness of the project and determine if the organization has enough time to devote to it.

Master Gardener projects are the primary public relations tool for most county programs. The projects should always be visible, well-kept, and serve the general public. If projects are messy or service commitments are not kept, it reflects poorly on the Master Gardener program.

Some guidelines for sanctioning Master Gardener projects are listed below. The process is divided into three steps: (1) project proposal, (2) acceptance or rejection, and (3) evaluation. Always try to be fair when choosing projects, and realize the limitations of your organization.

County-sanctioned projects are approved by the CMGC and the Master Gardener organization through a specific proposal procedure using the forms on the following pages. Some counties may sanction projects that others do not. Sanctioned projects may include beautification projects, school enrichment programs, horticultural therapy programs, annual garden shows, the Master Gardener newsletter, and working in the Extension office.

Most Master Gardener beautification, landscaping, and gardening projects should be a partnership between Master Gardeners and the community. For this reason, it is recommended that these types of projects be funded by other organizations such as city or county governments, chambers of commerce, corporations, or utility companies. The community funds the project and the Master Gardeners provide expertise, labor, and management.

PROJECT GUIDELINES

- Appoint a project review committee.
- Identify areas within your community needing the "Master Gardener touch."
- Avoid funding beautification projects unless they are for county Extension offices or places where Master Gardeners meet frequently.
- Select enough projects to meet membership working-hour requirements.
- It is recommended that most projects be ongoing, requiring continuous Master Gardener maintenance.
- Group participation in sanctioned projects is recommended.
- Appoint a project chair for each sanctioned project.
- The project review committee should promptly notify applicants of approval or rejection.
- Each Master Gardener is responsible for reporting working hours.

Project Chair Responsibilities

- Meet with the contact person regularly to discuss project needs and funding.
- Schedule workdays and committee meetings as needed.
- Inform Extension staff of all workdays.
- Report project status at monthly meetings.

Choosing Projects

Projects should...

- be accessible to the public without an admission fee.
- create visibility for Master Gardeners.
- benefit a city, county, state, or nonprofit organization.
- be submitted on a project proposal form.
- be made available for committee review at least 1 month before the projected starting date.

PROJECT PROPOSAL FORM

To be completed by the Master Gardener and submitted to the CMGC for approval. Optional: The project could then be submitted to the membership for approval.

Project name: _____

Location: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Telephone: _____

Person responsible for making decisions: _____

Description: _____

Educational impact: _____

Starting date: _____ Duration: _____

Proposed number of Master Gardeners: _____ Estimated hours: _____

Cost of project: _____

Funding source: _____

A project may be a one-time event, or, more preferably, an ongoing project with continuing maintenance by Master Gardeners. The sponsoring organization is welcome to assist.

Other important details: _____

Proposed by

Date

Hosting Organization Representative

Date

Projects Committee

Date

County Master Gardener Coordinator

Date

Membership Approval: ____ Yes ____ No Date: _____

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PROJECT EVALUATION FORM

Project name: _____

Description: _____

Starting date: _____ Duration: _____

Average workday attendance: _____ Cost of project to Master Gardeners: _____

Source of funding: _____

Special tools or equipment needed: _____

1. Please describe what you enjoyed about working on this project:
2. Describe any problems you experienced and possible solutions to those problems:

Problems with your host organization:

Problems with your committee members (enough members, too many, too many no-shows):

3. Suggestions or recommendations for next year:
4. Would you be willing to serve as chair next year?

Our guidelines suggest project chairs rotate at least every 2 years. If you have already served 2 years, whom would you recommend from your committee to serve as chair? Please list at least two names.

Continue with project for another year? ____ yes ____ no

Please list other comments and recommendations below. Use the back of the page if needed.

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Mississippi Master Gardener Volunteer Program: A Quick Guide



What Is the Master Gardener Program?

The Master Gardener volunteer program is a great way to gain horticultural expertise at a low cost, meet other avid gardeners, share gardening experiences, get connected to the community, and belong to a well-respected educational organization. This educational exchange program is offered through county offices of the Mississippi State University Extension Service.

Through this program, individuals are trained and certified in horticulture and related areas. In exchange for educational training, individuals are asked to volunteer their time to help county Extension offices with horticultural projects that benefit the local community. Master Gardeners help extend the educational arm of the university to the public by providing horticultural information based on university research and recommendations.

What Does the Master Gardener Program Provide?

The Master Gardener training program provides 40 hours of classroom and hands-on instruction in horticulture and related areas. Class instructors include Extension specialists, Extension agents, and other horticultural professionals. Class topics include botany, soils, vegetables, ornamentals, insects, diseases, propagation, urban tree care, and lawn care. Curriculum material to support the classroom instruction is provided.

What Does the Master Gardener Program Require?

In exchange for 40-plus hours of educational training, individuals are required to return 40 hours of volunteer

service within 1 year of completing the training. All volunteer service activities must be approved by the county Master Gardener coordinator. Any approved educational opportunities that will allow the Master Gardener to share horticultural information may count toward these hours. Each year after the first year, volunteers are required to return 20 hours of volunteer service and attend 12 hours of educational training to remain certified as Master Gardeners. Volunteer hours are digitally recorded in the designated Master Gardener reporting system.

There is a one-time \$125 fee for entry into the Master Gardener program. This fee covers the cost of curriculum, supplies, a name badge, and a 1-year membership in the state Master Gardener association. It also provides funding for future development and growth of the county and statewide programs.

How Do I Apply?

The first option is to contact your county Extension office to see if any in-person trainings are planned. Locate your county Extension office by looking under the county name in the phone book or by visiting <http://extension.msstate.edu/county-offices>. The second option is to visit the Extension Master Gardener website at <http://extension.msstate.edu/community/leadership/master-gardener> to find information about online training options.

What Are Some Sample Projects I Can Do as a Master Gardener?

- Conduct plant clinics
- Answer home horticulture questions (phone, email, face-to-face)
- Develop demonstration/teaching gardens
- Assist with research projects
- Provide leadership to county or state organizations
- Participate in 4-H Junior Master Gardener or other 4-H gardening projects
- Participate in community beautification/landscape projects

Making Recommendations

When making horticultural recommendations, including the use of chemicals (insecticides, pesticides, fungicides, herbicides), Master Gardeners must follow published Extension recommendations. Some cultural problems may not be specifically covered by Extension publications. Experienced Master Gardeners may suggest nonchemical treatments they consider appropriate based on personal experience. You must state clearly that you are speaking from your own personal experience and are not presenting the opinion of the MSU Extension Service. Always cite the reference book or material used for a recommendation. All questions concerning the commercial production of crops and pest control should be referred to the county Extension office.

Using the Master Gardener Title

Master Gardener is a nationally recognized title but has no service or trademark status. However, the title Mississippi Master Gardener or Mississippi State University Extension Master Gardener is used by Extension to indicate a person who has been trained and certified through our Extension program. The Master Gardener designation as considered void when individuals cease active participation.

Mississippi Master Gardeners are expected to use their title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work for Extension. Master Gardeners should not advertise their names or places of business or be listed as Master Gardeners on business advertisements. The Master Gardener program is an Extension public service program. Appearing for a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or implying Extension endorsements of any product or business is inappropriate.

Master Gardeners may not solicit money for public speaking. Unsolicited money received should be donated to the local Master Gardener fund. Gift items may be accepted.

Using the Master Gardener Logo

The Master Gardener logo may be used on printed materials, T-shirts, pins, and other items. If you do use the Master Gardener logo, it is recommended to also include the Extension wordmark. It is against university policy to change or alter the Extension wordmark in any way.

For additional information, visit the Master Gardener Extension webpage at <http://extension.msstate.edu/community/leadership/master-gardener>.

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SAMPLE NEWS RELEASE

(Include name and telephone number here.)

Master Gardener in-person program taking applications

Do you want to be a Master Gardener? Applications are being accepted in _____ County for anyone who wants to sharpen their horticultural skills and share that knowledge with others.

The Mississippi State University Extension Service is conducting the Master Gardener training program (#) days per week from (beginning date and ending date) at (location).

Enrollment will be limited to (number) participants, who, following training, will commit to donating 40 service hours to the county MSU Extension office.

Training begins with instructions on the Master Gardener program concept, basic botany, and soils. Other training sessions include vegetables, ornamental plants, home fruit and nut production, and lawn care.

Extension professionals, certified Master Gardener volunteer instructors, horticulture industry professionals, and other specialists will conduct the training. A one-time program participation fee of \$125 covers materials, refreshments, and a 1-year membership in the Mississippi Master Gardener Association. A local association membership fee may be added.

Final selection of participants will be made from applications and interviews. Deadline for application is _____. For more details, contact the _____ County MSU Extension office at (telephone #).

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VOLUNTEER APPLICATION

Mail or take this form to your county Extension office.

Date: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone (cell): _____ Email: _____

List areas of horticulture specialty or hobbies (roses, trees, flowers, herbs, bonsai, etc.).

List skills or experience you could use to strengthen the program (such as public speaking, computer skills, editing, graphic design, management, writing, youth work).

Why do you want to become a Master Gardener?

THE MASTER GARDENER COMMITMENT AND MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Before training begins, all accepted applicants must sign the Memorandum of Agreement committing to abide by Master Gardener policies and return 40 working hours to the Master Gardener program in exchange for the training course.

Master Gardener Memorandum of Agreement

The Master Gardener program is offered by Mississippi State University Extension and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve quality of life with horticultural projects. Goals are implemented through the training and employment of local volunteers. Master Gardeners assist Extension by implementing community projects, answering phone requests, running plant clinics, and performing other service projects.

The title "Master Gardener" is to be used only by individuals who have attended the 40 hours of Master Gardener training and passed an examination given by the County Master Gardener Coordinator. To be a Master Gardener, one must attend the prescribed 40 hours of instruction and volunteer 40 service hours to Extension. The title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in the Master Gardener program. When individuals cease active participation, their designation as Master Gardener becomes void.

Master Gardeners must be willing to maintain an electronic record of their volunteer activities using the designated reporting system.

Mississippi Master Gardeners will not use the title "Master Gardener" at a place of business or for commercial publicity, unless it is while participating in a Master Gardener-sponsored event. Association with commercial products or implying Mississippi State University Extension endorsements of products or businesses is inappropriate.

Master Gardeners are not to accept money for Master Gardener-related public speaking engagements, although the host group may reimburse travel expenses. Master Gardeners may accept contributions for the Master Gardener fund in their county. Gifts may be accepted.

When making horticultural recommendations, including the use of chemicals, Mississippi Master Gardeners are to follow the current published recommendations of Extension. Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved. Cultural problems are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations, so experienced Master Gardeners may suggest nonchemical treatments that they consider appropriate. Questions concerning commercial production of crops are to be referred to the local Extension Master Gardener Coordinator.

Master Gardeners who wish to continue in the program must accumulate 12 learning hours and 20 service hours every year. When representing Extension as a Master Gardener, discrimination of any kind is not acceptable.

I have read the Mississippi State University Extension policies pertaining to the Master Gardener program. I wish to become a Master Gardener in _____ County. I understand that, in exchange for training, I will volunteer at least 40 working hours to the Master Gardener program within 1 year of completing training classes. I understand that I will become a Certified Master Gardener when I complete the training and return my 40 hours of service. I understand that, in order to retain the Master Gardener designation in subsequent years, I must volunteer 20 service hours and obtain 12 learning hours annually.

Signature of applicant: _____

Printed name: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone (cell): _____ (home): _____

Email: _____ Date: _____

Signature of County Master Gardener Coordinator: _____

Mississippi State University is an equal opportunity institution. Discrimination in university employment, programs, or activities based on race, color, ethnicity, sex, pregnancy, religion, national origin, disability, age, sexual orientation, gender identity, genetic information, status as a U.S. veteran, or any other status protected by applicable law is prohibited.

For disability accommodation, please contact Jeff Wilson at jeff.wilson@msstate.edu.

SECTION EIGHT: *County Master Gardener Program Records*



This empty section provides space for your own county program records. Documentation in this section could include association minutes, project proposals, and programs.



Selected material taken from the *University of Arkansas Master Gardener Management Guide and Volunteer Handbook*, by Janet B. Carson. Published by University of Arkansas Extension Service. Used with permission.

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GARY B. JACKSON, Director