

Policies and Procedures for the Missouri Master Gardener Program

University of Missouri Extension

“The mission of the University of Missouri Extension Master Gardener volunteer program is to provide horticultural information and training to the gardening public based on proven research specific to the local climate, soils, and plants”

I Master Gardener Program and Participants

The Master Gardener volunteer program is a University of Missouri public service aimed at providing unbiased, research-based horticultural information and education. Official approved Master Gardener projects must be Extension related, educational and represent the interests of University of Missouri Extension. At no time shall there be association with commercial activity or products, or the giving of implied University endorsement to any product or place of business.

- A. The designation “University of Missouri Extension Master Gardener” is to be used exclusively by trained and certified Missouri Master Gardeners in educational programs and approved projects that provide information and answer gardening questions under the auspices of University of Missouri Extension. Identification as a Master Gardener is valid only when an individual is a participant in programs sponsored by University of Missouri Extension. Only those individuals currently certified in the program may call themselves Master Gardeners.
- B. Master Gardeners are not to advertise as Master Gardeners in their names or places of business, nor be listed as such in business advertising. Association with commercial activity or products, or the giving of implied University endorsement to any product or place of business, is a violation of Master Gardener program policies. Master Gardener training and experience may be given as qualifications when seeking employment. However, once employed, Master Gardener credentials may not be displayed.

II Master Gardener Program Structure and Definitions

The Missouri Master Gardener program is administered by the state coordinator, either through the regional coordinator where one exists, or direct to local programs. Local program coordination varies, depending on initial structure and size. Master Gardeners may be guided directly by an advisory or steering committee or through a coordinator.

A. *Master Gardener Trainee*

A Master Gardener Trainee is an individual accepted into the Master Gardener Core Course (Level I) and is currently attending classroom-training sessions and

is in the process of completing the first year volunteer requirement of at least 30 hours.

1. Acceptance as a Master Gardener Trainee is contingent upon signing the Missouri Master Gardener Exchange of Services Agreement (Appendix A) stating that the individual will complete the training program consisting of classroom instruction and volunteer hours. The Exchange of Services Agreement sets the tone for volunteer involvement in the Master Gardener program. It ensures from the outset that participants have a clear understanding of the program's goals.
2. In order for individuals to complete and sign the agreement, they must first receive orientation to the program, including a review of University of Missouri Extension policies and volunteer opportunities at the local program level. Copies of the signed agreement will be kept by the local program coordinator(s) and the trainee.
3. The Master Gardener trainee status is contingent upon signing a Missouri Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement (Appendix B) prior to beginning volunteer service. Copies of the signed contract will be kept by the State Master Gardener Coordinator, local program coordinator(s) and the trainee.

B. Certified Master Gardener

A Certified Master Gardener is an individual who has completed both the core course and the volunteer requirements.

C. Active Master Gardener

1. An Active Master Gardener must report annually at least 20 hours of volunteer service in regionally approved programs plus a recommended 6 or more additional hours of continuing education within that year (January 1st - December 31st).
2. Exceptions to these requirements may be granted for extenuating circumstances by local program coordinator, the regional coordinator or the state coordinator.

D. Inactive Master Gardener

An Inactive Master Gardener is one who has not completed their annual volunteer requirement of at least 20 hours each year and is not classified as an Emeritus Master Gardener. Inactive Master Gardeners remain as such until they complete a volunteer requirement of at least 20 hours in one calendar year. As soon as 20 hours of approved volunteer service have been recorded, the status will be changed to Active. Inactive Master Gardeners will not receive the newsletter nor be invited to special events.

E. Master Gardener Emeritus

A Master Gardener who has been an Active Master Gardener for a total of ten (10) years will be granted Emeritus status upon request to the local program coordinator, regional coordinator or to the state coordinator. There will be no

volunteer requirements. However, a Master Gardener Emeritus is encouraged to continue to participate in Master Gardener programs. He or she will receive Master Gardener mailings and may attend any continuing education programs offered to Master Gardeners.

F. *Uncertified Master Gardener*

1. An Uncertified Master Gardener is one who may no longer use the Master Gardener title or participate in Master Gardener programs and activities.
2. A Master Gardener Trainee will not be certified if they fail to complete the training course and/or annual volunteer service hours requirement within one year.
3. A Certified Master Gardener may be uncertified by the local coordinator, region coordinator or the state coordinator with concurrence of the State Advisory Board if the conditions under the volunteer agreement are not fulfilled.

G. *Master Gardener Mentor*

A Master Gardener Mentor is an Active or Emeritus Master Gardener who is paired with a Master Gardener Trainee to guide that person into a successful Master Gardener experience.

III Master Gardener Training

A. *Recruitment, Application & Selection*

1. Recruitment of Master Gardener trainees is based on a local team action plan developed from pre-planning and an established need for local Master Gardener volunteer activities.
2. Applicants to the Master Gardener Program must submit a written application, answering all questions on the form. A standardized Master Gardener application form (Appendix C) is available from the State Master Gardener Coordinator, or local programs may use their own forms.
3. All completed forms will be reviewed by the local program coordinator, the regional coordinator or the state coordinator.
4. Applications and in-person interviews may be used to determine if candidates are appropriate for the program.
5. Applicants shall be given a clear explanation of volunteer opportunities.
6. Final decisions for acceptance into the program will be made without regard to race, religion, color, age, disability, sexual orientation, military status, national origin or gender.

B. *Training Fees*

To ensure that all Master Gardeners receive the basic resources they need for the job, the State Master Gardener office requires a fee of \$45 per person for the Core Course training. For this fee the State Master Gardener office will provide:

- Enrollment into the statewide program
- Permanent name tags

- Certificates upon completion of the core course and initial volunteer requirement
1. Local training sites may need to increase the training fee if there are additional expenses for facilities, copying, mailings, press releases, refreshments, etc. Travel expenses for non-University of Missouri Extension personnel may also be offered.
 2. Copies of *Grounds for Gardening* will be available at a cost of \$45 per copy through the State Master Gardener Office, and a discount if ordered in bulk.
 3. No fee will be required of Active Master Gardeners and Master Gardeners Emeritus who attend core course sessions for review.

C. *Core Course Topics*

Core course topics shall include those contained in the core course textbook published by University of Missouri Extension. Additional topics may be included according to local coordinator, regional coordinator or state coordinator.

D. *Absenteeism*

Not more than three (3) classes can be missed from the core course. All missed classes from the Core Course must be made up. Videotapes of topics contained in the core course textbook for class make-up are available from the State Master Gardener office.

E. *Advanced Training*

An Active Master Gardener is eligible to apply for Advanced Master Gardener Training. Application, selection, course topics, examinations, absenteeism policy and hours of subsequent volunteer service for Advanced Master Gardener training will be determined by the local program coordinator, the regional coordinator or the state coordinator. No set fee is established for Advanced Master Gardener Training.

IV Volunteer Service

A. *Approved Activities*

1. The determination of what counts as an approved Master Gardener project shall be at the discretion of the local program coordinator, regional coordinator or the state coordinator. Guidelines for volunteer service are that the activity should be educational and be performed or directed by Master Gardeners who are volunteers representing University of Missouri Extension. Volunteer service shall not result in financial gain for any volunteer involved in the activity. A good rule-of-thumb for determining which activities are appropriate is a positive response to the question, "Does this activity contribute to the goals and mission of the local Extension program?"
2. Individual consultation with friends and neighbors can also be counted as volunteer time. The questions answered in this manner can save a lot of calls to the local the Extension office. Local coordinators may decide to put a limit (such as 10 hours, or a portion like 25% of the volunteer pay-back time) on

the amount of individual consultation volunteer service that qualifies.

3. An example of activity that does NOT count as volunteer Master Gardener time is that of a garden center employee being paid by her or his employer to conduct a plant clinic. Even though the employee may be an Active Master Gardener or trainee, the paid time does not qualify as volunteer service.

B. Fees and Reimbursements

Master Gardener programs may collect fees to cover program expenses and operating costs, but individuals should not be making a profit from Master Gardener activities. For example, an individual Master Gardener could collect mileage for legitimate programs, be reimbursed for supplies used in a Master Gardener project, or be reimbursed for telephone and postage related to Master Gardener programs. If honoraria (beyond mileage) are received for speaking engagements, they shall be turned over to the local Master Gardener group; otherwise, the activity does not qualify as Master Gardener volunteer service.

C. Dual Capacity

Volunteer service may be done in a dual capacity. For example, the Master Gardener may also be a member of a garden club or other civic group. As long as the Master Gardeners identify themselves as a University of Missouri Extension Master Gardener, and has the local coordinator's approval, the volunteer activities may "count" for both organizations.

V Continuing Education

The determination of what counts as continuing education for the Active Master Gardener shall be at the discretion of the local program coordinator, the regional coordinator or the state coordinator. The basic guideline is that the Master Gardener continuing education should augment and reinforce the Master Gardener core course training.

VI Reporting Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

Volunteer hours for approved programs shall be recorded by the individual and reported to the local coordinator, the regional coordinator or to the state coordinator via mail or the University of Missouri Master Gardener Web Page. Total volunteer hours for the previous year are to be received by the state office by the end of January of the current year. Regional programs shall use the method of volunteer record keeping chosen by the state for ease in data transfer and updates.

VII Master Gardener Relocation

1. Master Gardeners who have completed the Core Course training and initial volunteer requirement in Missouri are eligible to become Master Gardener volunteers in the locale of their new residency. They will be subject to the guidelines of the new locale and may be required to take additional core course

- work as required in their new locality.
2. Master Gardener trainees who have not completed their volunteer service prior to moving may be required to pass the local examination (if any) and to complete additional course work prior to becoming volunteers in their new locale.
 3. Master Gardeners moving into Missouri from another state may be required to complete the entire Master Gardener training prior to volunteering in Missouri. The determination of further training needs shall be at the discretion of the local program coordinator(s) in consultation with the State Master Gardener Coordinator.
 4. State Master Gardener office requires a fee of \$45.00 per person for Master Gardeners transferring from another state.

VIII Master Gardener Volunteer Review

Non-compliance with the signed Missouri Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement could lead to a loss in certification.

IX Volunteer Service Awards

1. If local groups wish to recognize Master Gardeners for outstanding service or contributions, they are encouraged to do so.

XI Appendices

- A. Missouri Master Gardener Exchange of Services Agreement
- B. Missouri Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement
- C. Application for Master Gardener Training

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