

ASK THE AG TEAM, for the week of February 3, 2008

Master Gardener training to be offered in Northwest Missouri –by *Tim Baker, Horticulture Specialist, University of Missouri Extension, Daviess County*

Do you have a passion for gardening? Would you like to learn more about gardening? Are you interested in volunteering your time for community betterment using your gardening skills?

University of Missouri Extension has just the opportunity for you. As a special outreach of the University, Master Gardeners have the opportunity for developing their gardening knowledge as they help others in the community.

Before someone is certified as a Master Gardener, they must undergo extensive training for 13 weeks. After an introductory class, Master Gardeners are taught for 12 consecutive weeks about all aspects of gardening. Topics include plant growth, soils, diseases, insects, fruits, vegetables, flowers, trees, and many others.

After they graduate, Master Gardeners are required to fulfill 30 hours of service to the community. That's really not too difficult. Every month, Master Gardeners meet as a group, and come up with volunteer projects to work on.

Volunteer service can include many types of projects. Many groups focus on beautification projects in their communities. Some teach gardening knowledge through speaking or writing. Youth gardening projects, and working with the elderly are good projects as well. There are many other projects that are possible, and as long as it's some type of community service, only your imagination is the limit.

Master Gardeners include adults of all ages and come from a wide variety of backgrounds. Some have extensive knowledge, and others come ready to learn. But they all have two traits in common: a love of gardening and a desire to help others.

And Master Gardening is a lot of fun as well. Our monthly meetings are an enjoyable time to get together with fellow gardeners, and learn from each other.

On March 6th, University of Missouri Extension will be starting another series of training classes. We will be meeting on Thursday evenings, from 6 to 9 PM, at several locations around Northwest Missouri. Classes will be taught by interactive television, and each location will be able to ask questions of the instructors and communicate with other training sites.

Tentative training locations include Albany, Bethany, Carrollton, Chillicothe, Gallatin, Grant City, Princeton, St. Joseph, and Trenton. The selection of final sites will depend on the number of applications received for each site.

Master Gardeners receive the complete "Grounds for Gardening" series of guide sheets from University of Missouri Extension. The cost for the training classes will be \$95. If spouses attend together, the cost for the couple will be \$165 if a second "Grounds for Gardening" is not required.

Ok, so you think the training sounds great, but you just don't have the time for volunteer work. While we really encourage participation as Master Gardeners, sometimes people realistically just don't have the time to spare. If you fall into this category, you may still take the classes. This year, the cost will be \$360 if you just want to take the classes and not become a Master Gardener.

For more information about Master Gardening, and a registration form, please call Tim Baker in Gallatin at 660-663-3232, or Tom Fowler in St. Joseph at 816-279-1691. You may also register and find more information on our web site at <http://extension.missouri.edu/nwregion/hort/>.

University of Missouri Extension programs are open to all.