



*Tennessee*<sup>SM</sup>

*MASTER GARDENER*

HELPING TENNESSEE GROW BETTER COMMUNITIES

# Official Volunteer Guidebook



THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE

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## FOREWORD

Welcome to the Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Program. You have been selected to study as a *master educator of garden knowledge* in Tennessee. The Tennessee Master Gardener Program has been serving Tennesseans with unbiased, research-based information for more than 15 years. You will be a university-trained volunteer who assists county Extension offices in providing home horticulture and environmental stewardship information throughout your county. You will become recognized as a garden expert representing and serving the University of Tennessee and your community.

This administrative guidebook is intended to provide you with tools and general information for Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers. Specific programs will vary slightly from county to county, so it is important to contact your county Extension office, Master Gardener coordinator or your county Master Gardener Association for more details.

Thank you for offering volunteer service to your community and the state. Volunteers are our most valuable allies. UT Extension could not succeed in fulfilling all of our state's educational needs in home horticulture without the help of our volunteers. On behalf of the University of Tennessee, I would like to offer you a sincere "Thank You!" for your participation, interest and financial support in this fine program.

We offer a *Special Thanks* to those individuals and county offices that helped develop this manual. Their contributions of time and materials enriched this guidebook and are greatly appreciated.

More resources are available on-line through our Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Web site, <http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

Welcome to our volunteer program. We hope that your experiences and involvement enrich your life in ways you never thought possible!

Happy gardening and never stop learning!



State Coordinator, Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Program

# *Tennessee Master Gardener Program*

## *Mission, Vision and Values*

### *Mission*

In the support of the University of Tennessee and the University of Tennessee Extension mission, the Master Gardener Program promotes environmental stewardship through a network of volunteers who provide research-based information and education to Tennessee communities in home gardening and related areas.

As part of our mission, the program supports continued education and development for committed volunteers.

### *Vision*

To provide innovative, research-based, progressive home horticulture education to all Tennessee communities.

### *Values*

***Providing*** home horticulture education in a responsive and timely manner.

***Collaborating*** with local non-profit and municipal groups to offer educational leadership for better gardening practices in area communities.

***Fostering*** a learning environment for volunteers who promote environmental stewardship while representing the University of Tennessee.

***Encouraging*** continued education and the recruitment and training of new Master Gardener Volunteers.

***Offering*** information and education to Tennessee citizens through innovative programs with creative and new approaches.

# *About the Tennessee Master Gardener Program*

## **Introduction**

The Master Gardener Program provides a group of people with extraordinary talents and abilities to serve the public. Master Gardener Volunteers host many different educational and community service projects in more than 44 counties in the state. Volunteers are trained with 40 hours of horticultural classes and, in return, volunteers give their community 40 hours of volunteer service through the Extension office. Statewide, Tennessee has approximately 1,200 active Master Gardeners.

## **Defining the Program**

The Master Gardener Program is offered by University of Tennessee Extension (UTE). It is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information across the state and improve Tennesseans' quality of life through horticulture projects. Goals are implemented through the training and utilization of local volunteers. These volunteers, known as Master Gardeners, aid Extension by running plant clinics; answering phone requests for horticultural information; establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens; working with youth, those with disabilities, the elderly and other special groups in the community; designing and implementing community involvement projects; and coordinating Master Gardener programs.

## **Program Objectives**

The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train citizens as horticultural education volunteers of University of Tennessee Extension who work with their county Extension office to expand the university's educational outreach by providing home gardeners with research-based information.

### **Objectives:**

- To expand the capabilities of University of Tennessee Extension to provide horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community.
- To develop community programs related to horticulture. Depending on the needs of the community, these programs might include landscaping improvement activities with civic groups, horticulture therapy projects with nursing homes or home demonstration gardens designed to improve access to information or low-income groups.
- To enhance 4-H programs through the establishment of 4-H horticulture/garden clubs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network that is administratively self-sufficient.
- To recruit and train volunteers interested in helping area residents solve their gardening problems by working with the residents individually or in groups, or by working on the creation of information for distribution through the news media, Web sites and direct mail.
- To recruit and train volunteers interested in working with special groups within the community, such as garden clubs, civic organizations, children, the disabled, the elderly, the confined, minorities and low-income families.
- Recruit 4-H garden club leaders from the Master Gardener volunteers.
- Identify the administrative positions necessary to maintain the Master Gardener program. Fill these positions with capable volunteers who will direct the activities of the program.

## **Official Slogan**

“Helping Tennessee Grow Better Communities”

## **Organizational Structure**

The statewide Master Gardener program is coordinated through the University of Tennessee Extension by a state coordinator. On the county level, Master Gardener programs are coordinated by the county Extension office staff, assisted by local Master Gardener organizations. Local Master Gardener organizations provide financial support, resource and program planning assistance.

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program also participates in regional and international Master Gardener conferences and committees. The state coordinator actively works with other state coordinators to develop better programs and share information.

## **Relationship to Other Programs**

Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers participate with other Extension programs (4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources), various federal agencies (Soil and Water Conservation District, NRCS), state agencies (Department of Natural Resources, Department of Ecology, etc.), county/city agencies (city parks, water quality and conservation agencies, waste management and recycling agencies, etc.) plus numerous local organizations and individuals (community garden clubs, Optimist and other service groups, schools, churches, nonprofit agencies, etc.). The scope of involvement varies by county and local Master Gardener organization. Volunteers are encouraged to function as an educational resource for each community by participating with other community programs.

## **Program Funding**

Funding for each county program comes from federal, state and county levels, in addition to the often-vital contribution of the local Master Gardener organizations. The amount of funding support from government agencies varies by county. Other funding sources could include fees for services, grants, the Tennessee Master Gardener Gift Account, private donations and bequests. Fundraising is an increasingly important role for local and state Master Gardener organizations. Donations may be accepted for the program. Tax credit may only be offered if the program is set up as a nonprofit group (See County Master Gardener Accounts).

## Official Tennessee Master Gardener Graphic

The state service mark for the official graphic is shown below. The mark may be used in either black, dark green or beige. It is available for download in a variety of formats from <http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>.

County graphics may be used to represent programs and projects within that county only. The state graphic may be adopted for county representation if desired.



## State Servicemark

In addition to the above graphic, the University of Tennessee also owns the marks “Tennessee Master Gardener” and “Tennessee Master Gardeners: Helping Tennessee Grow Better Communities” and the phrase “Master Gardener” when used in Tennessee. The use of the Tennessee Master Gardener graphic or any of the above service marks on letterhead, Web sites or banners should include the “service mark” symbol [SM]. These marks are owned by the University of Tennessee and may only be used for official Master Gardener purposes.

## **About University of Tennessee Extension**

*(From the Web site of UTE)*



University of Tennessee Extension (UTE) is one of four units of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture: the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Agricultural Experiment Station and UT Extension. Extension works with local governments, community leaders, families and individuals to address problems and issues that help improve people's lives.

Established by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, UT Extension is the off-campus educational unit of the UT Institute of Agriculture. It is a statewide educational organization, funded by federal, state and local governments, that brings research-based information about agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and resource development to the people of Tennessee where they live and work.

### **Mission of University of Tennessee Extension**

The College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources, the College of Veterinary Medicine, the Agricultural Experiment Station and UT Extension, collectively known as the Institute of Agriculture, provide instruction, research and public service in agriculture and related areas to students, producers and consumers in Tennessee and secondarily to the region, nation and world. The Institute contributes to improving Tennesseans' quality of life, increasing agricultural productivity and income, protecting the environment, promoting the economic well-being of families and conserving natural resources for all Tennesseans. The clientele served includes students, farmers, homemakers, 4-H and other youth, agribusiness, state and federal governmental agencies, consumers and the general public.

The Institute fulfills its responsibilities through the following:

- Providing comprehensive, high-quality, undergraduate, graduate and veterinary medicine degree programs that will qualify its graduates to compete for employment at the national level.
- Attracting and maintaining a uniquely qualified and nationally recognized teaching and research faculty.
- Providing up-to-date curricula and teaching methods appropriate to meet student and societal needs that are consistent with the goals of life-long learning, ethics and leadership.
- Maintaining a strong basic and applied research program to support all segments of agriculture, and placing additional emphases upon critical issues, including water quality, food safety, environmental concerns and animal reproduction programs.
- Providing the resources to maintain and enhance the specialized teaching, primary research and clinical opportunities of the College of Veterinary Medicine.
- Providing a state-of-the-art educational program using basic and applied research in agriculture, family and consumer sciences, resource development and 4-H programs throughout Tennessee.
- As it pursues all activities in support of its mission, the university is committed to Affirmative Action and other programs that contribute to cultural and ethnic diversity of the Institute.

UT Extension has an outreach campus in each county and functions as the outreach division of the University of Tennessee. Extension faculty and staff are engaged in a broad range of educational programs in agriculture, resource development, nutrition, health, family issues, lawn and garden, and youth development.

Because Extension emphasizes helping people improve their livelihood where they are located, most Tennesseans have contact with Extension through their local county agents, found in each of Tennessee's 95 counties. Extension agents are supported by area and state faculty, as well as by the educational and research resources and activities of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 74 land-grant universities and 3,150 county units throughout the nation. The stated mission of the system is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge to address issues and needs.

Funding for University of Tennessee Extension is provided by:

- State of Tennessee
- 95 Tennessee counties
- United States Department of Agriculture
- Grants and contracts (from both the public and private sectors).

## **Relationship of UT Extension to the Master Gardener Program**

*Within Extension:* The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is part of an outreach program from the Department of Plant Sciences in Urban Horticulture. Master Gardener volunteers educate homeowners and those with non-commercial, garden-related needs. The UTE faculty provides education and assistance to the commercial green industry.

*County:* The Master Gardener program is one of many programs directed by UTE staff through county Extension offices. County support will be visible to volunteers because county governments typically provide substantial funding for support staff, operating expenses, equipment and office space. In response to this support, county Extension offices design their programs to respond to counties' concerns and issues.

*Region:* There are three regional offices for Tennessee Extension: Western, Central and Eastern. Each county office program (4-H, MG) is supported by a regional Extension program director. To find out which UT Extension Region your county is in, visit <http://www.utextension.utk.edu/offices/default.asp>

*State:* The Master Gardener program is one of the many "Agriculture and Natural Resources" (ANR) programs from the University of Tennessee. The current state coordinator is also the urban horticulture area specialist, who reports to the department head of the Plant Sciences Department, the deans of University of Tennessee Extension and the Vice President of the Institute of Agriculture. Salaries for Extension specialists come from the Department of Plant Sciences and the Institute of Agriculture.

*National:* University of Tennessee Extension, and thus the Master Gardener Program, fall under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Agriculture. As representatives of Extension and the University of Tennessee, volunteers must follow federal guidelines and cooperate with reporting diversity information as they serve the public.

Master Gardeners are volunteers, not employees, of The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture. They represent an extraordinary example of land-grant college outreach as they serve their communities, state and country.

## **Why Was the Master Gardener Program Formed?**

The Washington State University Cooperative Extension Service started the Master Gardener Program in 1973. The concept of the Master Gardener Program actually was conceived by an Extension agent.

In the early '70s, there was a renewed interest in gardening. Everyone was cultivating and experimenting with more diverse plants and garden techniques than the traditional vegetables and window-box geraniums. In 1972, David Gibby, an agent in Seattle, Washington, would often arrive at work to find 100 or so messages from home gardeners in addition to his workload. He asked several other agents to brainstorm and help him find a way to meet the needs of these vast numbers of new home gardeners. They came up with an idea of recruiting volunteers who would be trained by specialists, and in return help Extension provide gardening information to the public.

In the fall of 1972, the name Master Gardener was chosen for the new program. An article in a local magazine launched recruiting efforts. Many questioned whether or not people would donate their time, but the response was incredibly overwhelming. Out of 300 applicants, 120 were selected to receive training. Master Gardener training began in January 1973. Enthusiasm to interact with the public was so great that 50 of those Master Gardeners continued with more personal communication training.

The initial focus of the MG program was for volunteers to take the Extension office to the people. Plant clinics were developed for problem diagnoses and to offer solutions. These techniques are still being used today.

The MG program has been a success from the start. Master Gardeners become well-trained horticulturists. It has been documented that Master Gardeners have “improved self-worth, confidence, and decision making abilities.” (*Source: The Washington State University Master Gardener Program: Cultivating Plants, People, and Communities for 25 Years. By Van Bobbitt*)

## **The Value of the Master Gardener Program**

The value of a Tennessee Master Gardener is in urban areas, but is extremely useful in smaller towns. Often, Extension agents' areas of expertise are in areas of agriculture other than horticulture. Master Gardeners provide the experience and knowledge necessary to provide information addressing the needs and interests of Tennesseans. Now there are more than 44 counties with certified active Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers.

On average, 1,200 Master Gardeners are trained every year in Tennessee. That's 48,000 *volunteer* hours per year! And the value of that volunteer time to the state is \$960,000! (Source: U.S. average hourly volunteer time rate \$20 per hour, prepared by Sandy Scott for the National & Community Service, February 19, 2004, “New Report Details Volunteer Management Capacity at U.S. Charities and Congregations, and Potential Enhancements.”)

## **Program Importance**

**What Is the Extension-Volunteer Connection?** The value of volunteers' contributions to UTE is tremendous. Volunteers helped create the original Agricultural Extension Service in the early 1900s, and today continue to guide its growth and development. Through volunteer efforts today, University of Tennessee Extension achieves stronger, more relevant programs and greater community visibility, thereby reaching more people and enhancing consumer confidence.

**What Is the Master Gardener Volunteer Program?** It is a prescribed instructional program designed to train selected volunteer personnel in home horticulture. In exchange, volunteer interns provide 40 hours,

or five days, of volunteer Extension work under the supervision of a local Extension agent sponsoring the Master Gardener program.

## **Criteria for Master Gardener Volunteers**

There are three levels of volunteers in this program:

***Intern Master Gardener Volunteer*** – participating in the 40 hours of training from UTE, and beginning 40 hours\* of initial volunteer service and eight TMG Continued Education Units\*\*.

***Certified Master Gardener Volunteer*** – has passed the tests during class and completed the 40-hour\* commitment of volunteer service and eight continued education units (CEU), or an individual who recertifies by maintaining 25 hours of volunteer service plus eight CEUs annually.

***Master Gardener Volunteer, VIP*** – a Certified Master Gardener who has remained with the volunteer program for a minimum of three years, and/or has provided exceptional service for the program's mission. Master Gardener VIPs are eligible for advanced Master Gardener training.

\* Hours will not count unless they have been reported to the TMG Web site database, record keeper or the county Extension office.

\*\* See following section on Continued Education, Advanced and Educator Training)

## **Volunteer Status:**

***Active Status*** – the Master Gardener Volunteer certificate is valid for one year. Advanced training and re-certification are available for those wishing to continue. Continued volunteer support beyond the first year is our goal. Re-certification for volunteers who wish to maintain active status and recertify should include an annual minimum of 25 hours\* recommended volunteer service and eight CEUs. Active Master Gardener cards may be given to Master Gardeners who have completed the requirements.

***Inactive Status*** – Master Gardener volunteers may join this category if they are unable to complete the above annual requirements, but would like the opportunity to return to active service in the future. An Inactive Status Form must be completed for Extension agent approval. This request is valid for one year. This time on leave of absence will not count toward VIP or Lifetime Status.

***Lifetime Status*** – available to Certified Master Gardeners who have provided 10 years of continuous active service to the program. Lifetime status does not require annual recertification. Program participation is still greatly appreciated and recognized. To be eligible for lifetime status, records of service must be accurate for recommendation and approval by the appropriate Extension agent. All records must be in line with the guidelines of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.

***Out-of-State*** – Accepting Certified Master Gardener volunteers from other states is encouraged using the following criteria.

- Volunteers must provide proof of enrollment in an out-of-state program: either a letter from their former Master Gardener coordinator or their certificate.
- Volunteers must audit the Tennessee Master Gardener Course where work is performed. No cost is required, except the registration fee, which includes the handbook. Fees/donations may be required for local group membership.
- Volunteers are allowed to miss a maximum of two classes.
- Volunteers are exempt from taking class exams.
- Volunteers must volunteer a minimum of 25 hours of recommended volunteer service activities within one year of Master Gardener course.

- Upon completing these requirements, out-of-state Master Gardener volunteers receive Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Certificate and may purchase a Tennessee Master Gardener name badge at a cost of \$7.

### **Master Gardener Awards:**

**Hour Leaders** – Master Gardeners who have given an extraordinary number of hours in one year. County groups determine the number of achievement hours.

**Five-Year** – Master Gardeners who have provided five continuous years of active service.

**Lifetime Status** – 10 years of continuous service (see above).

**Honorary Master Gardener** – An award given to those individuals who have shown overwhelming support for the program but have not been through the program. Honorary Master Gardeners have no voting rights – the use of this title is strictly for symbolic purposes. The title “Honorary Master Gardener” and may not be used for personal gain.

### **Continued Education, Advanced Training and Educators**

Master Gardeners are encouraged to continue learning new horticulture-related information. **Eight hours** of personal **TMG Continued Education Units (CEUs)** are required for annual recertification. TMG CEUs are earned by attending educational programming approved by the county Master Gardener coordinator. Examples of CEUs: lectures or field days sponsored by UT Extension, Master Gardener training class, botanical garden lectures, Wildlife Resource Agency education programs, other state Extension programs, etc. Continued education requirements may be increased by the county if necessary. *Travel time to CEU opportunities does not count toward earned volunteer hour requirements Mileage to CEU opportunities will be tax deductible at the current IRS rate.*

**Advanced Master Gardener Training** is available to those *Certified Master Gardeners* who have earned *VIP* status. Advanced training is sponsored by the Tennessee Master Gardener Program and may be coordinated with surrounding state Master Gardener groups. Advanced training should be pursued if one desires to *learn in-depth information in a specific area planned to share with a community*. Master Gardeners with advanced training may be asked to help teach local Master Gardener training programs.

**Master Gardener Educators** are *Certified VIP Master Gardeners selected by their county or district to teach core curriculum courses for local Master Gardener Training programs in their district or area*. Master Gardener educators are vital to teaching the Master Gardener Program and offering new Master Gardeners core curriculum subjects. Educators must complete an application and have county Extension agent approval for training (see Web site). Training may be sponsored by the county or district to support area Master Gardener training programs. One applicant will be selected from each county for a specified discipline. Depending on interests, interviews may be part of the application process.

Educator training is an in-depth educational session on subjects from the training program. Specialists provide Master Gardener educators and Extension agents subject content and teaching methodologies of specific curriculum topics. Educators will be required to teach these subjects to their surrounding area Master Gardener intern trainings.

### **Requirements For Certification**

Upon acceptance into the Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program, volunteers are designated as Intern Master Gardener Volunteers. To become a Certified Master Gardener Volunteer, interns must:

***Complete the Master Gardener Volunteer Training Course:***

Attendance is required for all class meetings, with no more than two excused absences or 80 percent of the classes (excused absences can be made up under the direction of the Extension agent). Completion of course exams with an average passing score is required for certification.

***Complete the Internship Volunteer Service Hours:***

MG interns must complete and document a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service activities within one year of the date of their training. Extension agents will help facilitate this process. Documentation should be filed through the Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Service Report. Hours will not count unless they have been reported to the record keeper or the county Extension office.

***Sign the Tennessee Master Gardener Program Memorandum of Agreement:***

This Memorandum of Agreement will be kept on file at the county Extension office or on the password-protected TMG Web site titled "Master Gardener Resources." Web site address:

<http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

**Recertification and Continued Volunteer Service**

Each year after initial certification, Certified MG Volunteers must complete a minimum of 25 hours of volunteer service activities sponsored by a local MG coordinator, sign the annual *Memorandum of Agreement* (available through online Volunteer Service Report, hardcopies from the county Extension office or downloadable from Web site), and complete eight hours of personal continuing education units (CEUs). Reports should be neatly filed and organized on a Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Service Report (See Web site password-protected area "Master Gardener Resources"). The Master Gardener Program reporting year runs from **October 1 to September 30** for Extension annual reporting purposes. Hours and volunteer status can be checked by the Extension agent and updated throughout the year.

Master Gardeners must submit Volunteer Service Reports to the Extension agent, record keeper or online by **October 1 annually**. Extension agents may print an Annual Agent's Report on their Master Gardener Program from the TMG Web site.

Master Gardeners who have been inactive for a period of time are encouraged to participate in Master Gardener program activities and volunteer their expertise whenever possible. Activation will occur with recorded hours returned to the record keeper or the county Extension office.

**Inactive Master Gardeners will have until this deadline to rejoin with clemency of inactivity. Former MGs will be required to turn in recertification hours and CEUs annually to reinstate with the Master Gardener title. Inactive time will not count toward statuses.**

**Volunteer Service Hours**

Hours are important in providing the state and federal government data about the Master Gardener Program's impact, progress and needs. There are three categories of volunteer hours in the Master Gardener Program; all are of equal importance in running a smooth program. We refer to these hours as ACE hours: Administrative, Community and Education. Fifty percent of annual volunteer hours must meet county Master Gardener approval. Volunteer hours, CEUs and mileage should be reported on the Volunteer Service Report and turned in to your record keeper or entered online (see Web site).

Volunteer hours should reflect the time spent supporting the mission of the Master Gardener Program. The honor system is used to turn in valid hours donated to support the program's mission and each community.

The county or community's needs should determine how volunteer hours are spent. Weight may be placed

on certain types of hour categories if needed, for example: 30 percent administrative, 30 percent community and 40 percent education. The county can determine the weight of hour categories. The county may also increase continuing education hourly requirements.

**Administrative** hours are contributed while conducting organizational work for Master Gardener activities, projects, county organizations or the Extension office. Examples of administrative hours include coordinating Master Gardeners to help with the county fair, recording hours into the TMG annual report database, committee meetings and fundraising.

**Community** hours are contributed while working on Master Gardener-approved community projects that are non-educational. Examples of community hours include replanting begonias in the welcome sign planter; working at the county fair and serving as a non-educational docent at a county meeting.

**Education** hours are contributed while teaching or preparing Master Gardener or Extension educational programs, answering horticulture questions, writing articles or during office duty in the Extension office. Examples of education hours include writing newsletter articles, research for educational programs and teaching a home gardening program.

**Mileage to and from volunteer ACE service:** Mileage should be reported on your Volunteer Service Report for volunteer service hours (ACE). This report may be used to keep up with mileage to use as a deduction on tax returns. *Travel time to CEU opportunities does not count for toward volunteer hour requirements.*

## Calculating Service Hours

MG volunteers may consider reporting service hours and CEUs trivial, but the importance of this is critical to the success and continued support of the Tennessee MG Volunteer Program. Quantifying time invested in these activities and the number of people reached through our activities are important measures that demonstrate the worth of the MG Volunteer Program. Potential funding is more easily attained when significant efforts and impact can be proven. Also, the ability to successfully compete for funding is critical to our financial survival. MG volunteers should be made aware of the value in reporting their activities and time spent in service.

### Intern MG Volunteers

- Any volunteer service accepted or approved by the local MG coordinator (Extension agent in charge of the local program) counts as volunteer hours. An Extension agent may request some of the volunteer's time be spent on a specific project or type of volunteer service.
- Attendance at educational and/or association meetings counts as volunteer hours.
- Travel time to and from a volunteer activity counts toward volunteer hours.

### Certified MG Volunteers

- Time spent in MG business meetings counts as volunteer hours.\*
- Time spent listening to an educational speaker or topic should be counted as CEUs (Continuing Education Units). Printed certificates stating the number of CEUs are strongly recommended when organizing such events.
- Travel time to and from educational activities counts as volunteer time.

**\*NOTE:** When volunteering for leadership positions or volunteer duties, positions should be held for one year with the option to “reapply” for that duty. Volunteer duty descriptions are helpful when leading a position. It is advised that volunteers should help recruit and train replacements.

## **Reporting and Evaluation**

Evaluation is the chief tool of control, and the manager who seeks to control and direct the organization to better and more significant goals needs to use this tool. Many volunteer organizations overlook this tool because they are too busy *doing* to think of *planning*. When plans are made and implemented through the setting of concrete goals, job assignments and volunteer work, it is necessary to evaluate; to determine if anything happened and, if it did, was it planned to happen?

The evaluation procedure needs to be planned at the beginning, when the goals are set, so that data can be gathered while the program is in action. If the goal is to provide \$100,000 worth of horticultural information to the public, then the volunteers need an efficient and relatively easy system to gather the data while they are giving out the information. If the volunteers are a part of the planning and goal setting, the evaluation will make sense and volunteers will understand its importance.

Goals are not always attached to large numbers. Perhaps your county's Master Gardeners would like to serve a previously neglected segment of the community. For example, a goal might be to provide the opportunity for horticultural therapy to the members of a halfway house or to start three 4-H garden clubs.

Evaluation not only reveals the success of the program, it also furnishes evidence that the program is valuable. In explaining the program to the paid staff, the community or the volunteers, hard figures that reveal the amount of money saved by the citizens, the number of people seeking and receiving service or the special population served present a convincing case for continuation and support. Future planning can also benefit from evaluation of previous programs.

Evaluation should be meaningful. Measure the ways your goals were achieved. Evaluations must be timely. Some events need to have rapid reporting, while others should be assessed after a given time (i.e., 6-12 months).

## **Annual Report**

Each county needs to complete an online report of activities. This report should be completed at the end of each designated reporting year (October 1). It should be completed by a Master Gardener record keeper or the individual Master Gardener and then reviewed by the Extension agent. The report form is on the Web site. Extension agents will be the only personnel with access to print an annual report.

## **How Can Master Gardener Volunteers Be Utilized?**

The Master Gardener program attracts a diverse group of clientele: young; old; male; female; and people from various racial, economic, educational and geographic backgrounds. A varied mix of volunteers indicates a good representation of Extension in the community but it also makes administration of the program a greater challenge, especially when it comes to putting volunteers to work. Volunteer work should be assigned only after a personal conference with each trainee to review of his/her application to determine interests, skills and abilities. (See Appendix: Suggestions for Master Gardener Volunteer Duties.)

## **Recommended MG Volunteer Service Activities**

The following activities are by no means a complete list, but instead are examples to give a better understanding of how the Master Gardener Program operates. Any questions should be directed to the local MG coordinator (Extension agent). Activities and projects may be managed by committee.

(40 hours required of Intern MG Volunteers within the first year)  
(25 hours per year requested of Certified MG Volunteers)

### **Extension Office Work**

- Answering home gardening and pest management phone calls and helping visitors at the county Extension office.
- Compiling mail-outs; organizing Extension newsletters and phone schedules for Master Gardener Program.
- Organizing reference materials, publications and files for Master Gardeners to disseminate.
- Accepting plant, disease, insect or soil samples for the Extension office.
- Helping the Extension office with educational programs.

### **Record Keeper**

- Managing and requesting hours from volunteers. Hours are important in providing data to the state and federal government about the Master Gardener Program's impact, progress and needs.
- Assisting the Extension agent with compiling volunteer service hours for all Master Gardeners in the county; entering hours into the TMG Web site database. The Extension agent will generate final reports.

### **Social & Special Events**

- Coordinating or assisting with home and garden shows, county fairs, gardening information booths, problem diagnostic clinics, etc.
- Picking up or delivering supplies for programs, plant clinics, exhibits, seminars, conferences or other Master Gardener functions.
- Preparing displays, posters, advertisements or any artwork that benefits or represents the Master Gardener Volunteer program or UT Extension.
- Serving as special events coordinator.
- Organizing field trips.

### **Journalism**

- Writing articles for the local association newsletter.
- Photographing events and projects.
- Writing news articles (must be approved by county Extension agent prior to release).
- Serving as newsletter chair, communications director, publicity director or on newsletter committee.

### **Research**

- Working on research projects and reports to develop and disseminate information or seeking grants under the supervision of the county Extension agent.

### **Community Projects**

- Serving as a project coordinator/chair.
- Serving as MG group liaison (coordinating cooperative programs with other agencies).
- Example projects to participate in: Plant-a-row for the Hungry, Habitat for Humanity, county fair and community beautification projects.

### **Scrapbook/History**

- Collecting articles and photos of the Master Gardener activities in the newspaper and other media.
- Recording the history of the group.

### **Presentations and Programs**

- Organizing, researching, planning and presenting programs/classes to civic or garden clubs, schools, Master Gardener classes or meetings, conferences, botanical gardens, community colleges, etc.
- Serving as a speaker's bureau coordinator or program director.

## **Master Gardener Volunteer Training Classes**

- Assisting with assembly of written materials and handouts, equipment setup, refreshments, test grading, etc.
- Serving as class coordinator.
- Serving on a selection committee to screen applications.
- Organizing a Mentor Program (Bud Sprout).

## **What's Up Network Contact**

- Receiving and disseminating information provided by the state Master Gardener coordinator and the county Master Gardener coordinator and distributing to the county Master Gardener group.

## **Leadership Roles**

Specific leadership roles:

- *Extension Office Liaison*: Coordinating volunteers for office and phone duties, orienting new Master Gardeners to the Extension office staff and resources.
- *Officers*: Serving in any office, leadership function or committees on the local or state level of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Examples: TMG Board members and committee members, local association officers and committee members including historian, parliamentarian, refreshments coordinator, awards coordinator, etc. Organization and structure of executive committee will vary from county to county. [See Basic Bylaw Structure on Web site]

## **Youth Gardening Activities**

- Assist classroom teachers with gardening projects, school gardens or landscapes (involving students).
- 4-H youth activities (including judging projects).
- Mentor a Junior Master Gardener program in a county.

## **Official Tennessee Master Gardener Web site**

<http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

The purpose of the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site is to increase communication between the state office and Master Gardeners. Some specific uses will be to provide resources and support materials, and to report database, recruitment and featured county projects. Master Gardener resources will be password protected from the general public. Resources include a message board to share information with other Master Gardeners around the state, general forms and the reporting database. Master Gardeners will be able to submit their own hours and mileage or have hours entered by the record keeper. Agent resources will also be password protected. Agents will have access to forms and will have the only access to generate county Master Gardener reports at the end of the "Master Gardener Year" (October 1). See appendix for online registration directions.

## **Use of the Master Gardener Volunteer Title**

The title of Master Gardener Volunteer is to be used solely within the framework of UTE. MG volunteers should identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid, public service under the direction of the local MG volunteer coordinator. Volunteers may not wear their name badges while at work or being paid for service. MG volunteers may not advertise their place of business during Extension-sponsored activities. MG volunteers may not use their honorary title on business cards or other types of business advertisements. UTE is a source of unbiased, research-based information. It is important that no one associated with the Extension System, including MG volunteers, gives the appearance of being involved in a commercial activity, has association with commercial products or gives implied Extension endorsement of any product or place of business while involved in UTE activities. Violation of this policy may result in an immediate withdrawal of privileges.

## **Pesticide Recommendations**

When making recommendations that include the use of pesticides, Tennessee Master Gardeners must follow current recommendations found in the various publications available from the University of Tennessee Extension. Use of other pesticide recommendations, chemical or “organic,” is not approved. When making pesticide recommendations, if more than one product is listed as satisfactory, each product should be recommended. Cultural problems and soil additives that are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations and publications should be recommended only after consultation with the county Extension agent or specialist. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest management on such crops are always referred to local county Extension personnel.

## **Dismissal of a Master Gardener Volunteer**

Repeated and consistent disregard for the policies and guidelines established by UTE and the Master Gardener Volunteer Program are grounds for dismissal of a volunteer. When the local MG volunteer coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, he/she will be informed in writing of the termination of his/her status. This notice of dismissal will be added to the volunteer’s file.

## **Tennessee Master Gardener Program Advocacy Board**

The State Master Gardener Program coordinator formed the Tennessee Master Gardener Program Advocacy Board 2004. The Advocacy Board is a state Extension program committee created to include representation by all facets of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. It is made up of three county Extension agents (who are local Master Gardener Program coordinators representing each region) and one Extension agent alternate, six certified Master Gardeners and three alternates who have served as volunteers and been active in their local MG programs, one state Extension specialist who has worked with the MG Program and the state Master Gardener coordinator who serves as a facilitator of this committee. (See application on Web site.)

The Master Gardener Program Advocacy Board is charged with the following tasks:

- Establish program policies.
- Define relationships between University of Tennessee Extension and Master Gardener volunteers.
- Work with the state MG Program coordinator to identify and develop new program information and materials, and revise existing program information as needed.
- Set goals, objectives and action plans for obtaining goals for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.
- Evaluate and give oversight to the growth and development of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program as we seek to accomplish its mission and purpose relative to University of Tennessee Extension, Master Gardener volunteers, communities and individual Tennesseans.

We need members who are interested and committed to doing the work required of this committee and who can attend the necessary meetings. Positions require a two-year term of service, with members rotating off in alternate years. If you are interested in serving, please review and complete the criteria and commitment on the application for Tennessee Master Gardener State Advocacy Board. The Advocacy Board will meet twice a year; additional meetings will be determined by the state coordinator and the TMGAB.

## **Tennessee Master Gardener State Conference**

This is an annual event hosted in rotation by different county groups with the support of the state Master Gardener Program. The state conference functions as an enriching educational conference for Master Gardeners to expand their horticultural and volunteering knowledge base. Fellowship of different county groups is encouraged to stimulate ideas for better programming to meet the objectives of the Master Gardener mission.

To host a state conference, the Master Gardener must submit an application to the State TMG Advocacy Board and the state Master Gardener coordinator. The group must be willing to organize and support the event. Educational resources will be available to the conference through UTE and the state Master Gardener Program.

### **Tennessee Master Gardener Foundation**

All donations to the University may be directed toward a specific program. The TMG Foundation Gift fund was developed to support the TMG program. Gift funds will be used specifically to support development of intern training programs, advanced training and educator opportunities, and other TMG events. If you are interested in offering financial support for the TMG program, please contact Beth Babbit (865-974-7324) [ebabbit@utk.edu](mailto:ebabbit@utk.edu) or Rhodes Logan [rlogan@utk.edu](mailto:rlogan@utk.edu) for more information. Master Gardener county groups may support the foundation through county and state fundraisers, plant sales and purchasing Master Gardener items from the Tennessee Master Gardener Web store at <http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

### **Junior Master Gardener™**

Junior Master Gardener™ is a national youth gardening educational program created by Texas A&M University. JMG clubs or camps create learning opportunities for kids to learn more about gardening, nature, health and the environment. The University of Tennessee is a state sponsor for the JMG program. Local leadership for the JMG program can be shared with the 4-H program in the county or as an independent Master Gardener educational project. JMG programs can have many different forms to fit the needs of a community. Tennessee counties have used the JMG curriculum for summer camps, after school clubs or home schooling groups. For more information about starting a registered JMG group, visit the JMG Web site [www.jmg.org](http://www.jmg.org) or contact your state Master Gardener coordinator. Curriculum and workbooks may be purchased on the JMG Web site.

### **Role of Local Master Gardener Organizations**

UT Extension encourages the formation of local Master Gardener associations to maintain an organized relationship with the volunteers who support the missions of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program and UTE. The local MG coordinator will serve as an advisor to the local MG association. UTE supports the mission, vision and values of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program, and provides additional continuing education to Master Gardener volunteers. All certified MG volunteers, regardless of affiliation with local Master Gardener groups and associations, represent the mission and policies of University of Tennessee Extension.

The Master Gardener program is a volunteer organization. As with most volunteer organizations, individuals are expected to work amicably together in accomplishing the mission and goals of the program. If conflicts arise between an individual and the local organization, disputes should be settled within the organization by good faith discussion (with *all* involved parties) keeping the goal of resolving the dispute in mind. Extension personnel may be consulted only after discussions have failed. Extension personnel may resolve the issues according to the mission and policies governing the university.

Local associations must register with the state program; individuals must sign an annual Memorandum of Agreement and register as volunteer leaders (see Web site). The Tennessee Master Gardener Program advocates the use of *Robert's Rules of Order* to facilitate effective meetings and suggests that bylaws should reflect this policy. A skeleton structure of suggested bylaws is available on the TMG Web site. They may be adopted and embellished. However, the bylaw structures indicate the TMG program's standards and are *minimum requirements that may not be decreased or compromised* (i.e., minimum hours for certification 40 + 8 CEU = certification, 25 + 8 CEU = recertification, in addition to signed Memorandum of Agreement and volunteer liability forms).

County organizations are community units supported by University of Tennessee Extension and the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, offering educational programs, assistance and materials to all people without regard to race, color, national origin, age, sex, religion, veteran status or disability.

## **County Master Gardener Accounts**

County Master Gardener groups need a way to receive money from plant sales, donations of unsolicited money from speaking engagements, grants or scholarships for projects, etc. that support educational programs and projects in the community. There are two options: 1) Outside Master Gardener Association account or 2) Extension Master Gardener account.

1) Outside Master Gardener accounts give the association more freedom to raise and spend money. However, the associations will be responsible for all tax records and money handling. Nonprofit status would not be available unless the association independently acquired 501(c)3 status (or other nonprofit status).

2) County Master Gardener Programs may set up a special restricted “R” account through the Extension offices and the state. This account would allow programs to use UT’s nonprofit status. Donations would be specifically marked for that county’s Master Gardener Program. Gift credits and endowments could be also accepted and marked for county programs. Donors would be eligible for UT donor benefits. Fees (i.e., annual dues) may not be placed in a restricted “R” account – only “donations.” Funds in a UTE account would be spent according to Extension’s policy and procedures.

To start a Master Gardener “R” account in a county: discuss options with the county director and contact the state Master Gardener coordinator to begin paperwork. A check for \$500 (minimum) will open your county MG account with a \$500 balance.

\*\*Please discuss this option with the Extension agent, county director and state Master Gardener coordinator.

## **Fundraising and Accepting Fees**

Seeking both in-kind or cash donations and bequests, grant writing, plant sales and auctions are examples of fundraising to support the Tennessee Master Gardener Program at the state or county level. Volunteers are encouraged to learn about donation options and participate in fundraising events. They should also inform donors of giving options through the Tennessee Master Gardener Foundation Fund. Contact the state Master Gardener coordinator for more information.

Fees acquired while conducting volunteer services should be donated to the program. An individual may not keep fees. If mileage is paid, mileage may not be reported on the Volunteer Service Report.

## **Promotion and Public Relations**

Promotion of the Master Gardener program is essential to creating a thriving organization. Promotion and public relations will affect how a county Master Gardener group grows, what projects it takes on, how these projects are funded and who in the community benefits from these projects. Projects and accomplishments of the Master Gardeners should be promoted regularly to increase interest in and respect for the program.

It is important to keep in mind the goals of the Master Gardener Program when promoting it. These goals are to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve Tennesseans’ quality of life with horticultural projects. Master Gardeners should highlight ways in which they have met these goals when promoting the program.

The association between the University of Tennessee and the Master Gardener program often lends respect to the program. At the same time, the Master Gardener Program and its members are a reflection of the University of Tennessee, the Institute of Agriculture and are the liaison between Extension and the community. When promoting the Master Gardener Program, UT Extension should always be acknowledged for coordinating the program and Master Gardeners should strive to represent the University of Tennessee well.

Promotion of the Master Gardener program can benefit Master Gardeners in several ways. First, promotion will serve as one of the main recruitment strategies. Expanding the Master Gardener Program and attracting new members are important to creating a thriving and vital organization. By constantly making the public aware of Master Gardener projects and events, individuals with an interest in public service and gardening will learn about and be more likely to apply to the program.

Promotion will also assist in developing resources for the program. With increased public awareness, other groups become interested and willing to work with Master Gardeners toward common goals. County government, community businesses and organizations may be more willing to assist Master Gardeners with supplies, services and funding if they have an understanding of Master Gardener activities. Promotion and marketing of Master Gardener activities also offer a perfect opportunity to publicly recognize supporters. This strengthens the Master Gardeners' relationship with the community. A suggestion for promotion is to send a copy of newsletters and educational flyers to county and city government figures and officials. Local and state governments appropriate funding to Extension programs like Master Gardener.

Finally, promotion of the Master Gardener program can help accomplish the goal of increasing the availability of horticultural information in the community. Master Gardener activity that is open to or visible to the public is a form of promotion. Master Gardeners can use the media to distribute horticultural information through newsletters, seminars, radio programs, fair booths, personal contacts and news releases to the local media. Some tips for preparing news releases are available on the MG Web site. (See Appendix section "Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers.")

# APPENDIX

## Suggestions for Master Gardener Volunteer Duties

These duties can be used in the application for creating a MG volunteer database.

- Assist in the planning and/or conducting of programs on home gardening and landscaping topics for the general public (Library Lecture series, Gardening 101 – classes for individuals not seeking to become Master Gardener Volunteers).
- Answer telephone requests for horticultural information – start a hotline!
- Assist with plant clinics and home gardening information booths at malls, fairs, garden centers, botanical gardens, etc.
- Plan and conduct educational tours or garden demonstrations.
- Give programs for local garden clubs and other community groups.
- Create future programs based on community requests – slides or PowerPoint®.
- Work on horticulture projects with charitable organizations, health care facilities and assisted living residences.\*
- Work with park, school and playground committees.\*
- Establish community gardens.
- Work with 4-H programs like Junior Master Gardeners or other UT Extension programs.
- Establish and maintain demonstration gardens, compost demonstration, recycling and other environmental projects.
- Organize a horticultural newsletter, or write articles for it.
- **Assist with implementation of future Master Gardener classes.**

[\* This is not a free labor program. Master Gardener Volunteers are educators, advisors and helpers. Always make a primary inquiry with the requesting organization or facility to investigate its commitment to a project's future. [See Project Request Form.]

## County Contacts: What's Up Network

Increasing postal costs, time-sensitive material and the availability of Internet services to more people have made e-mail contact the method of choice for many Master Gardener communications. Each county Master Gardener Program should designate the e-mail contacts in their group. Program information will be sent to the county Extension office and the "What's Up Network" county contact(s). County contacts should develop a plan for sharing information with the rest of the program members in a timely manner. This may include forwarding the message to all Internet-connected members and developing a phone tree for those without email.

## Volunteer Projects

One of the main purposes of the Master Gardener program is to work on community betterment projects. Project work is often one of the most rewarding parts of being a Master Gardener. Before agreeing to take on a project, Master Gardeners should evaluate the usefulness of the project and determine if the organization has enough time to devote to the project.

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. A Master Gardener program can quickly get a "bad name" if its projects are not well done or if commitments are not followed.

Following are some guidelines for sanctioning Master Gardener projects, along with some forms and sample letters that may be used in the process. We have divided this process into three steps: 1. the proposal, 2. acceptance or rejection, and 3. evaluation. Try always to be fair when choosing projects and realize the limitations of your organization.

County-sanctioned projects are those that have been approved by the Master Gardener organization through a specific proposal procedure such as the one suggested in 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, working in the Extension office, etc.

Annually review sanctioned projects for meaning. Make sure that the projects provide enough work for all members to meet their “work hour” requirements. The work will be more rewarding if members feel they are instrumental in the success of a worthwhile project. Be sure there is as much variety as possible in project assignments. Allow members to change projects to maintain interest. Share ideas! Think of additional ways members can gain hours if they are unable to fulfill regular requirements. (See the MG Web site for Project Request and Project Evaluation forms)

Most Master Gardener beautification projects should be a partnership between the Master Gardeners and the community. For this reason, it is recommended that beautification 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 of the project.

### **Project Guidelines**

- Appoint a Project Review Committee.
- Identify areas within your community that need the “Master Gardener Touch.”
- Master Gardeners should avoid funding beautification projects, unless they are for county Extension offices or places Master Gardeners meet frequently.
- Select enough projects to insure that membership working hours are met.
- It is recommended that most projects be “ongoing” to maintain Master Gardener recognition.
- 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 his/her hours worked on projects. Travel time to or from projects or when picking up project supplies can count as work hours.
- A minimum of 50 percent of required work hours must be on county-sanctioned projects.

### **Project Chair Responsibilities**

- Meet with contact person regularly to discuss needs and funding for the project.
- Schedule workdays and committee meetings as needed. Request that the phone committee call volunteers for workdays.
- Inform Extension staff of all workdays.
- The committee chair should report project status at monthly meetings.
- May apply for beautification awards, or other grants and awards (i.e., Keep Tennessee Beautiful).

### **Newsletters**

Newsletters can be a very important tool for management of the Master Gardener program. The newsletters may serve as the main form of communication between the executive committee, project committees, the county Extension agent and all other Master Gardeners. Newsletters can update those who were unable to attend the monthly meeting. They also serve as a tool to acknowledge members’ achievements, notify individuals of upcoming events, share gardening tips and advice, report accomplishments, recognize donations from other organizations or businesses and much more. However, a newsletter is only effective if members read it. Newsletters should be engaging, organized and easy to read. Newsletters can be sent via email.

Keep all members and other county programs informed by publishing a newsletter. Be as people-and-project oriented as possible. Take and publish photographs that recognize special members and projects. Be sure to include a calendar of events that includes information about major workdays, tours and educational opportunities. Provide pertinent local gardening information and list new horticulture books and articles. Below are some tips for writing good newsletters.

### **Do's**

- Do include the county Extension agent's signature and official title on all correspondence.
- Do use a uniform official letterhead with the University of Tennessee Extension logo.
- Do make sure all correspondence relates to Extension programming.
- Do include statements of appreciation for donors or sponsors without specifying the exact donation.
- Do list individuals who have won awards in Extension-sponsored contests.
- Do include prices for Extension-sponsored activities, Extension services and Extension publications.

### **Don'ts**

- Don't advertise one business or product.
- Don't advertise commercial, religious or political activities.
- Don't advertise plant sales.
- Don't include personal messages unless it is an aside to the main purpose of the correspondence.
- Don't solicit funds or advertise the sale of items for profit.
- Don't list other groups or businesses that sponsor activities or donate goods or services, although you can thank them for their support or help.

## **Recruitment and Retention of Volunteers**

The University of Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program is dependent upon volunteers. It is critical that recruitment be focused on prospective members who will complete their "working commitment" to the county. By making the program rewarding to its members, experienced volunteers will be retained for many years. Remember, diversity strengthens the group – a variety of genders, races, ages, backgrounds, etc. makes a more interesting group.

### **Brochure**

The development of a colorful, informative brochure, which describes an individual county Master Gardener Program, is a good start. Include in this brochure self-assessment questions for the prospective member aimed at volunteerism (i.e., Do you like to garden? Do you have 4-6 hours each month to volunteer to work on Master Gardener projects?)

These brochures should be placed in the county Extension office, as well as in local nurseries. If the production of a county-specific brochure is not possible, a "generic" form is available from the state Extension office that includes in it an application-to-join form.

### **Advertising**

Advertise the Master Gardener Program in every available avenue:

- Chamber of Commerce
- Newspapers
- Garden clubs
- Radio and television
- County fairs
- Neighborhood newsletters
- Senior citizens' organization

- Welcome Wagon
- Other Extension groups such as Extension Family and Community Education Clubs and 4-H Clubs.
- Consider using some of the following tools: posters, pamphlets, news releases, informational cards and copies of the Master Gardener newsletter.

Make sure the local newspaper photographer is notified of club events and special projects.

### **Members-Recruiting-Members**

Members-recruiting-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 about the Master Gardener Program to civic organizations, schools, garden clubs and church groups. Brochures should be available to all members of the audience. Visibility is the key.

### **The Interview**

Candidates who apply for admission into a Master Gardener class should be interviewed by a selection committee. This committee should include the county Extension agent 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. Volunteerism should be stressed during the interview process. The applicant should be given a clear overview of the policies and expectations of the Master Gardener Program. (See the Web site for Sample Interview Questions and Sample Evaluation.)

### **The Training**

If a county Master Gardener program and the Extension office have difficulty recruiting the necessary number of people for a training class, consider having the class every other year or share the training with another county. Training should always be facilitated through the Extension office. Master Gardeners' participation as training organizers and educators is always appreciated.

### **Mentors**

A mentoring program is recommended for each county (Bud Sprout Program – visit the Web site for more information). This process allows a Certified Master Gardener to directly interact with the new recruit on a personal level. These pairings should be made before the completion of training. The support provided should include:

- Phone calls
- Personal visits
- Invitations to meetings and workdays
- Introductions to other members
- Specific help with training

The mentoring should continue until such time that the new member feels comfortable or until work hour requirements have been met.

### **The Reward**

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
- Recognize all new VIPs with a pin\*

- Reward Master Gardeners who qualify for the Five Year pin\*
- Recognize all new members at their inaugural meeting with a party
- Select a Master Gardener of the Year or an Hour Leader
- Select a Project of the Year
- Recognize all officers and chairpersons in newsletter biographical sketches
- Honor any Master Gardener for all of his/her personal achievements

*\*Agents may order pins from the state office.*

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

### **Field Trips**

Select a field trip committee that plans and executes 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 (learning hours) when coupled with a speaker.

### **Be Friendly**

Encourage friendliness among members.

- Provide incentives for wearing name tags
- Encourage visiting among members at meetings
- Consider a “We Care Committee” to phone absentees and send cards
- Consider using a “buddy system” between project committee members
- Consider the “secret pal” concept for birthday recognition
- Promote comradeship among members by joining together to prepare for and attend state, regional and national Master Gardener functions
- BE A FAMILY!

Master Gardeners are fine, hard-working people. For more information on finding and keeping good members, call other counties to see what they do successfully. Also, seek information from the TMG Web site and use e-mail to contact county members. Make use of statewide get-togethers such as state meetings and leadership training to network, network, network.

## **Ask a Master Gardener**

*(by Joy Moore, Northeast TMG)*

A well-run plant clinic is the best possible public relations for the Master Gardener program. A MG plant clinic is Extension volunteers going into the community to provide one-on-one assistance in solving plant-related problems, giving the program a visible presence as a responsive, educational arm of Extension and a direct link to Extension capabilities. Here are some suggestions to help your Master Gardener plant clinics run smoothly and to give the best service to your clients.

Before you start the season, put together a plant clinic kit with supplies for all your plant clinics. Of course you will have to replenish your UT publications after each event, but most of the items in the kit stay intact. Remember to advertise your plant clinics and encourage people to bring in their sick plants.

### **Plant Clinic Kit**

This kit is contained in a Rubbermaid™ tote (14-gallon) so you don't have to worry about rain.

1. UT publications, including hot topics for the time of year and always lawn care publications.
2. Pest and plant problem ID book – *Southern Living Garden Problem Solver* or the Ortho™ books. You should aim toward a MG library where Master Gardeners can research questions.
3. Pad for writing questions you are unable to answer, along with client's name and phone number.
4. Pens – ball point, Sharpies.™
5. MG prescription pads. Use them to write names of plants, recommendations, UT publication numbers, Extension office phone numbers, etc. for clients to take with them. They direct people to the MG Web site and, through there, to UT publications.
6. Rubber bands, big paper clips or rocks to hold handouts when it's windy.
7. Phone numbers for area Extension offices – taped to the inside of the tote.
8. List of phone numbers of Master Gardeners who have special expertise and agree to be a resource and to take questions by phone.
9. Sheets about samples used for Distance Diagnostics.
10. Baggies for any samples people bring in.
11. Notebook (2-inch, 3-ring binder) with pencil sleeve to hold pens, etc., handily. Contents of notebook: printouts of the six Web pages listing UT publications available on line (in page protectors), a copy of any publications that are in short supply or are no longer in print. Phone number(s) for Extension office(s) in the area are taped inside the cover.
12. Banner or sign identifying your booth as a Master Gardener booth.

Also handy to have: scissors, tape, clipboard, index cards, duct tape, paper weights.

## **Guidelines for Working with the Public at Plant Clinics**

*(By Joy Moore, Northeast TMG)*

As a Tennessee Master Gardener, you are an Extension volunteer representing Extension and the University of Tennessee. You are responsible for providing the general public with accurate and useful research-based information regarding horticulture and integrated pest management. All recommendations made by Master Gardeners as Master Gardeners must be consistent with university recommendations. Only in this way is the university able to stand behind the recommendations. Everyone, of course has the right to his/her personal ideas and beliefs. It is vitally important that Master Gardeners avoid interjecting personal ideas into their official recommendations.

Identify yourself as a Master Gardener Volunteer or Master Gardener Intern when participating in events sanctioned by UT Extension. Don't forget to wear your name badge. Remember that the public has respect for you and confidence in your abilities because of your association with the University of Tennessee. They expect impartial, objective information. Your job is to help clients make informed decisions.

The most important things to remember in staffing a plant clinic are:

1. Master Gardeners should not feel they have to know all the answers; they can always research the question and get back to the client. Don't ever "fake" an answer. When stumped by a question, take down the pertinent information, research the question, talk to other Master Gardeners or Extension professionals and then call the client back with an answer. Remember, we now have Distance Diagnostics to aid clients as well.
2. MGs must always be very careful with pesticide recommendations. Pesticide recommendations must be word-for-word from UT Extension publications.
3. Do not attempt to answer questions outside of the home horticulture area. Refer questions about commercial production or from the green industry to appropriate Extension professionals.
4. Effectively communicate with clients. Listen carefully, ask questions (since the garden or plant in question is not often present) and use terms the client can understand.

Remember, no one knows everything. As a Master Gardener, you know a great deal about horticulture, but the most important thing you know is how to find the answers.

### **Pesticides and Pest Control Recommendations**

Master Gardeners know that the use of chemicals in the garden is usually a last resort. An experienced Master Gardener may suggest a non-chemical treatment if the cultural problem is one that is not specifically covered by Extension recommendations. **If they give advice that includes chemicals, however, Tennessee Master Gardeners must follow the latest UT Extension recommendations.** Master Gardeners must be very careful about chemical recommendations, because the registration and use of pesticides are governed by the United States Environmental Protection Agency. It is illegal to use a pesticide on a crop unless the crop is listed on the label. The rate of application may not be exceeded.

1. It is the client's responsibility to use pesticides safely and legally. **ALWAYS** insist that clients **READ** and **FOLLOW** pesticide label directions and remind them that it is a federal offense to use any pesticide in contradiction to the label information.

2. Help clients solve pest problems using an IPM approach. Accurate identification of the affected plant and problem is critical. **It is your job to help reduce unnecessary pesticide use by teaching clients how to examine plants, monitor for symptoms and prevent problems. Persuading clients to ignore minor pests and accept minor pest damage is also important.** Applying pesticides, especially broad-spectrum, persistent materials, is a last resort. **Pesticide recommendations should only be made from the most up-to-date University of Tennessee publications.** Do not make recommendations off the top of your head.
3. For problems not covered in UT publications, the client can be referred to popular gardening books available in libraries and bookstores.
4. Your own experiences will be of great value to you in dealing with the public. Perhaps you have successfully repelled an insect pest with a homemade repellent. It is OK to let a client know what worked for you but be careful not to represent “home remedies” as official UT recommendations.
5. Some clients will only consider organic controls. It is often helpful to explain that insecticidal soaps and oils may burn plants under some circumstances and that broad-spectrum botanical insecticides, like pyrethrum and rotenone, are potentially harmful and should be used prudently. It is important to be up-to-date on the labeling information for commonly used pesticides and knowledgeable about alternative pest control methods.

## Resources for Master Gardeners

### Books

*Dirr's Hardy Trees and Shrubs: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* by Michael A. Dirr

*Armitage's Garden Perennials: A Color Encyclopedia* by Allan M. Armitage

*The Southern Gardener's Book of Lists: The Best Plants for All Your Needs, Wants, and Whims* by Lois Trigg Chaplin

*Small Fruits in the Home Garden* by Robert E., Ph.D. Gough (Editor), E. Barclay, Ph.D. Poling (Editor)

*Insect ID Guide* like Peterson, Audubon

*Southern Living Garden Problem Solver* by Steve Bender (Editor)

*Right Plant, Right Place* by Nicola Ferguson, Fred McGourty

*Diseases of Annuals and Perennials: A Ball Guide: Identification and Control* by A. R. Chase, Margery Daughtrey, Gary W. Simone, Ball Publishing

*Color Encyclopedia of Ornamental Grasses: Sedges, Rushes, Restios, Cat-Tails, and Selected Bamboos* by Rick Darke

Vegetable gardening reference

## **Web Sites**

From the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site, you can access UT publications:

<http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu/>

Get the latest publication information from the UT Extension publications site:

<http://www.utextension.utk.edu/publications>

Find out what's new from the UT Plant Science Department:

<http://plantsciences.utk.edu>

The link below to University of Maryland Extension has an extensive collection of photos to help with diagnosis of plant problems:

<http://www.agnr.umd.edu/users/hgic/>

This is Rutgers Weed Gallery:

<http://www.rce.rutgers.edu/weeds/default.asp>

Virginia Tech's Weed Key:

<http://www.ppws.vt.edu/weedindex.htm>

Bugwood Web site:

<http://www.bugwood.org>



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**Visit the UT Extension Web Site at  
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