

The Master Gardener program began in Arkansas in 1988 and has since trained over 3,000 volunteers encompassing almost every county in the state. In return for valuable educational training, trained volunteers known as Master Gardeners give back to their communities through beautification projects, garden workshops, school garden projects, and service oriented projects such as County Fair judging. The opportunity for volunteerism in gardening is endless, and new Master Gardeners are encouraged to adopt projects specific to their own personal interests and communities.

Below are highlights of the program to inform perspective candidates, spur interest, and answer questions.

- 40 hours of educational training over the course of five days
- Topics cover a myriad of subjects such as landscaping, lawns, ornamentals, vegetables, trees, shrubs, irrigation, diseases, insects, bees, soils, and much more.
- The Master Gardener of the Delta chapter will conduct training as follows:
 - January 28, 2016 – Monticello
 - February 4, 2016 – Warren
 - February 11, 2016 – Hamburg
 - February 18, 2016 – Lake Village
 - February 25, 2016 – McGehee
- Each day of training will begin at 8:30 AM and conclude about 4 PM.
- Trainees must attend all five days of training to be certified as a Master Gardener. However, certain situations will be taken into consideration to accommodate individual circumstances.
- Once training is completed, the new Master Gardener is expected to volunteer 40 hours of service on Master Gardener related projects during the year of training.
- To maintain active Master Gardener status after the first year, the volunteer is required to volunteer 20 hours of service yearly.
- Aside from the 5 day training, monthly educational/business meetings are conducted each month. A special guest speaker will address some aspect of gardening, project reports are given, and business affairs are addressed. The monthly meetings are rotated among the five counties of Ashley, Bradley, Chicot, Desha, and Drew.
- Notification will be given by phone or email regarding upcoming meeting dates, times, and locations.
- Projects adopted by Master Gardeners are often done by a group of MG's from a given town so that the workload is shared. It also becomes a great social atmosphere.
- Trainees meet new friends who have a common passion for plants.
- You'll learn how to diagnose and treat not only your own plants, but your neighbor's as well. You will become a sought-after source of information when people find out you are a prestigious Master Gardener.

For more information contact Steven Kelley at the Drew County Extension office by email at skelley@uaex.edu or by cell phone at 870-222-7265