

INTRODUCTION

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

To consider these volunteers cheap labor, useful in handling the less-demanding parts of Extension's work overload, is inappropriate. Master Gardeners are trained to help with the work of the Extension office, yet they are not the usual employees. They are loaded with potential that must be utilized in the best way possible. When a horticultural technician is hired, horticultural knowledge is a prerequisite; a secretary must have clerical skills; a manager, proven organizational talents; but when a Master Gardener is recruited, Extension obtains horticultural skills in addition to any number of other abilities: teaching, public speaking, managing, designing, analysis, human relations, mass communication, and many other disciplines. This guide offers information and suggestions for beginning and managing a Master Gardener program successfully.

DEFINITION OF PROGRAM

The Master Gardener program is offered by the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve quality of life with horticultural projects. Goals are implemented through the training and employment of local volunteers. These volunteers, known as Master Gardeners, aid the Extension Service by running plant clinics; answering phone requests for horticultural information; establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens; working with the handicapped, the elderly, and other special groups in the community; designing and implementing community improvement projects; as well as coordinating Master Gardener programs.

OBJECTIVES OF THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

- To expand the capabilities of the Cooperative Extension Service to disseminate horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community.
- To develop community programs related to horticulture. Depending on the needs of the community, these might be landscape improvement activities with civic groups, horticultural therapy projects with nursing homes, or home demonstration gardens designed to improve conditions of minority and/or low-income groups.
- To enhance 4-H programs through the establishment of 4-H horticultural/garden clubs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network that is administratively self-sufficient.

Methods for Implementing Objectives

- Recruit and train volunteers interested in helping area residents solve their horticultural problems by working directly with the residents individually or in groups or by working on the creation of information for distribution through the news media and direct mail.
- Recruit and train volunteers interested in working with special groups within the community, such as garden clubs, civic organizations, school children, the handicapped, 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 are able to direct the activities of the program.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Does your area need a Master Gardener program? There are two groups of people immediately involved in a Master Gardener program: Extension Service employees and the volunteers who will enroll in the program. Although there may be people in your area who would like very much to have a course in horticulture offered through your office, do you need the volunteer work that would result from the program? Keep in mind that the program is designed to produce competent volunteers to aid you in the dissemination of horticultural information to the public. It is not designed to be a free course available to anyone with no obligations on the part of the recipients.

Consider these questions:

1. Is the office swamped with phone requests for horticultural information during the gardening season?
2. Could you use volunteer help answering these phone requests?
3. Is there a demand on your time to talk to garden clubs and conduct plant clinics?
4. Could you use help with publicity and information processing as they relate to horticulture?
5. Are there community needs for horticultural projects (e.g., 4-H clubs, public landscaping) going unmet for lack of trained and willing workers?
6. Would people in your area who are interested in gardening be able or willing to pay for the materials used in a Master Gardener program?

If the answer to most of the questions above is “yes”, then a Master Gardener program may be very useful in your area.

Next, write job descriptions for the volunteers. Be as specific as possible and estimate the amount of time required to accomplish each job. This task will force you to examine your goals and understand the flow of work in your office. It will also tell you if you have volunteer jobs available. The *Arkansas Master Gardener Handbook* contains a section on volunteer work that has job descriptions for 21 Master Gardeners.

Be aware that the greatest expenditure of time on your part and smallest return on competent help will occur in the first year of the program. You will be very busy organizing the program, generating the publicity, setting up the training sessions, and establishing the course material. The teaching of the course can be done entirely by you, with the aid of resource materials from the state Extension office, or you can invite qualified people from the community, nearby colleges, Extension specialists, or a mixture of these people and agents. From the very beginning of the program, the trainees must realize that this is a volunteer program and they are being trained specifically to represent the Extension Service and to help with the dissemination of information on gardening, not simply to improve their gardening skills. To help impress this point and get the program working from the beginning, there should be a trainee chosen to act as coordinator for the group. In following years, you should be able to call on previous Master Gardeners to help get the new ones started. Established programs across the country have volunteers coming back year after year so that the program becomes nearly self-sufficient.

POLICIES

This section includes statewide Master Gardener policies. Every county Master Gardener program should follow these policies. Individual counties may set additional policies as needed that apply to their county programs.

Master Gardener Title Defined

The official name is “University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener – (your county) County”. This title applies to one who has successfully completed the 40-hour training class and is actively pursuing ‘working’ hours (40) and ‘learning’ hours (20 – in addition to the training class) as part of the payback commitment the first year. To maintain the designation in subsequent years, an individual must provide 20 ‘working’ hours and accrue 20 ‘learning’ hours per year. One half of the required working hours must be in county sanctioned projects.

When to Use the Master Gardener Title

The Master Gardener name is used only while participating in Master Gardener programs and not to be used in relation to any commercial venture. When individuals cease active participation their designation as Master Gardener is void.

Master Gardeners should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Master Gardener at a place of business unless that place is designated as a Master Gardener Plant Clinic location by the local Extension unit. Master Gardeners must not use the title “Master Gardener” in any form of advertisement. Implying Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business is improper. Master Gardener is a public service program providing unbiased information, and the title “Master Gardener” is to be used only when doing unpaid volunteer work in this program.

Master Gardeners are not to accept any money for speaking before groups on horticultural subjects, although travel expenses may be reimbursed by the host group. Unsolicited monies may be donated to the Master Gardener fund. Gifts may also be accepted.

Education and experience gained by participation in the Arkansas Master Gardener program may be included as qualifications when seeking employment.

Retaining the Master Gardener Designation

The requirements for retaining the Master Gardener designation are (1) completion of 40 working hours in the Master Gardener program the first year as payback for the training course, (2) accumulation of 20 learning hours (over and above the training course) the first year, and (3) willingness to volunteer an additional 20 working hours and 20 learning hours each subsequent year.

At least one half (50%) of all required working hours must be earned by participating in official, county sanctioned Master Gardener projects. County sanctioned projects are those that have gone through a proposal procedure, been accepted by the county Master Gardener membership as one of the group's official projects, and been accepted by the county agent. The other 50% of required working hours may be used on "individual projects." Individual projects could consist of providing horticultural advice, expertise, or information to individuals requesting assistance, committee work, contributing to the newsletter, presenting a gardening program to a garden club, landscaping a church or other public area which is not an official Master Gardener project, etc. Attending the monthly county Master Gardener meeting is considered one learning hour unless conducting the meeting. Travel time is not counted as working or learning hours, but may be counted under a separate category for travel hours.

Determination of the number of learning hours to allot for various educational activities is the responsibility of the county agent. Any educational opportunities related to horticulture may be considered by the county agent toward these hours. These may include subject matter seminars in landscaping, vegetable gardening, pruning demonstrations, lawn and garden shows, field days, or attendance at the Arkansas Horticultural Society annual meeting. Activities are not limited to Extension-sponsored programs. Garden club programs, herb society programs, state park programs, and nursery-sponsored seminars will also count. Field trips to nurseries, horticultural operations such as the Fruit Substation in Clarksville, or visiting public gardens such as the St. Louis Botanical Gardens or Bellingrath Gardens can also be used to accumulate learning hours. Viewing educational T.V. programs may be counted as learning hours, based on county guidelines.

A copy of the program or an outline of the learning activity must be given to the county agent or person responsible for recording hours to assign hour value. Hours are normally based on the number of hours of instruction excluding time for lunch, breaks, or drive time.

Because all working hours are, in essence, a learning experience, a Master Gardener may choose to count some of their time working on projects as learning hours if credit is needed in that

category. However, if one works four hours on a county sanctioned landscaping project, the time may not be counted as four hours working and four hours learning. The Master Gardener should decide how many hours to allot to each category. Learning hours cannot be counted as working hours.

Research for a program that a Master Gardener is giving on a specific horticultural topic will also count as learning hours. For example, if a Master Gardener is teaching on lawn care for a garden club, the time spent researching and developing the program counts as learning hours, within limits. Usually the total preparation time is not used, so assign two to three hours for this activity. The time spent actually presenting the program would usually be considered as non-county sanctioned working hours.

The ongoing learning requirement is not meant to be difficult. It is simply a means of keeping Master Gardeners current and active. Master Gardeners have a full year to earn the 20 learning hours. Master Gardeners who find this program interesting and rewarding usually end the year with many more hours than required.

Learning hours must be accrued each year. Hours cannot be carried over for future years unless they are within a month of the new reporting year.

Members Transferring From Another State *(Revised 1/07)*

Persons who have completed Master Gardener training in another state may participate in a county MG program upon arrival but must attend the first available Arkansas MG training, and pay applicable fees. To be an Arkansas MG, persons must attend an Arkansas training since training programs vary from state to state. An exception to this rule is if the transferring Master Gardener is from a county that borders the state of Arkansas.

Leave of Absence *(Revised 1/07)*

Occasionally, circumstances may arise, such as illness, family emergency, job, or other unique circumstance, and a Master Gardener in good standing and have completed their first year may need to apply for a leave of absence. The Leave of Absence form will need to be submitted to the county extension office, and be reviewed by the county agent and/or the MG executive committee. This form may be filled out by the MG or someone cognizant of their circumstances. Leave of absence status will be good for one MG year, and will be reviewed annually. Someone from within the county organization should check with these persons annually. While on leave, the Master Gardener will not be responsible for any work or learning hours, but may retain the option to participate in events as conditions permit. MG's on leave of absence will not be allowed voting rights, but will remain in county roster. If these members wish to register for MG events that have limited space, priority will be given to active MG's, and those on leave will be accepted as space allows. Time spent on leave of absence will not accrue towards active years of MG service, and therefore will not count for 5, 10, or 15 year pins. Payment of dues will be optional based on county needs.

Sustainer Status *(New 10/03)*

A Master Gardener, who has been a member in good standing for a minimum of seven years, may apply to be a Master Gardener Sustainer. Applicants must complete a Request for Sustainer Status form and submit it to the county agent and/or Master Gardener executive committee within a month of the end of the county's "Master Gardener" year.

A Sustainer will be accorded all privileges of an active Master Gardener without the requirement of annual work and learning hours. MG Sustainers are strongly encouraged to continue to report any volunteer hours they accrue within each calendar year. A Sustainer may not hold office, or have any voting rights; however, they may be active on a committee if they choose. Time spent as Sustainer will not count towards the 10, 15 year pins or for Advanced Master Gardener status. Sustainers may attend county, regional and state MG events. But programs with limited registrations will give priority to active MG members and allow Sustainers in as space is available.

All applicable fees as set by the county for active Master Gardeners will be required of sustainers. This includes any annual dues, registration fees, etc. If you meet all the requirements as stated for the Sustainer, and submit a written request to the county agent and/or executive committee, you will remain a Sustainer of said county until you choose to no longer pay county fees. A Master Gardener with sustainer status can revert back to active status by applying within a month of the end of the county's MG year.

Reinstatement Policy *(New 2008)*

If a former Master Gardener wants to rejoin the county program, he or she should fill out the **Request for Returning to the Master Gardener Program Form**. Upon the approval of the County Agent and the County MG Board or Officers, a former Master Gardener may be reinstated in the county program subject to the following conditions:

Former Master Gardener

1. Has completed the first year requirements and has been recertified,
2. Is not under the policies of Leave of Absence or Sustainer,
3. Submits **Request for Returning to the Master Gardener Program Form**,
4. Agrees to requirements of and signs a new Memorandum of Agreement,
5. May be granted reinstatement only one time,
6. Completes working and learning hours for the year of reinstatement pro-rated on a quarterly basis.

Lifetime Membership *(New 7/15)*

Master Gardeners who have remained active for 15 years will receive Lifetime membership status at the annual Master Gardener state meeting. Master Gardener years accrue by the calendar. As an example, if a Master Gardener trained at any time during 2001, lifetime membership eligibility would be in 2016. Lifetime membership entitles a Master Gardener to all of the benefits of an active member, but working and learning hours are no longer required. If a county Master

Gardener program requires dues, they will be waived for a Lifetime member. Lifetime members who wish to continue working on projects are encouraged to do so. Lifetime members are also requested to report any hours, since county record-keeping includes all volunteer hours. Hours/years of service will continue to accrue in 5-year increments.

In recognition of Master Gardener Lifetime members who desire to continue in the program, guidelines for additional levels called Lifetime Plus have been established.

A minimum of 10 hours of sanctioned project work per year for 5 years is required for each new level of achievement: Level I, 20 years; Level II, 25 years; Level III, 30 years. Appropriate pins, certificates and recognition will be given to Master Gardeners who achieve Lifetime Plus status.

Lifetime members will receive a name badge denoting new status at the annual Master Gardener state meeting.

Training

The Master Gardener training course must be at least 40 hours in length and cover the core curriculum, which is outlined later in this manual. A training course will be provided to no less than 20 individuals at a time. Counties should work with nearby counties to combine their training courses and maximize resources. It is generally recommended that 2 or 3 counties train together.

Individuals may miss up to 8 hours of the 40 hour training and still be eligible to become a Master Gardener. It is recommended that individuals who miss a portion of the training attend a training course at another location to make up the missed hours. Individuals who miss more than eight hours of the training cannot graduate to become Master Gardeners.

If a county trains individuals from another county, which does not have an official program, those individuals are considered members of the county program in which they trained.

Horticultural Recommendations by Master Gardeners

When making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals, Arkansas Master Gardeners are to follow the current Arkansas Pest Management Guide series. Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved. Cultural problems, which are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations, may be handled by suggesting nonchemical treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops are to be referred to the agricultural county agent.

Liability

Two laws enacted by the state legislature protect volunteers from being held civilly liable for personal injury or property damage resulting from any act or omission in carrying out their volunteer activities. Copies of the laws are on file in the Little Rock state office. Agents using Master Gardeners to answer client questions must have all contacts documented with the response

given. Agents can then view the log for correctness of answers and contact the client if there is an error.

MANAGEMENT OF THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

Although the greatest concern about starting and continuing a Master Gardener program seems to be the training, of equal importance is the management of the program. The horticultural training must be good quality, and because it is, the volunteers value their training and are often motivated to join the program to obtain that training. But when the purpose of the program is considered, management is of equal importance, for only through management can that training and knowledge be used to meet the needs of the community.

The County Extension Agent is advisor to and the administrator of the county Master Gardener program and, as the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service representative in the county, is the final authority on its Master Gardener Program. He or she must manage the overall program to meet the parameters of the Extension Service and to accomplish its goals. Successful Master Gardener Programs, however, rely heavily on volunteer management and leadership. Each county has its own identity based on its size and volunteer base. For those agents not eager to give up the reins, consider the concept that a well-managed program should be able to function well without an agent. The idea is to accomplish the goals of the operation by using the entire program, not making one person indispensable, which would only hinder the operation should that person leave the program. If the Extension Agent should decide to make a career change, the Master Gardeners should be able to continue without one until the position is filled again. This has happened in some counties, and Master Gardeners have successfully continued working in the interim.

Managing the Organization

In order to both satisfy the needs of the volunteers and utilize the assets in the program to meet the goals of the Extension Service, the program needs to be managed as efficiently as possible. As manager, the agent must plan, organize, staff direct, and control.

Planning was begun when job descriptions were created for the volunteers. Once Master Gardeners become a valuable work force, it only makes sense to include them in the goals and plans of the office. The business world has discovered that workers are more efficient and happier when they have some identity and can contribute to the goals of the enterprise. Again, volunteers gain nothing but satisfaction from their goals in the program, and they should receive as much as can be designed into the program for them. They are worth a great deal of money as unpaid workers, and they are often invaluable as representatives of the Extension Service.

Organizing involves deciding how to get the job done and utilizes delegation. Delegation is one of the most difficult jobs of management. It is probable that some very unique Master Gardener programs may come into existence because an agent is willing to delegate.

The greatest stumbling block to delegating is in the mind of the manager. People with this problem are typically overworked and feel that no one else can possibly do the important jobs in the organization as well as they can themselves. If this becomes a stumbling block, remember:

1. Some volunteers actually know more than you do about a particular subject area and can not only do the job, but also find your trust in them a reward for their work.
2. A good performance from a qualified volunteer is acknowledgement of the fine job you are doing. After all, you organized and initiated the program and hired the volunteer.
3. By delegating, you are not only getting the job done, you have made it possible for someone else to gain accomplishment.

When you have decided to delegate, remember:

1. Clearly define the responsibilities being delegated. Be sure agreement is reached as to areas in which this person can function freely and where the limits are.
2. Delegate job segments that make sense.
3. Choose appropriate people for assignment.
4. Mutually set goals and standards of performance. Expectations must be clearly defined. Do not lower standards for volunteer staff as it is an insult to a good volunteer.
5. Give accurate and honest feedback. People want to know how they are doing, and they deserve to know. This is an opportunity for giving satisfaction and encouraging growth. Allow risk-taking and mistakes.
6. Support co-workers, both paid and volunteer, by sharing knowledge, information, and plans with them.
7. Whenever possible, promote those who are responsible for carrying out significant portions of the program by giving them a voice in the decision-making body.
8. Really delegate! Most responsible people, when given a project, do not appreciate someone constantly checking on them, and the Master Gardeners are responsible people.

Staffing is determining who is going to do the job. By encouraging participation from the first training session you are able to determine the best job for each volunteer. Directing involves allowing the workers to accomplish their tasks. This is best done by putting some effort into good job placement and then displaying your confidence in the ability of the volunteers to do their jobs. Control refers to the program and its goals; not to the employees. If Master Gardeners are doing the same work year after year, you may want to reassess the amount of control you have over the program. Growth, change, even mistakes are an indication of some program control. Evaluation is the best tool for good program control.

Managing the Volunteers

Understanding Motivation

We already know that Master Gardeners have a strong interest in gardening and enough free time to commit themselves to the training and the volunteer hours. Other than that, what brings them to the program and what do they want from it? To answer those questions it is necessary to look at human motivation as it applies to work, for volunteers do work.

Each of us has various levels of need, and as we satisfy one need level, we move up to the next. The most basic need is a physiological one and includes food, water, air, etc.; the next need is for safety from harm and conversely to obtain security; the next need is social and includes wanting to be liked and enjoying closeness with others; next is esteem and includes recognition as someone of value; and highest on the ladder is self-actualization, which means doing what one is best suited to do.

This explains why the unemployed poor are not interested in becoming volunteers even though they may have time to do the work. In fact, volunteers are people who have probably satisfied the first three levels of need and so are seeking to build esteem or reach self-actualization. Those needs are more complex than the ones they have already fulfilled on their own, and the Master Gardener program needs to make an effort to satisfy those needs with appropriate jobs. This is why it is important to have real jobs for the Master Gardeners and not mere time-fillers. Since they are not paid, the satisfaction from a job well done and worth doing is essential.

As you already know from working with paid staff, it helps to place the right person in the right job. Work motives are often related to three needs: achievement, power, and affiliation. These motives display themselves in our behavior and can be identified by the observant manager so that appropriate jobs are supplied to meet these needs. The goal of an achievement-motivated person is success in a situation, which requires excellent or improved performance.

Achievement-motivated people need to work alone and enjoy the freedom of guiding their own work and setting their own goals. They consistently produce work of high quality and accomplish what they set out to do. They challenge themselves but do not set out to do the impossible. The achiever often will show signs of strong organizational ability, a willingness to complete a job without further supervision, and a desire for feedback on job performance.

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

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

Assigning Jobs to Fulfill Motivation

Considering that after they receive the training, which they often value highly, the work is all the program has to offer the Master Gardener, good job placement makes a great deal of sense. If the work satisfies these people, they will be an asset to the program and will often return to continue working. Sometimes little thought has gone into the design of jobs for Master Gardeners. It may be clear from the number of phone calls to the office requesting gardening information that the program will be useful and with that, and only that in mind, people are trained and then sent to the phones. Unfortunately, this not only wastes the diverse talents of the volunteers but also neglects the development of innovative projects for the community. Fortunately, these restrictions are usually quite clear and program development soon begins. The budding scientists reveal themselves at plant clinics, and this leads to an office lab to identify plant problems. Master Gardeners staying late to discuss the details and latest findings on rose development can lead to the establishment of a speakers' bureau, which in turn leads to more and more specialization on the part of the Master Gardener experts. There are, after all, talented amateurs and amateurs can be as good or better than professionals; they simply do not make a living from their knowledge.

In order to successfully place the volunteers in the most suitable positions you must get to know them. The application forms (samples in the back of this book) can be designed to begin this process. Promoting active participation from the beginning is also a great help. There are small jobs that clearly need to be done at the very first training session. Assigning new Master Gardeners to set up audiovisual equipment, distribute handouts, or call the group back from a break encourages participation. These first jobs might be handled through a volunteer system. By taking an active part, no matter how small, at the very first lecture, trainees will learn that their role is not a passive one. As training progresses, the agent will have ample time to get to know the volunteers thoroughly, especially if there is some time left after or before sessions for general social mixing. With the three motivational types in mind, the agent needs to identify the personality types and then match them with appropriate jobs.

Observing Behavior

It is difficult to list specific types of jobs best for each motive type because the skills and talents of each person vary. While it may seem that putting out the newsletter may be just the thing for the achievement-motivated person, that won't work if all the achievement-motivated people would rather take a beating than write a single word. As manager, the agent must consider the talents, skills, motives, and personalities in matching the jobs with the people.

In designing and redesigning jobs, the agent must assess the jobs to determine their motivational content. If repeatedly no one wants to do a certain job, there is probably something wrong with that job. It must be kept in mind that the job is their reward itself for the volunteer. There is no money payment, no hospitalization or vacation time; there may not even be a parking space.

Jobs can be changed by enlargement, enrichment, or simplification. Increasing the number and variety of tasks done. However, two or three meaningless tasks do not equal a single meaningful

one. Job enrichment refers to delegating functions that have been thought of as managerial. Including the worker in planning and evaluation procedures as well as the work itself helps enrich the job experience. Job enrichment can occur at any level of responsibility. Simplification involves combining tasks or even eliminating some tasks. In simplifying a job, look for any tasks that appear to be busy work and get rid of them first.