

Becoming an Extension Master Gardener

Master Gardener volunteers are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others.

What really sets Master Gardener volunteers apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture and their willingness to educate others. In exchange for their training, Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, work through their Cooperative Extension Center to provide horticulture-related information to the public.

Should I become a Master Gardener volunteer?

To help you decide if you should apply to become a Master Gardener volunteer, ask yourself these questions:

1. Do I want to learn more about the culture of many types of plants?
2. Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
3. Do I look forward to sharing my knowledge with people in my community?
4. Do I have enough time to attend training sessions and to serve as a volunteer?

If you answered yes to these questions, the Extension Master Gardener program could be for you!

Volunteer Training

If accepted into the Extension Master Gardener program in your county, you will attend a training course. Classes are taught by Extension staff, local experts, and Master Gardener.

The program offers a minimum of 40 hours of instruction on horticulture topics including: lawns; ornamental trees and shrubs; insect, disease, and weed management; soils and plant nutrition; vegetable gardening; home fruit production; garden flowers; and water conservation.

You will receive a North Carolina Master Gardener training manual --- full of comprehensive horticultural subjects. It will be a valuable tool in answering homeowners plant questions.

Volunteer Commitment

Once you successfully complete the training program and pass the final exam, you will begin a volunteer internship. During your internship, you will learn even more about plants and people.

Master Gardeners function as resource individuals for horticultural questions that come in to their local Extension center. Their efforts multiply the capabilities of county Extension Agents.

What Are the Kinds of Volunteer Activities?

The opportunities for volunteer services are limitless. Examples include:

1. diagnose plant, insect, and disease problems.
2. staff plant clinics and educational exhibits.
3. design a demonstration or community garden.
4. lecture on various gardening topics.
5. bring the joy of gardening to senior citizens or young children.

Master Gardener are representatives of North Carolina Cooperative Extension. Master Gardener follow the research-based recommendations of Cooperative Extension. The title "Master Gardener" can be used by volunteers only when engaged in Extension sponsored activities.

Who can become a Master Gardener?

Individuals with an interest in both gardening and volunteer service are potential candidates for the program. No previous formal training is necessary.

Why Should I become a Master Gardener?

You will become knowledgeable about a wide array of gardening subjects. The practical training is designed to:

1. increase your confidence and horticultural skills
2. enable you to assist the public with questions and problems involved with gardening

Volunteer service helps your community and you derive the pleasure and reward of working with others who share your interests.

Volunteers also participate in advanced Master Gardener training classes and field trips. The learning and the opportunities for satisfaction never end!

For more information, an application form, and a schedule of future training contact your local County Extension Agent. In Burke County, that person is Donna Teasley, at 828-439-4460.