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**Master Gardener offer online training**

By Tracy Courage

U of A System Division of Agriculture

**Fast facts:**

* Master Gardener program taking applications through Sept. 1
* 3,000+ Master Gardeners statewide
* Contact your county extension office for info: <https://www.uaex.edu/counties/>

(352 words)

(Newsrooms – with file photo at <https://bit.ly/3rdG6Uz>)

LITTLE ROCK — Interest in gardening surged during the COVID-19 pandemic as Arkansans took to the outdoors, and that interest doesn’t seem to be fading.

The Arkansas Master Gardeners program, part of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture, continues to be the state’s largest horticulture volunteer and education organization. Registration for its fall training, set to begin Sept. 22, is now open.

This year’s training will be conducted via Zoom and will include five day-long sessions on Sept. 22, Sept. 29, Oct. 6, Oct. 20, and Oct. 27. Training will be scheduled 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m.

The cost is $75 and includes 40 hours of training and the Master Gardener handbook.

Trainees will learn about basic botany, soils and fertilizer, pest control and pesticide use. In addition, there will be classes on landscape design, vegetable and fruit gardening, annuals and perennials and other topics of interest to homemakers. Each new Master Gardener is also paired with a mentor in their county.

“Our mentors are what sets this volunteer program apart from others,” said Berni Kurz, extension consumer horticulture educator for the Division of Agriculture. “They provide guidance to new gardeners and help answer questions.”

Volunteerism is crucial to many Cooperative Extension Service programs, including Master Gardeners. Members complete 40 hours of volunteer service after their training. To maintain membership, they complete 20 education hours and 20 hours of community service each year.

“Communities across Arkansas have benefitted greatly from the Master Gardeners’ work in public gardens, parks and other public spaces,” Kurz said. “You can see the work of Master Gardeners in almost every county in the state.”

Starting with just four counties and 40 members in 1988, the Arkansas Master Gardener program is now 3,200 volunteers strong in 67 counties.

For a program application, contact your county agent through your county Cooperative Extension Service office. A directory of county offices is available at <https://www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/>.

For more information about the Master Gardener program in Arkansas, visit [www.uaex.uada.edu/master-gardeners](http://www.uaex.uada.edu/master-gardeners). To learn more about other extension programs in Arkansas, contact your local Cooperative Extension Service agent or visit [uaex.uada.edu](http://uaex.uada.edu/). Follow us on Twitter at [@AR\_Extension](https://twitter.com/AR_Extension).

**About the Division of Agriculture**

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture’s mission is to strengthen agriculture, communities, and families by connecting trusted research to the adoption of best practices. Through the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Cooperative Extension Service, the Division of Agriculture conducts research and extension work within the nation’s historic land grant education system.

The Division of Agriculture is one of 20 entities within the University of Arkansas System. It has offices in all 75 counties in Arkansas and faculty on five system campuses.

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