

TRAINING

Rev. 11-01

A California study revealed that the horticultural subject matter in the Master Gardener training is one of the primary reasons volunteers come into the program. The training has a history of being comprehensive and of high quality. Since it is impossible to commit Extension specialists to all of the individual training programs, agents are encouraged to utilize local professionals when organizing their training programs. Area colleges are often a source of trainers for some of the subject matter as well as retired or local experts in horticulture. It is very useful to combine counties for the training procedure so that agents can deliver a training segment to two or three groups of Master Gardeners at one time.

Basic botany sections are usually taught in the first session. Each of the other topics is covered as thoroughly as possible. Topics within each section are not arranged in any particular order. Other courses may be added when deemed appropriate by agents in any locality. Classes may be taught as lectures, workshops, tours, or by a combination of these techniques. Courses are usually offered once or twice each week, at a time convenient for trainees.

The *Arkansas Master Gardener Handbook* is available for use as a text and resource for Master Gardener training only. It consists of 15 chapters totaling more than 500 pages and is illustrated with hundreds of drawings. The format is looseleaf in a binder. Every county office has one handbook for your review. Order handbooks through the state Master Gardener Coordinator's office.

TRAINING TIMELINE

One Year Before Training

1. Determine the needs of your office. What are the jobs that volunteers are needed to do? How many volunteers are needed, and how many hours of work are available? Does your office have enough space and equipment for the volunteers to do these jobs?
2. Survey the population to determine interest in the program.
3. Plan with the state Master Gardener Coordinator the timing for the program. Arrange to train cooperatively with adjoining counties. A minimum of three adjoining counties is optimum. A minimum of 20 participants is mandatory, with a suggested maximum of 50 per training session. Each county that participates in the training must have a county agent actively involved in the program. Each agent must teach a minimum of two hours per 40 hours of training. Counties must provide a minimum of eight hours of the 40-hour training.

Six Months Before Training

1. Schedule training sessions (dates, times, and locations). Most classes are held one eight-hour day a week for five weeks. Other options include half-day sessions. Nights and weekends are an option, but consider this carefully; if your county needs daytime help, will these volunteers be available?

2. Engage instructors for all sessions. Due to limited travel budgets and scheduling constraints, give specialists plenty of advanced notice.
3. Decide on the number of volunteers you can train.
4. Set the price for the program. Training manuals must be purchased. Some counties serve meals, while others have participants bring sack lunches. Plan for \$5.00 cost for MG nametag. Add a little buffer for coffee, cokes, etc.
5. Begin publicizing the program and sending out application forms.
6. Place an estimated order for materials with the Master Gardener Coordinator's secretary to insure book availability. Send in the Master Gardener Scheduling form (included later in this section.)

Two Months Before Training

1. Continue to make application forms available. Cut-off for applications should stop one month before training begins, to allow for time for interviewing of the applicants.
2. Advertise the program. Sample press releases are available.
3. Begin interviewing potential Master Gardeners. Sample interview questions are included in this section. It is important that each candidate be interviewed. The goal is to train continuing volunteers, not just to give them a good education on gardening. While it is hard to turn away volunteers, there may be class size limitations, and those who just want the class and whom you may never see again. Utilize returning Master Gardeners to help in this process in future years.
4. Give the final order for all training materials and arrange for delivery or pick-up.

One Month Before Training

1. Notify all applicants of their acceptance or rejection to the program. A sample rejection letter is included in this section.
2. Notify participants of the training schedule, location directions, etc.
3. Confirm/remind instructors of their commitment to the training program. Send them a copy of your program with directions to where the meeting will be held.

Two to Three Weeks Before Training Ends

1. Order nametags. Be sure to identify the appropriate county name for each applicant. This is important with multi-county training. It is nice to present these to the graduating Master Gardeners.
2. Print the certificates for graduation. Remember, participants can miss a total of 8 hours and still graduate. If you have someone who misses more classes, they can try to make up a session in another training county, or they can't graduate.
3. Prepare the final test.

Final Session

1. Give test, grade.
2. Pass out certificates and Master Gardener pins.
3. Pass out evaluations of program.
4. Make plans to meet with the new Master Gardeners and announce a meeting date.

TRAINING SCHEDULE

General Horticulture Core Curriculum:

- 15 min. Overview of the program. What is a Master Gardener?
- 20 min. What is the Cooperative Extension Service? (Video available, 18 min., 20 sec.)
- 60 min. Basic Botany (Videos available)
- 30 min. Pesticide formulations and safety
- 15 min. Pesticides and environmental issues
- 60 min. Soils and soil testing/Understanding fertilizers
- 45 min. Irrigation and irrigation equipment
- 30 min. Insects, an overview
- 30 min. Diseases, an overview of plant pathology
- 5 hours total – This leaves 3 hours for electives or more in-depth discussion of above topics.

Possible electives:

- Wildflowers
- Attracting wildlife to your backyard
- Hobby greenhouses
- Computerized landscape design

Ornamentals Core Curriculum:

- 15 min. Overview of the day
- 45 min. Woody plant material for Arkansas landscapes – Shrubs
- 45 min. Trees for Arkansas landscapes
- 45 min. Herbaceous plant materials – Annuals

- 45 min. Herbaceous plant materials – Perennials
- 30 min. Planting and transplanting ornamental plants
- 45 min. Pruning ornamental plants
- 30 min. Houseplants
- 30 min. Diagnosing ornamental problems

This amounts to over 5 hours. You can spend more time on some of these topics and add topics on other days. Ornamentals tend to be the most popular topic with most groups.

Possible Electives:

- Roses
- Water Gardening
- Plant Propagation (slide set available)
- Basics of landscape design (slide set available)
- Bonsai
- Native Plants (slide set available)
- Any specialty plant group
- More in-depth on any of the above topics

Vegetable Core Curriculum:

- 60 min. Garden basics: site selection, soil fertility, mulches, irrigation, weed control, crop rotation, etc.
- 30 min. Tomatoes
- 60 min. Warm season crops – cucurbits, peppers, corn, eggplant, okra, etc.
- 60 min. Cool season crops – cole crops, onions, spinach, lettuce, potatoes, greens, etc.
- 30 min. Herb gardening
- 30 min. Organic gardening

This amounts to 4 ½ hours. The other 3 ½ hours can be spent on any related material or by going more in-depth on any of the above topics.

Possible Electives:

- Row crops and other means of protection
- Diseases and insects
- Harvesting and storage of vegetables
- Unusual vegetables
- Oriental vegetables
- Square foot gardening
- Greenhouse vegetables and hydroponic production

Fruit Core Curriculum:

- 60 min. Fruit basics: time requirements, fertilizers, establishment, and principles of pruning
- 90 min. Small fruits: strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, blackberries, and grapes
- 90 min. Tree fruits: nectarines, plums, peaches, apples, pears, and pecans

(For each fruit, we will cover: site, soils, pH, varieties, establishment, maintenance, and harvest)

This amounts to 4 hours. You can go more in-depth on one of the above topics or choose electives.

Possible Electives:

- Figs, persimmons, gooseberries, and almonds
- Diseases and insects
- Container fruit production
- Integrated pest management

Turf Core Curriculum:

- 60 min. Lawn selection, establishment and maintenance
- 30 min. Weed control in lawns
- 30 min. Diagnosing turf problems
- 30 min. Composting

This is a total of 2 ½ hours. Commonly, turf is covered on the last day of training since not as much time is devoted to it. This leaves plenty of time to give the final exam and grade it. You may want to present certificates and nametags on the last day or wait until the next monthly Master Gardener meeting. The last day of training is also a good time to bring in some returning Master Gardeners. The new Master Gardeners can ask the returning Master Gardeners questions.

A discussion of what projects you have in your county should be discussed. You could even allow the new Master Gardeners to sign up for particular projects. A class picture should be made which can then be used for publicity.

Master Gardener Scheduling

Please complete this form and send to the State Master Gardener Coordinator six months prior to training.

Proposed date for training _____

Location of classes _____

Counties participating in the training _____

Estimated number of trainees _____

I have read the Arkansas Master Gardener Program Management Guide and understand the guidelines for conducting a Master Gardener Program.

County Agent _____

County Agent _____

County Agent _____

District Agent _____

PUBLICIZING THE TRAINING

News releases should be sent to the media well before the training to announce that applications are being accepted. News releases should include a deadline to apply which gives you ample time to screen applicants and send letters of acceptance or rejection. Sometimes it is best to combine a solicitation of applicants with a picture and short article about a current Master Gardener project to get people's attention.

NEWS RELEASE

(Contact information – Name, Telephone No.)

Master Gardener Program Taking Applications

Want to be a Master Gardener ? Applications are being taken in _____ County for persons who want to sharpen their horticultural skills and then share their knowledge with others.

The University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is conducting the Master Gardener training program (# of days per week) between (beginning date and ending date) at (location).

Enrollment will be limited to (number) participants, who, following training and receipt of the Master Gardener certification, are committed to donating 40 working hours and pursuing 20 additional learning hours in their county Master Gardener Program.

Training begins on (date) with instruction on basic botany, principles of horticulture, soils and fertilizers, irrigation, pest control and pesticide use. Other training sessions include: vegetable production, home fruit production, landscaping, and lawn care.

Cooperative Extension Service professionals, horticulture professionals and other specialists in their field will conduct all training. A fee of \$_____ covers books and other training materials.

Final selection of participants will be made from applications and interviews. Deadline for applying is (date). For details, contact the _____ County Extension office at (telephone #).

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected class.

INTERVIEWING APPLICANTS

Because an organization is made up of people, it is full of surprises. Interview processes are encouraged to ensure that people are not admitted to the program who are unable to fulfill the forty (40)-hour volunteer commitment, or who do not have a desire to do volunteer work. Yet each year, the group of trainees will be different. One year may find many extroverts who are aggressive in running public programs; the next year may be filled with introverts who are better at planning, writing, and other behind-the-scenes work. Fortunately, nearly all Master Gardener programs experience a veteran return, with volunteers who have already completed their commitment coming back year after year. These people give a continuity and stability to the organization that can be reassuring to new trainees.

Some agents may feel uncomfortable with using an interview process because of the Extension philosophy of being open to everyone. However, these people will become employees who will in turn serve the clients who should not be turned away. By choosing the best applicants, you are ensuring the best service for consumers.

Many Master Gardener programs have too many applicants due to the popularity of the program, and are compelled to screen applicants. There are a variety of ways to go about screening. Person-to-person interviews are good, and in some programs, current Master Gardeners are involved with the process. Who could be better at knowing what kind of person makes a good volunteer than a good volunteer? Application forms with appropriate questions are another method used in some counties. It is good to design the questions so that the applicant reveals his or her personality, interests, and abilities instead of giving the answers that they think are wanted. One method is to reject all applicants who do not mention the desire to volunteer in their answer to a question about why they want to become a Master Gardener.

MASTER GARDENER APPLICATION

I wish to become a Master Gardener in (county) . I want to be accepted into the 40-hour Master Gardener training program offered by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service. I understand that in exchange for the training, I will volunteer at least 40 working hours and agree to acquire 20 additional learning hours in the Master Gardener program within the next year. I understand that I will become a Master Gardener when I complete the training and pass the examination. In order to retain the Master Gardener designation in subsequent years, I will volunteer 20 working hours and obtain 20 learning hours annually.

Name (Signature) _____ Date _____

Name (Print) _____

Address _____ Phone (day) _____

City _____ Zip _____ Phone (night) _____

Please complete the following:

Years of gardening experience:

Type of gardening experience:

List areas of specialty or hobbies (e.g. flowers, herbs, ornamentals, etc.):

List experiences working with the community, schools, churches, youth, senior citizens, etc.:

Please list group affiliations (e.g. garden clubs, plant societies, etc.):

How did you learn about the Master Gardener program?

Why do you want to become a Master Gardener?

The Master Gardener training will be held on (day of the week, dates, where, and times) .
A \$ _____ registration fee will cover all supplies. You must complete all five classes to be a Master Gardener.

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all persons without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status.

Comments:

RETURN APPLICATION TO: Cooperative Extension Service
_____ (county office address)

MASTER GARDENER SAMPLE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Name of applicant _____

First, I would like to tell you a little about the _____ County Master Gardeners. Do you have any questions to ask me about the Master Gardener program, Cooperative Extension Service, or myself?

1. Tell me a little about your gardening experience and interests.
2. Why did you select this particular volunteer program to become involved in?
3. What do you hope to get out of this program?
4. What can you tell me about yourself that demonstrates your desire or ability to fulfill the training and volunteer commitment?
5. How involved do you feel you can or want to become in the Master Gardener program?

(Do you see this as more than a one-time, one-year program?)

6. Do you think you might have conflicts between your philosophy, ideology, or commercial interests and that of the University of Arkansas or the Master Gardener program? (Direct this question especially to organic gardeners, nurserymen, or other people making their living working in horticulture.)

(If so, how would you resolve these potential conflicts?)

7. Will you be available during our busiest months, March-September?

8. How much time could you devote to the Master Gardener program each month?
9. The volunteer commitment is 40 hours. Do you think this is too little, too much, just right?
10. Do you feel comfortable talking with other people over the phone, in person, in groups (large or small), through mass media?
11. Are there any volunteer projects you would feel uncomfortable doing?
12. Do you have any special skills useful to the Master Gardener program? (Art ability, writing, teaching, photography, etc.)
13. Are you willing to try something you've not done before?
14. Why do you think you should be selected for the program over the other applicants?
15. Do you have anything else to add?

Master Gardener Interview Evaluation Form

Your assessment and impressions of this applicant – to be filled out immediately after the interview.

Name of applicant _____

Suitability for the program (check one):

____ Outstanding ____ Very Good ____ Good ____ Fair ____ Poor

Use the following categories as guidelines to record your impressions:

Personality (enthusiastic, outgoing, reserved):

Ability to communicate:

Honesty, integrity:

Ability to work with others:

Any potential problems:

Other comments:

Ethnic or minority affiliation (Don't ask this question; make your own judgment. The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service is required by court order to report to the race and gender of all contacts. The Master Gardener program also strives for racial integration.)

____ Asian ____ Black ____ Hispanic ____ American Indian ____ Handicapped

Interviewed and evaluated by _____

THE MASTER GARDENER COMMITMENT

Before the training begins, all accepted applicants should sign a Memorandum of Agreement committing to abide by Master Gardener policies and return forty (40) working hours to the Master Gardener program in exchange for the training course. Below is a simplified statement of Master Gardener policies that can be used with the Memorandum of Agreement.

University of Arkansas Master Gardener Policies

The Master Gardener program is offered by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life with horticultural projects. Goals are implemented through the training and employment of local volunteers. Master Gardeners assist the Extension Service by implementing community projects, answering phone requests, running plant clinics, etc.

The title “Master Gardener” is to be used only by individuals who have attended the 40 hours of Master Gardener training and passed an examination given by the local Extension agent. To be a Master Gardener one must attend the prescribed 40 hours of instruction, volunteer 40 working hours to the Extension Service, and acquire 20 additional learning hours within one year of the training. The title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in the Arkansas Master Gardener program. When individuals cease active participation, their designation as Master Gardener becomes void.

Master Gardeners must be willing to maintain a written record of their volunteer activities and provide this information to their local county agent.

Arkansas Master Gardeners will not use the title “Master Gardener” at a place of business or for commercial publicity, unless it is while participating in a Master Gardener sponsored event. Having association with commercial products, and/or giving implied University of Arkansas endorsements, products, or businesses, is improper.

Master Gardeners are not to accept money for speaking before groups as a Master Gardener, although travel expenses may be reimbursed by the host group. Master Gardeners may accept contributions for the Master Gardener fund in their county. Non-monetary gifts may be accepted.

When making recommendations which include the use of chemicals, Arkansas Master Gardeners are to follow the current published University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service recommendations. 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 are to be referred to the local county agent.

Master Gardeners who wish to continue as Master Gardeners after the first year must accumulate 20 learning hours and 20 working hours each consecutive year.

When representing the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service as a Master Gardener, discrimination of any kind is not acceptable.

MEMORANDUM of AGREEMENT

I have read the University of Arkansas Master Gardener policies. I wish to become a Master Gardener in (County). I understand that in exchange for the training, I will volunteer at least 40 working hours to the Master Gardener program and agree to acquire an additional 20 learning hours within a year from completing the training classes. I understand that I will become a Master Gardener when I complete the training and pass the examination. In order to retain the Master Gardener designation in subsequent years, I will volunteer 20 working hours and obtain 20 learning hours annually.

Signature of Applicant _____

Date _____

County Agent _____

PHYSICAL SURROUNDINGS

An appropriate setting is very important in a training situation. The negative effect of certain factors may, in fact, be more important than their positive effect. For example, everyone takes restrooms for granted and will not comment on their presence. However, try having a meeting place without restrooms and see what happens to the mood and attention of the audience. Likewise, just because there were no comments about how handy it was to have notepads and pencils on the table does not mean such details were not a contribution to a successful meeting or training session. People will not hesitate to mention what is wrong with a situation (too noisy, too warm) but are often unaware of the positive effects of some details (available parking, good directions) and do not mention them.

Deal with physical surroundings from the beginning by providing clear directions to the meeting place in announcements. Before the appointed time for the meeting, be sure there will be enough chairs, check the quality of lighting (the audience should be able to take notes and to see slides, blackboard, etc). Acoustics are also important. A public address system should be available if necessary, and outside noise should be controlled. In winter, coat racks should be provided. If extension cords are needed, have them at the meeting site. Nametags are useful, especially at initial meetings.

Once the meeting time arrives, be aware of room temperature and ventilation. Even the best speaker will have a difficult time holding the attention of an audience that is falling asleep or busy shivering. When the physical environment is just right, it is time to attend to the human environment. People should be welcomed; speakers need to be greeted and put at ease. Meetings should involve the audience through democratic leadership with plenty of opportunity to voice opinion. Since time is valuable, start and end meetings as stated in announcements and invitations.

EVALUATING THE TRAINING

The final step in the training process is to ask trainees to evaluate the training. This evaluation can be used to improve the training in the following years.

(SAMPLE)
MASTER GARDENER TRAINING EVALUATION

1. Overall, the program was:
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
2. 1st day, general horticulture.
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
3. 2nd day, ornamentals
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
4. 3rd day, fruits
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
5. 4th day, vegetables
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
6. 5th day, turf
_____ Excellent _____ Good _____ Fair _____ Poor
7. Most favorite part of the training:
8. Least favorite part of the training:
9. How could the training be improved?
10. Additional comments:

