

Master Gardener Program

The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer development program offered by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects. Master Gardeners are highly-trained volunteers working with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to provide residents with information on environmentally responsible gardening and landscaping. They provide unbiased, research-based information, problem-solving expertise and educational opportunities to residents.

Master Gardeners are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and to help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. They form a network of highly-qualified and concerned people who are capable of implementing a wide range of activities useful to the community.

What really sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. In exchange for their training, persons who become Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their local Extension office to provide horticulture-related information to their communities.

Is the Master Gardener Program for Me?

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

- *Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?*
- *Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?*
- *Do I look forward to sharing my knowledge with people in my community?*
- *Do I have enough time to attend training and to complete the volunteer service?*

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

Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for training, participants are asked to volunteer time to their County Extension program.

The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs, and the abilities and interests of the Master Gardeners. Some Master Gardeners answer telephone requests for information related to gardening. Others staff plant clinics or displays in shopping malls or community centers. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops. They may help establish community garden projects, work with 4-H youth, or assist their agent with news or radio releases related to gardening. The Master Gardener Coordinator in the County Extension office decides how volunteer time can be best utilized.

Master Gardeners are representatives of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. In all volunteer work related to the program, Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. The title of “Texas Master Gardener” can be used by volunteers only when engaged in Extension-sponsored activities.

Qualifications

Qualifications for the Master Gardener Program include:

- Basic gardening interest and knowledge
- Enthusiasm for acquiring and sharing horticulture knowledge and skills
- Ability to relate unbiased, research-based information to the public
- Ability to learn (or re-learn) new information, some of which is practically applied information and some fundamental, scientific principles
- Ability to attend classes, pass an exam, showing mastery of a wide range of topics
- Willingness, commitment and time to volunteer
- Understanding Texas AgriLife Extension’s educational mission

Benefits

Benefits of becoming a Master Gardener include:

- Satisfaction of serving your community to extend the educational mission of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
- Interaction with people in your community with similar interests and talents in gardening and landscaping
- Deeper understanding of the science and art of horticulture and its applied sciences

Training

If accepted into the Master Gardener program, you will attend a Master Gardener training course. Classes are taught by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service specialists, staff, and local experts.

The program offers 72 hours of instruction. Topics may include:

Botany & Plant Physiology

Integrated Pest Management/Entomology

Plant Identification

Plant Pathology

Organic Gardening

Perennials/Annuals

Turfgrass Maintenance & Diseases

Earth Kind Roses

Landscape and Design

Rain Water Harvesting

Propagation

Water Conservation & Quality

Herbs

Vegetables

Urban Trees

Water Wise Shrubs

Soils/Composting

Fruits, Pecans and Berries

What do Master Gardeners do?

The Dallas County Master Gardeners assist the local County Extension Office:

- Answering horticultural inquiries over the telephone
- Giving educational talks to various groups
- Introducing youth to gardening
- Supporting 4-H and Youth Development programs
- Presenting information at garden and trade events
- Organizing educational programs and conferences
- Creating and maintaining gardens which showcase plants for our area, new planting methods, composting and irrigation methods
- Researching and answering inquiries
- Writing articles about horticulture
- Increasing awareness of integrated pest management, water conservation and quality, and other environmental issues

Certification/Recertification

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the Intern training course, pass an examination administered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, and volunteer a minimum of 72 hours within one year.

In order to retain the Texas Master Gardener title, individuals are required each year to participate in a minimum of six (6) hours of recertification training (CEU's) and provide an additional 30 hours of volunteer service through the Dallas County Extension office.

To obtain an application, click on this link_____ or you may call the Extension office (214-904-3053 or 214-904-3054) .For more information on the Master Gardener Program in Dallas County, call us at 214-904-3053 or 214-904-3054.