

## **MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER INFORMATION**

This contains information that will be useful to you in understanding the Master Gardener Volunteer program as well as the role and responsibilities of a Master Gardener Volunteer. It will also give you insight into the Florida Extension Service, how it functions and how Master Gardener Volunteers operate as Extension volunteers.

*Please read the enclosed materials and complete the two questionnaires, application and interview form at the back of this packet.*

If you have any questions, please contact:

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# **THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**

## **Part I - History**

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service agents.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Service Agent in the State of Washington reasoned that well trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as Extension Homemakers and 4-H Leaders had always been a part of the Extension Service but never in the area of homeowner horticulture. The Extension Agent selected trained and certified volunteers as Master Gardener Volunteers. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact they exceeded his expectations. And so it was the Master Gardener Volunteer Program began.

Since that time, the Master Gardener Volunteer Program has grown and is now active in over 45 states. Florida's program began in 1979 and at Orange County in 1981. The program has been a tremendous success and is now active in 56 Florida counties. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) and cooperating county governments sponsor the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Florida.

What is the Extension Service? For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862 when the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act. This act established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the Federal government. They became known as "land grant colleges," a name which persists today. These colleges would emphasize practical subjects such as agriculture and home economics. In 1887, the Hatch Act provided for "experiment stations" to conduct agricultural research for Land Grant Colleges.

Then in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college. IFAS is that part of the University which has responsibility for the Florida Extension Service.

Florida Extension is funded by three cooperating funding sources: the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the State through legislative appropriations, and counties through appropriations by county governments. Additional funds are generated from grants. The term "extension" defines the organization's purpose to extend the information produced at the State and Federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service." The Extension Service is an informal education organization which provides information in three main areas: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H/Youth Development. Community Development, Marine Science, Natural Resources Education, and Energy are associated programs. The motto and goal of the Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener Volunteer concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

## **Part II Orange County Master Gardener Volunteer Program**

In Orange County, the Master Gardener Volunteer Program began in 1981 along with Osceola and Lake Counties. Selection to become a candidate for the Master Gardener Volunteer training program is not predicated on prior training, education, knowledge or experience. Neither do age, race, sex or physical disability influence selection.

*A sincere desire to help others, a desire to learn, and a personal commitment to volunteer service are the major selection criteria involved.* Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful but they are by no means a requirement for selection for the Master Gardener Volunteer training program.

## **Part III Master Gardener Volunteer Training**

The Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program is demanding and intensive. Formal classroom work constitutes more than 50% of the 70+ hour training period. Subjects include basic botany, soils, fertilizers, vegetables, entomology, citrus, lawns, landscape maintenance, use of (and alternatives to) pesticides, diseases, and related topics. All information is based on the knowledge and research of the University of Florida.

Each weekly session is a minimum of five hours and a portion of some classes is practical, hands-on activity related to the subject just presented. You will also become familiar with the "ten most asked questions" related to the subject matter. These are the questions most commonly asked by homeowners and serve to prepare the Master Gardener Volunteer for the day when that first homeowner question must be correctly answered.

Each trainee is provided Master Gardener Volunteer notebooks containing extensive reference materials from the University of Florida. These materials are updated frequently so that Master Gardener Volunteers have access to the most current recommendations of the University of Florida.

On completion of the 70-hour training period, all Master Gardener Volunteer trainees are required to satisfactorily pass a comprehensive examination ("evaluation") on the materials covered. Once training has been satisfactorily completed, trainees will serve a 12-month internship. All Master Gardener Volunteers must abide by a set of policies set out by the University of Florida and IFAS. Those "Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardener Volunteers" are attached and should be read carefully. Interns will be certified and be awarded the title of "Master Gardener" upon completion of the requisite volunteer service and continuing education hours during the next twelve calendar months.

## **Part IV Master Gardener Volunteer Activities**

Most Master Gardener Volunteer Activities center on the Extension Education Center in Orlando, at least initially. The first 40 volunteer service hours of each new Master Gardener Volunteer will be spent there. This is in fact a continuation of the training as the new members become familiar with the Extension Education Center, its staff and facilities. The remaining required 35 service hours may be spent in a wide variety of activities that are related to some aspect of gardening and contribute to community education and service. Many Master Gardener Volunteers continue their

close association with the Extension Education Center by answering telephone calls, assisting walk-in customers, and mailing out brochures in response to requests. Others choose to work in the demonstration gardens all located at the Extension Service office and the Central Florida Fairgrounds.

Master Gardener Volunteers also provide support and make presentations to garden clubs, schools, and civic groups. As the Master Gardener Volunteers assist the Extension Service Agents, they are in effect "extending the Extension Service." As such, they provide advice and recommendations that have been well documented as a result of experimentation and testing and are approved by the University of Florida.

Other activities include but are not limited to staffing information booths at fairs and garden festivals, working with youth groups (4-H), developing community gardens, helping the disadvantaged and disabled in gardening, and even such tasks as preparing this brochure. There is something for almost every skill at every level. Many Master Gardener Volunteers far surpass the mandatory 75 service hours during their first year of volunteer service.

Training never ceases for the certified Master Gardener Volunteer. Once a month, Master Gardener Volunteers may visit local gardens, nurseries, parks, and similar facilities, or attend a Lunch 'N' Learn event at the Extension Education Center. Specialized knowledge is gained to better enable the Master Gardener Volunteer to give expert advice. These monthly meetings are also used for planning and status reports on various projects and information exchange and updates.

Once a year a "post-graduate" Master Gardener Volunteer training usually takes place at the University of Florida in Gainesville. This voluntary 2-3 day session serves to acquaint Master Gardener Volunteers with the latest horticultural developments and research.

### **Part V Conclusion**

This is the Master Gardener Volunteer Program in words - a very poor substitute for the real thing. Words cannot describe the sense of accomplishment one feels in helping someone be a better gardener. Master Gardener Volunteers, people wanting to help others, make the program what it is. These are the kind of people who make America great -- bonded together through a common interest in gardening, horticulture and the spirit of volunteerism. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a wonderful opportunity to learn and to help. We hope that you will become a part of this growing experience.

## **POLICIES REGARDING FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS**

The title "Florida Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the Florida Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer program in which trained and certified Master Gardener Volunteers answer gardening questions. ***Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work in the Extension horticulture program.***

Florida Master Gardener Volunteers are advised not to advertise their name or their place of business, nor to be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardeners. This is a University of Florida Extension public service program. Appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University of Florida or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business is improper.

In making recommendations that include the use of pesticides (e.g., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener Volunteers must follow published Extension Service recommendations. Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved including home remedies or "tonics". Cultural problems that are not specifically covered by Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener Volunteer considers appropriate. Questions concerning **commercial** production of crops and pest control on such crops are to be referred to the appropriate Extension Agent.

A Florida Master Gardener Volunteer must attend the prescribed hours of instruction, pass an examination administered by the Florida Extension Service, complete 75 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education during the first 12 months of volunteer service before becoming a certified Master Gardener Volunteer. ***This certification is valid only when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program and for one year only. If an individual ceases active participation, then the certification as Master Gardener Volunteer becomes void.***

Upon completion of the Master Gardener Volunteer training class conducted by the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service, first year Master Gardener Volunteers are required to return 75 volunteer working hours in activities approved by the Master Gardener Coordinator and acquire an additional 10 hours of continued education within 12 months of the completion of their class.

To remain a Master Gardener Volunteer in good standing after successful completion of their first year of volunteer service, one must:

- 1) Complete 35 volunteer hours during the calendar year.
- 2) Complete 10 learning hours during the calendar year.
- 3) Must comply with the Florida Master Gardener policy statement and code of conduct.

If an individual's annual working and learning hours are not completed within the first twelve (12) months after the completion of the Master Gardener Volunteer Training class, he or she will no longer be considered a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer. Those who have completed their

first year of service and are unable to continue to donate a minimum of 35 hours each year will be placed on inactive status. **Inactive status** is defined as:

An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer is one who is unable to commit to an additional 35 hours annually at present, but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify themselves in the future. The following policies apply:

- 1) An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer is one who has completed their original commitment of 75 hours of volunteer service in the first twelve months following the completion of their training, but is not able to continue to volunteer the minimum of 35 hours per year.
- 2) The inactive Master Gardener Volunteer must apply to the county Master Gardener Volunteer for recertification. He or she must then attend or have attended 10 hours of acceptable horticultural training to re-certify.
- 3) The inactive Master Gardener Volunteer must take and pass a comprehensive examination provided by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- 4) An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer can re-certify at any time as long as the above criteria are met.
- 5) Inactive Master Gardener Volunteers are ineligible for applying for awards of excellence, receiving mailings, monthly meetings, or registering for advanced training opportunities.

The county Master Gardener Coordinator can make exceptions in unusual circumstances.

Persons who have successfully completed the Master Gardener Volunteer training in another Florida county and were members in good standing in that county, may petition for immediate membership in another county if they have moved their residence to that county.

The reporting year for University of Florida/IFAS Orange County Master Gardener Volunteers is January 1 to December 31. All hours must be turned in by the date specified by the county Master Gardener coordinator.

All Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to record their working and learning hours in order for UF/IFAS Extension to comply with federal requirements. Failure to do so will result in dismissal. Master Gardener Volunteers are also expected to keep and record clientele contact numbers and information as instructed by the County Master Gardener Coordinator.

All Master Gardener Volunteers must recognize the necessity for representing the County Extension Service in a manner consistent with exemplary citizenship and leadership. Standards for Master Gardener Volunteers have been established to create a safe and pleasant learning environment for the Master Gardener Volunteer program. In addition, procedures for due process are available from the Extension agent for a Master Gardener Volunteer to follow if he or she is charged with violating a standard and feels the charge is unfounded.

Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to participate in all components of the planned program, be responsive to the reasonable requests of the county agent in charge and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Along with active participation, Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to uphold certain standards including, but not limited to the following - there will be no: possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace or on job assignments outside the extension office; abuse or theft of public or personal property; sexual harassment or misconduct; verbal abuse and failure to cooperate with others, including other staff members and/or the public; possession of weapons or fireworks in the workplace; defamation of the organization; creating an implied or outright University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business; misrepresentation of sources of information; consistent giving out of incorrect information; use of state and/or county vehicles without authorization; failure to report any and all injuries to the county extension agent as soon as possible or physical assault. Any violations will result in dismissal pending due process. Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program are valuable and may rightfully be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardener Volunteers should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Master Gardener at the place of business.

Experienced Master Gardener Volunteers are likely to receive invitations to speak before groups. Gratuitous payments for speaking are not a concern since such speaking activity is entirely separate from the question-answering done at Master Gardener Volunteer Clinics. However, please do not seek payment for such speaking appearances.

Your work is much appreciated by the Florida Extension Service and your local area residents who will receive your counsel.

**Special note of caution:** Individuals who are not acting on behalf of the Florida Extension Service are strongly urged to make every effort to minimize the appearance of being on duty before making any recommendations in the area of horticulture. Speaking "off the record" is your right; however, make sure everyone knows you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service.

## **ORANGE COUNTY GUIDELINES REGARDING RECERTIFICATION**

A Master Gardener Volunteer may recertify for participation in the Program for another year by:

- 1) Committing to 35 hours of volunteer work to be completed in one year **AND**
- 2) By completing or having completed 10 hours additional horticulture training. Examples of this are: New Master Gardening Training, Master Gardener Volunteer Advanced Training in Gainesville, Master Gardener Volunteer Field Trips, University or Community College courses, etc.

This **training must be approved as acceptable** by the Extension Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator.

## QUESTIONNAIRE #1

Please circle the letter indicating your answer and return this along with the second questionnaire and the form indicating your choice of interview dates/times.

1. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is sponsored by:
  - a. The University of South Florida.
  - b. The U.S. Department of Agriculture.
  - c. IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences University of Florida).
  - d. Florida Department of Plant Industry.
  
2. The Extension Service was created by a legislative act called:
  - a. The Morrill Act (1862)
  - b. The Smith-Lever Act (1914)
  - c. The Hatch Act (1887)
  
3. The Extension Service is funded by:
  - a. The Federal Government.
  - b. The State of Florida.
  - c. Orange County
  - d. All of the above.
  
4. The Orange County Master Gardener Volunteers are required to volunteer how many hours to volunteer (public) service?
  - a. 35 hours for the first year after training.
  - b. 35 hours for each year they remain active.
  - c. 75 hours for the first year after training.
  - d. 75 hours for each year they remain active.
  
5. Orange County Master Gardener Volunteers are required to attain how many additional hours of horticultural training in order to re-certify for another year?
  - a. 3 hours.
  - b. 6 hours.
  - c. 10 hours.
  - d. 12 hours.

6. The main purpose of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program is to increase or extend the service and output of information offered by the Extension Service?
  - a. True.
  - b. False.
  
7. The Extension Service provides information to the community primarily in the program(s) and area(s) of:
  - a. Family and Consumer Sciences.
  - b. 4-H Youth.
  - c. Agriculture.
  - d. All of the above.
  
8. Master Gardener Volunteers make recommendations to home-owners based on:
  - a. Public sources such as books, magazines and newspaper articles.
  - b. Personal, practical experience.
  - c. Information generated by the University of Florida's IFAS.
  - d. All of the above.
  
9. The title "Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only in association with the Master Gardener Volunteer Program and not for commercial purposes.
  - a. True.
  - b. False.
  
10. Master Gardener Volunteers are occasionally called upon to extend information to people involved in commercial agricultural/horticultural endeavors.
  - a. True.
  - b. False.

## QUESTIONNAIRE #2

There are many reasons why individuals want to be a part of the Master Gardener Volunteer program. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions.

Instructions: Beside each comment below, write the number that best describes how important it is to you.

- 1 = Extremely Important Reason
- 2 = A very important Reason
- 3 = An important Reason
- 4 = A somewhat important Reason
- 5 = Of minor importance
- 6 = Not a reason or factor

**To become a Master Gardener Volunteer is important to me because:**

- \_\_\_a. I will have the opportunity to receive useful training.
- \_\_\_b. I will become a part of the University of Florida - IFAS.
- \_\_\_c. I will have the opportunity to share my knowledge with other gardeners.
- \_\_\_d. I will gain practical experience that can help me get a job.
- \_\_\_e. I will be able to provide a service to other people in my community and/or neighborhood.
- \_\_\_f. I can get a tax credit for my volunteer work.
- \_\_\_g. I will receive instruction and materials.
- \_\_\_h. I will be able to increase my knowledge in the area of gardening.
- \_\_\_i. I will gain a great deal of personal satisfaction.
- \_\_\_j. I will be able to creatively use my free time.
- \_\_\_k. I will be recognized by people in my community.
- \_\_\_l. I will be able to gain new skills as a gardener.
- \_\_\_m. I will be certified by the University of Florida Extension Service.
- \_\_\_n. (Other reasons: Please use space below)

**FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

**SECTION I:**

NAME: Mr./Mrs./Ms.

NICKNAME, if any:

ADDRESS:

HOME PHONE:

WORK PHONE:

EMAIL:

**SECTION II:**

Have you applied for Master Gardener Volunteer training before? (Circle answer)

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes                      \_\_\_\_\_ No

If yes, when? \_\_\_\_\_ where? \_\_\_\_\_

Please list any training and/or personal experience you have had in gardening, horticulture, farming, or related fields:

What, if any, gardening affiliations do you have, e.g. garden clubs, horticultural societies, etc.?

What types of volunteer work have you done in the past or are currently doing?

What is your job status at present? Please check (✓) below:

\_\_\_\_\_ Work full-time    \_\_\_\_\_ Work part-time    \_\_\_\_\_ Retired    \_\_\_\_\_ Other (please explain)

If you are working or retired, what is/was your professional background?

If you are working now, how will you adjust your work schedule to accommodate the training and volunteer commitment?

What talents, hobbies, or interests do you have that might enhance the Master Gardener Volunteer program?

How did you learn about the Master Gardener Volunteer Program?

Why do you want to become a Master Gardener Volunteer?

What types of Master Gardener Volunteer activities are you interested in? (e.g., presentations, demonstration gardens, phone, plant clinics, etc.)

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List all periods during the next year (January - December) that you know you will not be available for volunteer service due to vacations, job, etc.:

What are the best days for you to do volunteer work, e.g., every Friday afternoon, first Thursday of each month, etc.?

**SECTION IV:**

I wish to become a Master Gardener Volunteer and would like to be accepted into the program. I understand that if accepted and I successfully complete the course of instruction, I agree to donate at least 75 hours of volunteer service in the next 12 months and earn 10 hours of continuing education through the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. I have also read, understand, and agree to abide by the "Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardener Volunteers".

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Signature:

## **INTERVIEW REQUEST FORM**

Prior to final selection for training, all Master Gardener Volunteer candidates meet informally with an Extension Service Agent and several Master Gardener Volunteers. This meeting gives you the opportunity to visit the Extension Service office (if you've never done so), and to meet and talk to the Master Gardener Coordinator and several current Master Gardener Volunteers.

These interviews take only about 15-20 minutes and are scheduled for July 21, 22, 23, 24, and 25, 2008. Interviews will be conducted on the hour and half-hour from 9:00 till 11:30 a.m. and 1:00 till 3:30 p.m. each day. Please indicate below the date and time of your choice. Every effort will be made to meet your request. Your interview date/time will be confirmed by telephone no later than July 15.

On arrival, please check in with the receptionist at the Extension Education Center.

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### **DETACH AND RETURN WITH YOUR APPLICATION**

NAME:

PHONE NUMBER

Preferred Date:      July 21          July 22          July 23          July 24          July 25  
(Please Circle One)

Preferred Time: \_\_\_\_\_