

Policy Statement

Every Master Gardener Volunteer trainee is asked to read and sign a copy of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program policy statement. This policy statement describes the two requirements necessary for achieving Master Gardener Volunteer status: the educational training course and the volunteer commitment. It also explains the requirements for annual recertification and how to become active when you have been inactive for one or more years.

Additional important information in the policy statement is Master Gardener Volunteer liability coverage and the MSU Extension policy regarding criminal history background checks for all volunteers.

Finally, the policy statement contains a Standards of Behavior section that every Master Gardener Volunteer trainee must agree to follow.

If you have not already read and signed a copy of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program policy statement, please do so now. A copy of the policy statement follows.

Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Policy Statement

Mission

Biological environments are essential to life. Michigan State University is a primary provider of plant research and education, dedicated to the preservation and enrichment of life. The Master Gardener Volunteer Program, available to all citizens of Michigan, is designed to develop a cadre of Michigan State University Extension (MSUE) volunteers trained in horticulture. Their knowledge and skills related to basic plant science and home gardening enables these volunteers to improve the quality of life in their communities. This is accomplished by increasing people's appreciation for and use of plants and by providing them with instruction on growing plants using environmentally sound practices.

Qualifications

An individual interested in becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer must possess the following qualifications:

- A strong interest in horticulture and home gardening.
- Willingness and availability to undertake extensive training in consumer horticulture practices.
- Willingness and ability to provide 40 hours of horticulture-related volunteer community service as approved by MSUE.
- Ability to communicate and share knowledge effectively and diplomatically with others.
- Willingness to support MSUE staff in giving citizens up-to-date consumer horticulture information.

Educational Training Course

County Master Gardener Volunteer Programs will offer the following core training classes:

- Orientation to MSUE and Master Gardener Volunteer Program
- Plant Science
- Soils for Plant Growth
- Flower Gardening
- Lawn Care
- Vegetable Culture
- Small Fruit Culture
- Tree Fruit Culture
- Woody Ornamentals
- Integrated Pest Management
- Indoor Plants
- Household Pests

MSU Extension provides the formal training program. Instructors are Extension staff members, experienced Master Gardener Volunteers and other experts.

The training program provides a balanced, integrated, practical course in plant science. Special topics, based on local needs, may be added. Core training is held during 2-to3-month period, with followup training or in-service provided during the year according to local needs and resources.

Attendance: Each Master Gardener Volunteer trainee is expected to attend every classroom session. If a participant misses more than one session and does not arrange to make up the session, he or she cannot become a certified Master Gardener Volunteer.

Examination and quizzes: To become a Master Gardener Volunteer, trainees will take weekly quizzes and must pass a final examination with a score of 70 percent or better. The final examination, a take-home test, emphasizes an individual's ability to gather accurate information from class notes and other reference material. This emphasis on problem-solving techniques and resources will help Master Gardener Volunteers as they give horticultural assistance to others.

Volunteer Commitment

The Master Gardener Volunteer training course consists of a minimum of 40 hours of core instruction and 40 hours of volunteer work, in horticulture/gardening-related activities. The purpose of the volunteer requirement is to extend MSU Extension's educational programs in the areas of horticulture, gardening and small-scale food production.

These horticulture/gardening activities that count toward Master Gardener Volunteer certification must have educational value for others and be nonpaying for the Master Gardener Volunteer. The volunteer will provide reliable and accurate information to the public from requests received via telephone, office visits or letter inquiries and by use of displays, classes and workshops in matters related to home gardening.

At the discretion of each county Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator, 20 of the required 40 volunteer hours will be spent working on MSUE-directed projects and activities related to horticulture.

For the remaining 20 hours, participants are encouraged to volunteer their time in a way that is especially meaningful to them. Approval by the county Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator must be obtained before engaging in any volunteer activity. Through volunteering, trainees enrich their knowledge of horticulture, help others through education and launch exciting ideas.

Documentation: It is the responsibility of the Master Gardener Volunteer trainee to document his/her time and report that time in writing to the county Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator for tabulation.

Time limits: An individual has one year from the end of the Master Gardener Volunteer training course to complete the required 40 volunteer hours.

Certification

Participants receive Master Gardener Volunteer certification after successful completion of the educational training course and the volunteer requirement. Certificates and name badges are awarded.

Recertification

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

- Providing a minimum 15 hours of MSUE-approved volunteer service each year; and:
- Completing 5 additional hours of horticulture training each year. All educational programs sponsored by MSU and others must be approved by the county Master Gardener Volunteer coordinator. Full credit, hour for hour, will be issued for attending MSUE programs, state and international Master Gardener conferences and MSU courses. Courses *not* sponsored by MSU will be awarded one-half hour credit for each hour of class time.

Inactive Status

An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer is one who is unable to commit to the annual recertification requirement of 15 volunteer hours and five hours of horticulture training. For recertification, a Master Gardener Volunteer who has been inactive for one to three years must attend five hours of acceptable horticulture training for each year of inactive status. He/she must also provide 15 hours of volunteer service *for each year* of inactive status.

To be recertified, a Master Gardener Volunteer on inactive status for more than three years is required to:

- Retake the basic Master Gardener Volunteer core training to assure that his/her knowledge base is current, *and*:
- Provide 40 hours of volunteer service to the county MSU Extension office.

Out-of-State Transfers

Master Gardeners who are certified in another state may be admitted to a Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program by meeting the following criteria:

- Purchase a current MSUE Master Gardener Volunteer training manual.
- Score a minimum 70 percent on the take-home exam administered by MSUE. The test emphasizes an individual's ability to gather accurate information.
- Comply with the recertification process.

Liability

The MSU indemnification policy is extended to Master Gardener Volunteers performing services solely for and under the direction of MSUE.

Criminal History Background Check

As a policy of MSU Extension, a criminal history background check must be run for any Master Gardener Volunteer who will be volunteering under the following circumstance:

When working with children or impaired adults the volunteer will be alone, without another adult present for more than 15 minutes.

Guidelines

The title, MSUE Master Gardener Volunteer, is to be used only and exclusively by individuals trained and certified to help MSUE. The title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in the Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Training and experience gained by participating in the Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program are valuable, and may rightfully be listed as qualifications when seeking employment. Employed Master Gardener Volunteers are allowed to display credentials at their place of business.

On Master Gardener Volunteer speaking engagements, it is appropriate to receive payment for expenses only, such as supplies and mileage. If an honorarium is offered, it may be accepted and given to the county Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

Master Gardener Volunteers do not give specific recommendations for use of fertilizers and pesticides. Master Gardener Volunteers must encourage others to follow label recommendations included with all products.

Standards of Behavior

The standards of behavior are a contractual agreement accepted by volunteers who commit to the MSU Extension Master Gardener Program. These standards guide the volunteers' behavior during their involvement with the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Just as it is a privilege for MSU Extension to work with those who volunteer their time and talents to the Master Gardener Program, a volunteer's involvement in the program is a

privilege and a responsibility, not a right.

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program provides unbiased, research-based educational programs accessible to all Michigan residents. The primary purpose of the standards of behavior is to ensure the safety and well-being of all Master Gardener Volunteer Program participants (i.e., target audiences, professionals and volunteers.)

Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to function within the guidelines of Michigan State University, MSU Extension and the MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

The MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer will:

- Uphold volunteerism as an effective way to meet the horticultural needs of Michigan consumers.
- Uphold an individual's right to dignity, self-development, and self-direction.
- Accept supervision and support from professional Extension staff while involved in the program.
- Accept the responsibility to represent their individual county Master Gardener Volunteer Program and the Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program with dignity and pride by being positive mentors for others.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner, with fairness, honesty and integrity.
- Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies and guidelines established by their county Master Gardener Volunteer Program, the MSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program and Michigan State University Extension.
- Not commit a felonious criminal act.
- Comply with equal opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.
- Perform duties in a responsible and timely manner.
- Report immediately any threats to the volunteer's emotional or physical well-being to the county Extension professional coordinating the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.
- Accept the responsibility to promote and support Master Gardener Volunteer activities in order to develop an effective county, state and national program.
- Operate machinery, vehicles and other equipment in a responsible manner.

Acceptance of Policy

I have read and understand the Michigan State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer policy statement and standards of behavior outlined above. I agree to comply with the guidelines and fulfill the commitments required. I also understand that failure to comply with the above guidelines and policies may result in expulsion from the program at the discretion of the supervisory extension agent.

Name: _____ County: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Email: _____ Daytime phone: (____) _____

**Signature: _____ Date: _____

****Please *sign* this page and return it to your county Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator.**