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About the Texas Master Gardener Program

When the term "Master Gardener" was first coined in the early 1970s to describe a new Extension program in Washington State, few could have predicted it would spread into Texas and blossom into one of the most effective volunteer organizations in the State. The annual reports, history, and management guide chronicles the development, activities and impact of the Texas Master Gardener program, now known to be the largest in the nation.

Become a Texas Master Gardener

Who are Texas Master Gardeners?

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.

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 Extension office to provide horticultural-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. Contact your local Extension Office to see if there is a Master Gardener program in your county, not all counties have one. If there is a program, obtain an application from the Master Gardener Coordinator at the office.

Training

If accepted into the Master Gardener program in your county, you will attend a Master Gardener training course. Classes are taught by Texas AgriLife Extension specialists, agents, and local experts.

The program offers a minimum of 50 hours of instruction that covers topics including lawn care, ornamental trees and shrubs, insect, disease, and weed management; soils and plant nutrition, vegetable gardening; home fruit production; garden flowers; and water conservation. The training is offered at various times during the year at various locations across the state. Check with your County Extension office for specific locations, dates, and times.

Volunteer Commitment

In exchange for training, participants are asked to volunteer time to their County Extension program. At least 50 hours of volunteer service within one year following the training is required to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener."

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

Certification

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the training course and fulfilled their volunteer commitment.

For additional information, please contact the AgriLife Extension office at 903-675-6130.