



A Member of the University of Maine System

Master Gardener Volunteer Program Policy

What is the Master Gardener Program?

The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is a national program and in Maine is part of the University of Maine Cooperative Extension. The overall objective of the Master Gardener Program is to educate home gardeners, address community efforts related to horticulture and support the educational mission of the UMaine Extension. The mission of the UMaine Extension is to help Maine people improve their lives through an educational process that uses research-based knowledge focused on issues and needs.

Individuals apply for enrollment in the Master Gardener Volunteer training program to learn about horticulture. This training involves both classroom and hands-on experience. After their basic training, Master Gardeners volunteer a minimum of 40 hours of their time to develop, adapt and extend research-based horticultural information and educational programs to the residents of their respective county. Trainees will become certified Master Gardener Volunteers after successful completion of the training and 40-hours of volunteer time in an approved outreach project. Acceptable projects include garden/environmental exhibits, lectures or public presentations, and garden demonstration projects that are open and accessible to the public. Such activities may also include:

- ❖ Presentations to garden clubs, service organizations, schools and other community groups
- ❖ Writing horticulture related articles for local newspapers, newsletters, magazines and websites
- ❖ Educational gardening activities such as advising schools or community garden efforts, and projects located at public sites such as parks, historic properties or other public open spaces.
- ❖ Designing and/or producing educational exhibits or teaching aides
- ❖ Participating in special garden related efforts to reach citizens with disabilities or who are disadvantaged

All projects require the approval of the Master Gardener Program Coordinator.

Eligibility/Accessibility:

Any resident of Maine interested in studying horticulture and volunteering in community gardening projects may apply to the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Since we usually receive more applications than we can accommodate, applications are subject to screening for county residence, gardening and community service experience.

If you are a person with a disability and will need any accommodations to participate in this program, please call the County Extension Office listed at the end to discuss your needs. Please contact the Master Gardener Program Coordinator two weeks prior to the start of the training to assure fullest possible attention to your needs.

Initial Training:

The University of Maine Cooperative Extension will provide a minimum of 40 hours of Master Gardener volunteer training. Training will be interactive with lecture, hands-on learning demonstrations, and self-directed learning activities. Class participation, discussions, presentations and quizzes will be used to monitor progress of volunteers.

Certification:

The title of *Certified Master Gardener Volunteer* is awarded to participants who successfully complete both the training program and the 40 hours of volunteer time within a specified time. Participants must attend at least 80% of all training sessions; demonstrate knowledge and skills by achieving at least an overall average score of 70%. Individuals requiring special accommodation should make arrangements with the county Master Gardener Coordinator.

Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

The purpose of this policy is to clearly define for Master Gardener Volunteers and University of Maine Cooperative Extension staff what constitutes volunteer hours. This policy includes both Master Gardener Volunteers in training who are working towards their initial certification requirement of 40 hours of volunteer time, and certified Master Gardener Volunteers who are continuing in “active status” and who are required to volunteer 20 hours each year they remain active.

There are three categories of volunteer hours in the Master Gardener Program; all are of equal importance in meeting our Master Gardener Plan of Work goals and improving the lives of Maine people. We refer to these hours as **Administrative, Community and Education**.

Administrative volunteer hours include time conducting leadership and/or organizational activities of Master Gardener Volunteer programs and projects. Administrative time would include time spent planning and conducting meetings, developing communications, emails and letters, conducting surveys, entering data and other tasks involved in managing a Master Gardener project or supporting the state Home Horticulture Plan of Work. For example a volunteer may serve as a local project coordinator for Plant-A-Row for the Hungry in a particular county.

Community hours are contributed while working on Master Gardener-approved community

projects that are non-educational but which are in support of our Extension Master Gardener program mission. Such volunteer hours include time conducting approved community beautification projects, gleaning fields or growing food for Plant-A-Row for the Hungry, working to assist people who for reasons of age or physical disability need a helping hand to continue their passion for gardening in program such as Garden Angel.

Education hours are contributed while teaching or preparing Master Gardener or Extension educational programs, answering horticulture questions, developing educational materials, demonstration gardens, displays and resources, and writing newsletter articles or publications.

All Master Gardener Volunteer hours need to be conducted in conjunction with programs and projects which meet the approval of the local Master Gardener Volunteer program coordinator. Weight may be placed on certain types of hour categories if needed. County Master Gardener coordinators may require participation in particular projects.

The honor system is used to turn in valid hours using Master Gardener Volunteer program report forms available through the county programs. They are subject to review and approval by the UMaine Extension local Master Gardener program coordinator.

Travel to and from volunteer Master Gardner Volunteer Programs: Travel time may be reported on your Volunteer Report for volunteer hours. Time spent traveling while conducting Master Gardner Volunteer programs may be included in your volunteer hours contributed. We encourage volunteers to track mileage traveled as a University of Maine Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Volunteer as you may claim that as a tax deduction. *Mileage and time spent traveling to and participating in educational programs for your ongoing learning does not constitute volunteer hours.*

Calculating Master Gardener Hours

MG volunteers may consider reporting hours trivial, but the importance of this is critical to the success and continued support of the UMaine Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Quantifying time invested in these activities and the number of people reached through our activities are important measures that demonstrate the worth of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Potential funding is more easily attained when significant efforts and impact can be proven. Also, the ability to successfully compete for funding is critical to our financial survival. Master Gardener Volunteers should be made aware of the value in reporting their activities and time spent in service.

Valid Master Gardener Hours

- Any volunteer time accepted or approved by the local MG coordinator (Extension staff in charge of the local program) counts as volunteer hours. UMaine Extension program coordinators may request some of the volunteer's time be spent on a specific project or type of volunteer project.
- Attendance at educational programs where Master Gardener Volunteers are receiving further training does not count as volunteer hours.
- Travel time to and from a volunteer activity counts toward volunteer hours.

- An example of time spent on activities which are typically NOT approved by the local Master Gardener coordinator includes setting up chairs at a local garden

club meeting. However, if you were teaching a gardening seminar to the local garden club and are *clearly doing such in your role as University of Maine Cooperative Extension Master Gardener* then the time would be approved by the local Master Gardener coordinator.

Any questions regarding what constitutes volunteer time should be directed to the local Master Gardener Program coordinator.

Use of the title “Master Gardener”

The title Master Gardener should only be used by individuals trained in a Cooperative Extension program. The title is valid only when used by an active Master Gardener who is participating in a program approved by the local Master Gardener Coordinator. When an individual ceases to be active in the Master Gardener program, their designation as Master Gardener ceases.

Master Gardeners should not display credentials of give the appearance of being a Master Gardener at a place of business unless that place has been designated as a site for Extension education. The title “Master Gardener” should not be used in a manner which implies Cooperative Extension endorsement of any product of place of business.

The title Master Gardeners should be used only when doing unpaid volunteer work for Extension. When experienced Master Gardeners speak before groups on horticultural subjects, they may accept unsolicited reimbursements (such as reimbursements for expenses) or non-monetary gifts. If an organization such as a garden club or Adult Education Program offers an honorarium, such funds should be donated to the UMaine Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program in that county to support on-going programs and projects. It is inappropriate, however, to seek speaking engagements for pay while participating in an authorized Extension activity and using the title Master Gardener.

Master Gardeners trained and/or certified from other areas:

Individuals who have completed the Master Gardener Volunteer Training in another state or county in Maine may be certified as a Master Gardener in Maine. This certification is approved by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.

Continuing Certification:

Master Gardener Volunteers who wish to remain certified and active in the program must continue to volunteer at least 20 hours per year and periodically attend advanced training opportunities. These opportunities include field days, tours, the annual Maine Master Gardener Conference, or special workshops and courses. There is no fee for continuing as a Master Gardener Volunteer. Master Gardener Volunteers may make arrangements with the coordinator for a temporary leave of absence.

Time/Activity Records:

Master Gardener Volunteers are required to complete a monthly time log to report their activities, time spent and contacts made. This minimal record-keeping process helps the local Extension staff monitor the progress and effectiveness of individuals’ outreach efforts. Volunteer reports can have a great impact on future funding for this program.

Pesticide Recommendations:

Because Cooperative Extension is liable for its advice, and because pesticide recommendations for organic or synthetic products change constantly, only Extension personnel may recommend pesticides when representing Cooperative Extension. Master Gardener Volunteers are encouraged to refer all requests for pesticide recommendations to the county Extension office or the University of Maine Cooperative Extension Pest Management Office, 491 College Avenue, Orono, Maine 04473; Telephone 1-800-287-0279; or web site www.pronewengland.org .

Fee:

There is a fee for the basic Master Gardener Training course. This fee is consistent statewide and covers expenses that include an extensive reference manual, other publications, supplies and meeting expenses. The fee is due on the first day of class following acceptance in the program (if necessary, other payment arrangements can be made). If the fee is a barrier to an individual, he or she may contact the county Master Gardener Coordinator. Limited scholarships are available.

County and State Office Information

Androscoggin & Sagadahoc Counties Office

24 Main St.
Lisbon Falls, ME 04252-1505
(207) 353-5550
1-800-287-1458 (in Maine)
e-mail: andsag@umext.maine.edu

Aroostook County Offices

22 Hall St., Suite 101
Fort Kent, ME 04743-7131
(207) 834-3905
1-800-287-1421 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesnas@umext.maine.edu

Houlton Road
PO Box 727
Presque Isle, ME 04769-0727
(207) 764-3361
1-800-287-1462 (in Maine)
e-mail: cescas@umext.maine.edu

Central Building
PO Box 8
Houlton, ME 04730-0008
(207) 532-6548
1-800-287-1469 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesso@umext.maine.edu

Cumberland County

PO Box 9300
15 Chamberlain Ave.
Portland, ME 04104-9300
(207) 780-4205
1-800-287-1471 (in Maine)
e-mail: cescmb@umext.maine.edu

Franklin County

147 Farmington Falls Road, #2
Farmington, ME 04938-6403
(207) 778-4650

1-800-287-1478 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesfrk@umext.maine.edu

Hancock County

63 Boggy Brook Road
Ellsworth, ME 04605-9540
(207) 667-8212
1-800-287-1479 (in Maine)
e-mail: ceshnk@umext.maine.edu

Kennebec County

125 State St., 3rd Floor
Augusta, ME 04330-5692
(207) 622-7546
1-800-287-1481 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesken@umext.maine.edu

Knox and Lincoln Counties

377 Manktown Road
Waldoboro, ME 04572
(207) 832-0343
1-800-244-2104 (in Maine)
e-mail: ceskl@umext.maine.edu

Oxford County

9 Olson Rd.
South Paris, ME 04281-6402
(207) 743-6329
1-800-287-1482 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesoxf@umext.maine.edu

Penobscot County

307 Maine Ave.
Bangor, ME 04401-4331
(207) 942-7396
1-800-287-1485 (in Maine)
e-mail: cespen@umext.maine.edu

Piscataquis County

165 East Main St.
Dover-Foxcroft, ME 04426-1396
(207) 564-3301

1-800-287-1491 (in Maine)
e-mail: cespsq@umext.maine.edu

Somerset County

7 County Drive
Skowhegan, ME 04976-4209
(207) 474-9622
1-800-287-1495 (in Maine)
e-mail: cessom@umext.maine.edu

Waldo County

992 Waterville Road
Waldo, ME 04915-3117
(207) 342-5971
1-800-287-1426 (in Maine)
e-mail: ceswal@umext.maine.edu

Washington County

34 Center Street
Machias, ME 04654
Phone: (207) 255-3345 or
1-800-287-1542 (in Maine)
E-mail: ceswsh@umext.maine.edu

York County

21 Bradeen Street, Suite 302
Springvale, ME 04083
(207) 324-2814
1-800-287-1535 (in Maine)
e-mail: cesyrk@umext.maine.edu

Administrative Offices

University of Maine Cooperative
Extension
5741 Libby Hall
Orono, ME 04469-5741
(207) 581-3188
1-800-287-0274 (in Maine)
TDD: 1-800-287-8957 (in Maine)

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