



POLICY STATEMENT AND GUIDELINES

PURPOSE:

The West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener Program is a volunteer educational program designed to meet the horticultural needs of citizens of West Virginia. Its purpose is to train volunteers and utilize their expertise to teach people more about plants, their culture, and importance to the environment and to our quality of life. Extension Master Gardener volunteers provide technical assistance to their county Extension office in order that consumer horticulture activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently carried out.

Extension Master Gardener trainees receive formal training from their county Extension office covering a wide range of pertinent horticultural topics. To become an Extension Master Gardener, the trainee must complete the training program, pass the required exams, volunteer a specified number of hours to Extension, and do a required presentation during training.

The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of different ways depending on the determined needs of the county residents. After the completion of the initial required volunteer time, volunteers are encouraged to continue to assist with horticultural program delivery as a West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

TRAINING:

The formal training program is the responsibility of the County Extension Faculty managing the program. Instructors are West Virginia University faculty, Extension specialists, experienced Extension Master Gardeners, and other experts.

The training program is to provide a balanced, integrated, practical course in plant science. Core topics that are to be part of the training in every county are Orientation to Extension and the MG Program; Basic Botany; Soils and Soil Fertility; Basic Entomology; Plant Disease Diagnosis; Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Use and Safety; Home Lawn Care; Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs; Trees and Shrubs; Home Vegetable production; Home Fruit production; Houseplants; and Communication Skills. Special topics, based on local needs, may be part of the curriculum.

FEES:

To cover the cost of training manuals and supplies, a non-refundable standardized fee approved by the State Coordinator will be charged. Upon an individual's acceptance into the program, this fee will be paid at the county level.

ATTENDANCE:

1. Each Extension Master Gardener trainee is expected to attend every class session.
2. The trainee is responsible for initiating provisions to make up any missed sessions.
3. 80% attendance at training sessions must be maintained for completion.

EXAMINATIONS AND QUIZZES:

1. There will be an open-book exam to test the trainee's abilities to retrieve information from reference materials.
2. Trainees must accurately complete 80% or better.

CERTIFICATION:

A West Virginia Master Gardener must attend the prescribed hours of instruction, pass the final examination and fulfill the 40-hour volunteer commitment before becoming a certified Extension Master Gardener. Upon completion he/she will be awarded a West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener certificate and name badge. This certification is restrictive in nature in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in the West Virginia Extension Master Gardener Program and for one year only.

VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT:

1. Attend required training sessions consisting of a minimum of 40 hours of instruction.
2. Perform an equivalent number (40) of horticulturally significant volunteer hours for West Virginia University Extension Service. Normally, only unpaid public service in WVU Extension-sponsored activities counts toward the requirement. Other volunteer activities may be counted after receiving prior approval by the local coordinator. The required volunteer hours should be completed within one year of completion of the training course.
3. Each Extension Master Gardener will have:
 - Completed application
 - Signed Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement
 - Signed WVU Extension Code of Conduct (completed annually)
 - Two references as part of background check
 - Background check (completed every three years)
 - Service record on file at local WVU Extension Office

In addition, **all individuals working with youth:**

- **Will be required to complete WVU Children on Campus training and certification annually**
- **Will be required to complete Title IX training every three years (New!)**

This information is treated confidentially. Volunteers' records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained Extension staff. It is the **responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the information on their application (i.e. address) and their service record is kept current and accurate.** This is necessary for liability reasons and for the protection of the Volunteer as well as program clientele.

4. Maintain an activity log and submit it to the county Extension office on a monthly, quarterly or yearly basis, as required by county procedures.
5. Attend meetings as scheduled to update information, discuss gardening problems and coordinate Extension Master Gardener activities.
6. Attending to state-wide projects: **(New!)**
 - Currently we have two state-wide projects: the Demonstration Garden at the State Fairgrounds in Greenbrier County and Planning and Organizing West Virginia Extension Master Gardener Association Annual Conference.
 - Organizing WVEMGA Annual Conference:
 - i. Each local County EMG Association has the opportunity to choose a specific part of the Conference that the Association members would like to organize and work on insuring the number of volunteers necessary to complete the task at hand.
 - Demonstration Garden at the State Fairgrounds in Greenbrier County – Master Gardener volunteers of Greenbrier County have been primary caretakers of this project for the whole-year period with some extra collaboration and help from other Counties during the ten-day Fair period.

Demonstration Garden has been a great project and is the face of the Extension Master Gardener Program not only for the Greenbrier County but for the whole State. In order to maintain this status and continue to generate great praises it is necessary to have a few guidelines in reference to the maintenance of the garden:

- i. For the Master Gardeners in the host county (Greenbrier) is strongly suggested to commit certain number of hours attending to the needs of the garden (planning, planting, caring and maintaining, cleaning and preparing the garden for the main showcase during the State Fair period when hundreds of visitors go through it enjoying its beauty and learning about gardening possibilities.
- ii. The incoming EMGs in Greenbrier County are expected to commit 10 hours of their required 40 hours for initial certification in the Demonstration Garden under the supervision of more seasoned EMGs as their mentors...
- iii. Mentors: to become a mentor, Extension Master Gardener has to have at least three years as Extension MG volunteer and desire and aptitude for mentoring up to three people over a period of a whole year.
- iv. For EMG re-certification process each Extension Master Gardener of Greenbrier County is expected commit at least two (2) hours in spring and two (2) hours in the fall {out of twenty (20) required service hours} to the maintenance needs of the Demonstration Garden.

SPEAKING:

When Extension Master Gardeners speak before groups on horticulture topics it is permissible for them to accept unsolicited reimbursements or gifts. It is inappropriate; however, to seek paid speaking engagements while participating in an authorized Extension function and while using the WVU Extension Master Gardener title. In all cases the county Extension office policy on speaking engagement fees should be honored. When a Master Gardener travels out of county for a speaking engagement, it is appropriate to request payment for travel expenses from the county Extension office or other organization requesting the Extension Master Gardener's services.

USE OF TITLE:

The title 'West Virginia Extension Master Gardener' is to be used only and exclusively by individuals trained and certified to assist the West Virginia University Extension Service, and the title is valid only when the volunteer is participating in the West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener Program. The title Extension Master Gardener is to be used only when doing unpaid, volunteer work in a program activity approved by an Extension agent.

The training and experience gained by participating in the West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener Program are valuable, and may rightfully be listed as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Extension Master Gardeners should not display credentials or give the appearance of being an Extension Master Gardener at the place of business, unless the place of business is specifically designated by an Extension agent as an Extension Master Gardener clinic location.

PESTICIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

When making recommendations that include the use of fertilizers and pesticides, Extension Master Gardeners must follow current Extension recommendations. In addition to their training, Extension Master Gardeners receive diagnostic support from the Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic at WVU and from various Extension specialists. Horticultural problems that are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations should be referred to an Extension agent. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops should be referred to an Extension agent.

RECERTIFICATION:

Extension Master Gardeners must be recertified each year to remain on the “active” list and maintain the Extension Master Gardener title.

An Extension Master Gardener may recertify for participation in the program for another year by:

1. Committing to a minimum of twenty (20) hours of volunteer work to be completed each year **and**
2. Completing or having completed ten (10) additional hours of horticulture training each year. Examples of additional training are: New Extension Master Gardener training, Extension Master Gardener Advanced Training, State/Regional/International MG conferences, University or Community College courses, Arboretum and Botanical Garden seminars, and annual horticulture conferences. The training must be approved by the county Extension agent responsible for supervising the Extension Master Gardener Program.

INACTIVE STATUS:

An inactive Extension Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional twenty (20) hours service plus ten (10) hours advanced training at present, but would like the opportunity to recertify themselves in the future.

The following policies apply:

1. An inactive Extension Master Gardener is one who is in good standing, having **completed** the original commitment of training, exam, and volunteer service.
2. The inactive Extension Master Gardener must attend or have attended ten (10) hours of acceptable horticulture training for each year of inactive status. (See Recertification #2 for examples of training)
3. An inactive Extension Master Gardener may recertify within three (3) years as long as the above criteria are met. Individuals on inactive status for more than three (3) years are required to retake the New Master Gardener training.

SEMI-RETIRED STATUS: (New!)

An Extension Master Gardener in good standing can request to be awarded a “semi-retired status” if he/she wishes to be active EMG volunteer but is unable to fulfill volunteer service requirements due to diminished physical capabilities. The following policies apply:

1. In order to qualify for “semi-retired status”, an EMG must have minimum of 10 years of volunteer service
2. Maintain six (6) educational hours per year

EMERITUS STATUS: (New!)

An Extension Master Gardener in good standing can request to be awarded “emeritus status” if he/she cannot continue to volunteer due to health reasons and/or diminished physical capabilities. In retirement, they maintain use of the Extension Master Gardener Emeritus title with certain restrictions. The following policies apply:

1. To qualify for an Extension Master Gardener Emeritus status, an EMG must have minimum of 10 years of volunteer Service
2. An Extension Master Gardener Emeritus will not have volunteering privileges*
3. An Extension Master Gardener Emeritus will not have voting privileges

**Only “active” EMG can engage in volunteering activities and be covered under the WVU Liability Insurance.*

OUT-OF-STATE:

An Extension Master Gardeners who are **certified** in another state may be admitted to the West Virginia University Extension Master Gardener program by meeting the following criteria:

1. Acquire or be provided with a current West Virginia Extension Master Gardener training manual.
2. Acquire or be provided with a West Virginia Extension Master Gardener name badge.
3. Score a minimum of 80% on a final exam administered by WVU Extension Service.
4. Meet the recertification requirements listed above.

DISMISSAL OF A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

Repeated and consistent disregard for the policies and guidelines established by the WVU Extension Service and the West Virginia Extension Master Gardener Program are grounds for dismissal as an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

When the county Extension Master Gardener coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer must be informed in writing of the termination of his/her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become part of the volunteer’s confidential file.

Extension Master Gardeners are not to advertise their name or their place of business nor be listed on the advertisements of business paces as West Virginia Master Gardeners. Because the Extension Master Gardener Program is a West Virginia University Extension public service program, providing unbiased research-based information appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or implying West Virginia University Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business is improper and grounds for dismissal from the program.

LIABILITY:

Extension Master Gardener volunteers are insured under the West Virginia Board of Risk liability insurance program provided to WVU. Coverage applies **only** to individual volunteers while they are performing their volunteer activities for West Virginia University Extension. The coverage does not extend to other organizations or groups that volunteers are working with. Volunteers may not sign contracts or leases assuming liability responsibility on behalf of other organizations or groups.

I have read and understand the West Virginia Master Gardener Program Policy Statement and 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 West Virginia Master Gardener Program at the discretion of the supervising Extension agent.

Name	Date	County
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Statement of Nondiscrimination

Programs and activities offered by West Virginia University are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age veteran status, sexual orientation or national origin.

Issues in furtherance of Cooperative Extension work, Acts of May 8 and June 30, 1914 in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Agriculture Director, Cooperative Extension Service, and West Virginia University.