

# **Handbook for the Angelina County Volunteer Master Gardeners**

*The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer development program offered by Texas Cooperative Extension and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects. Program objectives are implemented through the training and "employing" local volunteers, known as Master Gardeners.*

From The Texas Master Gardener Management Guide

Developed January 2004

## **Preface**

I began the volunteer Master Gardener program in an effort to increase my own and this office's ability to reach those needing information regarding home horticulture. I spent an inordinate amount of time with these clients and still do. The perpetuation of information truly only serves to increase the number of questions. To follow the maxim: "The more I know, the more I know I don't know."

Agricultural agents face a wide range of issues: Agri-business issues related to crops and livestock; natural resource concerns regarding pesticidal use and misuse; land and aquaculture management subjects; home horticulture for beautification and nutrition; and limited economic development of the community. A Master Gardener program provides additional ammunition in home horticulture.

There is no incentive or compensation provided by Extension for having Master Gardeners, financial or otherwise. The only reward comes from job satisfaction. In fact, I caution other agents who say that they want to start a Master Gardener program to "save time" and reduce the load of questions.

This Handbook is my first attempt to articulate this portion of the program in Angelina County for which I am responsible in written form. This will certainly develop and change over time.

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# The Angelina County Master Gardener Program

## **Purpose:**

Master Gardener is an Extension title to describe trained volunteers who assist the local Extension staff with various phases of home horticultural programming. These volunteers are brought into the Extension role to aid in the dissemination of research based information to county residents.

On a national level, the main activity of Master Gardeners has been to answer gardening questions at county Cooperative Extension offices or community gardening clinics. Still other opportunities exist for community service. From the beginning, the program diversified, reflecting the skills and individuality of the volunteers. Many Master Gardeners teach gardening classes, others write horticultural articles, and some operate home pages on the World Wide Web. Master Gardeners also address important social and environmental issues in their communities. They educate the public and build demonstration gardens test new vegetable varieties and donate excess produce to food banks. In some communities, low-income citizens learn to grow their own food and become more self-sufficient with the help of Master Gardeners. The possibilities are unlimited.

The Master Gardener program is more than a horticulture class or a garden club. It is not a club. It's aim is not to develop expertise in personal fields of interest. It is a volunteer group that helps residents in their communities better understand how to care for their landscape.

## **Projects:**

The project work conducted in each county reflect the programmatic emphasis of the county agent in reaching issues of the public. The following list is not static.

Farmers Market demonstration garden  
Office Assistance  
Fall Landscaping Seminar  
Spring Landscaping Seminar (2005)  
Newspaper Articles

Jr Master Gardener programs  
Web-page  
Speaking Engagements  
Meetings  
Home Show booth

**Certification:**

Upon acceptance by application, Master Gardener interns must complete the course work and then complete a matching number of hours of volunteer work in the first year. Upon meeting this first requirement, the Volunteer Master Gardener title is kept with 20 volunteer hours each year with 12 hours of continuing education. No more than half of the required volunteer hours may be from Association work.

**Continuing Education:**

Volunteer Master Gardeners in Angelina County are required to obtain 12 hours annually of continuing education. These can be from lectures, short courses, seminars, or special studies where relevant home horticultural information is gained.

**Fund Raising :**

As a rule, Angelina County Extension horticulture programs will not charge for education. Only in the case where supplies/books/plant material/food or other significant expenses are incurred will a fee be assessed. Fund raising will be kept to a minimum.

**The Association:**

The Association serves two purposes. It is an organizational body that offers financial opportunity not afforded the county office and is a place of fellowship for the members. While association participation is not required, it is encouraged.

For additional information please read the full text of The Texas Master Gardener Management Guide which can be found at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu/mastergd/tmgmgal.html> Below is the full text of the first few pages of the Guide.

# **The Texas Master Gardener Management Guide**

## **Introduction**

I. The Texas Master Gardener Program creates a corps of volunteers with extraordinary talents and abilities. It is imperative that this resource for meeting Extension's goals be understood and managed properly. In making the decision to establish a Master Gardener Program, not only must the time and effort necessary to begin and maintain the program be considered but, more importantly, how the volunteer service from the program will be utilized. Master Gardeners form a network of highly qualified and concerned people who are capable of implementing a wide range of activities useful to the community.

To consider these volunteers cheap labor, useful in handling the less demanding parts of Extension's work overload, is inappropriate. Master Gardeners are trained to help with the work of the Extension office, yet they are not the usual employees. They are loaded with potential that must be used in the best way possible. When a Master Gardener is recruited, Extension obtains horticultural skills in addition to any number of other abilities, including: teaching, public speaking, writing, publishing, managing, designing, analyzing, human relations, mass communication, and computer software and web design. This guide offers information and suggestions for beginning and managing a Master Gardener program successfully.

## **Defining the Program**

The Master Gardener Program is a volunteer development program offered by Texas Cooperative Extension and is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information and improve the quality of life through horticultural projects. Program objectives are implemented through the training and "employing" local volunteers, known as Master Gardeners. They aid Extension by conducting school garden projects; answering telephone requests for horticultural information; establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens; working with special audiences in the community; and designing and implementing community improvement projects, as well as coordinating Master Gardener projects.

## **Program Objectives**

The objectives of the Master Gardener Programs include:

- to expand the capabilities of Texas Cooperative Extension to disseminate horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community
- to develop and enhance community projects related to horticulture, including: horticultural therapy projects, community gardens, and demonstration gardens
- to develop a Master Gardener network to assist in administration of the local Master Gardener Program

to enhance 4-H programs through the establishment of 4-H horticultural clubs and JuniorMaster Gardener groups

### **Responsibilities of Texas Cooperative Extension**

The Master Gardener program is administered by Texas Cooperative Extension. Responsibilities of Extension include:

- recruiting and selecting participants in the Master Gardener Program
- coordinating, conducting and funding training for Master Gardener volunteers
- certifying and recertifying Master Gardeners using State Master Gardener Guidelines
- identifying, developing and determining volunteer activities and projects for Master Gardeners which support Extension's educational mission
- approving, recording and reporting volunteer service of the Master Gardeners
- recognizing Master Gardeners for volunteer service and leadership
- facilitating communications between Extension personnel and Master Gardeners

These responsibilities are often shared with individual Master Gardeners and/or the leadership of a Master Gardener Association; however, the ultimate accountability for these actions lie with the local County Extension Agent or staff member who serves as Master Gardener Coordinator.

The Master Gardener Coordinator may in fact recruit Master Gardeners to serve as unpaid staff to assist in coordinating projects and activities. For example, Master Gardeners often serve as coordinators for speakers bureaus, school garden programs, demonstration and beautification gardens, and more. This staff of volunteers meet regularly with the Master Gardener Coordinator to oversee the County Master Gardener Program.

### **Master Gardener Associations**

The idea of a Master Gardener Association may confuse some Master Gardeners. Some feel that since they are working for Extension, it is Extension's role to provide the association. Others feel that an association would separate them from Extension. County Master Gardener Programs can be managed without an association, yet the strong desire exists among Master Gardeners to meet on a regular basis for purposes of education, fellowship and service. Master Gardeners are the ideal group to coordinate these regular meetings and an "association" is often a natural organizational result of these meetings.

Another primary reason for a Master Gardener Association is financial independence. A Master Gardener Program does not need a large amount to be effective. Generally, Extension is able to fund basic program needs, such as office space, telephone and copying. However, Extension often does not have the available funds needed for specific Master Gardener activities and

support. In addition, Extension has specific policies regarding Extension agents soliciting and handling monies from community organizations, foundations or corporations.

Associations have more freedom to raise money needed through several means. Some examples might include: conducting plant sales, donating unsolicited money received from speaking engagements; or soliciting grant funds or sponsorships for projects. Funds generated or received by Master Gardener Associations provide support for educational projects, computer and office equipment for Master Gardeners and/or agents, horticultural libraries and resources, college scholarships, and educational and recreational activities for the Master Gardeners.

Texas Cooperative Extension will recognize and register Master Gardener Associations, which adhere to the following guidelines:

- the association consists of certified volunteers (Master Gardeners) who serve as representatives of Texas Cooperative Extension, thus affiliating closely with the local county Extension office

- a staff member of the local county Extension office serves as Advisor to the Association leadership

### **Texas Master Gardener Title Defined**

The title, Texas Master Gardener, is to be used only by individuals trained in the Texas Master Gardener program to assist Texas Cooperative Extension. A trainee must receive a minimum of 50 hours of instruction, pass an examination administered by Extension and volunteer a minimum of 50 hours of service to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener." Once a trainee completes the instruction and examination phase, the individual gains the title of "Master Gardener Intern." From that point, the Intern has a maximum of one year to complete a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service. Master Gardener trainees, Interns and Master Gardeners are encouraged to participate in local Master Gardener associations/groups and to attend State/Regional Master Gardener Conferences.

It is important to note that the State training and volunteer requirements are minimums. County Extension Agents have the authority to increase these requirements. Documentation requirements and validation of training and volunteer service hours are under the purview of the County Extension Agent or individual designated by the agent. Modifying Master Gardener Association by-laws regarding certification (or recertification) does not supercede State or County Master Gardener Program Guidelines.

### **Recertification of Master Gardeners**



In order to retain the Texas Master Gardener title, individuals are required **each year** to participate in a minimum of 6 hours of recertification training and provide an additional 12 hours of volunteer service through the local Extension office. Again documentation requirements and validation of training and volunteer service hours for recertification are under the purview of the County Extension Agent or individual designated by the agent.

The title of Texas Master Gardener is valid only when the volunteer is participating in a Master Gardener program being conducted by Texas Cooperative Extension. When an individual ceases active participation in the Master Gardener program and/or does not meet recertification requirements, the individual's certification as a Texas Master Gardener becomes void. The County Extension Agents, serving as Master Gardener Coordinators, are charged to maintain this guideline.

### **Master Gardener Leave of Absence**

On occasion, a Master Gardener Intern or Texas Master Gardener is unable to fulfill the requirements to obtain or maintain certification due to illness, illness in the family, or other personal situation. In cases such as these, a "Leave of Absence" can be granted by the County Master Gardener Coordinator. This decision is generally made with input from the individual and local Master Gardener leadership. The Leave of Absence would be for a specified time period and may have specific training and/or service requirements for the individual to regain full status as a Master Gardener Intern or Texas Master Gardener.

### **When to Use the Texas Master Gardener Title**

Graduates of the Texas Master Gardener Program should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Texas Master Gardener at a place of business unless that location is designated as a Master Gardener educational activity location by the local Extension office. Texas Master Gardeners must not use the title, Texas Master Gardener, in any form of advertisement. Implying Texas Cooperative Extension endorsement of any product or place of business is improper. The Texas Master Gardener program is a public service program operated by Texas Cooperative Extension to provide unbiased information, and the Texas Master Gardener title is to be used only when doing unpaid volunteer work in this program. When Texas Master Gardeners speak before groups on horticultural subjects it is permissible for them to accept unsolicited reimbursements or gifts.

### **Texas Master Gardener Handbook**

The *Texas Master Gardener Handbook* will be sold to certified Master Gardeners (including trainees) of Texas Cooperative Extension for a set fee (contact the Extension Publications office or State Master Gardener office). This fee includes certificates for Master Gardener certification and recertification, and wallet cards for Master Gardener Interns. Handbooks purchased by non-Master Gardeners are at a higher cost, unless special arrangements are approved through the State Master Gardener office.

## **Value of Texas Master Gardener Training**

Through Master Gardener training, amateur and novice gardeners can advance their gardening expertise with up-to-date horticultural information, as well as gain considerable self-satisfaction. For professional horticulturists, Master Gardener training can provide invaluable education and meaningful experiences which may be included as qualifications for employment and/or maintaining competence. The volunteer aspect of the Master Gardener program allows individuals to dedicate their time and talents to educate, enhance, and beautify their local community utilizing the science and art of horticulture.

## **Pesticide Recommendations by Master Gardeners**

When making recommendations which include the use of pesticides, Texas Master Gardeners must follow the current recommendations found in the various publications available from Texas Cooperative Extension. Use of other pesticide recommendations, chemical or "organic," is not approved. When making pesticide recommendations, if more than one product is listed as satisfactory, each product should be recommended. Cultural problems and soil additives which are not specifically covered by Extension recommendations and publications should be recommended only after consultation with County Extension Agents or Specialists. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest management on such crops are to be referred to the local county Extension personnel.

# **Position Descriptions**

**(More need to be added)**

# **Educational Coordinator**

A one year position running length of calendar year.

## **Qualifications:**

Must be a certified Angelina County Master Gardener;

Able to plan, coordinate, and organize with multiple presentations at different times;

Understands media outlets and means of utilizing them.

## **Position Responsibilities:**

Plan, coordinate and conduct educational meetings for weekday, Saturday or evening programs. Responsible for securing speakers, providing publicity to media, providing amenities (bathroom, food and drink when necessary). Must have close working relationship with County Extension Agent, County Extension Staff, and Farmers Market Coordinator.

## **Goals for the Farmers Market project:**

1. Conduct 10 Brown Bag luncheons.
2. 4 other educational programs/ meetings (evening or Saturday a.m.)
3. Utilize Angelina County Farmers Market when possible

# Farmers Market Coordinator

A one year position running length of calendar year with preference given to the previous assistant coordinator.

## **Qualifications:**

Must be a certified Angelina County Master Gardener;  
Understands principles and application of Xeriscaping;  
Able to clearly communicate with volunteers and public;  
Able to plan and organize landscaping.

## **Position Responsibilities:**

Develop landscaped demonstration beds at the Angelina County Farmers Market and coordinate educational opportunities that 1) reflect the work done in demonstration beds and 2) utilize the Farmers Market facilities whenever possible for Extension horticulture meetings. Must have close working relationship with County Extension Agent, County Extension Staff, Farmers Market managers, and volunteers who dedicate significant portion of their volunteer time to the FM. Beds and surrounding areas must be maintained and kept ready for public viewing at all times the Farmers Market is open

## **Goals for the Farmers Market:**

1. Develop group of Master Gardeners to commit to the Farmers Market activities
2. Significant portion of landscaping completed by opening of Farmers Market, May 1, utilizing Xeriscaping principles (adapted plants, low maintenance, mulched beds, little required irrigation)
3. Develop and conduct 3 educational programs focusing on developed landscape
4. Conduct “craft” program(s) in cooperation with Farmers Market management
5. Assist Farmers Market in childrens field trips in the fall. Prepared beds, locating corn stalks, scarecrow, ect.

# **Plant Sale Coordinator**

A one year position coinciding with budget year and end of plant sale.

## **Qualifications:**

Must be a Certified Angelina County Master Gardener;  
Have a good understanding of plant propagation and growth;  
Able to coordinate and communicate effectively with volunteers;  
Able to project budget needs, skilled in planning and organizing.

## **Position Responsibilities:**

Plan, coordinate, and execute spring plant sale. Develops plant list resources needed and recruits team to work plant sale. Must have close working relationship with County Extension Agent, County Extension Staff, and volunteers who dedicate significant portion of their volunteer time to the plant sale. Must have quality, regionally adapted plant material for sale.

## **Goals for the Plant Sale:**

1. \$4000 net income.
2. Provide educational material to customers at plant sale.