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 are encouraged 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 and gardening and community service experience.

If you are a person with a disability and will need an accommodation to participate in this program, please contact the Master Gardener Program Coordinator prior to the start of the training to assure the fullest possible attention to your needs. Receiving requests for accommodations at least 14 days before the program provides a reasonable amount of time to meet the request, however all requests will be considered.

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 Hours

- Any volunteer time accepted or approved by the local Master Gardener coordinator (UMaine 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.

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

Pesticide Recommendations

Because UMaine Extension is liable for its advice, and because pesticide recommendations for organic or synthetic products change constantly, only UMaine Extension personnel may recommend pesticides when representing UMaine Extension.

Fee: $220

There is a fee for the basic Master Gardener Training course. This fee covers expenses that include reference materials, 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 financial assistance is available. Contact your county UMaine Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinator for more information.