

MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

HANDBOOK FOR VOLUNTEERS | 2021

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WELCOME TO THE START OF YOUR MASTER GARDENER JOURNEY

As you begin your time with the Master Gardener Program, we want to start off by saying “Thank you!” for choosing to give your time and talents in volunteer service. As a volunteer for the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension, you will become an important resource in your community as you help others make good gardening decisions based on university research.

The Master Gardener Program is first and foremost a volunteer program using gardening to make a measurable change in Wisconsin communities. A hallmark of the Master Gardener Program is our use of unbiased, research-based, scientific information. This helps us explain the “how” and “why” of what we do with plants in our gardens. To do this properly, you need to have a good foundation in the plant sciences, general gardening practices, integrated pest management, and other gardening topics. We ensure this with the program exam and your continuing education.

You will be a representative of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension. You will help people learn about gardening and participate in the many benefits of being around plants. You do this by answering garden questions, providing educational programs, or working in display or food donation gardens.

When you serve as a volunteer, people will expect you to answer their questions and have it all make sense, and sometimes that can be a challenge! By learning the science behind gardening, you will be better equipped to help people understand their gardens and make the decisions that are right for them. Many times, you are learning along with them, exploring different options and sleuthing for answers. Being observant, listening to what people are saying, asking questions, and knowing where to look up information is what makes you a successful Master Gardener Volunteer.

This course achieves three important steps in becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer in Wisconsin:

- Serves as an orientation to UW-Madison Division of Extension and reviews the scope of being an Extension volunteer in the Master Gardener Program.
- Allows you to complete the enrollment process to become an Extension volunteer in the Master Gardener Program.
- Provides the horticulture exam in order for you to demonstrate a baseline of horticultural knowledge.

After successfully completing all steps of this onboarding experience, you will be awarded your Volunteer Agreement and be cleared to begin work on approved projects.

NEED HELP?

COURSE HELP

Please contact us with any questions about the course. We will respond within 1-2 business days.

- email wimastergardener@extension.wisc.edu
- phone 608-265-4536 [messages]

TECHNICAL HELP

1. Contact us via email wimastergardener@extension.wisc.edu. We may not know the solution, but it is good for us to know any problems you experience!
2. Check to make sure you have one of the [recommended browsers](#) and your computer has the [basic specifications](#) for using Canvas.
3. Go to the [Canvas Student Guide](#) for detailed info on how to use Canvas (not all features listed will be activated in your course).
4. Contact the Learn@UW Help Desk [**very important!** You must say you are a Lifelong Learner (L3) so they don't mistake you as a student on campus]
 - email help@doit.wisc.edu
 - phone [1-888-435-7589](tel:1-888-435-7589) (staffed 7 days a week from 7AM - 11PM US Central time)
 - [text chat](#) (7 days a week from 8AM - 10PM)

INTRODUCTION TO EXTENSION

We begin this program with an introduction of our organization, Extension.

Please review the information below to learn about our historical roots in agriculture, our connection to the United States Department of Agriculture, and our connection to land grant universities.

WHAT IS EXTENSION?

Extension provides non-formal education and learning activities to people throughout the country — to farmers and other residents of rural communities as well as to people living in urban areas. It emphasizes taking knowledge gained through research and education and bringing it directly to the people to create positive changes.

HISTORY OF EXTENSION

Fewer than 2 percent of Americans farm for a living today, and only 17 percent of Americans now live in rural areas. Yet, the extension service still plays a significant role in American life — rural, urban, and suburban. With its unprecedented reach — an office in or near most of the nation’s approximately 3,000 counties — extension agents help farmers and ranchers achieve greater success, assist families with nutrition and home economics, and prepare today’s youth to become leaders tomorrow.

EXTENSION IN WISCONSIN

In Wisconsin, Extension is connected to the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

THE WISCONSIN IDEA

One of the longest and deepest traditions surrounding the University of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Idea signifies a general principle: that education should influence people’s lives beyond the boundaries of the classroom. Synonymous with Wisconsin for more than a century, this “Idea” has become the guiding philosophy of university outreach efforts in Wisconsin and throughout the world.

“I shall never be content until the beneficent influence of the University reaches every family of the state.”

UW President Charles Van Hise in 1905

OVERVIEW OF MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

In this section you learn how the Master Gardener Program developed and how it operates in Wisconsin.

YESTERDAY

The Extension Master Gardener program started in 1972 in King and Pierce counties in Washington State by local horticultural Extension agents, David Gibby and Bill Scheer, in response to the overwhelming amount of gardening questions coming into their office each day. To address this, they took a very novel approach of utilizing well-trained volunteers to answer these gardening questions. Two-hundred hand selected volunteers received the inaugural training. Sessions were to be held eight hours per day, one day a week, for five weeks. At the end of the training, volunteers were required to pass subject matter exams.

Since these volunteers went through significant training, they deserved an appropriate and distinguished title. As both Gibby and Scheer had worked in Germany acquiring language proficiency and understanding of the culture, they knew that Germans bestow titles for hard-earned proficiency levels in various crafts. The top proficiency level in horticulture is denoted by “Gartenmeister,” which they anglicized as “Master Gardener.”

In the following decades, this unique volunteer program has become internationally recognized and is often duplicated as a model for other volunteer programs.

The Wisconsin Master Gardener Program started in the late 1970’s in Brown, Dane, and Milwaukee counties, under the University of Wisconsin-Extension.

TODAY

Since its start, the program has grown into something bigger. The program now exists in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Canada and South Korea have their versions of the program, and other countries attempt to duplicate it.

Master Gardener Volunteers continue to answer gardening questions. They play an important role in sharing information with the public through educational programs. Master Gardener Volunteers also garden in communities to maintain public green space and help prevent hunger.

You, as a Master Gardener Volunteer in Wisconsin, answer gardening questions, educate others, and garden through approved projects focused on our educational themes:

- Supporting healthy and safe food systems
- Protecting valued natural resources
- Creating healthy and vibrant communities
- Improving human well-being

You can look at our Annual Impact Report to see some of what’s going on across the state and near you. Our Annual Impact Report is the annual culmination of select efforts by Master Gardener Volunteers from across the state.

The program is funded at the state and local levels through a combination of support from counties, UW-Madison, the [USDA Smith-Lever Act Capacity Grant](#), fees for services, grants, local fundraising, and donations.

VIDEO MESSAGE

Tom Bewick, National Program Leader, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture

Recorded for the 2018 National Extension Master Gardener Coordinator Conference.

Good evening. I'm sorry I can't be in Madison with you this evening but I had to travel to south Florida to see if we can't figure out some way to handle the HLB mess. Mike Maddox had asked me to present some remarks that I made last year at the International Master Gardeners' Conference to help kick off your meeting this year. And I'm honored that he thinks enough about them that he asked me to record this message to help kick off the 2018 Master Gardeners Coordinators Conference.

I live near Fredericksburg, VA, which was the site of some of the bloodiest battles of the American Civil War. And recently my younger son moved to a town called Fishersville in the Shenandoah Valley. When I drive over to see him, I drive past and through the Chancellorsville and Wilderness battlefields. I think about all the wasted young lives and what the people of that time must have been thinking and feeling. And one thing that I always come back to, one of the most amazing things about that time in our history, is that during this conflict that pitted fathers against sons, Abraham Lincoln had the foresight to create the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture. And then later in 1862, he signed the Morrill Act that created the land-grant university system, which brought the possibility of a college education to virtually every American. The land-grant mission was expanded in 1887 by the passage of the Hatch Act, which created the State Agricultural Experiment Stations, and in 1914 by passage of the Smith-Lever Act, which created the Cooperative Extension Service. And that brings us to the creation of the Extension Master Gardener Program over 45 years ago by two beleaguered Extension specialists in urban counties of Washington State.

So where the National Institute of Food and Agriculture is the federal partner in the land-grant university system, Extension Master Gardeners are the glue that holds that agricultural knowledge system to the concerns of everyday citizens.

There are lots of statistics that we can cite;

- *There are over 330 million people in the US and only 4 million are farmers*
- *65 % of our population live in cities*
- *90 % live in urban areas*

So the dilemma for the land-grant system is: How can we keep our mission and message alive for people who are only marginally concerned with the knowledge we are generating? That again brings us to our Master Gardeners.

According to a 2014 survey, there are 80 million households in the US that garden. That represents about 160 million people who rely on science based information to enhance their enjoyment of plants. And Extension Master Gardeners are one of the main ways they get that information. That's a very important position to have.

And here we are 155 years after we began the land-grant experiment and we seem to be as politically divided now as we were then. One thing that most of us have in common is our love of plants. But what can one person, even a person with the reach of an Extension Master Gardener, do? We can join together in a common cause. The National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture is a collaboration of land-grant faculty, including many Extension Master Gardener coordinators, non-profit and commercial organizations and state and federal partners that is looking to emphasize the role of gardens and gardeners in our society. And we are looking for people like yourselves to get involved. There is room for everyone and their ideas in the NICH tent. So I encourage you to visit the web site: consumerhort.org, see what has already been created and get involved so that you can help influence the future.

Thank you for everything that you do. It's very important and your success has contributed greatly to the success of the land-grant partnership and of USDA. You are critical to making USDA, in the words of Abraham Lincoln, the People's Department. Have a great conference.

PURPOSE, VALUES, VISIONS:

An organization's purposes, values, and visions tell you what they do, who they are, and what they want to be. This should guide you through your work with individuals and communities as you represent the University and the Master Gardener Program.

PURPOSE: WHAT WE DO

The Extension Master Gardener Program educates, empowers, and supports volunteers to use university research-based information to extend the Wisconsin Idea, making a positive difference in lives and communities.

VALUES: WHO WE ARE

Build with, not for: be inclusive with the people we want to see in the program. Be culturally relevant. Have the community take part in the creation process.

Think globally, act locally: connect identified, local needs to statewide and national goals to better communicate the value and impact of efforts; create resources at the global level and apply to local needs.

Meet people where they are at: create materials along a learning continuum to better serve people with a variety of life experiences; move away from the expert model of content delivery and create educational products for people to learn in different ways.

Be scholarly: use unbiased, university research-based information for training and to guide our projects. Incorporate new, interdisciplinary research on the benefits of plants into our projects to address the needs of individuals and our communities

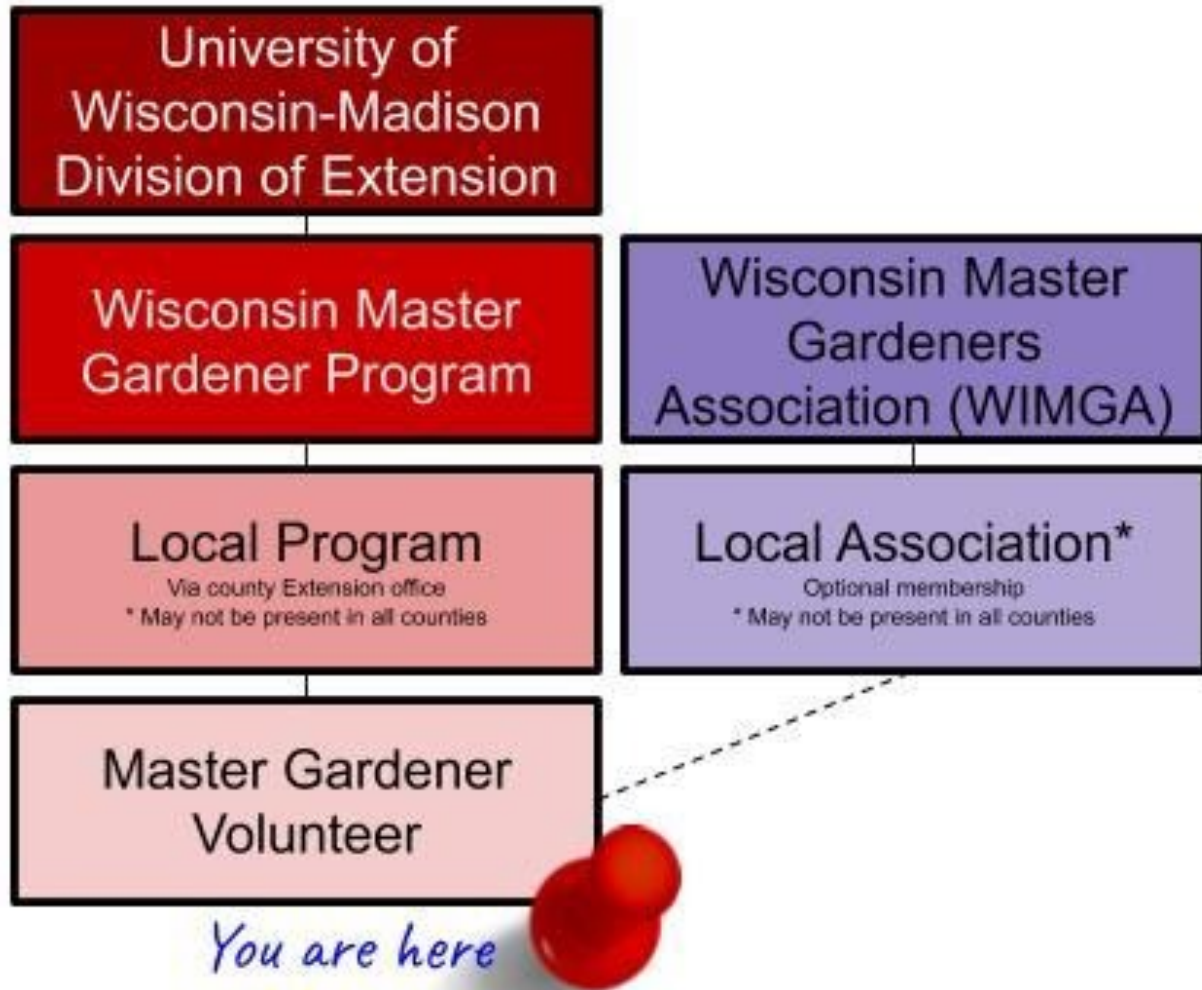
Have fun: incorporate best volunteer development practices to enhance program experiences. Remove unnecessary bureaucracy and rules.

VISION: WHAT WE WANT TO BE

To be a modern, meaningful, and measurable Extension program valued by volunteers, staff, and the communities we serve.

WHO'S WHO IS IN THE MG PROGRAM

Within the Master Gardener Program you will be introduced to a large cast of characters.



YOU! THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER

We are excited you want to volunteer and serve your community in collaboration with UW-Madison Division of Extension! By improving your community through science-based gardening, you are part of Extension and acting as its representative. You are considered by the UW to be in a Position of Trust, which creates additional responsibilities for you as a volunteer and may be different than other volunteer experiences. Master Gardener Volunteers often work with remote supervision and with vulnerable populations. Our volunteers must be screened and selected by UW staff, pass a criminal background check, complete mandated reporter training of child abuse

and neglect, and agree to our volunteer guidelines and other requirements. You must be at least 18 years old, enjoy gardening, and want to make a difference in your community.

As a Master Gardener Volunteer you connect to a local and national networks of like-minded individuals contributing time and talent. Your experiences as a volunteer lead to personal growth. And, you directly contribute to meaningful change at the local, statewide, and national level.

There are different volunteer designations that we use to help explain what stage of the program you're in. These are called "statuses". Here are the different statuses of Master Gardener Volunteers:

CERTIFIED MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS:

- These individuals have completed and reported a minimum of 24 hours of approved volunteer service in the specified time frame.
- Have completed a minimum of 10 continuing education hours in the specified time frame.
- Have successfully passed the MG exam and have completed all program requirements for participation.

INTERN MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS:

- Are in the process of successfully completing the program requirements and the MG exam.
- Are in the process of completing and reporting a minimum of 24 hours of approved volunteer service within the specified time frame.

EXEMPT MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS:

- A volunteer can elect this status when unable to complete the minimum hour reporting for volunteerism and continuing education. This status is in place for when life prevents you from participating in the MG program.
- There are no minimum reporting activity requirements for a designated period of time, typically one year.

HONORED MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEERS:

- This status is for individuals completing 10 years or 1000 hours; plus, significant accomplishments (typically leadership roles in the state or local program and projects).
- There are no minimum reporting activity requirements for perpetuity.
- This status requires approval by the local coordinator and state program office.

In addition, volunteers in all categories must complete Extension enrollment and orientation requirements.

EXTENSION STAFF

LOCAL COORDINATOR

Your local Master Gardener Program is county or multi-county based with oversight provided by Extension staff, referred to as your coordinator. This individual serves as your primary contact for all things related to this program.

MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM (STATE OFFICE)

The statewide staff in the Master Gardener Program office is responsible for the overall facilitation of the MG program. The Master Gardener Program serves as your secondary contact within the program.



Mike Maddox
Outreach Program Manager
Mike.Maddox@wisc.edu



Amy Freidig
Outreach Specialist
AKFreidig@wisc.edu

Open
Program Coordinator
TBD

Please contact us with any questions about the course. We will respond within 1-2 business days.

- email wimastergardener@extension.wisc.edu
- phone 608-265-4536 [messages]

ASSOCIATIONS

LOCAL ASSOCIATION

Local associations exist in many counties. They provide social support and camaraderie for volunteers. They can also conduct fundraising activities to help support approved projects. They also collect dues for local activities. Local associations have a written agreement with Extension and can serve in roles to facilitate the local Master Gardener Program. The local associations work together to provide statewide representation through WIMGA.

WISCONSIN MASTER GARDENERS ASSOCIATION (WIMGA)

WIMGA is a statewide association which provides grants, an annual conference and a statewide newsletter to WIMGA members.

Participation in associations is optional.

SCOPE OF THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER POSITION

Now that you understand the history and organization of the Master Gardener Program, we can introduce what you do and how you do it. In this section we list the types of activities you can do and your responsibilities as a volunteer. Much of this will be expanded and reinforced in later sections.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES

These are important components of every volunteer project. We introduce them now and will go more in depth in the Volunteering section.

- **Diagnostics:** These are opportunities where you will address gardening questions in a one-on-one setting. These include troubleshooting problems for residents at the Extension office and working “Ask a Master Gardener” booth at farmers markets and fairs.
- **Educating Others:** You may have an opportunity to engage a group with gardening information. This could include workshops, symposiums, and displays. When you report your hours, be sure to include your time for preparation and delivery.
- **Gardening:** When you volunteer your time physically gardening at an approved project, you will report those hours under the Gardening category.
- **Program Support:** The success of most of the volunteer projects come from thoughtful planning and behind the scenes efforts. These include attending meetings, and preparation and clean-up of planned activities.

TIMEFRAME

We operate on a calendar year, January 1 to December 31.

You must use our Online Reporting System to enroll in the program between January 1 and March 31. The enrollment process lets us know who is volunteering on behalf of Extension. It must be repeated each year. DON'T WORRY! An upcoming section of this course will create your Online Reporting System account and enroll you for this year.

Then, you must report all your volunteer and continuing education hours by December 31.

Note: This is a recent change in the program. You may see and hear references to our old deadline of October 1.

ORIENTATION & TRAINING

Orientation and Training (referred to as “onboarding”) are best practices in any volunteer program. Orientation provides an overview of your role in the organization you plan to serve. Training ensures you have the knowledge and ability to do that service.

This onboarding course introduces you to key components of the Master Gardener Program and your role as a volunteer before most activities begin in the spring. We want you to be familiar with the program, so you will feel comfortable and confident in your work as a volunteer.

The entrance exam, available as part of this course, ensures you have a minimum baseline knowledge in horticulture, the art and science of growing plants. Each year, you will be required to have 10 hours of continuing education to promote your growth in plant-related knowledge and skills. More will be covered in the Continuing Education section.

RESOURCES

Master Gardener Volunteers must have a copy of the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program training manual, **Foundations in Horticulture**. Additional resources are provided by the [Master Gardener Program](#). More information pertaining to appropriate unbiased credible scientific resources will be provided in the Scientific Literacy section.

YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

As a Master Gardener Volunteer, you are representing the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension. In order to fully understand the scope of your role as an Extension volunteer in the program, Extension provides Master Gardener Volunteers with a Position Description. Your responsibilities as explained here follow that position description. You will receive a copy of the position description with the completion of this course.

For this role, you will assist Extension educators in addressing community needs in approved projects and activities. As part of your volunteering, you will learn and become familiar with the available resources required to accomplish assigned tasks. This includes Master Gardener Program policies, procedures, and personnel in the county Extension office and state program office. You will also follow all safety guidelines.

You will need to represent the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension and the Master Gardener Program in a professional manner.

- Maintain a welcoming environment.
- Demonstrate commitment to diversity and equal opportunity.
- Always use tact and give constructive horticultural advice using university research-based information.
- Stay positive and never be disparaging of opinions or procedures
- Respect confidence and clientele information.

You must also comply with the Volunteer Behavior Expectations and other relevant policies and guidelines of the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension.

You may accept assignments on approved projects or other Master Gardener activities that are consistent with your interests and time available for volunteering.

Let project leaders know as soon as possible if you are unable to follow through with a commitment.

Know your limitations (for example, say “I don’t know, but I can find out” when you do not know the answer to a question).

Keep appropriate records, such as volunteer hours and public contacts. We use these records to tell our story of our impact to our communities. In later modules, you’ll learn more about how we share our impact to our partners.

Master Gardener Volunteers work only with non-professional gardens, including home gardeners, kids, and other amateur gardeners. Professionals, such as landscapers, arborists, greenhouse operators, and more often need information and have access to solutions that are outside the scope of this training. Refer all inquiries, outreach, and education opportunities from commercial horticultural organizations to Extension staff.

USING THE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER TITLE

Once you have completed your first year of required volunteer hours, you will have earned the title of Master Gardener Volunteer with Extension. The title belongs only with your unpaid volunteer activities for Extension and as you are operating as a Master Gardener Volunteer only during your Extension-approved activities.

Both the title Master Gardener (with or without Volunteer) and the logo cannot be used for personal gain. You cannot use the title to advertise business services or influence others to do business with you. The Master Gardener title or description can never be used if you are being paid (with the exception of honorariums payable to the MG Program or a local MG association). You can, however, refer to your certification and experience in the Master Gardener program in job applications and conversation as long as you are not presenting it as a way to get additional business.

HOW PLANTS MAKE A DIFFERENCE

How did you first start gardening? Did you help a grandparent plant flowers and vegetables? Did a neighbor give you plants from their yard? During COVID-19 quarantine, did you attempt gardening as a new hobby? At some place, at some time you were introduced to gardening and connected to plants.

You can make gardening meaningful for someone else. You can connect someone with information to improve their appreciation of plants and knowledge of gardening. In this section, you will explore the newest information on how we all benefit from plants.

THE BENEFITS OF PLANTS

Plants play an important role in our lives and communities.

As Master Gardener Volunteers we expand plant appreciation and its benefits. Plants can positively impact the places we live, work, and play with environmental, economic, and social benefits. Plants can also improve the minds and bodies of individuals in contact with them.

If you are an experienced gardener, you may already know how a good day in the garden can make you feel. Energized! Refreshed, and ready to take on the world (or, tired, if you were digging big holes). Being around plants can also help you feel centered, relaxed, and calm.

University research now documents how plants and gardening can impact our overall health. We can quantify how plants improve our communities by making them healthier, attracting people to business districts, and positively promoting interactions between neighbors. Plants can also improve the environment by cleaning the air, helping with storm water runoff, and promoting space for pollinators and wildlife.

The benefits of plants go beyond “pretty gardens” and affect our everyday lives. Plants increase our concentration and memory retention, improve mental health and mood, and reduce stress. Additionally, plants are known to raise environmental consciousness, create community and reduce crime in neighborhoods.

Read more!

The [National Initiative for Consumer Horticulture](#) has gathered the latest research on the benefits of plants into easy to read infographics. Please take the time to review each of these.

- [PlantsDoThat-The Art Science and Business of Plants](#)
- [PlantsDoThat-Indoors-WhereWeLive](#)
- [PlantsDoThat-Indoors-WhereWeLearn](#)
- [PlantsDoThat-Indoors-WhereWeHeal](#)
- [PlantsDoThat-Indoors-WhereWeWork](#)

STAY FOCUSED!

Plants and people have had a long relationship. Throughout our existence humans have depended on plants for food, medicine, and shelter. Plants have worked themselves into our culture, customs, and spiritual practices. We,

as plant enthusiasts, likely have our own personal memories with plants that extend beyond traditional gardening. Many of these topics are fun and interesting.

What we do in the Master Gardener Program is connect people with plants and how to best grow them. For many gardeners, this is easy. They often are ready to take the plunge with an educational program and learn the latest and greatest information about plants and gardening. Other people such as kids may not realize why and how plants can, and should be, important to them.

DO focus on growing ornamental and edible plants. This includes:

- The right plant in the right place and good gardening practices;
- Pest management using an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach, our brains and lots of elbow grease, and if necessary, the judicious use of organic and synthetic pesticides;
- The process of gardening for educational, vocational, recreational, and therapeutic uses.

We can also discuss how to harvest crops and post-harvest handling to get products into homes or food pantries.

We will discuss our educational themes in an upcoming section. These themes also help us stay focused.

The following topics, however, are outside the scope of this volunteer program:

- Medicinal and alternative health uses of plants
- Foraging for wild plants or mushrooms
- Food preservation and recipes
- Non-research-based practices
- We also do not teach about growing cannabis or marijuana

We recognize people will use plants to improve their own well-being through consuming, sensory stimulation, and spiritual practices; they may incorporate plants into their own traditions, including diet and medicine. Volunteers can honor people’s cultural relationships with plants. At the same time, we need to focus on what is our niche which includes safe interactions with plants and success in growing them. It is critical that information we provide is research based and results in us doing no harm to those depending on us for their gardening needs.

Do this!	Don't do this!
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Focus on growing ornamental and edibles plants in sustainable ways. This includes:• Growing the right plant for the right place and good gardening practices• Using an Integrated Pest Management framework, our brains and elbow grease and, if necessary, the judicious use of organic and synthetic pesticides.• The process of gardening for vocational, recreational, and therapeutic purposes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• These topics are outside the scope of the Master Gardener Program:• Medicinal and alternative health uses of plants• Foraging for wild plants and mushrooms• Food preservation and recipes• Non-research based practices• We also do not teach how to grow cannabis or marijuana.

VOLUNTEERING

In this section, you will be introduced to the specifics of volunteering and to the types of activities you may perform in your role as a Master Gardener Volunteer. These may involve skills that you may not be totally comfortable in performing. Don't worry! You'll have the opportunity to pick and choose what you want to do in the volunteer projects. You may also get the opportunity to expand and grow these skills with time and experience. You'll also learn how many hours are required to earn and maintain your certification each year.

Everybody can be great. Because anybody can serve. You don't have to have a college degree to serve. You don't have to make your subject and your verb agree to serve.... You don't have to know the second theory of thermodynamics in physics to serve. You only need a heart full of grace. A soul generated by love.

Martin Luther King, Jr.

CONNECTING WITH YOUR COMMUNITY

Volunteering can be one of the most rewarding experiences in life and have a positive impact on your community and yourself. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, more than 62 million Americans volunteer annually through charitable organizations. Master Gardener Volunteers return incredible numbers of volunteer hours annually to their communities—more than 150,000 hours every year in Wisconsin alone. As a Master Gardener Volunteer you will join the Division of Extension family of volunteers, and millions of other people, by donating time and talents to Extension's community programs and activities.

Master Gardener Volunteers follow principles and procedures created as a result of scientific study at universities and have the backing of the Extension with its faculty, research, and plant-related publications. As a volunteer, you spread university research-based knowledge to communities throughout the state in keeping with the Wisconsin Idea. Master Gardener Volunteers teach others about plants and how to grow them successfully in presentations, displays, demonstrations and other programs. As part of the university system, Master Gardener Volunteers advise people about plants and gardening practices free from commercial interests and without a sale to be made. Plants and gardening can improve our physical and mental health as well as create safer and more connected neighborhoods; you can help your community with gardening projects in parks and community gardens. Master Gardener Volunteers listen, connect people to plants, meet people where they are, and serve the needs of the community and individuals.

Master Gardener Volunteers tackle real world issues and help communities by engaging in Extension-approved projects. These projects align with community priorities and are meant to provide positive and meaningful experiences for the Master Gardener Volunteers.

BENEFITS OF VOLUNTEERING

Aside from doing good work in your community, you will benefit in other ways from volunteering with the MG Program. For those that love gardening, you can share your passion for plants with others. Helping others on a topic you enjoy can be more rewarding than you might imagine—you can also learn from those you are educating. You can use your skills and talents in a different way and help train others. You can improve your communication, management and leadership abilities and use them in other aspects of your life. Volunteering gives you a new way

to meet new people and make new friends. A part of your Master Gardener Volunteer experience, you have the continuing opportunity to learn more about plants and gardening from experts and fellow Master Gardener Volunteers.

VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

For us to ensure a safe, positive, and meaningful volunteer experience, Master Gardener Volunteers work on projects selected and approved by Extension. Any new project needs approval of your county coordinator before Master Gardener Volunteers can volunteer with that project. In the approval process, Extension reviews projects to satisfy liability concerns, align with program priorities and county needs, comply with required non-discrimination policies, and ensure the necessary support from your county Extension office. Projects must provide a public benefit and cannot be conducted on private property for individuals or private organizations only.

We have two broad categories of approved projects:

Extension projects: UW-Madison Division of Extension provides the oversight and liability coverage. Master Gardener Volunteers work directly with Extension and in support of Extension and local MG associations. Master Gardener Volunteers may answer gardening questions at the fair, farm markets, and at the office. They may organize and run a speaker's bureau, annual gardening conference, or other events.

Partner organizations projects: Extension approves both the host organization and the project before Master Gardener Volunteers can volunteer on these projects. These partner organizations are typically county or municipal government, school districts, or not-for-profit organizations (such as NGO, environmental center, botanical garden, or similar entity). Among other considerations, they must be able to safely support volunteers in doing meaningful work related to horticulture.

All approved projects are listed in our online reporting system. Some counties also provide a list and description of approved projects.

Remember this!

Requirement: A minimum of 24 hours of volunteerism must be completed on an approved project and reported by December 31 using the Wisconsin Master Gardener online reporting system each year.

Hours: You may count your time from arrival at to departure from a project location or time spent working on preparation or support offsite. Travel time to and from the project is not applicable.

VOLUNTEERING WITH YOUTH

Youth (age 18 and younger) are often participants in our volunteer projects and activities. Our approved volunteer projects are only non-custodial. That is their custodian (parents, guardians, chaperones, or other care givers) must be present at all times during the activity. It is the responsibility of their custodian, not you, to provide discipline, toileting, or other care to program participants. Additional information is provided in the Legal Stuff module.

We strongly recommend only non-custodial programs when also volunteering in assisted living centers, health care facilities, correctional facilities, or similar organizations. It is always good to have the organization staff nearby for them to handle the unexpected!

TYPES OF VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Volunteering as a Master Gardener Volunteer includes different types of activities, as explained below. When you report your hours, you'll choose one or more of the following categories of educating others, diagnostics, gardening, and project support.

EDUCATING OTHERS

Education is not the filling of a pail but the lighting of a fire.

William Butler Yeats

Educating others can happen in many different ways within the Master Gardener Program, not just teaching in front of a group. As a Master Gardener, you often connect people with information during a conversation with someone visiting a demonstration garden or a Master Gardener display booth. Instead of teaching a whole group, you provide personalized information to address that person's particular needs.

Master Gardener Volunteers provide many different kinds of educational programs. Look at the examples below and consider the types of education you are able and willing to do in this role.

- Create educational displays for farm markets and fairs
- Design signage for display and community gardens
- Staff an educational booth at an event and talking plants with event visitors
- Make public presentations at libraries, schools, and events
- Write educational articles for newsletters and blog posts.

DIAGNOSTICS

The truth is out there.

X-Files

The Master Gardener Program originated with the intent of training individuals to answer gardening questions. Because of its special status and additional training needed in the Master Gardener Program, diagnostics has its own special category when we talk about what volunteers do.

Diagnosing plant problems and answering garden questions from the general public takes extra training, time and practice. This module will not be able to teach you everything you need to know about how to do diagnostics. It will only introduce you to the seven simple diagnostic steps and connect you with additional support resources. If you have an interest in diagnostics, training is available through local and state programming.

INTRODUCTION TO THE DIAGNOSTIC PROCESS

Diagnosing plant problems and answering garden questions from the general public takes time and practice to get really good at it. This module will not be able to teach you everything you need to know about how to do this. It is our goal with this module to introduce you to the seven simple diagnostic steps and connect you with additional support resources. If you have an interest in diagnostics, more training is available through local and state programming.

1. *Identify the Plant.* Make sure both you and the person asking the question are talking about the same plant. For example, many people call all evergreens a pine when in fact it may be a juniper or a spruce.
2. *Identify the Problem.* What do they see? Where on the plant do they see it? How many plants are affected? When did they first see it? Usually this is long after the problem began. What is “normal”?
3. *Collect Information about the Plant’s History.* Information is needed to make an accurate diagnosis. Questions will need to be asked regarding overall health, age, when it was planted, what has been done to it (fertilizing, pruning, watering, mulch, pesticides used, etc). Be sure to gather enough information without using leading questions. Ask open-ended questions - ones that cannot be answered ‘yes’ or ‘no.’.
4. *Collect Information about the Plant’s Environment.* Gather information about the site such as light, soil, disturbances or changes (i.e., nearby construction), moisture, slope, weather, etc.
5. *Research the Problem.* Consult science-based/research-based references. Determine common problems. Consider both living (biotic - fungi, viruses, insects, critters, etc) or nonliving (abiotic - nutritional problems, weather, injuries) factors. Do not be afraid to ask follow-up questions to assist you in making an accurate diagnosis.
6. *Significance of the Problem.* During and after making a diagnosis, it is important to put the problem into proper perspective. Sometimes an insect or disease problem will cause negligible damage in regard to plant health but it may make the plant look bad. Also, how much time and resources invested in making a positive diagnosis should be weighed against the value of the plant (tree vs tomato); the severity of the problem (terminal vs cosmetic); the consequences of treatment vs no treatment (disfiguration, spread, etc), or the magnitude (expense and feasibility of the treatment).
7. *Follow-up with the Client/Recommendations.* Do not be quick to jump to a quick conclusion. If you need more time to research the problem, get their contact information and tell them you will research it and get back to them.

If a diagnosis is not able to be made without seeing a plant sample, suggest they bring in a sample or send a sample to your Extension office or one of the UW labs. Consult your county’s policy for receiving and handling plant, insect, soil, or turf samples. Be unbiased with treatment options. Share all options that are available. If chemical control is warranted, follow the policy of your county for making pesticide recommendations. Some counties have only the Extension Horticulture or Agriculture Educator give these recommendations.

GARDENING

The glory of gardening: hands in the dirt, head in the sun, heart with nature. To nurture a garden is to feed not just on the body, but the soul.

Alfred Ausin

Some of the approved Master Gardener Volunteer projects require physical garden work. These garden projects may be in partnership with partner organizations as part of some larger goal or purpose to bring change to a community. Participating in only approved projects with partner organizations keeps these activities focused on agreed upon goals and should avoid Master Gardener Volunteers being used as “free labor” for landscaping.

Volunteer garden projects that may require a bit of sweat equity include:

- Demonstration gardens that show new trends or proper methods for flowers, vegetables, and landscapes.
- Historical gardens that showcase older plant varieties or share historical gardening methods.
- School gardens for youths or teens.
- Hunger prevention gardens that may supply fresh produce to local food pantries and/or help low-income community members learn to grow their own food.
- We also borrow from our community development colleagues and apply the principles of placemaking to guide planting projects that promote community in public places.

Important!

For safety and liability reasons for you and those around you, a few things are off limits to Master Gardener Volunteers.

- No chainsaws.
- No flamethrowers.
- No restricted-use pesticides.

These three things exceed the scope of any training provided within this program and you cannot use these items while volunteering.

PROJECT SUPPORT

The fun for me in collaboration is, one, working with other people just makes you smarter; that's proven.

Lin-Manuel Miranda

Successful programs need intentional thought and planning. Most volunteer projects also require administration and preparation. We recognize the importance of these efforts. Volunteers can claim their hours related to the project support of approved projects, programs, and activities.

This includes but is not limited to:

- Writing project descriptions

- Recruiting and organizing volunteers for a project
- Evaluating projects
- Gathering supplies for a project
- Marketing and promoting projects
- Managing social media
- Completing office-type work that may include but is not limited to making copies of MG handouts, assisting with registration of Extension MG educational programs, collating, assisting with a mailing, etc.

Writing articles about plants, creating educational displays or presentations, and researching for these types of projects are better reported under Education.

PROJECT THEMES

All programs in the Division of Extension, including the Wisconsin Master Gardener Program, focus our work on identified themes. Volunteer projects can address:

- Supporting healthy and safe food systems
- Protecting valued natural resources
- Creating healthy and vibrant communities
- Improving human well-being

Within each of these themes, we apply the latest unbiased university research-based information to understand and address the situation. Extension also evaluates if and how volunteers make a difference through their activities around these themes.

SUPPORTING HEALTHY AND SAFE FOOD SYSTEMS

Rates of food insecurity are generally below the national average in the Midwest, including Wisconsin. In the period from 2014-2016, 10.7% of Wisconsin households were food insecure, meaning they lacked assured access to safe, affordable foods. While the Wisconsin food insecurity rate fares better than the nation as a whole (13.0%), the overall state food insecurity rate masks considerable regional and subpopulation variation. Households at greatest risk for food insecurity are poor, single headed households, households of color, and households with children (USDA ERS, 2017). Food insecurity has a negative impact on health and nutrition and has been associated with nutrient deficiencies, increased rates of chronic disease, and chronic stress (FRAC, 2018).

Our Response: Master Gardener Volunteer activities can improve the motivation and knowledge of participating individuals in activities related to the selection, growing, management, pest control, and harvesting of fruits and vegetables.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- **Diagnostics:** Answer gardening questions related to growing fruits and vegetables.
- **Educating others:** Provide formal and informal learning experiences related to growing fruits and vegetables.
- **Gardening:** Garden in approved public spaces to demonstrate management of fruits and vegetables.
- **Program support:** Participate in the administration and preparation of these activities

PROTECTING VALUED NATURAL RESOURCES

The people of Wisconsin love the outdoors! Extension is one of several state groups and agencies that works to protect our natural resources. Many native plants cannot reproduce without pollinators. Many native insects, birds and other wildlife need native plants as a food source. Invasive plants decrease the diversity of native plants, and this in turn limits habitat availability for pollinators, birds, and other wildlife. Invasive plants can also adversely impact human health, such as wild parsnip sap causing burns and Japanese barberry infestations hosting higher populations of Lyme-infected deer ticks.

Our Response: Master Gardener Volunteer activities can improve the motivation and knowledge of participating individuals in the following subjects.

- Pollinator protection: activities related to protecting bees, butterflies, and other pollinator insects
- Invasive/native animals and insects: activities related to invasive and native animals and insects (not pollinators)
- Invasive/native plants: activities related to invasive and native plants
- Resource protection (water, soil, land etc.): activities related to sustainability topics
- Gardening for changing climate: activities related to weather and climate change

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- Diagnostics: Answer gardening questions related to invasive and natives species (plants, animals, insects) and resources (soil, water) preservation.
- Educating others: Provide formal and informal learning experiences related to invasive and natives species (plants, animals, insects) and resources (soil, water) preservation.
- Gardening: Garden in approved public spaces to demonstrate management of invasive and natives species (plants, animals, insects) and resources (soil, water) preservation.
- Program support: Participate in the administration and preparation of these activities

CREATING HEALTHY AND VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Cared-for plants and green spaces in our communities have positive social, economic, and environmental benefits, such as aiding in creating walkable streets, attracting shoppers to downtown business areas, and mitigating urban heat islands. These Master Gardener Volunteer projects utilize a Placemaking framework combined with the latest interdisciplinary research on the benefits of plants in order to do meaningful work in communities.

Our Response: Master Gardener Volunteer activities can improve the motivation and knowledge of participating individuals in the following subjects.

- Managing woody plants: Trees and shrubs, when properly cared for, provide environmental, social, and economic benefits to our communities.
- Selecting the right plant for the right place: Proper plant selection for the environment they are to be grown in can reduce chemical inputs for pest management as well as allow for maximum environmental, social, and economic benefits to our communities.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- Diagnostics: Answer gardening questions related to growing herbaceous and woody plants and pest management.
- Educating others: Provide formal and informal learning experiences related to growing herbaceous and woody plants and pest management.
- Gardening: Garden in approved public spaces to demonstrate management of herbaceous and woody plants and pest management.
- Program support: Participate in the administration and preparation of these activities

IMPROVING HUMAN WELL-BEING

Increased exposure to nature, including plants and gardening activities, can improve the mental, physical, social, and emotional well-being of participating individuals. Nature deficit disorder is a term created to describe the psychological, physical and cognitive costs of human alienation from nature.

Our Response: Master Gardener Volunteer activities can improve the motivation of targeted audiences to go outside and/or improve their interactions with plants.

TYPES OF ACTIVITIES:

- **Diagnostics:** Answer gardening questions related to growing fruits and vegetables, ornamentals, and pest management for the promotion of gardening activities.
- **Educating others:** Provide formal and informal learning experiences related to the benefits of plants and how to engage in gardening.
- **Gardening:** Engage targeted audiences in the act of gardening (or interaction with plant materials) and to experience the benefits of plants.
- **Program support:** Participate in the administration and preparation of these activities

CONTINUING EDUCATION

Learning is a crucial part of being a Master Gardener Volunteer and we hear it's something you love to do! Each year, you will need to complete 10 hours of continuing education as a part of your certification requirements. This added learning will help keep you informed, involved and updated about research-based horticultural topics and advances. You can also learn about how to be a better volunteer and outreach educator.

Only certain educational activities count for Master Gardener Program continuing education hours. In general, something will count if it presents research-based gardening or horticulture information in an objective way or if it helps you learn to be a better Extension volunteer. The Continuing Education Policy helps you understand if that seminar, book, article, webinar or video you're checking out is an appropriate continuing education experience for the Master Gardener Program. We recommend you try to get your continuing education in a variety of different ways each year.

Read through the Continuing Education Policy to learn about the general requirements. You can find it on the Master Gardener website program policies section. The Policy includes more specific information about what counts toward your continuing education hours. A short summary follows.

KNOW THE CONTINUING EDUCATION POLICY

Continuing education keeps Master Gardener Volunteers informed, involved, and learning about research-based horticultural and volunteer topics and advances. It matters for volunteer development and satisfaction and promotes high quality volunteerism

REQUIREMENTS:

To fulfill the continuing education requirement for certification, a Master Gardener Volunteer must complete 10 hours of continuing education per year using approved sources.

Hours are reported on the honor system in the online reporting system (ORS).

To be counted toward certification requirements, a continuing education experience should:

- 1a. present research-based information on horticulture or gardening in an objective manner
- or
- 1b. support or improve an individual's ability to serve as an Extension volunteer,
- and
2. align with Master Gardener Program scope and scientific literacy guidance.

BEST PRACTICES:

Get information from a variety of sources if possible, depending on what you have access to.

As well as you are able, make sure to focus on the most current information. There are, of course, exceptions to this—some gardening information is as true now as it was 50 years ago! If you are wondering if something older is appropriate, check in with your coordinator.

TIME:

Master Gardener Volunteers collect continuing education hours over the year. Continuing education hours do not transfer between reporting years; they count only for the reporting year of the educational activity. Master Gardener Volunteers can claim the full run time of a continuing education presentation, class or webinar unless otherwise specified. Travel does not count toward continuing education hours.

UNDERSTANDING SCIENCE

Science guides the Master Gardener Program. As you learned in the Overview module, Extension and the Master Gardener Program arose from the scientific work done by the land grant universities and partnerships with the USDA and other government agencies. In Wisconsin, the long and proud tradition of the Wisconsin Idea further promotes the combination of academic science and public outreach to influence actions beyond the boundaries of the classroom. The Master Gardener Program “educates, empowers, and supports volunteers to use unbiased university research-based information to extend the [Wisconsin Idea](#), making a positive difference in lives and communities.”

Master Gardener Volunteers focus on horticulture, which encompasses both the science and art of growing plants. The art comes from years of personal experience, design inspiration, and current trends. The science, however, comes from facts and knowledge established by university-based research and the scientific process. Since most people are not scientists, Extension interprets this scientific information for the public. As part of your training, MGVs must learn how to find and explain science-based recommendations. You must also learn to recognize the bias, or lack of scientific neutrality, present in both your own perspective and that of the person asking for your assistance. Conveying scientific recommendations in an unbiased way can be complex, but we will walk you through the process.

FROM THE WISCONSIN INITIATIVE OF SCIENCE LITERACY, [HTTP://WWW.SCIFUN.ORG/WISL/WISL.HTML](http://www.scifun.org/wisl/wisl.html)

Society is increasingly dependent on science and technology. It is essential for the well-being of our society that all citizens develop an appreciation of science, the benefits of technology, and the potential risks associated with advances in both. Citizens must gain "science literacy."

Science literacy does not require detailed knowledge of any particular field, but rather a broad appreciation and understanding of what science is capable of achieving and, equally important, what science cannot accomplish. Science literacy is necessary for the democratic process to work. We make a distinction between scientific literacy, expertise in a particular field, and science literacy, a broad appreciation and understanding of science and its practitioners, and of what science is capable of achieving and what it cannot accomplish.

Science literacy enlightens and enables people to make informed choices, to be skeptical, and to reject shams, quackery, unproven conjecture, and to avoid being bamboozled into making foolish decisions where matters of science and technology are concerned. Science literacy is for everyone—scientists, artists, humanists, all professionals, the general public, youth and adults alike.

Society makes progress in addressing critical issues by having both a skilled, creative, and productive work force and a citizenry able to judge the risks and enjoy the benefits of advances in science and technology.

BIAS

Our personal experiences cause us to have an inclination or prejudice for or against someone or something. This is called bias and it opposes the neutral, factual viewpoint of science. In gardening, bias can occur in the form of our plant preferences (natives vs non-natives; edibles vs ornamentals, lawns vs no lawns), chemical use (organic vs non-organic), and so much more. As a volunteer in the Master Gardener Program, you should consider your own horticulture bias when providing information to others. You must reach beyond your own personal preferences to convey unbiased scientific information that meets the needs of your audience.

PUTTING IT TOGETHER

When interacting with the public, remember that you and your audience have biases, values, and varying past experiences. These elements all interact to form a complex web that can make effective communication challenging. But, being aware of your own biases and values in relation to your audience or the project that you are working with will help make your volunteer activities successful. Even simple things can matter!

Let's look at a few real-life examples where experience, bias, and knowledge impact a gardener's decisions. We also include a potential response as a Master Gardener Volunteer.

A caller to the horticulture help-line wants to put a Japanese beetle trap in the middle of their rose garden.

Our Extension fact sheet on Japanese beetle management states removing beetles by hand, or trapping, may provide adequate protection for small plantings when beetle numbers are low. However, Japanese beetle adults can migrate from other areas, and the presence of beetles on or near a plant will attract more beetles. Consequently, use of Japanese beetle traps often attracts more beetles and results in more damage to plants, so their use is not recommended.

While at the education booth at the county fair, you meet someone who has recently moved to Wisconsin from southern Illinois, and they want to plant those hydrangeas that can turn blue or pink in their new landscape.

The Big Leaf Hydrangea, *Hydrangea macrophylla*, is most likely the plant she is referring to. You know through your continuing education that variety blooms on old wood, and in Wisconsin those flower buds suffer from winter kill. This results in a plant without flowers most years. You then direct her to types of hydrangeas and other flowering plants that will reliably bloom in our climate.

While at the community garden, a fellow gardener insists they need to "sweeten" their soil with lime because that's what their dad did on the farm.

You look online for more information. Adding lime to farm fields is a common practice due to farmer's use of fertilizers that can change the soil pH. In our typical Wisconsin garden, lime application is not

necessary. If any soil adjustment is required, it should be based on the results of a soil test.

Someone saw an online meme about how to tell the difference between boy peppers and girls peppers, and they ask you about it while at an educational program.

In the Master Gardener newsletter you read about this being a horticulture myth. Though many plants can be separate male and female plants, peppers are not. They are monecious with both male and female reproductive parts occurring in the same flower on the same plant.

You volunteer at a garden for your community food pantry. Someone decided to add “fun options” by growing fancy heirloom tomatoes and “ghost” cucumbers. Later, you learn from the pantry manager there are complaints about the mushy tomatoes and the sickly-looking cucumbers.

You consult with your Extension educator and learn from their experience the heirloom varieties are often bred for flavor, not for transport or disease resistance, which could result in the mushiness. Also, people may only be familiar with traditional varieties of vegetables and may think there is something wrong if it is a different color, texture, or size.

HORTICULTURAL MYTHS

“I need to sweeten my soil”

“My tree got too big so I topped it”

“Smack your tree with a rolled up newspaper to help it grow”

Gardeners use many practices that are not grounded in scientific research and can be strongly embedded in someone’s mind and personal experiences. These are often referred to as “horticultural myths.” Please use tact as you redirect gardeners to refer to and use research-based, unbiased information. Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott from Washington State University has created a list of popular myths and the research to dispel them.

[Explore horticulture myths at https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/](https://puyallup.wsu.edu/lcs/)

CREDIBLE SOURCES

The Master Gardener Program uses unbiased, university research-based information to guide its learning and volunteerism. However, in this day and age, nearly anybody can present themselves as a subject expert and the Internet and social media can often promote misinformation.

Use the following guidelines as you sort through information:

- **Preferred sources:** You use these as your primary sources of information when gathering information and answering questions. These most often are the unbiased, university research-based information sources.

- **Possible sources:** Before using, you examine these sources for appropriateness, bias, and credibility. Use this when the preferred sources are unavailable or as a starting point to find something preferred.
- **Least preferred sources:** You avoid using these as the primary source. You might use these as a starting point in research and then find your way to possible and preferred sources.

You will also consider the institution and organization, the geographical origin, and the print/media source to arrive at the most credible sources possible on the needed topic. This table isn't exhaustive, but it gives you an idea on things to consider when choosing sources of information to use in answering questions. Contact your Extension educator or the Master Gardener Program if you need help determining the appropriateness of a potential source.

Sources of Information			
	Preferred Source	Possible Source	Least Preferred
Institutions and Organizations	University resources; state and federal governmental resources, such as Department of Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, and USDA	Not-for-profit organizations, such as Xerces Society, environmental centers and botanical gardens with research and education missions	Commercial, for-profit entities or random, unvetted websites
Geography	From within Wisconsin	From surrounding midwest states; areas with a similar environment to Wisconsin	From areas outside the midwest; areas with a different environment from Wisconsin
Print and media	Information with direct source citations, such as journals and peer reviewed articles; websites ending in .edu or .gov	Popular press with source citations; websites ending in .org.	Popular press with no source citations; sites ending in .com

While it is better to use a preferred source for information, other sources often come up first. Don't stop there! Use this as the first step in the process of finding information and searching for more preferred sources. You may learn terms or concepts that you can then apply in a new search with keywords that also use the word "university" or ".edu" to help bring up university sources of information.

You will also need to consider the qualifications and quality of presenters and authors. Qualifications may include academic degrees and/or experience in the topic. Consider the individual's point of view: are they an educator, researcher, or regulator? Are they trying to sell you a product or service? Are they sponsored? Are they an

instigator who likes to present button-pushing topics? Are they a good communicator who can properly convey the information in a neutral way or are they selling their personal agenda with their charisma?

With organizations, look at their mission statement and About section. Read about their membership, if available. Are they about education and the professional development of their members? If so, this could be a potential source. Or, do they lobby for a specific point of view? You may want to continue searching for a better source.

Let's look at some examples. For each, assume you are researching information for a Wisconsin gardening project.

EXAMPLE 1

A fact sheet about earwigs from the University of Florida Extension website.

This is a possible source. The institution is a preferred source, but their geographic location is outside of the Midwest. Their recommendations may not be appropriate for a Wisconsin garden. You should continue looking for a Midwest or Wisconsin source.

EXAMPLE 2

A tree planting brochure from the International Society of Arboriculture (<https://www.isa-arbor.com/>)

You can look at the mission statement and About Us section of their website to learn more about the organization. You find it promotes the research and education of tree care to professionals and the general public. The brochure you look at references research from university studies. This is an appropriate possible source for information, and you may continue to look for a preferred source of information from a Wisconsin source. [As a note: we frequently reference ISA materials].

EXAMPLE 3

A popular YouTube personality demonstrates a product you can apply to your lawn that will promote growth. They provide a link in the description to purchase the product.

This is not a credible source of information and you do not use it as a reference. You may use it to start a search on lawn care and work your way to finding information from a preferred source, such as a lawn care fact sheet from a university.

EXAMPLE 4

A Reddit post on forcing amaryllis bulbs to rebloom.

The post author may offer useful information on how they were successful, and it can help point you towards more information. But this should not be your sole source of information. You must continue to look for information from a potential or preferred source.

KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE

Remember that while you are passionate enough about plants to be choosing this as your volunteer work, not everyone else wants to hear about the nuances of daylily breeding when they ask you to identify a daylily in a photo or discuss the process of photosynthesis when they ask you if a particular plant should be in full sun or part shade. Keep your audience, location and client in mind when responding. Our values of "meeting people where

they are at” and “build with, not for” mean in part that we should not be trying to display our vast horticultural knowledge at every opportunity. Plants fit differently into everyone’s life, whether it is because they don’t know much about them or they lead busy lives and have other priorities. Help them figure out how plants can enrich and inform their lives in a way that makes sense for them. Once a person determines how plants and gardening fit into their life, we can help move them along the gardening path as they further develop their interest and skills.

WHAT IS THE ORS?

We collect our numbers in the Online Reporting System (ORS). You report the hours you spend volunteering on projects and participating in continuing education. We also collect the number of people who participate in public events. These numbers, combined with pictures and stories, show how you contribute to making a difference across the state. These numbers are used in our Annual Impact Report and used in other ways to support the Master Gardener Program and its funding.

You can use the ORS to update your contact information, email, and phone number.

In this section you will learn:

- How to activate your account and complete enrollment
- How to report volunteer hours and continuing education hours

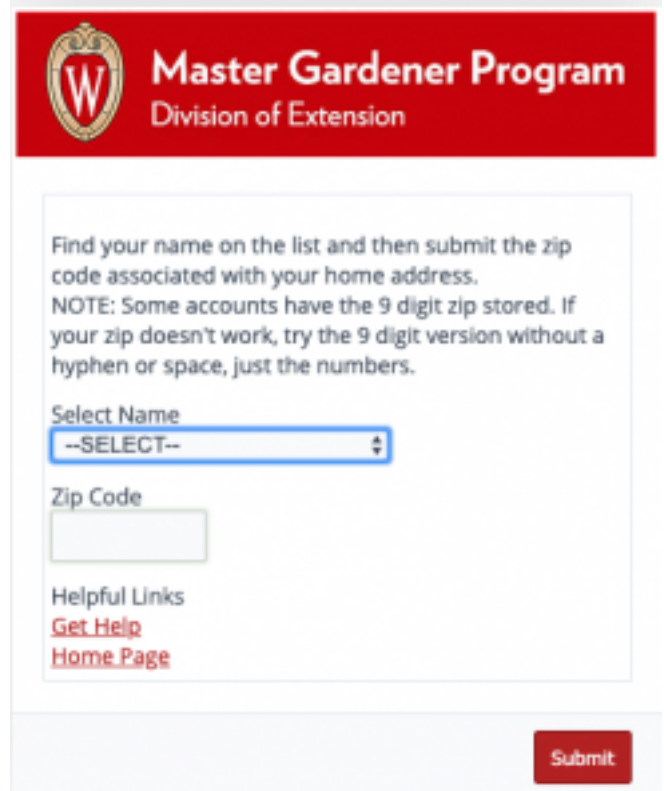
CREATING YOUR ACCOUNT

The Master Gardener Program staff must create your account. This includes your name, address, phone, and email. They also set your account to volunteer in a county or counties.

ACTIVATING YOUR ACCOUNT

You need to activate your account and create a username and password:

1. Visit [Activate Your Account](#)
2. Find your name in the drop down menu
3. Use your zip code to access your account
4. Create a username and password (don't forget these!)
5. SAVE



The screenshot shows the 'Master Gardener Program' logo and 'Division of Extension' header. Below is a form with the following text: 'Find your name on the list and then submit the zip code associated with your home address. NOTE: Some accounts have the 9 digit zip stored. If your zip doesn't work, try the 9 digit version without a hyphen or space, just the numbers.' The form includes a 'Select Name' dropdown menu with '--SELECT--' selected, a 'Zip Code' input field, and 'Helpful Links' for 'Get Help' and 'Home Page'. A red 'Submit' button is at the bottom right.

You only need to do this once.

LOGGING INTO YOUR ACCOUNT

Visit your newly created account at <https://wimastergardener.org/report-your-hours/>. This is how you will access your account.

Watch Video: [Logging into your account](#)

HOW TO USE

Note: We have removed the Directory feature for your privacy.

Watch Video: [How to use](#)

OOPS! FORGOT MY PASSWORD

Watch Video: [Forgot my password](#)

OOPS! FORGOT MY USERNAME

Watch Video: [Forgot my username](#)

REPORTING YOUR VOLUNTEER AND CONTINUING EDUCATION HOURS

Our Online Reporting System (ORS) is how we collect the numbers we need to tell our story.

- For volunteer hours, the system has been loaded with local approved projects and coded for educational themes and audiences. All you need to do is navigate to the project, select the activity (education, diagnostics, gardening, support) you performed and enter the hours on that task.
 - Communicate with the project lead or your county coordinator to know what level of detail to submit: some projects require information on a daily basis; others can be a monthly summary; and a few can be entered as an end of year total. Hours are reported in hourly format, converted to decimals.
 - Only time at the project counts; do not count travel time to and from the event. It's OK to include breaks!
- Continuing education is easy to enter. You can enter the amount of time, date of the event, and a short description of what you attended.
 - Use the class time only; do not count travel to and from the event or meals.

Please round your hours to the nearest quarter hour, or use an Hours Calculator to help you figure out your time. Enter your start and end times and hit Calculate. Use the Total Times (hours) calculation that is generated.

Watch Video: [Reporting your hours](#)

REPORTING HOURS: EXAMPLE

Reminder: Travel time to and from projects is not allowable to report.

Watch Video: [Example](#)

LEGAL STUFF

CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Everyone who applies to volunteer for an Extension program must pass a criminal background check prior to being approved as a volunteer. Prospective volunteers are screened because they serve in positions of trust.



Master Gardeners are classified as serving in positions of trust because they may handle money, have access to program property, or interact with youth or other vulnerable populations.

After completing initial registration in the Master Gardener Online Reporting System, you will receive an email with more details about how to complete a background check. If you do not receive an email from extvolunteers@ohr.wisc.edu containing instructions within 10 days, check your junk email folder.

Screening is conducted by HireRight. HireRight reviews local, state, and national records, including sex offender databases. To verify your identify, you must enter your social security number into HireRight's secure website. Staff at the Division of Extension will not have access to social security numbers.

Does Having a Criminal Record Automatically Exclude Me from Volunteering With Master Gardeners?



No, a criminal record does not automatically exclude you from volunteering. Criminal history is reviewed by staff in the Office of Human Resources to determine whether it is relevant to the volunteer position. Other factors considered in the eligibility decision include age at the time of the offense, time since the offense took place, and whether there is a pattern of offenses.

Criminal background checks are conducted for all Extension volunteers every few years. The enrollment system will let you know anytime a new check is needed.

Approved volunteers are required to report any new arrests, charges, or convictions within 24 hours or at the earliest possible opportunity. Failure to report such changes in status may result in dismissal as a volunteer.

RISK MANAGEMENT

SAFETY IS OUR TOP PRIORITY

When planning projects and activities for Extension volunteers, project leaders and Extension staff strive to reduce risks. This is done to help keep you, other volunteers, and all program participants safe.

Since all risks cannot be eliminated, it is important that volunteers contribute to program safety. Actions you can take include, but are not limited to, picking up tools left on the ground, so others do not trip, washing your hands, cleaning up spills, and reporting concerns. It is important that everyone is proactive when it comes to safety!

RESPONDING TO AN ACCIDENT

You may never encounter an accident or witness an injury during your time as an Extension volunteer. However, if you do, you should respond in the following manner.



Call 911 if the situation is life threatening, serious, or needs police attention. If you're not sure, err on the side of caution - and, make the call.



If you are able, administer care until first responders arrive. Extension volunteers are covered by Wisconsin's Good Samaritan statute. This protects members of the public who attempt to help.



Call your Extension contact or local Extension office about the situation as soon as possible. If it is outside of normal business hours, consider sending an email in addition to leaving a voicemail. Staff in your local Extension office will help you complete an incident report form, which must be done within 24 to 48 hours.

LIABILITY COVERAGE

UW-Madison protects volunteers through liability coverage. If injuries or property damage result from your negligence, the state can pay claims or defend you against allegations that result from your actions. The university does not pay claims or defend volunteers who engage in acts of gross negligence.

See Definitions Below for More Details and Supporting Examples:

Scope of Responsibilities: Actions that fall within the expectations and roles listed in the position descriptions for volunteers.



Negligence: Failure to take reasonable care to avoid causing injury or loss to another person.



EXAMPLE: As part of your volunteer role, you are carrying a jug of water to a meeting. In your hurry to get to the meeting, water spills on the tile floor in the hallway outside the meeting room. You are rushing to get to the meeting, so you don't clean it up or ask someone else to clean it for you, and one of the participants slips and falls.

Although you were not trying to hurt anyone, this is an example of negligence because it was possible to foresee that an accident could happen. In this case, if an injury resulted from the slip and fall, the University may pay claims resulting from the accident or defend you, as a volunteer, if needed.

Gross Negligence: Behavior that is intentionally reckless or indifferent to the safety of others.



EXAMPLE: You are a volunteer who is scheduled to lead a hike with a group. When you get to the park where the hike was planned, you see signs that say DANGER-KEEP OUT. Despite objections, you decide to ignore the signs and encourage all of the participants to continue with the hike. Some of the participants who go with you get hurt.

This would be an example of gross negligence. You could be held PERSONALLY liable for any injuries to participants who got hurt, because you intentionally made a decision that you knew was highly likely to result in injuries to others. Your actions showed that you were indifferent to their safety. In this scenario, the University would not have volunteer protections for you.

WHAT ABOUT DRIVING?



Driving is not part of most volunteer positions. Transportation to and from program activities is the responsibility of participants.

In rare situations where volunteers are asked to drive as part of their volunteer role, the university's driver authorization process must be completed. Extension staff will help you fill out paperwork and gain necessary approvals. As the approval process may take a few weeks, it is important to plan ahead.

There is very little auto liability coverage and no collision coverage available for volunteers who are approved to drive as part of their roles. Interested in more details about coverage of personally owned vehicles when used for university business? Read the box below.

Additional Automobile Insurance Coverage Details

- Damages to a volunteer's personal vehicle are covered by the volunteer's own auto insurance, and the volunteer is responsible for the insurance deductible. Under no circumstances will the University's property program pay for the volunteer's vehicle repairs.

- In the event of a loss, the Authorized driver’s personal auto liability insurance will provide the primary insurance coverage for the loss. The University will only provide excess liability coverage to authorized drivers while using their personally owned vehicles on University business.

YOUTH PROTECTION

Some Master Gardener volunteers choose to work on projects that involve youth. When youth are involved in Master Gardener programs, a parent/guardian, teacher, troupe leader, or other responsible adult must be present to provide supervision. The responsibility for the care and supervision of program participants who are minors is outside of the role of a Master Gardener volunteer.

Even though you will not be directly responsible for supervising youth, it is important to understand some of Extension’s guidelines for working around minors.

Safety is our top priority. Volunteers play an important role in ensuring the safety of all program participants, including minors. If you have questions, contact your instructor or local Extension.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES INVOLVING YOUTH SHOULD BE BOTH OBSERVABLE AND INTERRUPTIBLE

All volunteer activities that involve youth should be observable and interruptible. That means other people should be able to see or hear what you are doing. In most cases, the adults responsible for supervising youth will be within sight distance of the minors for whom they are responsible.

You should never put yourself in a situation where you are completely alone with a youth program participant unless you are their parent or legal guardian.

AVOID TOUCHING YOUTH UNLESS NECESSARY FOR THEIR SAFETY

In most situations, there will be no need for physical contact between a youth program participant and a Master Gardener volunteer. If you have to demonstrate a skill that requires touch in order for a youth to safely participate, remember to ask for permission first. Any touch should be of limited duration and take place in front of others.

As noted in the section on Risk Management, volunteers are encouraged to assist others, including youth, in cases of accidents, injuries, or emergencies. Such assistance may also involve physical contact.

REFRAIN FROM SEEKING OUT PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH YOUTH

Adult volunteers should not attempt to establish personal relationships with minors they meet through their volunteer activity in Extension. That means you should not do things like share your personal contact information or seek out youth as “friends” on social media.

REPORT CONCERNING BEHAVIOR

Examples of prohibited behavior in all Extension programs include bullying, harassment, hazing, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and sexual abuse and sexual harassment. This type of behavior should be reported immediately to your project supervisor or Extension staff. See appendix for Examples of Prohibited Behavior in Extension Programs.

Some of this behavior also needs to be reported to local authorities. The next section in the training will include information about Mandated Reporting.

MANDATED REPORTER TRAINING

As a volunteer with Extension, you are required to complete our training to be a mandatory reporter of child abuse and neglect.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, about 1 in 7 children in the United States experienced child abuse in the past year - and Wisconsin is no different.

Even if your volunteer position doesn't plan to work directly with young people, you may still come in contact with them in your volunteer role. The Mandatory Reporter Training will give you the knowledge and tools to report suspected child abuse or neglect. You may never encounter a situation where you are required to report, but if you do, we need you to be prepared and know the steps to report. Although your local Extension Staff cannot officially report on your behalf, we are here to help you think through the situation, remind you of steps and figure out who to call.

See appendix for Fulfilling Your Obligation as a Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect Brochure.

Mandated Reporter Training is located outside of this course. When you click on the link below it will take you to the 4-H page. Please complete that module. When done, you come back here.

Very important notes!

1. Note that there IS NO EXAM (this only applies if done through 4-H online) and no ability to print certificate (this has been turned off).
2. When you complete the mandated reporter training, come back to this course. You report your completion of the training in Setting Up Your Account later on.
3. If you completed mandated reporter training for another organization, you are still required to participate in Extension's training.

 [Go to Mandated Reporter Training](#)

THE CONDITIONS OF SERVICE

Extension's conditions of volunteer service are designed to explain protections that people can expect when serving in their volunteer roles and outline the risks and responsibilities that volunteers assume. You will be asked to acknowledge that you have read, understand, and agree to conditions of volunteer service focused on these three areas:

- Risks associated with volunteer service,
- Protections provided to volunteers by the University of Wisconsin-Madison,
- Your responsibilities as a volunteer, and
- Use of your voice and/or image in promotional and other recorded media.

See appendix for Division of Extension Conditions of Volunteer Service.

VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR AGREEMENT

Behavior consistent with Extension's Volunteer Behavior Expectations is required of all individuals who are approved to volunteer with the Master Gardener program. The expectations are designed to promote a positive environment where all people are treated with respect and work cooperatively to achieve program goals.

See appendix for Division of Extension Volunteer Behavior Agreement.

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APPENDIX

Mandatory Reporting Requirements for Child Abuse and Neglect

All University of Wisconsin-Madison employees and volunteers working with Extension programs must immediately report child abuse or neglect if, in the course of employment or voluntary service for Extension, the employee or volunteer:

- observes an incident or threat of child abuse or neglect
- learns of an incident or threat of child abuse or neglect
- has reasonable cause to believe that child abuse or neglect has occurred or will occur

Any person making a report of child abuse or neglect in good faith is immune from civil or criminal liability that results from the report.

Reporting suspected abuse or neglect may be difficult. It is, however, crucial to a child not only today, but also in the future. Parents, caregivers or other maltreaters who have abused or neglected children may need services and support to provide safe care of their children. The sooner a concern is reported, the sooner the family can be helped.

Definitions and Signs of Child Abuse and Neglect

Who: For purposes of reporting child abuse and neglect, a “child” is a person who is less than 18 years of age.

What: All suspected abuse (physical, emotional, sexual or the manufacture of methamphetamine) or the neglect of a person under 18 years of age must be reported to the local law enforcement or the county human services department.

Physical abuse

Physical injury inflicted on a child by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes, but is not limited to, lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or great bodily harm.

Signs

- Afraid to go home
- Frightened of parents/caretakers
- Fearful of other adults
- Extremes in behavior, very aggressive, withdrawn and shy
- Bruises, welts on face, neck, chest, back, buttocks
- Injuries in the shape of an object (cord, belt)
- Fractures that do not fit the story of how an injury occurred
- Delay in seeking medical help
- Unexplained burns

Sexual abuse

Sexual intercourse or sexual touching of a child, recording or displaying a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct, sexual exploitation, exposing of genitalia, forced viewing or listening to sexual activity, or involving a child in sex trafficking.

Signs

- Poor peer relationships
- Refusal to participate in physical activity
- Drastic change in behavior
- Regressive or childlike behavior that is not age appropriate
- Overly sexualized behavior
- Difficulty walking or sitting, frequent urination pain
- Stained or bloody underclothing
- Pain, swelling, itching in genital area

Abuse by manufacturing of methamphetamine

It is child abuse to manufacture methamphetamines with a child present, in a child’s home or under any other circumstances in which a reasonable person should have known that the manufacture would be seen, heard or smelled by a child.

Emotional abuse

Emotional damage occurs when a child’s parent, guardian or legal custodian has neglected, refused or been unable for reasons other than poverty to obtain the necessary treatment or to take steps to address the symptoms.

Harm to a child’s psychological or intellectual functioning that is exhibited by severe anxiety, depression, withdrawal or aggression. Emotional damage may be demonstrated by substantial and observable changes in behavior, emotional response or learning which are incompatible with the child’s age or stage of development.

Signs

- Low self-esteem
- Self-denigration
- Aggression
- Withdrawal
- Severe depression or anxiety

If you suspect something, say something.

Fulfilling Your Obligations as a Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect

EXECUTIVE ORDER 54

Information for University of Wisconsin-Madison
Extension employees and volunteers

Neglect

When a parent or a caregiver fails, refuses, or is unable for reasons other than poverty to provide the necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care, or shelter, which seriously endangers the physical health of the child.

Signs

- Poor hygiene, odor
- Inappropriately dressed for the weather
- Needs medical or dental care
- Left alone, unsupervised for long periods
- Failure to thrive, malnutrition
- Constant hunger, begs for or steals food
- Extreme willingness to please
- Frequent absence from school
- Arrives early and stays late at school or play areas or other people's homes

How to report

Immediately contact (EXTERNAL REPORT):

- The county human services department, sheriff, or local police department where the child resides by phone or in person. Reports may **not** be made by email.
- If there is an emergency or a child is in urgent danger, call 911.

After reporting to local authorities, contact UW-Madison (INTERNAL REPORT):

- UW-Madison Police Department at (608) 264-COPS or (608) 264-2677

What to report to local authorities

Explain as well as you can what happened or is happening to the child. Describe the nature of the abuse or neglect. Include information that has been disclosed by the child and/or observed by you. Be as specific as possible. Be prepared to give the name, address and phone number of the child and the name of the parent(s) or caregiver. Even if you do not know all of this information, report what you do know.

What to report to UW–Madison

After reporting to local authorities, you (both employees and volunteers) should contact the UW-Madison Police Department and indicate who made the report, on what date, and to which agency.

If the incident or threat of child abuse or neglect involves an allegation against a university employee or volunteer, or the suspected abuse or neglect occurred during an Extension sponsored activity, contact Extension's Assistant Dean of Human Resources at 608-890-3636.

What happens after you report

Child protective services and law enforcement will conduct the investigation and follow up with you if deemed appropriate. With exceptions, the identity of the person making the report will be kept confidential.

Questions

Contact your local Extension staff.

Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect

Important contacts

- Emergency 911

After Reporting Child Abuse to Local Authorities

- UW-Madison Police Department at (608) 264-COPS or (608) 264-2677

More information

<https://uwpd.wisc.edu/services/reporting-child-abuse-neglect/>

As AA/EEO employers, UW Colleges and UW–Extension provide equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements.

December 2020

Fulfilling Your Obligations as a Mandatory Reporter of Child Abuse and Neglect



EXTENSION

Examples of Prohibited Behavior in Extension Programming

Bullying: An intentional, persistent, and repeated pattern of physical and/or non-physical behaviors that are intended to or have the reasonable potential to cause fear, humiliation, or physical harm in an attempt to socially exclude, diminish, or isolate. Bullying is unwelcome behavior pervasive or severe enough that a reasonable person would find it hostile and/or intimidating.

Child abuse: Abuse of a child can include a wide range of behaviors from physical abuse, to sexual contact or exploitation, to manufacture of methamphetamines with a child present. Chapter 48 of the Wisconsin Statutes provides details of crimes against children.

Child sexual abuse: Includes, but is not limited to, sexual intercourse or sexual touching of a child, recording or displaying a child engaged in sexually explicit conduct, sexual exploitation, exposing of genitalia, forced viewing or listening to sexual activity, or permitting, allowing or encouraging a child to engage in prostitution. Romantic or sexual relationships between employees, contractors, or volunteers and youth program participants are strictly prohibited.

Discrimination: Unjust or prejudicial treatment of different categories of people. The following are the specific bases upon which discrimination is prohibited by the University of Wisconsin-Madison for visitors and program participants in University activities: age; ancestry; color; creed; disability; national origin; race; retaliation for making a complaint of discrimination, or taking part in an investigation relating to discrimination, or opposing discrimination; sex; and sexual orientation (<https://compliance.wisc.edu/eo-complaint/>). Discrimination based on gender or gender orientation is also prohibited.

Emotional abuse: A pattern of deliberate, non-contact behavior that causes emotional or psychological harm. Signs of emotional abuse include low self-esteem, self-denigration, aggression, withdrawal, and severe depression or anxiety.

Grooming: An observable pattern of behavior that is designed to draw a minor into a sexual relationship. Grooming behaviors often result in youth being more isolated, more dependent, more likely to trust the groomer, and more vulnerable to abusive behavior. Examples of grooming behavior can include touching behaviors, giving gifts, paying an excessive amount of attention to a youth, or emotional manipulation.

Harassment: A repeated pattern of behavior that is intended to harass or intimidate another person. Harassment may include, but is not limited to, verbal or physical assaults, threats, slurs, or derogatory or offensive comments.

Hazing: Any activity that is expected of someone joining or participating in a group where that activity humiliates, degrades, abuses, or endangers them regardless of a person's willingness to participate.

Indecent Exposure: Under no circumstances shall an authorized adult intentionally expose his or her breasts, buttocks, groin, or genitals to a youth program participant or vulnerable adult. In addition, authorized adults shall not shower, bathe, or undress with or in the presence of unrelated youth program participants or vulnerable adults.

Neglect: When a parent/guardian or caregiver fails, refuses, or is unable for reasons other than poverty to provide necessary care, food, clothing, medical or dental care, or shelter, which seriously endangers the physical health of the child or other member of a vulnerable population.

Physical abuse: Physical injury inflicted by other than accidental means. Physical injury includes lacerations, fractured bones, burns, internal injuries, severe or frequent bruising or bodily harm. It also includes, but is not limited to, recommending against or denying adequate hydration, nutrition, medical attention, or sleep.

Sexual Assault: Sexual contact or sexual intercourse with another person without the consent of that person, as defined by §940.225, Wis. Stats.

Sexual Harassment: Unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature constitutes sexual harassment when (1) submission to such conduct is made either explicitly or implicitly a term or condition of an individual's employment or educational experience or their participation in a University program or activity; (2) submission to or rejection of such conduct by an individual is used as the basis for employment, academic, or program-related decisions affecting such an individual; or (3) creates a hostile environment.



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CONDITIONS OF VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Thank you for your interest in volunteering with the Division of Extension! This document outlines four topics:

1. Risks associated with volunteer service,
2. Protections provided to volunteers by the University of Wisconsin-Madison,
3. Your responsibilities as a volunteer, and
4. Use of your voice and/or image in promotional and other recorded media.

You will need to acknowledge you have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions of volunteer service. If you have questions, call your county Extension office.

1. RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH VOLUNTEER SERVICE

A. Assumption of Risks:

- I understand that:
 - all risks cannot be anticipated; some risks are unpredictable.
 - certain risks cannot be eliminated regardless of the care taken to avoid injuries.
 - the risks of volunteer participation can include, but are not limited to, the possibility of physical injury, partial and/or total disability, paralysis, and death.
 - I am advised to seek the advice of my physician before participating in an Extension program.
 - I am also advised to have health and accident insurance.
- My participation is voluntary, and I understand that I assume all such risks.

Please note: if injured during the course of volunteer service, volunteers would have the same legal rights as other citizens to seek compensation if the injury results from University negligence. Workers' compensation coverage is not provided to volunteers. Accident coverage is only provided by the University for some volunteer activities.

B. Consent for Medical Treatment:

- I authorize the University and its designated representatives to consent, on my behalf, to emergency medical/hospital care or treatment to be rendered upon the advice of a licensed physician if I am unable to make that decision for myself (e.g., unconscious, incoherent, unresponsive).
- I agree to be responsible for all necessary charges incurred by any hospitalization or treatment that occurs as a result of this consent.

2. PROTECTIONS PROVIDED TO VOLUNTEERS

A. Liability Protection

- UW-Madison protects volunteers through liability coverage. If injuries or property damage result from your negligence, the state can pay claims or defend you against allegations that result from your actions. Negligence is the failure to take reasonable care to prevent causing injury or loss to another person. This protection is provided only when you are serving in your volunteer role (see your position description), performing approved or assigned tasks, and behaving in a manner that is not reckless. If you intend to unlawfully inflict harm on others, you would not be protected.



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- You must acknowledge your mistakes and report actions that may result in injuries or property damage to your county office as soon as possible, but not more than 48 hours after the incident.

If you want to read more about liability coverage, see Wisconsin Statute, Sections [893.82](#) and [895.46](#).

B. Excess Automobile Liability Protection

- If UW-Madison approves you to drive as part of your volunteer role, you may be eligible for excess automobile liability protection if you are involved in an accident. This coverage will only be in effect if you meet all requirements and the limits of your personal automobile liability coverage have been exhausted. No property coverage is provided.

More information can be found on the [Automobile Insurance](#) page of the Risk Management Website. Please note that Extension volunteers are not permitted to reserve or drive vehicles owned by the State.

3. YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES AS A VOLUNTEER

A. Personal Insurance

- I understand that I am advised to have my own health, accident, and related insurances when I am an Extension volunteer.
- I understand that the University does not provide such coverage.

B. Rules and Regulations

When volunteering for Extension, I agree to abide by the following:

- Extension's Volunteer Behavior Expectations and other Extension rules, regulations, and procedures, including those directly associated with my program.
- University of Wisconsin-Madison rules, regulations, and procedures.
- Any federal, state, city, or other laws and rules that apply to the location where the activity is occurring. This includes U.S. Department of Agriculture rules, policies, and guidelines.

C. Reporting

- I will [report accidents, injuries, property damage, or criminal activity](#) that occur, or I have reason to believe may have occurred, during my service as an Extension volunteer. Reports will be made to my county Extension office and local authorities as soon as possible, but not more than 48 hours after the situation occurs.
- I will also [report suspected child abuse or neglect](#) to local authorities and the University as soon as possible, but not more than 48 hours after the situation occurs.
- When participating in activities on university property, I will [report behaviors prohibited by Title IX legislation](#) to UW-Madison. These behaviors include sex discrimination, sexual harassment, sexual assault, dating violence, domestic violence, stalking, and retaliation.

Contact your county office with questions about reporting responsibilities or whether a report needs to be made in a specific situation.



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4. USE OF YOUR VOICE AND/OR IMAGE IN PROMOTIONAL AND OTHER RECORDED MEDIA

A. Media Release:

- I understand that the University may record my participation and appearance (e.g., video, audio, photos) for use on the Extension website, social media, television, or other platform for educational or promotional purposes (e.g., recruiting program participants).
- I agree to allow the University to use my name, image, likeness, and voice in such recordings.

To opt out of this section, you will need to request a Recorded Media Opt-Out Release from your Extension supervisor. You will also need to communicate that you have signed an opt-out release anytime recordings are being made during your volunteer service. The University cannot guarantee that all staff and volunteers involved in program management will be aware of your preference if you do not let them know anytime photos are taken or other recordings are made.

COPY



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VOLUNTEER BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS

These expectations serve as a guide for behavior during volunteer service. You will need to acknowledge you have read, understand, and agree to the terms and conditions of volunteer service. If you have questions, contact your county Extension office.

As a Division of Extension volunteer, I agree to:

1. Conduct myself in a manner that is in the best interest of the Division of Extension and the program(s) for which I volunteer.
2. Work cooperatively with others, including Extension staff, volunteers, program participants, and community members, to further the mission of my volunteer program and the Division of Extension.
3. Accept supervision and guidance from Extension staff or designated management volunteers.
4. Treat all people with respect, use courteous manners and language, exhibit good sportsmanship, be a positive role model, and use effective conflict resolution skills.
5. Complete tasks, reports, and evaluations within the agreed upon timeframe. When I am not able to complete something within the agreed upon period, I will let staff or designated management volunteers know I am unable to do so.
6. Take part in orientation and training programs designed to help me deliver programs more effectively.
7. Use appropriate resources, including research-based information from the university, when delivering programs.
8. Support inclusion by making all reasonable efforts to ensure that programs are accessible to all individuals in the communities we serve.
9. Refrain from engaging in any form of abuse, harassment, neglect, or [discrimination](#), and [report](#) anyone who engages in this type of behavior when involved in Extension programs to appropriate university and law enforcement authorities.
10. Abide by all University of Wisconsin-Madison and Division of Extension rules, regulations, and procedures (e.g., youth/vulnerable populations protection policies) and with any federal, state, city, or other laws and rules that are applicable to the location where the activity is occurring. This includes USDA rules, policies, and guidelines.
11. Treat animals in a humane manner and teach program participants to provide appropriate animal care and management.
12. Refrain from consuming or being under the influence of alcohol or illegal substances while serving in the role of a Division of Extension volunteer and forbid youth participants under my supervision from doing so.
13. Refrain from conceal carry of firearms and/or weapons. I understand that if I am a 4-H Youth Development shooting sports volunteer, I am expected to openly carry/transport 4-H shooting sports equipment in designated areas.
14. Refrain from participating in any political campaign activity and expressing personal political views while serving in my volunteer role.
15. Refrain from using my volunteer position or title for my own private or personal gain (e.g., securing university contracts).
16. If approved to drive by UW-Madison as part of my volunteer role, I will operate all motor vehicles and other equipment in a safe and reliable manner and only with a valid operator's license and the legally required insurance. I will comply with all motor vehicle-related state regulations and laws.
17. Self-report to my Division of Extension supervisor or other point of contact about any changes in my status (e.g. criminal arrest, charge or conviction history, driving privileges, etc.) in accordance with the UW-Madison Criminal background check policies and/or within 24 hours or at the earliest possible opportunity; also, I will inform Extension about any new criminal activity, arrests, or convictions that involve another Extension volunteer or staff member within 48 hours of learning about the situation.

I have read, understand, and agree to abide by these expectations for volunteers. I understand that suspension or termination of my position as a volunteer may result if I do not meet these expectations.



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Position Description

Position Title: Master Gardener Volunteer

The Master Gardener Volunteer position description includes the following titles: Certified Master Gardener Volunteer, Intern Master Gardener Volunteer, Student Master Gardener Volunteer, Honorary Master Gardener Volunteer, and Exempted Master Gardener Volunteer

Position Purpose:

- To use university research-based information to extend the Wisconsin Idea through educating the public about gardening and natural resources.
- Make a positive difference in lives and communities.

Your Responsibilities:

- Assist local Extension educators in addressing community needs (e.g., garden therapy programs, increasing food security, answering gardening questions) in Extension-approved projects and activities.
- Acquire/retain requisite knowledge and become familiar with the resources necessary to accomplish assigned tasks.
 - Become acquainted with the county Extension office and Master Gardener Program policies, procedures, and personnel.
 - Follow all safety guidelines.
- Represent the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension and the Master Gardener Program in a professional manner.
 - Maintain a welcoming environment.
 - Always use tact and give constructive horticultural advice using university research-based information.
 - Never be disparaging of opinions or procedures.
 - Respect confidence and clientele information.
- Accept assignments on approved projects or other Master Gardener activities that are consistent with your interests and time available for volunteering.
 - Let project leaders know as soon as possible if you are unable to follow-through with a commitment.
 - Know your limitations (e.g., say “I don’t know, but I can find out” when you do not know the answer to a question).
- Refer all inquiries, outreach, and education opportunities from commercial horticultural organizations (e.g., greenhouses, landscape contractors, arborists, etc.) to Extension staff.
- Keep appropriate records, such as volunteer hours and public contacts.
- Ensure compliance with Volunteer Behavior Expectations and other relevant policies and guidelines of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Division of Extension.

- Demonstrate commitment to diversity and equal opportunity for those wishing to benefit from Master Gardener programs and services.

Essential Functions: These functions are important components of almost every volunteer project.

- **Answering Questions/Diagnostics:** Activities related to addressing gardening questions in one-on-one settings.
- **Educating:** Activities related to group engagement with gardening information (e.g., workshops, symposiums, displays); includes your preparation and delivery.
- **Gardening:** Activities related to the physical aspects of gardening.
- **Administering/Supporting:** Activities related to the ongoing success of programming (e.g., attending meetings, decision-making); preparation/clean-up of planned activities.

Commitment Time Frame: between January 1 and December 31, annually

- **Certified Master Gardener Volunteers:**
 - Complete and report a minimum of 24 hours of approved volunteer service in the specified time frame.
 - Complete a minimum of 10 continuing education hours in the specified time frame.
- **Intern Master Gardener Volunteers:**
 - Complete the Level 1 Training course and pass the Level 1 exam.
 - Complete and report a minimum of 24 hours of approved volunteer service within the specified time frame.
- **Exempted Master Gardener Volunteer:**
 - Elected by volunteer.
 - No minimum reporting activity requirements for a designated period of time, typically one year.
- **Honored Master Gardener Volunteer:**
 - 10 years or 1000 hours; plus, significant accomplishments.
 - No minimum reporting activity requirements for perpetuity.
 - Note: Requires approval by local and state coordinators.

In addition, volunteers in all categories must complete Extension registration and orientation requirements.

Accountable to/Reports to:

- Primary contact:
 - **Local (county) coordinator (staff)** to be provided
- Secondary contacts:
 - Mike Maddox, Outreach Program Manager
Master Gardener Program
Mike.Maddox@wisc.edu
- Note on cross-county volunteerism: prior to volunteering in additional counties outside of reporting county, confer about potential permissions, requirements or restrictions with coordinators in additional counties

Training and Orientation:

- Master Gardener Program Level 1 training course
- Extension orientation requirements, including Mandated Reporter
- Continuing education requirements, as appropriate to position title (see Commitment section)

Resources:

- Wisconsin Master Gardener Program training manual
- <https://wimastergardener.org/>

Qualifications:

- Willingness to learn
- Enthusiasm; interest in helping people
- Ability to work with others in a cooperative manner
- Ability to effectively communicate to members of the public
- Belief in the value of Extension's educational programs
- Annual enrollment as a Wisconsin Master Gardener Volunteer
- Successful completion of all Extension orientation requirements upon initial enrollment
- Pass criminal background check conducted by UW-Madison at required intervals
- Complete/have the intention of to complete Master Gardener Training with score of 70% or higher on exam

Benefits:

- Being part of a group and community; networking with other gardeners from your community, across the state, and nationally
- Access to quality educational resources; personal development and life-long learning
- Sense of giving back to the community; altruism

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