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Tennessee MASTER GARDENER

UT Extension
W099

Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Handbook

Statewide Guidelines and Procedures

mastergardener.tennessee.edu



THE UNIVERSITY of TENNESSEE
INSTITUTE of AGRICULTURE

TENNESSEE MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER HANDBOOK
STATEWIDE GUIDELINES AND PROCEDURES

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Foreword

Welcome to the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. I hope that your experiences and involvement enrich your life in ways you never thought possible!

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program has been serving Tennesseans with the University of Tennessee Extension's unbiased, research-based information for more than 20 years. Master Gardeners are university-trained volunteers who assist UT Extension Offices in providing home horticulture and environmental stewardship information to their home counties. Master Gardeners are recognized by and represent UT Extension as garden experts who serve the community.

This volunteer guidebook is intended to provide general information and minimum requirements for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. Local requirements may vary slightly from county to county, so it is important to contact your county UT Extension Office, Master Gardener coordinator or your county Master Gardener Association for more details. More resources are available online through our Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Web site at *mastergardener.tennessee.edu*.

Master Gardener volunteers work together as a group to better their communities. They come from diverse backgrounds and experiences to form a unique and diverse group which has two basic things in common: gardening and community service. Volunteers are UT Extension's most valuable allies. It could not succeed in fulfilling all of the state's educational needs in home horticulture without the help of its volunteers. On behalf of the UT Extension, I would like to offer you a sincere thank you for your participation, interest and financial support in this fine program.

I also offer a special thanks to those individuals and county offices that helped develop this manual. Their contributions of time and materials enriched this handbook and are greatly appreciated.

Happy gardening and never stop learning!



State Coordinator, Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Program

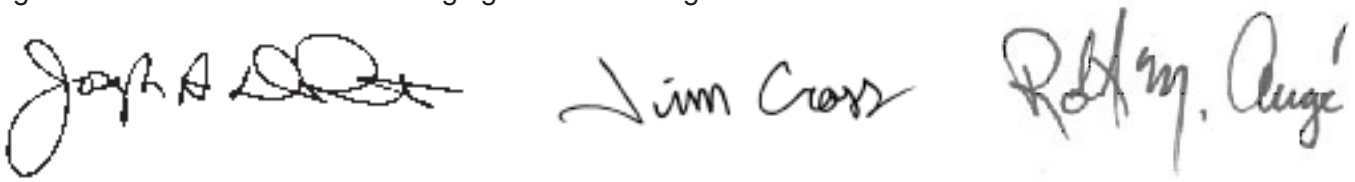
University Administrative Endorsement of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is an organized educational outreach program of the University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture.

Tennessee Master Gardener is the University of Tennessee Extension's salient volunteer training program that enables the state's land-grant university to implement part of its mission of outreach and education to local community. Volunteers are selected, trained and certified to serve the university as volunteer educators in home horticulture and environment.

The Tennessee Master Gardener volunteer certification program is developed and managed by the UT Extension, a division of the UT Institute of Agriculture. To attain certification, volunteers must commit to a required amount of service, horticulture and environmental coursework, and standards defining the program. In the effort to continually establish, maintain and promote the Tennessee Master Gardener Program, the UT Institute of Agriculture recognizes, supports and enforces the state Tennessee Master Gardener Guidelines as established by the Tennessee Master Gardener Advocacy Board.

The activities and actionable plans of certified volunteers using the title "Tennessee Master Gardener" are conducting official university business; therefore, every Master Gardener must adhere to the same code of conduct as paid university employees. The University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture intends to protect programs and volunteers acknowledging the rules that govern them.



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Program Information

Introduction

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is a University of Tennessee Extension volunteer program that provides the public with quality home horticulture and gardener-related information through educational programs, examples and demonstrations. Master Gardener volunteers are a diverse group of people with extraordinary talents and abilities which hosts educational and community service projects across the state of Tennessee and the United States. Volunteers are trained with 40 hours of horticultural classes and, in return, volunteers give their community 40 hours of volunteer service through their local UT Extension Office. Master Gardeners are required to maintain a connection to their local UT Extension Office and continue their education annually.

Defining the Program

UT Extension offers the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. It is designed to increase the availability of horticultural information across the state and improve Tennesseans' quality of life through horticulture projects. Goals are implemented through the training and utilization of local volunteers. These volunteers, known as Certified Master Gardeners, aid UT Extension by running plant clinics; answering phone requests for horticultural information; establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens; working with youth, those with disabilities, the elderly and other special groups in the community; designing and implementing community involvement projects; and coordinating Master Gardener programs.

Program Objectives

The purpose of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program is to train citizens as horticultural education volunteers of UT Extension who work with their respective county Extension Offices to expand the university's educational outreach by providing home gardeners with research-based information.

Objectives

- To expand the capabilities of UT Extension to provide horticultural information to individuals and groups in the community.
- To develop community programs related to horticulture. Depending on the needs of the community, these programs might include landscaping improvement activities with civic groups, horticulture therapy projects with nursing homes, or home demonstration gardens designed to improve access to information or low-income groups.
- To enhance 4-H programs through the establishment of 4-H horticulture/garden clubs.
- To develop a Master Gardener volunteer network that is administratively self-sufficient.
- To recruit and train volunteers interested in helping area residents solve their gardening problems either by working with the residents individually or in groups, or by working on the creation of information for distribution through the news media, Web sites and direct mail.
- To recruit and train volunteers interested in working with special groups within the community, such as garden clubs, civic organizations, children, the disabled, the elderly, the confined, minorities and low-income families.
- To recruit 4-H garden club leaders from the Master Gardener volunteers.
- To identify the administrative positions necessary to maintain the Master Gardener Program and fill these positions with capable volunteers who will direct the activities of the program.

Why Was the Master Gardener Program Formed?

The Washington State University Cooperative Extension Service started the Master Gardener Program in 1973. The concept of the Master Gardener Program actually was conceived by an Extension agent.

In the early 1970s, a renewed interest in gardening swept the country. People began to cultivate and experiment with more diverse plants and gardening techniques than the traditional vegetables and window-box geraniums. In 1972, David Gibby, an agent in Seattle, would often arrive at work to find 100 or so messages from home gardeners in addition to his workload. He asked several other agents to brainstorm and help him find a way to meet the needs of the vast number of new home gardeners. They came up with an idea of recruiting volunteers who would be trained by specialists. In return, the trained volunteers would then help Extension provide gardening information to the public.

In the fall of 1972, the name Master Gardener was chosen for the new program. An article in a local magazine launched recruiting efforts. Many questioned whether or not people would donate their time, but the response was incredibly overwhelming. Out of 300 applicants, 120 were selected to receive training. Master Gardener training began in January 1973. Enthusiasm to interact with the public was so great that 50 of those Master Gardeners continued with more personal communication training.

The initial focus of the Master Gardener Program was for volunteers to take the Extension Office to the people. Plant clinics were developed for problem diagnoses and to offer solutions. These techniques are still being used today.

The Master Gardener Program has been a success from the start. Master Gardeners become well-trained horticulturists. It has been documented that Master Gardeners have "improved self-worth, confidence, and decision making abilities." *(Source: The Washington State University Master Gardener Program: Cultivating Plants, People, and Communities for 25 Years. By Van Bobbitt.)*

The Value of the Master Gardener Program

The value of Tennessee Master Gardeners is in urban areas, but they are also extremely useful in smaller towns. Often, UT Extension agents' areas of expertise are in areas of agriculture other than horticulture. Master Gardeners provide Extension with the experience and knowledge necessary to provide information addressing the needs and interests of Tennesseans. Currently, there are more than 46 counties with certified active Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers.

On average, 1,200 Master Gardeners are trained every year in Tennessee. That's 48,000 *volunteer* hours per year. And the value of that volunteer time to the state is $960,000! (Source: *www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html*)

Master Gardeners often become valued community leaders in garden- and environmental-related information. The volunteers experience the greatest "payback" as they share their information, conduct educational programs and volunteer on community projects. However, dedicated Tennessee Master Gardeners will also receive extra benefits, which are outlined below.

Each county UT Extension Office is required to register Master Gardener volunteers in the UT Extension SUPER system. As registered volunteers, certified Master Gardeners will receive benefits which include liability coverage up to $300,000 and a Web ID for access to resources and reporting on the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site.

Program Importance

What Is the Extension-Volunteer Connection? The value of volunteers' contributions to UT Extension is tremendous. Volunteers helped create the original Agricultural Extension Service in the early 1900s, and today continue to guide its growth and development. Through volunteer efforts today, UT Extension achieves stronger, more relevant programs and greater community visibility, thereby reaching more people and enhancing consumer confidence.

What Is the Master Gardener Volunteer Program? The Master Gardener Program is a prescribed instructional program designed to train selected volunteer personnel in home horticulture. In exchange, volunteer interns provide 40 hours, or five days, of volunteer work under the supervision of a local UT Extension agent sponsoring the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.

Mission, Vision and Values

The purpose of the Master Gardener Program is to provide University of Tennessee research-based information and education related to gardening and home horticulture.

Mission
The Tennessee Master Gardener Program promotes environmental stewardship through a network of volunteers who provide information and education to Tennessee communities in home gardening and related areas.

As part of its mission, the program supports continued education and development for committed volunteers.

Vision
To provide innovative, research-based, progressive home horticulture education to all Tennessee communities.

Values
Providing home horticulture education in a responsive and timely manner.

Collaborating with local nonprofit and municipal groups to offer educational leadership for better gardening practices in area communities.

Fostering a learning environment for volunteers who promote environmental stewardship while representing the University of Tennessee.

Encouraging continued education and the recruitment and training of new Master Gardener Volunteers.

Offering information and education to Tennessee citizens through innovative programs with creative and new approaches.

University of Tennessee Extension

Established by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, University of Tennessee Extension is the off-campus educational unit of the UT Institute of Agriculture. With an office in every county, UT Extension brings educational programs and research-based information to the citizens of Tennessee.

UT Extension works with local governments, community leaders, families and individuals to address problems and issues that help improve people's lives. Extension is engaged in a broad range of educational programs in agriculture, community resource development, nutrition, health, family issues, lawn and garden, and youth development.

Mission of University of Tennessee Extension
The University of Tennessee Extension is an off-campus division of the UT Institute of Agriculture. It is a statewide educational organization, funded by federal, state and local governments, that brings research-based information about agriculture, family and consumer sciences, and resource development to the people of Tennessee where they live and work.

Because UT Extension emphasizes helping people improve their livelihood where they are located, most Tennesseans have contact with UT Extension through their local county Extension agents found in each of the 95 counties. Extension agents are supported by area and state faculty as well as by the educational and research resources and activities of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 74 land-grant universities, and 3,150 county units throughout the nation. The stated mission of the system is to help people improve their lives through an educational process that uses scientific knowledge to address issues and needs.

Relationship of UT Extension to the Master Gardener Program

Within Extension: The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is part of an outreach program from the Department of Plant Sciences in Urban Horticulture. Master Gardener volunteers educate homeowners and those with non-commercial, garden-related needs. UT Extension faculty members provide education and assistance to the commercial green industry.

County: The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is one of many programs directed by UT Extension staff through county offices. County support will be visible to volunteers because county governments typically provide substantial funding for support staff, operating expenses, equipment and office space. Because of this support, county UT Extension Offices design their programs to respond to counties' concerns and issues.

Region: UT Extension has three regional offices: Western, Central and Eastern. Each county office program (such as 4-H and Master Gardener) is supported by a regional UT Extension program director. To find out which UT Extension region your county is in, visit *www.utextension.utk.edu/offices/default.asp*.

State: The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is one of the many "Agriculture and Natural Resources" (ANR) programs provided by the UT Institute of Agriculture. The current state coordinator for the Master Gardener Program is also the urban horticulture area specialist who reports to the department head of the Plant Sciences Department, the UT Extension dean, and the vice president of the Institute of Agriculture. Salaries for UT Extension specialists come from the Department of Plant Sciences and the Institute of Agriculture.

Master Gardeners are certified volunteer educators for UT Extension. All certified Master Gardeners

must register on the state Tennessee Master Gardener Web site as current certified volunteers. UT Extension county offices will register certified volunteers in the county personnel database as "friends of the university." Certified volunteers must be registered on both the Master Gardener Web site and in the county personnel database to be eligible for coverage under the university's liability policy.

National: UT Extension, and thus the Tennessee Master Gardener Program, fall under the jurisdiction of the United States Department of Agriculture. As representatives of UT Extension, volunteers must follow federal guidelines and cooperate in reporting diversity information as they serve the public.

Official Slogan

"Helping Tennessee Grow Better Communities."

Organizational Structure

The statewide Tennessee Master Gardener Program is coordinated through UT Extension by a state coordinator. At the county level, the UT Extension Office staff, assisted by local Master Gardener organizations, coordinates Master Gardener Programs. Local Master Gardener organizations provide financial support, resource and program planning assistance.

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program also participates in regional and international Master Gardener conferences and committees. The state coordinator actively works with other state coordinators to develop better programs and share information.

Program Funding

Funding for each county program comes from the federal, state and county levels, in addition to the often-vital contribution of the local Master Gardener organizations. The amount of funding support from government agencies varies by county. Other funding sources could include fees for services, grants, the Tennessee Master Gardener gift account, private donations and bequests. Fundraising is an increasingly important role for local and state Master Gardener organizations. Donations may be accepted for the program. Tax credit may only be offered if the program is set up as a nonprofit group. (See County Master Gardener Handbook for more information.)

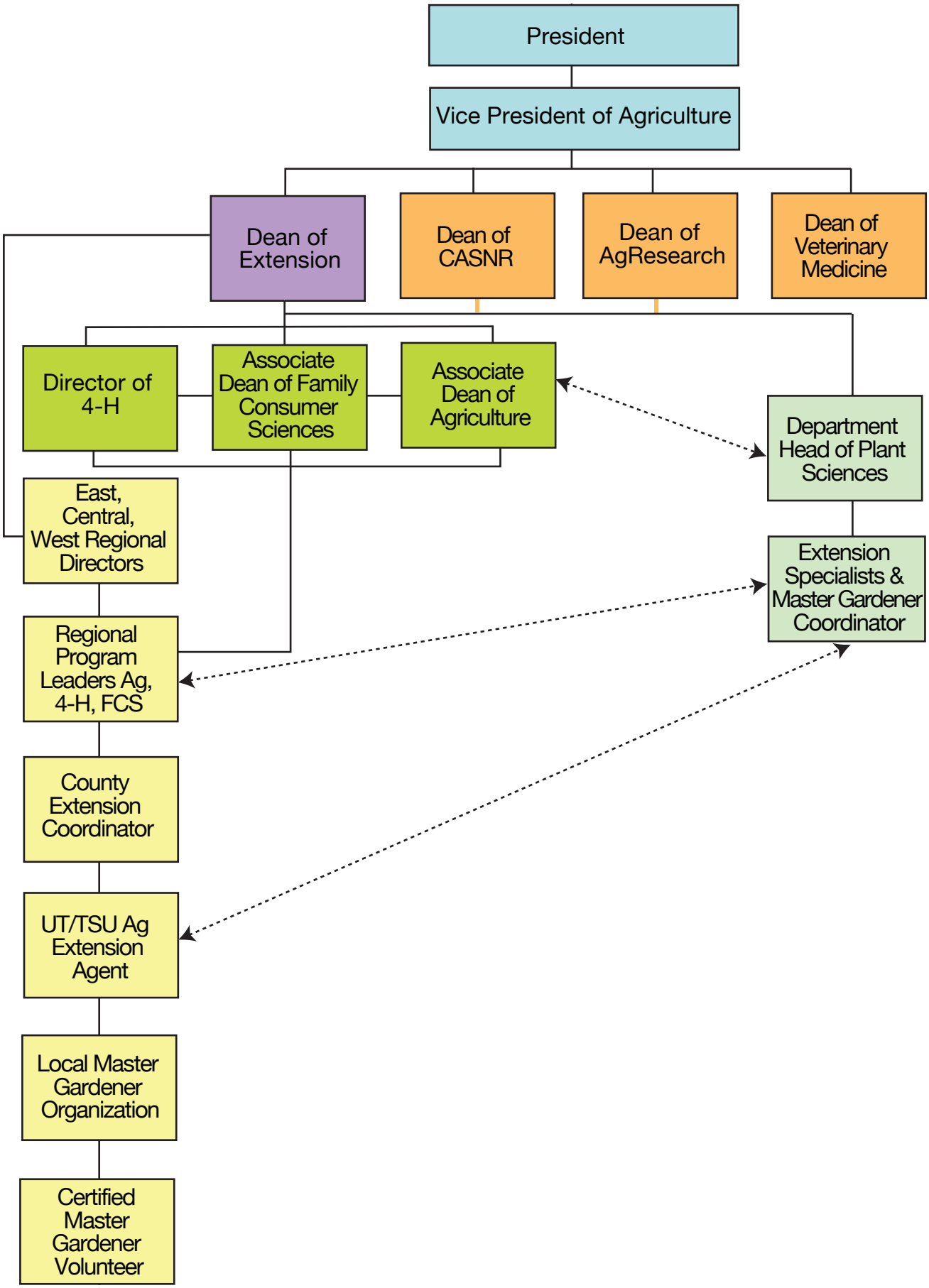
Relationship to Other Programs

Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers participate with other UT Extension programs (4-H, Family and Consumer Sciences, Agriculture and Natural Resources), various federal agencies (Soil and Water Conservation District, NRCS), state agencies (Department of Natural Resources, Department of Ecology, etc.), county/city agencies (city parks, water quality and conservation agencies, waste management and recycling agencies, etc.) plus numerous local organizations and individuals (community garden clubs, Optimist and other service groups, schools, churches, nonprofit agencies, etc.). The scope of involvement varies by county and local Master Gardener organization. Volunteers are encouraged to function as an educational resource for each community by participating with other community programs.

Junior Master Gardener™

Junior Master Gardener™ is a national youth gardening educational program created by Texas A&M University. JMG clubs or camps create learning opportunities for kids to learn more about gardening, nature, health and the environment. The University of Tennessee is a state sponsor for the JMG program. Local leadership for the JMG program can be shared with the 4-H program in the county Master Gardener educational project. JMG programs can have many different forms to fit the needs of a community. Tennessee counties have used the JMG curriculum for summer camps, after-school clubs and home schooling groups. For more information about starting a registered JMG group, visit the JMG Web site at www.jmgkids.us or contact the State Master Gardener Coordinator. Curriculum and workbooks may be purchased on the JMG Web site.

University of Tennessee Extension
Master Gardener Program



Official Tennessee Master Gardener Graphic

The state service mark for the official Tennessee Master Gardener graphic is shown below. The mark may be used in either black, dark green or beige. It is available for download in a variety of formats at *mastergardener.tennessee.edu*.

County graphics may be used to represent programs and projects within that county only. The state graphic may be adopted for county representation if desired.





State Service Marks

In addition to the above graphics, the University of Tennessee also owns the marks "Tennessee Master Gardener" and "Tennessee Master Gardeners: Helping Tennessee Grow Better Communities" and the phrase "Master Gardener" when used in Tennessee. The use of the Tennessee Master Gardener graphic or any of the above service marks on letterhead, Web sites or banners should include the "service mark" symbol [SM]. These marks are owned by the University of Tennessee and may only be used for official Master Gardener purposes.

Program Policies

Use of the Master Gardener Volunteer Title

The title of Master Gardener Volunteer is to be used solely within the framework of UT Extension. Certified Master Gardener volunteers should identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service under the direction of the local Master Gardener volunteer coordinator. Volunteers may not wear their name badges while at work or being paid for service. Master Gardener volunteers may not advertise their place of business during UT Extension-sponsored activities. Master Gardener volunteers may not use their honorary title on business cards or other types of business advertisements. UT Extension is a source of unbiased, research-based information. It is important that no one associated with UT Extension, including Master Gardener volunteers, gives the appearance of being involved in a commercial activity, has association with commercial products, or gives implied UT Extension endorsement of any product or place of business while involved in UT Extension activities. Violation of this policy may result in an immediate withdrawal of privileges.

Code of Conduct

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program is an educational and community service program designed by the University of Tennessee to provide unbiased, research-based information to the gardening public. These conduct standards were designed to maintain a high quality program that effectively serves the community and provides a positive volunteer experience.

As a Tennessee Maser Gardener volunteer I will

- Represent University of Tennessee Extension with dignity and pride.
- Respect all persons with whom I interact as a Tennessee Master Gardener (fellow volunteers, UT Extension or county personnel, and the general public).
- Conduct myself in a courteous, respectful manner refraining from profanity, harassment, disruptive behavior or abuse of any kind (physical or verbal).
- Provide a positive role model when working with youth.

- Respect and follow university, county and program policies and guidelines.
- Comply with Equal Opportunity and anti-discrimination laws.
- Avoid illegal or inappropriate use of alcohol and other drugs.
- Respect and use chemicals, tools and other equipment according to prescribed and recommended purposes.
- Participate as a team member within the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.
- Accept responsibility to promote and support other Tennessee Master Gardeners in order to develop an effective county and state program.

Pesticide Recommendations

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

Affirmative Action Policy

The University of Tennessee is an EEO/AA/Title VI/ Title IX/Section 504/ADA/ADEA institution in the provision of its education and employment programs and services. All qualified applicants will receive equal consideration for employment without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, pregnancy, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, age, physical or mental disability, or covered veteran status.

Concerns or evidence of non-compliance may be reported to your local UT Extension office or the UT Institute of Agriculture Volunteer Coordinator at 865-974-2128. Because UT receives both federal and state funds, Tennessee Master Gardeners are required to participate in the collection of contact information to verify lawful compliance with Affirmative Action laws.

Risk Management and Liability

Tennessee Master Gardeners are unpaid agents of the University of Tennessee. As a state agency, UT self-insures its general liability exposure. State statute provides that the state may provide a defense for any agent of UT, including a volunteer, against whom claims are filed. However, individuals are only eligible for defense if they can prove they were acting within the scope of their UT duties and in good faith.

To be acting in an official capacity as a UT volunteer, a person must be

1. Currently enrolled as an active volunteer on the Tennessee Master Gardener Program Web site (*mastergardener.tennessee.edu*).

2. Acting in good faith and in accordance with Tennessee Master Gardener Guidelines.

3. Engaged in activities that are planned, approved and carried out through UT Extension.

Volunteers are responsible for their own personal injury claims, except when reimbursement may be provided through the UT Extension volunteer program.

To view the Risk Management and Liability Policy for UT volunteers visit *web.utk.edu/~rm*.

Requirements for Certification

Upon acceptance into the Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program, volunteers are designated as Intern Master Gardener Volunteers. To become a Certified Master Gardener Volunteer, interns must complete all of the following steps.

1. Complete an Official Tennessee Master Gardener Application.
Applications must be completed for the county UT Extension volunteer selection process. All volunteers must provide their Social Security number to become a volunteer for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. The UT Office of

Risk Management and UT Extension require completed applications for volunteers to receive university liability coverage and other UT benefits. All Tennessee Master Gardener volunteers are required to be covered under UT liability coverage and should be entered on the Tennessee Master Gardener SUPER by the county Extension Office.

2. Complete the Master Gardener Volunteer Training Course.
Attendance is required for all class meetings, with no more than two excused absences or 80 percent of the classes (excused absences can be made up under the direction of the Extension agent). Completion of course exams with an average passing score are required for certification.

3. Complete the Internship Volunteer Service Hours.
Master Gardener interns must complete and document a minimum of 40 hours of approved volunteer service activities within one year of the date of their training. UT Extension agents will help facilitate this process. Hours recorded should be entered into the Tennessee Master Gardener volunteer database located online at *mastergardener.tennessee.edu*. Reporting service hours provides evidence of activity for liability and certification requirements. All Master Gardeners must register and submit regular reports on activities on the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site. Volunteers are responsible for requesting assistance in entering hours online if they do not have access to the Internet.

4. Complete Continued Education Hours.
In some counties, interns may be asked to complete another eight continued education hours. All recertifying Master Gardeners must complete the eight hours of continued education. The purpose of these hours is to keep volunteers involved and informed on group activities and new horticulture-related information.

5. Accept or Sign the Tennessee Master Gardener Program Memorandum of Agreement.
This Memorandum of Agreement will be kept on file at the county UT Extension Office or on the password-protected Tennessee Master Gardener Web site (*mastergardener.tennessee.edu*) under the section titled "Master Gardener Resources."

Recertification and Continued Volunteer Service

Each year after initial certification, certified Master Gardeners must complete a minimum of 25 hours of volunteer service activities sponsored by a local Master Gardener coordinator, sign the annual *Memorandum of Agreement* (available through online Volunteer Service Report, hardcopies from the county UT Extension Office or downloadable from the Web site), and complete eight hours of personal continued education (CE). Reports should be neatly filed and organized in a Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Service Report (see the Web site password-protected area "Master Gardener Resources").

Master Gardeners must continually submit volunteer service hours through the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site. UT Extension agents need the information to complete a report due at the end of December. County agents may request volunteers enter their hours prior to December 31 in order to complete the report. UT Extension agents may print an annual report on their Master Gardener Program from the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site. Each county Master Gardener group's year-end varies; however, hours should be reported January 1 through December 31 to comply with UT Extension program planning.

Master Gardeners who have been inactive for a period of time are encouraged to participate in Master Gardener Program activities and volunteer their expertise whenever possible. Activation will occur when recorded hours are returned to the record keeper or the county UT Extension Office. Inactive Master Gardeners will have until this deadline to rejoin with clemency of inactivity. Former Master Gardeners will be required to turn in recertification hours and CE hours annually to reinstate their Master Gardener title. Inactive time will not count toward statuses.

Volunteer Service Hours

Hours are important in providing the state and federal government with data about the Master Gardener Program's impact, progress and needs. There are three categories of volunteer hours in the Master Gardener Program; all are of equal importance in running a smooth organization. The three types of hours are referred to as ACT (or ACE) hours and include Administrative, Community and Educating/

Teaching. One hundred percent of annual volunteer hours must meet county UT Extension or Master Gardener approval; 50 percent must be spent on county-approved projects. Volunteer hours and CE hours must be reported on the Volunteer Service Report on the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site (*mastergardener.tennessee.edu*) or may be turned in to the group's record keeper for online entry.

Volunteer hours should reflect the time spent supporting the mission of the Master Gardener Program. The honor system is used to turn in valid hours donated to support the program's mission and each community.

The county's or community's needs and the mission of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program should determine how volunteer hours are spent. Weight may be placed on certain types of hour categories if needed (for example: 30 percent administrative, 30 percent community and 40 percent education). The county can determine the weight of hour categories. The county may also increase continued education hourly requirements.

Administrative hours are contributed while conducting organizational work for Master Gardener activities, projects, county organizations or the UT Extension Office. Examples of administrative hours include coordinating Master Gardeners to help with the county fair, recording hours into the Tennessee Master Gardener annual report database, committee meetings and fundraising.

Community hours are contributed while working on Master Gardener-approved community projects that are non-educational. Examples of community hours include replanting begonias in the welcome sign planter, working at the county fair, and serving as a non-educational docent at a county meeting.

Teaching or Educating hours are contributed while teaching or preparing Master Gardener or UT Extension educational programs, answering horticulture questions, writing articles, or performing office duty in the UT Extension Office. Examples of education hours include writing newsletter articles, research for educational programs, and teaching a home gardening program.

Mileage to and from Master Gardener Activities: Volunteers may record mileage to and from Master Gardener activities for tax deduction purposes. This is not a requirement by the Tennessee Master Gardener Program or UT Extension.

Continued Education, Advanced Training and Educators

Master Gardeners are encouraged to continue learning new horticulture-related information. **Eight hours of personal Tennessee Master Gardener Continued Education (CE) are required for annual recertification.** Tennessee Master Gardener CE hours are earned by attending educational programming approved by the county Master Gardener coordinator. Examples of continued education include lectures or field days sponsored by UT Extension, Master Gardener training class, botanical garden lectures, Tennessee Wildlife Resource Agency education programs, garden tours, other state Extension programs, etc. Continued education requirements may be increased by the local UT Extension Office. *Travel time to CE opportunities does not count toward earned volunteer hour requirements.*

Advanced Master Gardener is a title available to those Certified Master Gardeners who have earned VIP status, applied for advanced status and completed the additional 40 hours of advanced courses. The County Extension Agent and the State Coordinator approve advanced courses. The State Tennessee Master Gardener Program or other cooperating agencies or programs may provide these training opportunities.

Applications for Advanced status are available on the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site. To begin advanced training, complete an application and agree to the terms of it. You should receive an activation letter by e-mail from the state coordinator. The graduation requirements for Advanced Master Gardener are

1) Receive an activation letter to begin advanced training.

2) Completion of 40 hours of coursework in the areas of pest identification, volunteering, integrated pest management, plant selection, plant care and maintenance, landscape design, and water management.

3) Conduct a Master Gardener Intern training on one of the above subjects and complete a self-evaluation and lesson plan for your presentation.

Coursework completed prior to the application may be considered, however, proof of coursework and testing will required for the coursework to count toward status.

Master Gardener Educators are Certified VIP Master Gardeners selected by their county or district to teach core curriculum courses for local Master Gardener training programs in their district or area. Master Gardener educators are vital to teaching the Master Gardener Program and offering new Master Gardeners core curriculum subjects. Educators must complete an application and have county UT Extension agent approval for training (see Web site). Training may be sponsored by the county or district to support area Master Gardener training programs. One applicant will be selected from each county for a specified discipline. Depending on interests, interviews may be part of the application process.

Educator training is an in-depth educational session on subjects from the training program. Specialists provide Master Gardener educators and UT Extension agents subject content and teaching methodologies of specific curriculum topics. Educators will be required to teach these subjects at Master Gardener intern trainings in their surrounding area.

Criteria for Master Gardener Volunteers

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program has three levels of volunteers:

1. **Intern Master Gardener Volunteer** – Participating in the 40 hours of training from UT Extension, and beginning 40 hours* of initial volunteer service and eight hours of Tennessee Master Gardener Continued Education.**

2. **Certified Master Gardener Volunteer –** Has passed tests during class and completed the 40-hour* commitment of volunteer service and eight hours of continued education (CE). May also be an individual who recertifies by maintaining 25 hours of volunteer service plus eight CE hours annually.

3. **Master Gardener Volunteer, VIP –** A Certified Master Gardener who has remained with the volunteer program for a minimum of three years, and/or has provided exceptional service for the program's mission. Master Gardener VIPs are eligible for advanced Master Gardener training.

* Hours will not count unless they have been reported in the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site database, to the group's record keeper or the county UT Extension Office.
** See following section on Continued Education, Advanced and Educator Training.

Volunteer Status
Tennessee Master Gardener Program volunteers are also categorized by status.

1. **Active Status –** The Master Gardener Volunteer certificate is valid for one year. Recertification for volunteers who wish to maintain active status and recertify should include an annual minimum of 25 hours* recommended volunteer service and eight CE hours. Active Master Gardener cards may be given to Master Gardeners who have completed the requirements.

2. **Lifetime Status –** Available to Certified Master Gardeners who have provided 10 years of continuous active service to the program. Lifetime status does require annual recertification for liability coverage. To be eligible for lifetime status, records of service must be accurate for recommendation and approval by the appropriate UT Extension agent. All records must be in line with the guidelines of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.

Inactive Status – Master Gardener volunteers may join this category if they are unable to complete the above annual requirements, but would like the opportunity to return to active service in the future. An Inactive Status Form must be completed for UT Extension agent approval. This request is valid for one year. This time on leave of absence will not count toward VIP or lifetime status.

3. **Out-of-State –** Accepting Certified Master Gardener volunteers from other states is encouraged using the following criteria.
    a. Volunteers must provide proof of enrollment in an out-of-state program with either a letter from their former Master Gardener coordinator or their certificate.
    b. Volunteers must audit the Tennessee Master Gardener course where work

is performed.

c. Volunteers are allowed to miss a maximum of two classes.
d. Volunteers are exempt from taking class exams.
e. Volunteers must perform a minimum of 25 hours of recommended volunteer service activities within one year of the Master Gardener course.
f. Upon completing these requirements, out-of-state Master Gardener volunteers receive a Tennessee Master Gardener Volunteer Certificate and may purchase a Tennessee Master Gardener name badge.

4. **Honorary Master Gardener –** An award given to those individuals who have shown overwhelming support for the organization but have not been through the program. Honorary Master Gardeners have no voting rights – the use of this title is strictly for symbolic purposes. The title "Honorary Master Gardener" may not be used for personal gain.

Entering and Calculating Service Hours

Master Gardener volunteers may consider reporting service hours and CE trivial, but the importance of this task is critical to the success and continued support of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. Quantifying time invested and the number of people reached through program activities are important measures that demonstrate the worth of the Master Gardener Program. The potential for funding is greater when significant efforts and impact can be proven. Also, the ability to successfully compete for funding is critical to the program's financial survival. Master Gardener volunteers should be made aware of the value in reporting their activities and time spent in service.

Reporting Hours Online

Master Gardeners must report service hours regularly to meet the program policies for certification as they relate to liability coverage for volunteers and the university.

How Can Master Gardener Volunteers Be Utilized?

The Tennessee Master Gardener Program attracts a diverse group of men and women from various racial, economic, educational and geographic backgrounds. A varied mix of volunteers not only indicates a good representation of UT Extension in the community, it also makes administration of the program a greater challenge, especially when it comes to putting volunteers to work. Volunteer work should be assigned only after a personal conference with each trainee to review of his/her application to determine interests, skills and abilities.

Master Gardener Volunteer Service Activities
The following activities are by no means a complete list, but instead are examples to give a better understanding of how the Master Gardener Program operates. Any questions should be directed to the local Master Gardener Coordinator (UT Extension agent). Activities and projects may be managed by committee (see the Tennessee Master Gardener County Handbook for more information).

- Answering home gardening and pest management phone calls and helping visitors at the county UT Extension Office.
- Managing and requesting hours from volunteers. Hours are important in providing data to the state and federal government about the Master Gardener Program's impact, progress and needs.
- Assisting the UT Extension agent in compiling volunteer service hours for all Master Gardeners in the county or entering hours into the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site database. The UT Extension agent will generate final reports.
- Coordinating or assisting with home and garden shows, county fairs, gardening information booths, problem diagnostic clinics, etc.
- Writing garden articles and photographing events and projects.
- Serving as a chair, director or officer for the county organization.
- Working on research projects and reports to develop and disseminate information to interested parties or seeking grants under the supervision of the county UT Extension agent.
- Serving as a project coordinator/chair.

- Working with 4-H or Junior Master Gardener.
- Serving as a Master Gardener group liaison (coordinating cooperative programs with other agencies).
- Organizing, researching, planning and presenting programs/classes to civic or garden clubs, schools, Master Gardener classes or meetings, conferences, botanical gardens, community colleges, etc.
- Assisting with assembly of written materials and handouts, equipment setup, refreshments, test grading, etc.
- Serving as a Master Gardener training class coordinator.

Volunteer Dismissal

As representatives of the University of Tennessee Extension, volunteers agree to abide by UT's policies and expectations. If a volunteer's behavior is not acceptable or in the best interest of UT Extension, the volunteer program, or program clientele, he or she may be reprimanded or asked to leave the program.

Dismissal Process

1. County UT Extension agent identifies the problem/issue. Every attempt will be made to correct disqualifying behavior, which may include retraining, reassignment and placement on inactive status. Documentation will be made of each case. A written warning will be issued to the Master Gardener in question, stating the problem, how it should be corrected and a deadline for correction. County office and managing agent will be copied on all documentation.

2. The issue is reviewed after the specified compliance period. If a volunteer's actions continue to disqualify him or her from active program participation, the issue will be referred to the county director for review and consultation with the State Master Gardener Coordinator.

3. If after consultation and review of the written documentation it is determined that the volunteer must be removed from the program, the volunteer will be personally contacted by letter outlining the reason(s) for dismissal and effective date of termination of certification.

Grievances

All grievances should be resolved at the closest level of the complaint. The University of Tennessee/Tennessee State University will not attempt to resolve interpersonal disputes among volunteers that are not related to the Master Gardener Program or university policy.

1. Volunteer concerns and grievances should be clarified at the earliest possible time and at the Master Gardener Executive Board (administrative) level or the county UT Extension office closest to the nature of the complaint. Every effort should be made to resolve such matters informally before official grievance procedures are initiated. The university is committed to the concept that volunteers are entitled to pursue their grievances without fear, restraint, interference, discrimination or reprisal.

2. For the purpose of this policy, "grievance" means a volunteer's complaint about one or more of the following matters which he or she has been unable to resolve with his or her managing county UT Extension agent.
    a. Work assignments or conditions of work which the volunteer claims violates a statute or university policy other than those prohibiting discrimination.
    b. Unlawful discrimination (including claims of racial and sexual harassment).

3. Process for filing a grievance.
    a. Grievance must be documented and filed with the county UT Extension Office within 15 working days of the incident.
    b. Following documentation, a face-to-face meeting should be scheduled no more than 15 working days after the filing of the grievance.
    c. The county director or regional director of the UT Extension office should then consult formal university human resources grievance policies and follow procedure.

Official Tennessee Master Gardener Web site

The purpose of the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site (*mastergardener.tennessee.edu*) is to increase communication between the state office and Master Gardeners. Some specific uses include

providing resources and support materials and reporting database, recruitment and featured county projects. Master Gardener resources are password protected from the general public. Resources include a message board to share information with other Master Gardeners around the state, general forms and the reporting database. Master Gardeners can submit their own hours and mileage or have hours entered by the record keeper.

Agent resources are also password protected. Agents have access to forms and are the users with the ability to generate county Master Gardener reports at the "Extension Year End" (approximately December 31, agents may request reports as early as October 1).

Tennessee Master Gardener Advocacy Board

The State Master Gardener Program Coordinator formed the Tennessee Master Gardener Program Advocacy Board 2004. The Advocacy Board is a statewide UT Extension program committee created to include representation by all facets of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. It is made up of three county UT Extension agents (all of whom are local Master Gardener Program coordinators representing each region) and one UT Extension agent alternate, 12 certified Master Gardeners (four from each region) who have served as volunteers and been active in their local Master Gardener programs, one state UT Extension specialist who has worked with the Master Gardener Program, and the State Master Gardener Coordinator who serves as a facilitator of this committee. For more information, visit *mastergardener.tennessee.edu/TMG_Advocacy.html.doc*.

The Master Gardener Program Advocacy Board is charged with the following tasks:

- Establish program policies.
- Define relationships between University of Tennessee Extension and Master Gardener volunteers.
- Work with the State Master Gardener Program Coordinator to identify and develop new program information and materials, and revise existing program information as needed.
- Set goals, as well as objectives and action plans for obtaining those goals, for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program.
- Evaluate and provide oversight to the growth and development of the Tennessee Master Gardener Program as it seeks to accomplish its mission and purpose relative to University of Tennessee Extension, Master Gardener volunteers, communities and individual Tennesseans.
- Provide leadership for the Tennessee Master Gardener Alliance, a statewide program organized by region.

The Tennessee Master Gardener Advocacy Board recruits members who are interested in and committed to doing the work required of the committee and who can attend the necessary meetings. Positions require a two-year term of service, with members rotating off in alternate years. Volunteers interested in serving should review and complete the application for Tennessee Master Gardener State Advocacy Board. The Advocacy Board communicates monthly by conference call and meets twice a year; the state coordinator and the Tennessee Master Gardener Advisory Board will determine the necessity of additional meetings.

Tennessee Master Gardener Awards

Search for Excellence (SFE) is the recognition program for Master Gardener volunteer work throughout the state of Tennessee and the nation. SFE has seven categories in which Master Gardeners can demonstrate their outstanding contributions to their communities. SFE applications and instructions are available online at the Tennessee Master Gardener Web site. Tennessee Master Gardener Search for Excellence award-winning entries will be submitted for consideration in the SFE awards at the International Master Gardener Conference.

All volunteer work done by Master Gardeners is significant to their communities and UT Extension's clients. SFE is designed to recognize outstanding group or team projects, not individuals who do outstanding work.

Master Gardener groups can submit a request to the Tennessee Master Gardener Advisory Board to recognize an outstanding individual volunteer. Individuals will be recognized at the following Tennessee Master Gardener conference or school.

Tennessee Master Gardener Endowment

All donations to the university may be directed toward a specific program. The Tennessee Master Gardener Endowment Gift Fund was developed to support the program. Gift funds will be used specifically to support the development of intern training programs, advanced training and educator opportunities, and other Tennessee Master Gardener events. Anyone interested in offering financial support for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program should contact Beth Babbit at 865-974-7324 or ebabbit@utk.edu, or Mark Clark at 865-974-5315 or mclark4@tennessee.edu for more information. Master Gardener county groups may support the foundation through county and state fundraisers, plant sales and purchasing Master Gardener items from the Tennessee Master Gardener Web store at *mastergardener.tennessee.edu*.

Tennessee Master Gardener Program
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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development.University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.