

February 1st, 2021

Dear prospective Master Gardener Volunteer,

Thank you for your interest in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program in Clay County, Florida! We strive to be the premier source of horticultural education for our residents and are always happy to train and welcome people with a passion for horticulture and sharing their knowledge with others. The enclosed application packet contains information that will be useful to you in understanding the Florida Master Gardener program, as well as the role and responsibilities of a volunteer Master Gardener. It will also give you insight into the University of Florida IFAS Cooperative Extension Service, how it functions, and how Master Gardeners operate as part of the Extension Service.

Training consists of classes starting this June. A finalized syllabus containing all trainings for each Wednesday will be given to you following acceptance but a tentative program is available with this message. This year's course will also integrate a blended learning strategy, using online lectures and activities to aid in learning and provide more in-class time for hands-on learning and activities.

Seating for this program is limited and placement is selective, so candidates are encouraged to complete applications as early as possible. The final due date for all forms is April 1st, 2021. In order to be considered for this year's program, you will need to do the following.

- Study the attached application packet
- Complete and return the enclosed application form and both of the questionnaires. Return all forms to the Clay County Extension Office, ATTENTION Michelle Alters: 2463 SR 16 W., Green Cove Springs, FL 32043 or mdalters@ufl.edu
- You will receive receipt of your accepted application by email and be asked to schedule a time in April to meet with myself and other volunteers and to tour our facility. This schedule for meetings will be sent out upon the close of the application window.
- Also, just a reminder that the UF/IFAS Clay County Master Gardener Volunteer program is generally only open to residents of Clay County. If you live in a neighboring county, please contact me at whhobbs@ufl.edu with your request and we may be able to coordinate with your counties agent.

You will be notified of your acceptance into the program by May 1st, 2021 and will need to register online for the class through Eventbrite at clayextension.eventbrite.com. The cost for the program is \$150 for each participant to cover training materials and resource books.

If you have any questions, please contact me at 904-284-6355 or whhobbs@ufl.edu.

Sincerely,

Wayne Hobbs
Environmental Horticulture Agent I
Master Gardener Coordinator

Florida Master Gardener Application Form

Section One

Name: Mr./Mrs./Ms. _____

Address: _____

Home Phone: _____ Alternate Phone: _____

Social Security: _____ Birthdate: _____

E-mail: _____

Section Two

Have you applied for the Master Gardener training before? Yes ____ No ____

If yes, when? _____ Where? _____

Please list any training and/or practical experience you have had in gardening, horticulture, farming, or related fields:

What, if any, gardening experience do you have, e.g., garden clubs, horticultural societies, etc.?

What types of volunteer work have you done in the past or are currently doing?

How did you learn of the Florida Master Gardener Program?

Why do you want to become a Florida Master Gardener?

Application Form--Page 2

Section Three

What ideas do you have of the type of volunteer work you can do toward completion of your commitment? (e.g., answering calls, delivering lectures, writing articles, making home consultations, working at a school, creating database/AV materials, etc.)

List *any* time periods that you can do volunteer work, e.g., every Friday afternoon, first Thursday of each month, etc.

What are the *best* days for you to do volunteer work, e.g., every Friday afternoon, first Thursday of each month, etc.?

Section Four

I wish to become a Florida Master Gardener and would like to be accepted into the 2018 training program. I understand that if accepted and I successfully complete the course of instruction, I agree to donate at least 75 hours of public service through the Florida Master Gardener Program in the 12 months after my graduation. I have also read, understood, and agreed to abide by the Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners.

Signature _____

Date _____

Questionnaire #1

READ the enclosed: The History of the Master Gardener Structure& Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners before completing

Please **CIRCLE** the letter indicating your answer and return this along with application.

1. The Master Gardener Program is sponsored by:
 - A. The University of South Florida
 - B. The U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - C. IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Science – University of Florida)
 - D. Florida Department of Plant Industry
2. The Cooperative Extension Service was created by a legislative act called:
 - A. The Morrill Act (1862)
 - B. The Smith-Lever Act (1914)
 - C. The Hatch Act (1887)
3. Master Gardeners are required to volunteer how many hours to public service?
 - A. 25 hours each year
 - B. 60 hours each year
 - C. 75 hours the first year and 35 hours in future years in order to remain active
 - D. 60 hours the first year and 25 hours in future years in order to remain active
4. Master Gardeners are required to attain how many additional hours of horticultural training in order to recertify for another year?
 - A. 3 hours
 - B. 6 hours
 - C. 10 hours
 - D. 15 hours
5. The main purpose of the Master Gardener Program is to increase or extend the service and output of information offered by the Cooperative Extension Service.
 - A. True
 - B. False
6. The Cooperative Extension Service provides information to the community primarily in the program(s) and area(s) of:
 - A. Home Economics
 - B. Youth
 - C. Agriculture
 - D. All of the above
7. Master Gardeners make recommendations to homeowners based on:
 - A. Public sources such as books, magazines and newspaper articles
 - B. Personal, practical experience
 - C. Information generated by the University of Florida/IFAS Extension
 - D. All of the above
8. The title Master Gardener is to be used only in association with the Florida Master Gardener Program and is not to be used for commercial purposes.
 - A. True
 - B. False
9. Master Gardeners are expected to extend information to people involved in commercial agricultural/horticultural endeavors.
 - A. True
 - B. False

Questionnaire #2

There are many reasons why individuals want to be part of this effort and program. Please take a few minutes to answer the following questions. Beside each comment below, write the number, which best describes how important it is to you.

1. Extremely important
2. Very important
3. Important
4. Somewhat important
5. Of minor importance
6. Not a reason of factor

Becoming a Master Gardener is important to me because:

- A. I will have the opportunity to receive useful training.
- B. I will become a part of the University of Florida.
- C. I will have the opportunity to share my knowledge with other gardeners.
- D. I will gain practical experience that can help me get a job.
- E. I will be able to provide a service to other people in my community and/or neighborhood.
- F. I can get a tax credit for my volunteer work.
- G. I will receive free instruction and materials.
- H. I will be able to increase my knowledge in the area of gardening.
- I. I will gain a great deal of personal satisfaction.
- J. I will be able to creatively use my free time.
- K. I will be recognized by people in my community.
- L. I will be able to gain new skills as a gardener.
- M. I will be certified by the University of Florida, Cooperative Extension Service.
- N. (Other reasons: Please use space below.)

References

Please provide the Name & Address of 3 people
who can provide a reference for you.

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____

Name _____

Address _____



**MASTER
GARDENER**
UF UNIVERSITY of
FLORIDA
IFAS Extension

107 Mehrhof Hall
PO Box 110675
Gainesville, FL 32611-0675
Phone: (352) 392-1831 x331
Fax: (352) 392-1413
<http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu>

The History of the Master Gardener Program

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service agents. Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and are relatively easy to answer assuming that one has horticultural training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Agent in the State of Washington reasoned that well-trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as Extension Homemakers and 4-H Leaders had always been a part of the Extension Service but never in the area of homeowner horticulture. The Extension agent selected, trained, and certified volunteers as Master Gardeners. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact they exceeded his expectations. This led to the genesis of the Master Gardener volunteer program.

Since that time, the Master Gardener program has grown and is now active in 45 states. Florida's began in 1979. The program has been a tremendous success and is now active in over half of Florida's counties. The Florida Master Gardener Program is sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) of which the Cooperative Extension Service is a part.

Just what is the Cooperative Extension Service? For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862 when the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act which established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the Federal government. They became known as "land grant colleges," a name which persists today. These colleges would emphasize teaching practical subjects such as agriculture and home economics. The 1887 Hatch Act provided for experimental stations at Land Grant Colleges to conduct research for those colleges' agricultural problems.

Then in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a part of these colleges as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college; The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the university which has responsibility for the Cooperative Extension Service.

The term "cooperative" refers to the method by which extension services are funded. In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds: the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State

through legislative appropriations, and the counties through appropriations by county governments. The word "cooperative" also implies a sharing of information generated through sound research programs at the federal and state levels. The term "extension" defines this organization's purpose -- to extend the information generated at the state and federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service." The Cooperative Extension Service is an informal education organization which provides information in three main areas: agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences.

The motto and goal of the Cooperative Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.



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Florida Master Gardener Structure

The University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service (“UF/IFAS Extension”) oversees the State of Florida’s Master Gardener program. The Master Gardener program trains and maintains horticulture volunteers for UF/IFAS Extension throughout the State of Florida. The goals of this program are to increase the availability of horticultural information for the community at large and to improve the quality of life for the residents of each county in Florida through horticulture volunteer activities.

UF/IFAS Extension does not require Florida counties to have the Master Gardener program. Rather, each individual county Extension office determines the focus and structure of the program. The volunteers (or MGs) execute a variety of outreach tasks as determined by the county coordinator (usually the horticultural agent). Duties are quite varied and can include: answering horticultural questions over the phone, in person or through the media; participating in public service projects; giving educational programs; supporting youth activities, assisting in field research; and other activities. The ultimate end to all these activities is to extend the vision of UF/IFAS Extension -- protecting and sustaining natural resources and environmental systems, enhancing the development of human resources, and improving the quality of human life through the development of knowledge in agricultural, human and natural resources and making that knowledge accessible.

As stated above, each county Master Gardener coordinator determines the structure of that county’s Master Gardener program. A formal Master Gardener organization is not required. If your county already has a structured organization or you develop one later, the following guiding principles must be followed. Additional requirements may be added with the approval of the county coordinator and state Master Gardener coordinator so long as such requirements do not vary or override the required principles. If a county’s Master Gardener organization forms or has formed a non-profit corporation to carry out the mission of the organization, such guiding principles shall be incorporated into the corporation’s organizational documents (i.e., articles of incorporation and by-laws). Additionally, the organizational documents shall include additional provisions relating to the county Extension office’s oversight and authority over the corporation and such organizational documents and amendments thereto shall be subject to approval of the county coordinator, state Master Gardener coordinator, the county Extension director and the appropriate district director.



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Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners

Within the state of Florida, 56 counties currently maintain active Master Gardener programs. This being the case, a need exists for the establishment of standards for all Florida Master Gardeners to represent their county in a manner consistent with exemplary citizenship and leadership.

To become a certified Florida Master Gardener, one is required to attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service. This certification is restrictive in nature and is valid only for one year and when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Program. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the coming year.

As a certified Florida Master Gardener, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference offered by the University of Florida, as well as local educational programs and field trips provided by the county agent. Master Gardeners are also provided with the most recent information available on environmental horticulture issues and related topics by the County Master Gardener Coordinator and State Extension Specialists.

Master Gardeners are encouraged to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping), be responsive to the reasonable requests of the county agent in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Whenever injuries do occur, they should be reported to the County Master Gardener Coordinator immediately. Along with active participation, Master Gardeners are expected to uphold a professional demeanor. The University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service functions without regard to race, color, religion, sex, age or national origin or disability and does not tolerate:

- ❖ Possession of alcohol or drugs in the workplace;
- ❖ Abuse or theft of public or personal property;
- ❖ Sexual harassment or misconduct;
- ❖ Verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with other Master Gardeners, staff members, and/or the public;
- ❖ Possession or use of weapons or fireworks in the workplace;
- ❖ Defamation of the organization;

- ❖ Creating an implied or outright University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business;
- ❖ Misrepresentation of sources of information;
- ❖ Consistently giving out incorrect information;
- ❖ Use of state and/or county equipment without authorization.

Master Gardener Certification may become void when an individual ceases active participation in the program or dismissal may result from violations described above. Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement. Those individuals not continuing in the program should be aware if they represent themselves as Florida Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment to the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener program are valuable and may rightly be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardeners shall not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener at the place of business.

Experienced Florida Master Gardeners may be invited to speak before various community groups. Please do not seek payment for such speaking appearances. Gratuitous personal payments (i.e., in the form of cash or gifts) for such presentations are not encouraged.

The title “Florida Master Gardener” is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program in which trained and certified Florida Master Gardeners answer gardening questions. Master Gardeners are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work on the behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service. Florida Master Gardeners shall not use the Florida Master Gardener title in any advertisements or activities not related to University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener activities. The Florida Master Gardener program represents a University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service public education program and one should avoid having association with commercial products or implying University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service endorsements of any product or place of business.

In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener **MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED** University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specially covered by University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. If you are making a recommendation based on personal experience, state clearly that you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service. Questions concerning any commercial horticultural enterprise (i.e., vegetable production, fruit crops production, landscape maintenance of golf course, recreational park, school grounds or commercial nursery production) are to be referred to the local Horticulture Extension Agent.

Special Note:

Individuals who are not acting on behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service are strongly urged to make every effort to minimize the appearance of being on duty before making any recommendations in the area of horticulture. Speaking “off the record” is your right; however, make sure everyone knows you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service.

.....

I have read the above policies regarding my services as a Florida Master Gardener volunteer and do here by agree to give at least 75 hours of service in my first year and at least 35 hours in each subsequent year to the Florida Master Gardener Program in return for the training provided by the University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service.

I have also read the state guidelines regarding active/inactive status of Master Gardeners and understand the recertification policy.

Agent Date

Signature of Applicant Date