



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension
Dutchess County

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER GUIDELINES

Purpose: Cornell requires program accountability. These guidelines allow Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County (CCE-DC) to maintain program integrity and provide information that could be requested by our funding partners and stakeholders. Each year CCE-DC has to report the total number of volunteer hours to Cornell. These guidelines ensure that our program is operating within the mission of Cornell Cooperative Extension. All Master Gardener volunteers must comply with Cornell University's Volunteer Involvement Policy and Procedures and these guidelines. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action or dismissal from the program. These Guidelines are subject to review and/or change at any time.

MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER TRAINING REQUIREMENTS

1. Training classes will take place every 2 years.
2. A position description, volunteer agreement, and volunteer code of conduct will be signed by all trainees before being accepted into the Master Gardener Volunteer (MG) training classes. These items state that the volunteer will donate 100 hours of service over a twenty four month period, beginning January 1, in return for the training received from CCE-DC. Trainees are also required to have a criminal background check.
3. There is a training fee associated with MG training. This fee is used to cover expenses associated with the program. Cost evaluation will be done before every new training, to keep up with cost increases.
4. Attendance is mandatory for all sessions during the training. Three emergency/medical absences are allowed, but the MG Coordinator **must** be informed **in advance** of absence. Each MG is responsible for getting his/her lecture material and taking any quizzes or tests for missed classes. If a trainee does not complete the training, he/she will forfeit the entire training fee.
5. Individuals with sudden long-term conflicts during the training (i.e. change of job, health or family situation) may attend the next bi-yearly training paying any incremental fees that apply, at the discretion of the Agriculture/Horticulture Program Leader or MG Coordinator.

MASTER GARDENER INTERN REQUIREMENTS

(After graduation)

The MG internship runs from January 1 to December 31 of the following year.

1. **MG Interns are required to volunteer 100 hours over a period of 24 months.**
These hours are comprised of:
 - 12 hours on the Horticulture Hotline/Lab (four 3 hour sessions)
 - 8 hours of monthly meetings (4 meetings). There are 4 morning (10 AM-12 PM), 4 afternoon (3-5 PM) meetings and 4 night (6-8 PM or 7-9 PM) meetings per year.
 - 80 hours of Community Service projects
2. MG Service Diaries must be completed and submitted October 31st of every year.
3. Individual exceptions (health, family problems or change in job situation, etc.) will be considered by CCE staff. It is the responsibility of the MG to **promptly** inform staff of any situation that prevents the MG from fulfilling their commitment.
4. If requirements are not met, the MG's name will be removed from the roster and mailing list and he/she will no longer be a CCE-DC MG Volunteer. If, at some later date, the MG wishes to return to the program they must reinitiate the application process.

ACTIVE MASTER GARDENER REQUIREMENTS

(Once internship is completed)

The Active MG calendar runs from Jan 1 to Dec 31.

1. **Active MGs are required to volunteer a minimum of 30 hours per year.**
These hours are comprised of:
 - 6 hours of continuing horticulture education per year. Several CCE-DC or MG meetings/events during the year will be designated as qualified continuing education. All non-CCE-DC or non-MG events must have prior written approval by the Agriculture/Horticulture Program Leader or MG Coordinator.
 - 24 hours of Community Service
2. Attend four monthly MG meetings per year. There are 4 morning (10 AM- 12 PM), 4 afternoon (3-5 PM) and 4 night (6-8 PM or 7-9 PM) meetings per year.
3. MG Service Diaries must be completed and submitted on October 31st of each year.
4. Individual exceptions (health, family problems or change in job situation, etc.) will be considered by CCE staff. It is the responsibility of the MG to **promptly** inform staff of any situation that prevents the MG from fulfilling their commitment.

5. If requirements are not met, the MG's name will be removed from the roster and mailing list and he/she will no longer be a CCE-DC MG. If, at some later date, the MG wishes to return to the program they must reinitiate the application process.

MASTER GARDENER EMERITUS STATUS REQUIREMENTS

1. When a MG has fulfilled the criteria for Active Master Gardener Volunteer Status on a consecutive annual basis for a period of ten years and has documented such in their MG Service Diaries (kept them up to date), that MG is eligible for Emeritus status.
2. MG Emeritus is not required to attend meetings, participate in community service projects, staff the Horticulture Diagnostic Lab or complete continuing horticulture education. They are, however, encouraged to participate in some capacity. All volunteer participation must be recorded in their MG Service Diary.
3. MG Emeritus retains all rights, privileges, and benefits of Active Master Gardener Volunteer Status.
 - Exception: See Master Gardener Volunteer Benefits, #7
4. An MG who wishes to be designated as Emeritus Status must make a written request to the Agriculture/Horticulture Program Leader and/or MG Coordinator and provide the necessary documentation (completed MG Service Diaries).
5. Upon being granted Emeritus Status, a MG will retain such for the rest of his/her life.

COMMUNITY SERVICE PROJECTS

1. MGs may choose from established projects or create their own.
2. All new projects must comply with CCE-DC's mission and plan of work. They must be presented in writing to CCE-DC staff (Agriculture/Horticulture Program Leader and/or MG Coordinator) and receive written approval before being undertaken.
3. CCE staff oversees MG projects and serve as advisors. The staff has the authority to cancel a project, or alter it, if the direction has turned away from being educational or unbiased, or does not meet the needs of the program, based on guidelines set by Cornell University. All program related documents produced by MG volunteers are the property of CCE-DC and may be revised as needed.
4. All volunteer activities must be recorded on a MG Service Diary.
5. MGs who assume leadership for a project are responsible for all aspects of that project.

MASTER GARDENER BENEFITS

These benefits are available to all MGs after graduation.

1. Free registration to CCE-DC Community Horticulture programs if class size is unlimited. If material or speakers fees are needed, the MG will pay for them at cost only. Commercial Horticulture Programs serve as continuing education, but MG must pay full fee.
2. Inclusion in MG field trips.
3. Receive MG newsletter.
4. Access to MG Resource Library, fact sheets and the Horticulture Diagnostic Lab.
5. After completion of MG training program, the volunteer may be eligible to apply for a New York State Department of Environmental Conservation pesticide license certification in category 3A - Ornamentals and Turf. Study manuals will be available for loan. CCE-DC's training fee is waived. NYSDEC initial test fees and all additional fees and renewal costs are the responsibility of the MG.
6. Attend Master Gardener Volunteer Conferences.
7. Annual Cornell volunteer recognition:
 - 100 hours - green New York State MG pin
 - 5 years of Active MG Status - red New York State MG pin
 - 10 years of Active MG Status - blue New York State MG pin
 - 15 years of Active MG Status - white New York State MG pin (In order for Emeritus MGs to be eligible for this pin, they must fulfill the requirements listed under Active Status.)
8. Annual CCE-DC volunteer recognition & awards- Note that a MG may receive recognition and an award only once in each category:
 - 100 hour level
 - 250 hour level
 - 500 hour level
 - 750 hour level
 - 1000 hour level
 - 2000 hour level
 - 3000 hour level
 - 4000 hour level
 - 5000 hour level

“GOSSIP FREE” WORK POLICY

Gossip is defined as a form of communication that an individual(s) participates in for the purpose of discussion, or passing onto to others, "hearsay" information. Gossip is the primary mechanism for communicating and spreading negativity. Gossip not only hurts morale in our organization, it affects our productivity as well. As we are dedicated to providing all of our volunteers and employees with a workplace that is as stress-free and positive as possible, we therefore maintain a “gossip free” workplace policy, as follows:

- If you are having a problem with a fellow volunteer, go directly to that person and discuss the issue in private. Discussing it with anyone else except your supervising staff person is gossip. If the CCE supervising staff person learns of problems with gossip, he or she is required to address it with all parties involved.
- Gossip takes two! If you are the listener, you are also guilty of gossiping. If someone gossips to you, protect yourself: do not participate! If you are whispering with another person in our workplace, you could be perceived as gossiping. Don't put yourself in the position of being misunderstood: if you have a private matter to discuss with someone, find a private place to do so.
- Negativity spreads like poison, and can cause damage beyond anyone's expectations. If you are feeling negative, take appropriate steps to address the issue. If it is personal and does not belong in the workplace, leave it at home. Our guiding principles are based on clear communication and respect for each other, and gossip has no place in these principles.

CORNELL'S CONFLICT RESOLUTION POLICY

Informal Resolution- Used when a volunteer is involved in a conflict with other volunteers, program participants or staff, and when it is determined by CCE, and all parties involved, that informal resolution is appropriate for the conflict at issue.

1. The parties involved should meet face to face to discuss the conflict.
2. The parties can ask the appropriate supervising staff person (if the staff person is one of the parties involved, the next level staff person should be approached) to attend if they are not comfortable meeting on their own.
3. Summarize the resolution in writing.

Formal Review- Used when a volunteer is the subject of a complaint by another volunteer or a staff member or when Informal Resolution has failed.

1. The written complaint is made to the supervising staff person who may seek input from others in reaching a written decision (which outlines corrective action) in a fair and timely manner.
2. The written decision is discussed with the Executive Director and appropriate action taken.

COMMUNITY HORTICULTURE BUDGET

The Community Horticulture Budget consists of moneys collected through donations, from speaker fees, additional donations, workshops, lectures, and fundraisers.

The budget may be used for the following purposes as determined by staff but not limited to: Travel costs for volunteer programs and educational trips for volunteer and paid staff development, staff salary, purchase of supplies for classes and demonstration gardens, office equipment, books and materials for the horticulture program, speakers fees, publicity costs, volunteer awards and recognition, public relations materials, i.e. signs, T-shirts, computer software, expenses for fundraising purposes.

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Revised April 16, 2014, NH

*Cornell Cooperative Extension provides equal program and employment opportunities.
The County of Dutchess partially funds Cooperative Extension programming in Dutchess County.*