

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENER
PROGRAM GUIDELINES



master
gardener

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UWE Master Gardener Program Mission Statement

University of Wyoming Extension's Master Gardener program trains volunteers using sound, research-based, and regionally appropriate horticultural information. UWE Master Gardeners are trained volunteers who help Wyoming gardeners learn to grow.

UWE Master Gardener Program Purpose

The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train volunteers in diverse horticultural topics to increase their knowledge and improve their gardening skills. Those trainees then assist the Program Coordinator or Extension Educator to extend the reach of University of Wyoming Extension while serving as volunteer educators in their communities.

UWE Master Gardener Program Goals

UWE is committed to educating the citizens of Wyoming through science-based education and practices. This includes promoting sustainable management practices that conserve natural resources and improve social, environmental, and economic conditions. The UWE Master Gardener program strives to achieve the following goals:

- UWE facilitates Master Gardener trainings and meaningful volunteer opportunities throughout the state. Training locations and schedules vary.
- Master Gardener trainees gain horticultural knowledge and skills focused on growing in Wyoming.
- UWE and Master Gardener volunteers provide unbiased, research-based information related to plant health care.
- UWE and Master Gardener volunteers assist Wyoming residents with diagnosing plant problems and provide research-based pest management recommendations for insects, plant diseases, and weeds.

Applying to the Master Gardener Program

People who want to join the Master Gardener program must first apply through their local county UWE office. Not all counties in Wyoming offer Master Gardener programs. In this case, people may apply through the nearest county offering Master Gardener training. Acceptance into the Master Gardener program is not guaranteed. Available space and resources may limit class sizes. In some cases, interviews are conducted prior to acceptance or refusal into the program. Fees for the program vary by location. Fees cover the cost of the Master Gardener curriculum *Sustainable Horticulture for Wyoming*, all other course materials, and all costs associated with the Master Gardener training. People applying to become UWE Master Gardeners must be advised they are committing to extensive training and volunteerism. Master Gardener trainees commit to the training and volunteer requirements of the UWE Master Gardener program.

UWE Master Gardener Training Requirements

Those selected into the Master Gardener program receive the title “Master Gardener Trainee.” Trainees receive a minimum 40 hours of training. The core curriculum covers the following topics:

- Introduction to the UWE Master Gardener Program
- UWE Master Gardener Program Guidelines
- Online Volunteer Reporting System
- Botany
- Soils, Composting, and Fertilizers
- Entomology
- Weed Management
- Herbaceous Ornamental Plants
- Woody Plants and Pruning
- Lawn Care
- Growing Vegetables
- Season Extension
- Fruit Trees and Small Fruits
- Plant Diseases
- Diagnosing Plant Problems
- Integrated Pest Management
- Understanding Pesticides
- Plant Identification
- Optional advanced topics may be offered, including:
 - Interior Plants
 - Your Yard and Water Quality
 - Plant Propagation
 - Landscape Design
 - Vertebrate Pest Management

Once completing the Master Gardener training, all trainees must pass a final exam with a score of 80% or better.

Attendance is strongly encouraged for all trainings. Trainees must attend a minimum of 40 hours to receive certification for completing the training.

UWE Master Gardener Volunteer Requirements

Master Gardeners work with local Extension educators and program coordinators to meet their volunteer requirements.

While acting in a volunteer role, UWE Master Gardener volunteers are representatives of UWE and are held to the same standards as all UWE employees. While representing UWE, Master Gardeners should act in a professional and positive manner and treat others with respect at all times.

Once a trainee has successfully completed the UWE Master Gardener training and passed the final exam, they earn the title “Master Gardener Apprentice” and may use the Master Gardener title when volunteering.

UWE Master Gardener Apprentices commit to a minimum of forty (40) hours of approved volunteer service through their local county UWE office. To become an Active Master Gardener, forty (40) hours of volunteer service are to be completed within a year of completing the UWE Master Gardener training. Approval of volunteer hours is assigned to the Master Gardener Program Coordinator or Extension Educator responsible for oversight of the local county UWE Master Gardener program. Additional local requirements may apply.

Guidelines for Volunteer Efforts

Volunteer efforts must be related to a horticultural topic, have an educational focus, and address local needs. UWE Master Gardener volunteer activities focus on community and home horticulture. Master Gardeners should refer commercial horticulture questions to the appropriate UWE Educator or Specialist. Volunteer efforts are coordinated through local county UWE offices. While the intent of the Master Gardener program is to train and engage volunteer educators, certain projects may involve physical work. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is not to provide free labor or competition with landscapers, arborists, market farmers, or other commercial industries. Demonstrations and hands-on activities are perfectly acceptable forms of volunteerism as long as education is the primary goal.

Annual Recertification Process

Once a Master Gardener Apprentice has fulfilled the forty (40) hour volunteer commitment, they earn the title “Certified Master Gardener” or sometimes referred to as “Active Master Gardener.” To remain certified all active Master Gardeners must sign an annual recertification form each year, and fulfill an annual commitment of twenty (20) volunteer hours and ten (10) continuing education hours. Additional local requirements may vary. This is done to help program coordinators gauge

the level of volunteer participation in their county and the extent to which their Master Gardener program can provide volunteer services in the community.

Approved Volunteer Activities

Master Gardeners provide volunteer service in their communities. There are many ways in which Master Gardeners make a difference in their communities. Some examples of approved volunteer service include:

- Responding to horticulture inquiries in a UWE office
- Conducting yard calls
- Researching and writing horticulture-based articles for local media outlets
- Conducting horticultural tours
- Maintaining educational display gardens
- Information booths or displays at fairs, farmers markets, or other public events
- Presenting at or hosting educational programs
- Providing research assistance
- Volunteering at a community garden or school garden

New ideas for volunteer projects should be brought to the appropriate UWE Master Gardener Program Coordinator or UWE Educator at the local county office. All volunteer activities must have an educational component.

Unapproved Volunteer Activities

Some Labor

UWE Master Gardeners are not a free source of labor. In some cases, Master Gardeners are asked to provide assistance with maintaining school gardens or other public areas. Exclusively maintaining a garden or landscape is not educational in nature and is not considered an approved volunteer activity. In this case, it may be possible to add an educational component such as training others to maintain a garden, conducting workshops in the garden, or adding signage in a display garden. Master Gardeners should request approval prior to taking on any new volunteer activity. Similarly, maintaining one's own property (mowing, weed control, watering, etc.) is not considered volunteering as a Master Gardener.

Conflict of Interest

Master Gardeners sometimes work in the green industry and must keep those roles separate. It is not acceptable for a Master Gardener to volunteer at their place of employment. Paid employees may not count paid time as volunteer time. Do not represent yourself as a Master Gardener while conducting business, marketing or advertising products, or actively campaigning or otherwise

participating in political activities. As representatives of UWE, Master Gardeners must not promote or advertise products, businesses, or political beliefs, or use their Master Gardener title while working at their place of employment, volunteering for another organization, or while involved in political activities. Advertising for businesses or products, representing yourself as a Master Gardener while on the job, or using the Master Gardener title as a platform for promoting political candidates or beliefs will result in dismissal from the Master Gardener program.

Legal and Medical Issues

Legal and medical issues are outside of the role of Master Gardener volunteers. UWE Master Gardeners are not authorized to give legal or medical advice including but not limited to the following examples:

- Food preservation or related topics – canning, drying food, nutrition, and food storage questions should be referred to a UWE Nutrition and Food Safety specialist or educator
- Hazard tree issues – refer to a certified arborist
- Poisonous plants and mushrooms – refer to poison control or UWE horticulture specialist
- Medicinal use of herbs – consult a physician or pharmacist
- Pesticide complaints or misuse of pesticides – refer to Wyoming Department of Agriculture

UWE Master Gardeners do not provide legal or medical advice.

Dismissal from UWE Master Gardener Program

It is unfortunate, but there are circumstances when individuals may be dismissed from the UWE Master Gardener program. As a result, the individual may no longer use the title UWE Master Gardener. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that “volunteering with an organization is a privilege, not a right. Organizations may release volunteers at the discretion of the organization.” Appeals or concerns can be made to the State Master Gardener Coordinator.

A volunteer may be dismissed at the request of the UW Extension Administration, Educator, Master Gardener Program Coordinator, or at the request of the State Master Gardener Coordinator. Some reasons a volunteer may be dismissed are mentioned elsewhere in the document. Other reasons include:

- Failure to fulfill the volunteer or continuing education requirements
- Failure to honor volunteer commitments (not showing up to a commitment)
- Recommending unsound or non-research-based products or practices
- Providing biased recommendations such as promoting businesses or products

- Using discriminating words or actions related to racial, gender, religious, political, sexual orientation, marital, or familial status
- Acting in an unprofessional manner while acting as a Master Gardener volunteer
- Use of vulgar, inappropriate, threatening, or offensive language
- Accepting pay for volunteer service
- Creating unnecessary conflict within the Master Gardener program
- Using the Master Gardener title or program as a platform for political gain

Leave of Absence

Master Gardeners unable to fulfill the annual volunteer and continuing education requirements may request, in writing, a one (1) year leave of absence. Leave of absence requests are reviewed by the local Master Gardener Program Coordinator or UWE Educator on a case-by-case basis.

Continuing Education

UWE Master Gardeners are actively engaged in life-long learning and keeping current with relevant horticultural issues. The UWE Master Gardener training provides a foundation of knowledge. Each year following the initial training, Master Gardeners commit to receiving a minimum of ten (10) hours of continuing education. Topics must be relevant to horticulture, but there are no specific requirements to attend certain trainings. Master Gardeners may choose to attend workshops, seminars, conferences, and talks on horticultural topics that suit their individual interests.

Reporting Volunteer Hours and Continuing Education Hours

Master Gardeners report their volunteer and continuing education hours using the UWE online volunteer reporting system. All UWE Master Gardeners completing the training will be given an account with a unique username and password used to log into the online volunteer reporting system. Master Gardeners who do not have computer access or internet access may be able to use a computer at the local county UWE office to enter hours. In some cases, a UWE employee may assist with entry of volunteer activities into the online volunteer reporting system.

UWE Master Gardener Program Structure

State Level

UWE offers Master Gardener programs in most, but not all counties in Wyoming. The State Master Gardener Coordinator provides support and structure to the state-wide program. The State Coordinator provides training and horticultural assistance to UWE Educators, Master Gardener Program Coordinators, and Master Gardeners; manages the online volunteer reporting

system; and conveys current and relevant horticulture information throughout the state. The State Coordinator does not oversee or manage local county Master Gardener Coordinators, programs, or volunteers. The State Coordinator does seek input on current issues related to horticulture and volunteer management from advisory boards, UWE County Coordinators, UWE Educators, UWE Master Gardener Program Coordinators, the Wyoming Master Gardener Association, and Master Gardener volunteers.

County Level

The title and job responsibilities of UWE employees responsible for oversight of local UWE Master Gardener programs vary by county. Extension Educators, Horticulturists, and Master Gardener Program Coordinators facilitate Master Gardener trainings and Master Gardener volunteer activities in their assigned county or area. Each county Master Gardener program is a part of the UWE state-wide Master Gardener program and follows the guidelines and policies printed in this document. Local Master Gardener programs operate within a county with a unique set of needs and opportunities for volunteers. Operating within the parameters of this document, local Master Gardener programs function in ways that meet local needs. As local needs change, the Master Gardener program adapts to address that change by offering new and different program opportunities. Volunteer activities are coordinated through the appropriate county UWE office. Many counties have a Master Gardener Board, Master Gardener Association, or officers who help and advise the local UWE office and provide input to the local Master Gardener program. Master Gardeners serve as eyes and ears in the community. UWE Master Gardeners are considered the front line for detection and reporting of new and important pest problems, and help bring new ideas and opportunities to the program, helping the Master Gardener program stay current and relevant. The UWE employee assigned to the county-based Master Gardener program coordinates local Master Gardener trainings, events, and volunteer activities.