

2026 National Extension Master Gardener Coordinator Conference - Chicago, Illinois



Tuesday, Aug. 18, 2026 The Wade Hotel: 644 N. Lake Shore Dr, Chicago

9-noon	National EMG Committee Meeting - (committee members only)
8-8:30 a.m.	Full-day tour bus loads up at the hotel entrance
noon-12:30 p.m.	Half-day tour bus loads up at the hotel entrance
4:30 p.m.	Full-day tour returns
5:30 p.m.	Half-day tour returns
5:00-7 p.m.	Registration table open – Great Room 1 & 2 – 6th floor
5:30-7 p.m.	Welcome social gathering and Poster Session – Great Room 1 & 2 – 6th floor
Wednesday, August 19, 2026: Altitude Room - 33rd floor	
7:30 a.m.-noon	Registration table open - Altitude Room - 33rd floor
8:30-9 a.m.	Welcome, housekeeping – 2028 IEMG Conference announcement
9-9:50 a.m.	Workshop presentation - Leading Change at Scale: Keeping Volunteers Engaged Through Organizational Transformation
9:50-10:40 a.m.	Workshop presentation - Clicking with Volunteers: Advocating for Volunteers' Technological Needs
10:40-11 a.m.	Break
11-11:50 a.m.	Workshop presentation - Leveraging Volunteers to Deliver a Native Landscape Design Workshop
noon-1 p.m.	Luncheon Buffet- Great Room 1 & 2- 6th Floor
1-1:50 p.m.	Workshop presentation - What's Your Garden Future? A New Way to Engage Communities on Climate Change
2-2:30 p.m.	Short presentation - Beyond Bob Dylan: The Times Have Changed in Our Local Master Gardener Volunteer Program
2:30-3 p.m.	Short presentation - Leveraging Existing Extension Programs to Build Intergenerational Learning Models
3-3:30 p.m.	Break
3:30-4 p.m.	Short presentation - Volunteer Training in Plant Diagnostics
Lightning Rounds (10 minutes with five-minute Q&A)	
4-4:15 p.m.	Lightning talk - Extension Master Gardeners in Community Science: Introducing Sweet Potatoes as a New Crop for Western Washington
4:15-4:30 p.m.	Lightning talk - Beyond Recognition: Using Seasonal Social Connection to Sustain Master Gardener Volunteer Engagement
4:30-4:45 p.m.	Lightning talk - Growing Expertise: Boosting Master Gardener Plant Diagnostic Skills
5 p.m.	Dinner on your own

Thursday, August 20, 2026: Altitude Room- 33rd Floor	
8:15-8:30 a.m.	Meet your Extension Master Gardener National Committee
8:30-9:20 a.m.	Workshop presentation - Fostering a Welcoming Environment and Culture
9:30-10 a.m.	Short presentation - Local and Statewide Fundraising That Shows Impact and Public Value
10-10:30 a.m.	Short presentation - Rooted in Data: Growing Colorado's Dashboard into a National Reporting Ecosystem
10:30-11 a.m.	Short presentation - Small but Mighty: Statewide Master Gardener Program Administration in Little Rhody
11-11:30 a.m.	Short presentation - Good Fences Make Good Volunteers: Setting Boundaries and Expectations Via Basic Training for Long-Term Program Success
11:30 a.m.- 12:00 p.m.	Coordinator Awards
12:00 p.m.- 1:30 p.m.	Luncheon Buffet- Great Room 1 & 2- 6th Floor
1:30-2:20 p.m.	Workshop presentation - Weeding Through Conflict: Real-World Case Studies for MG Coordinators
2:30-3 p.m.	Short presentation - Setting Priorities for Busy Extension Professionals
3-3:30 p.m.	Short presentation - Cultivating Connection: Retaining a Thriving Master Gardener Volunteer Community
3:30-3:45 p.m.	Break
3:45-4:15 p.m.	Short presentation - Growing Beyond Volunteers: Expanding Extension Reach Through a Sustainable Horticulture Certificate Course
4:15-4:45 p.m.	Short presentation - Growing Expertise Statewide: Lessons from Penn State Extension's Hybrid Woody Plant Identification Program
4:45-5 p.m.	Lightning talk - After-Summer School: A Chill Way to Maintain and Build Plant Clinic Skills
5-5:15 p.m.	Lightning talk - Transitioning to an Online Training Improves the Mississippi Master Gardener Program
5:15-5:30 p.m.	Lightning talk - Scaling for Success: How a 30-Minute Lesson Reached 30,000 First Graders
5:30 p.m.	Dinner on your own
Friday, August 21, 2026: Altitude Room- 33rd Floor	
8:15-8:30 a.m.	Review of the day
8:30-9 a.m.	Short presentation - Empowering Gardeners, Nourishing Community: A Seed Library Approach to Fighting Food Insecurity
9-9:50 a.m.	Workshop presentation - Cultivating Community: A Proactive Approach to Engagement in Minnesota
10-10:30 a.m.	Short presentation - Building Strong Foundations Through Master Gardener Admission Interviews
10:30-11 a.m.	Short presentation - Making Impact Visible at Every Stage: Retaining Master Gardeners Through Purpose-Driven Service
11-11:30 a.m.	Short presentation - Magnificent Moths: Engaging Communities with Science, Art, and Imagination
End of Conference- Travel Safe!	



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