

**University of Illinois Extension  
Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Unit**

**2020 Extension Master Gardener Online Recordkeeping  
Frequently Asked Questions and Guide**

- *Where is the online system located?* <https://volunteer.extension.illinois.edu/>
- *What do I do if I have difficulty logging into the online system?* The most common reason for errors is email address changes or entry errors. Send a "HELP" Request and we will try to solve the problem.
- *What is the difference between a volunteer activity and continuing education activities?* As you know from your annual agreement, Active Extension Master Gardeners must complete a minimum of 30 hours of approved volunteer service and 10 hours of approved continuing education annually. Volunteer activities are work you do as a EMG, e.g. working the Gardeners HelpLine, giving presentations, working in community gardens, etc. Continuing education activities happen when you learn something new for yourself through workshops, meetings, reading, etc. In this system, volunteer activities and continuing education activities are reported separately.
- *How do I report the county Master Gardener meetings?* Typically, these hours are reported as both a volunteer activity and a continuing education activity. Most people split these hours in half between volunteer and education.
  - Volunteer hours includes travel to/from meeting, social time, and business meeting.
  - Education hours includes the educational program portion of the monthly meeting.
- *What do I do if I make a mistake when entering my hours online?* Send a HELP message and explain the change. All HELP queries come directly to local staff. They will make the change manually in the system.

**Volunteer Hours Reporting Categories & Descriptions**

1. **4-H/County fair booth or judge**  
Volunteer hours working a MG informational booth or judging at a 4-H, county, or state fair. Please indicate location and volunteer activity in comments.
2. **Advisory Committee**  
Volunteer hours to serve on the Unit or State MG Advisory Committee.
3. **ART Inc. Lettuce Share Romain Community Garden**  
Volunteer hours at this community garden. As a recent garden (2019), this is still reported separately.
4. **Church Gardens & Activities**  
Volunteer activity at a church or place of worship that "Helps Others Learn to Grow." Please list name/location of church and activity in comments section.
5. **Common Place, Peoria**  
Volunteer activity at this community garden. Please capture numbers reached in comments section. As a 2018 state grant recipient, this project continues recording separate from other community gardens.

- 6. Community/Gift/Urban Farm FOOD Gardens**  
Volunteer work done at a Community/Gift Garden or Urban Farm. Please provide name/location of garden and how many people were reached in comments section.
- 7. Farmers Markets**  
Volunteer hours working a MG informational booth or collecting research data at a Farmers Market. Please indicate location and volunteer activity in comments.
- 8. Garden Walk work**  
Volunteer time related to planning and other support of garden walk. Please list name/location and number of people reached in the comments section. If attending for education only, enter separately as Continuing Education hours.
- 9. Garden/Bee Club work**  
Volunteer work done in support of garden and bee club meetings and events. Please indicate name/location of garden club and numbers reached in comment section. If attending for education only, enter separately as Continuing Education hours.
- 10. Gardeners' BIG Day work**  
Volunteer work done planning and working at Gardeners' BIG Day on April 29, 2017, a day-long horticulture symposium in Fulton County. If attending for education only, enter separately as Continuing Education hours.
- 11. Helpline**  
Answer lawn and garden questions that come into an Extension Office through the Gardening HelpLine housed in Peoria.
- 12. Hospital/Care Facility**  
Volunteer hours for workshops, events, or garden coordination at area hospitals or care facilities. Please indicate name/location of event and numbers reached in comment section.
- 13. ICC Gardens & Events**  
Volunteer work done at Illinois Central College in East Peoria, IL. Please indicate garden project or event in comments section.
- 14. Jubilee**  
Volunteer work done in support of horticulture-related project/event at Jubilee Park. Please indicate event/garden worked and numbers reached in comments section.
- 15. Juvenile Detention Center of Peoria Co. Gardening Project**  
Volunteer work done in this county facility. Please capture notes about gardening work and classroom teaching in comments section.
- 16. Luthy**  
Volunteer hours working gardens and answering questions at Luthy Botanical Garden in Peoria. Please report numbers reached in comment section.
- 17. Mason County Junior Master Gardeners, Havana**  
Volunteer hours working with Jr. Master Gardeners at Mason Co. Fairgrounds. Please report numbers reached in comments section. As a 2018 state grant recipient, this project continues recording separate from other community gardens.
- 18. Media and Blogs**  
Preparation of articles, blogs, TV, Radio, or other interviews for media that relate to horticulture topics or programs that "Help others learn to grow." Please indicate type and subject of media in comment section.

**19. MG Training Support**

Volunteer hours used in support of MG training, including grading tests, assisting trainees, providing hospitality, and more.

**20. MG-FULTON Meetings**

Time spent in travel, business meeting, and social portion of Fulton County MG meetings. Report educational portion of the meeting separately as Continuing Education Hours.

**21. MG-MASON Meetings**

Time spent in travel, business meeting, and social portion of MASON County MG meetings. Report educational portion of the meeting separately as Continuing Education Hours.

**22. MG-PEORIA Meetings**

Time spent in travel, business meeting, and social portion of PEORIA County MG meetings. Report educational portion of the meeting separately as Continuing Education Hours.

**23. MG-TAZEWELL Meetings**

Time spent in travel, business meeting, and social portion of TAZEWELL County MG meetings. Report educational portion of the meeting separately as Continuing Education Hours.

**24. MG-UNITWIDE and state MG meetings/conferences**

Time spent in travel, business meeting, and social portion of multi-county, state, regional, and national MG meetings. Report educational portion of the meeting separately as Continuing Education Hours.

**25. Peoria Clean Water Celebration**

Coordination and teaching at the Peoria Clean Water Celebration in the Peoria Civic Center.

**26. Peoria Home Show**

Volunteer work done coordinating and working the Peoria Home Show at the Peoria Civic Center.

**27. Plant Bingo**

Volunteer work in support of the Tazewell County MG Plant Bingo.

**28. Plant Sale**

Preparing for and working a plant sale, including the Peoria MG and Pekin St. Jude Plant Sales.

**29. Pollinator Event work**

Volunteer activity relating to bees, butterflies, birds, invasive insects, etc. that impact gardens and landscape. Includes pollinator gardens and pollinator events. Indicate garden/event and numbers reached in the comments section.

**30. Public/City Gardens**

Volunteer activity at any public location, such as city entrance signs, park projects, and street planters. Please list name/location and numbers reached in comments section.

**31. Questions & Answers**

Time spent answering inquiries from homeowners, neighbors, family members, or friends related to gardening or other horticulture topics. Please indicate type of question and numbers reached in comment section.

**32. Speakers Bureau**

Volunteer hours spent preparing and delivering horticultural presentations to others. Please indicate name of event and numbers reached in comment section.

**33. Trip/Tour Support**

Volunteer time spent organizing and assisting a MG trip. Indicate trip worked in comments section. If attending for education only, enter separately as Continuing Education hours.

**34. Wildlife Prairie Park**

Garden volunteer activity at one of the many great MG projects at Wildlife Prairie Park. Indicate garden worked and numbers reached in comment section.

**35. Youth/School Gardens and Projects**

Volunteer activities done at a school, after-school program, 4-H group, or other project or event that reaches kids. Indicate the location, lesson, and numbers reached in comments section.

**36. z-MISCELLANEOUS**

Volunteer work done that is not included in other entries. Please indicate name of event in comment section. Note: Begins with a "z" so that it is listed last.

**Continuing Education Hours Reporting Categories & Descriptions**

**1. Garden Day Event**

Continuing education hours received at a garden day event. Please list name and location of event (Gardeners' BIG Day, Herb Day, etc.) in comments section.

**2. Garden Walk**

Attend Garden Walk for educational purposes. Please list name/location of garden walk in comments section.

**3. Garden/Bee Club Meetings & Events**

Continuing education hours received at a garden club or bee club. Please list name and location of club in comments section.

**4. ICC Gardens Meeting/Program**

Educational program held at ICC in East Peoria, IL. Includes Landscape & Garden Day, Saturday lectures series, and more. Please list name of event in comments.

**5. MG Training**

Attend a MG Training session for continuing education hours. Include topic and location in comments section.

**6. MG-FULTON Meetings**

Education hours from Fulton County MG meetings, training, or other events in support of MG program. Report business/social portion of the meeting separately as Volunteer Hours.

**7. MG-MASON Meetings**

Education hours from Mason County MG meetings, training, or other events in support of MG program. Report business/social portion of the meeting separately as Volunteer Hours.

**8. MG-PEORIA Meetings**

Education hours from Peoria County MG meetings, training, or other events in support of MG program. Report business/social portion of the meeting separately as Volunteer Hours.

**9. MG-TAZEWELL Meetings**

Education hours from Tazewell County MG meetings, training, or other events in support of MG program. Report business/social portion of the meeting separately as Volunteer Hours.

**10. MG-UNITWIDE and state MG meetings/conferences**

Education hours from multicounty, state, regional, or national MG meetings and conferences. Report business/social portion of the meeting separately as Volunteer Hours.

**11. MidAmerican Gardener and other TV shows**

Watch MidAmerican Gardener or another gardening television show for educational purposes.

**12. OLLI Class**

Attend gardening related class in an Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) program at Bradley University or at another institution. List class name in comments section.

**13. Reading books, magazines, and online resources**

Reading or research of a horticulture topic. Includes books, magazines, horticulture and MG newsletters, and web-based research. List reading source and topic in comments section.

**14. Trips and Tours**

Education gained from Extension-sponsored and other trips to Botanical Gardens or other garden-related locations. Please list location visited.

**15. Webinars/YouTube Videos**

Webinars and YouTube videos that provides horticulture information, including Four Seasons Gardening and Speakers Bureau educational programs. Please indicate name of event in comment section.

**16. z-MISCELLANEOUS event/program**

Workshops relating to horticultural education not included in other entries. Please indicate name of event in comment section. Note: Begins with a "z" so that it is listed last.

- *Occasionally I help a friend, family member, or neighbor with gardening questions. Can I count this work as a Master Gardener volunteer activity?* Yes, these are considered Master Gardener volunteer activities because you are "Helping Others Learn to Grow." Please enter these occasional hours in the category titled "Questions & Answers."

**Demographic Contact Data**

- *Why do I see a place to enter demographic data on some of my volunteer activity pages?* Some Master Gardeners who coordinate major projects are listed as the key person to enter demographic data for that project. This assures that only one person counts the people at our programs. Use sign-in sheets to gather this data, when appropriate.
- *Where do I report public attendance at an event?* Include number reached in the notes.

**Speakers Bureau Hours**

- Use notes to provide location and topic and attendee demographics.
- *How do I report hours spent doing public presentations (Speakers Bureau)?* Report these under the volunteer activity for Speakers Bureau. Select the date of the presentation, and then you will notice that there are two places to enter hours. Please enter all your preparation hours (regardless of date) in the prep section, and then enter actual hours spent teaching on that date.
- I spent an extremely long time preparing for my public presentation, but certainly learned a lot doing it. Can I count those hours as continuing education time? Yes, you can report your study time in the appropriate category, such as Reading and Webinars.