



# UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER HANDBOOK

# **Updated December 2024**

This document supersedes any and all previous University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Policy Documents.

#### I. Introduction

The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program is an educational volunteer training program offered by University of Illinois Extension. The program is designed to increase the availability of university-based horticultural information to local non-profit, non-commercial community groups and private individuals through trained volunteers known as Master Gardeners.

# **Master Gardener Mission**

The mission of the Master Gardener program is: *"Helping Others Learn to Grow."* The purpose of the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program is to provide horticultural information specific to local climates, soils, and plants and training to the private, general gardening public, based on University of Illinois research, when available.

As part of the outreach efforts of University of Illinois Extension, Master Gardeners use horticultural education, applied research, and the resources of the University of Illinois to enhance the economy and environment.

# Master Gardener Program Objectives:

- Expand the capacity of University of Illinois Extension to distribute horticultural information to private individuals and public/community groups in local areas.
- Develop and enhance community programs related to horticulture. These programs are educational in nature and may involve environmental improvements, therapy gardening projects, community and school gardening projects, or other programs determined by local needs.
- Develop the leadership potential of Master Gardener volunteers through a volunteer network designed to assist Extension staff in managing local Master Gardener activities and programs.

To become a Master Gardener, you must submit an application online to the local Extension Unit offering the program. After the local coordinator reviews the application, you may be invited for a short interview. Not all applicants are accepted into the program. There may be more applicants than space allows for in an in-person classroom or than the local office can accommodate. There may also be a waiting period before the local office is ready to take new applications. If you are not accepted into the current training group, your name may be kept on file and you may be encouraged to reapply in the future.

# II. What is a Master Gardener?

Master Gardeners must be adults 18 years and older. They are members of the local community who are interested in lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers, gardens, and the environment.

# **Levels of Master Gardeners**

**Training Participant-** a program participant from the time they begin the training program through completion of training - no acceptance into the program has been given yet.

**Master Gardener Trainee** – a program participant from the time they are accepted into the program through completion of training.

**Master Gardener Intern** – a program participant from the time they-graduate from training with an average score of at least 80% on quizzes and exams through the completion of the initial 40 hours of volunteer service. This internship is normally completed within 12 months of the end of training. However, interns may take 2 years to complete their internship upon agreement of the local Extension unit Master Gardener coordinator. Anyone who fails to complete the volunteer service requirement does not become a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener.

**Certified (Active) Master Gardener –** a Master Gardener Intern who has completed their initial 40hour volunteer service requirement or a returning previously certified University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener. To maintain Certified University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener status requires a minimum of 20 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of continuing education annually and is valid for one year. Active Master Gardeners are encouraged to pair with Master Gardener Trainees and Interns to help guide newcomers through a successful volunteer experience.

**Leave of Absence –** A sabbatical-like status for a former University of Illinois Extension Certified Master Gardener or Intern who is temporarily unable to fulfill Active Master Gardener requirements for health, family, or other personal reasons. The volunteer may request Leave of Absence status at any time of the year. The request should be communicated in writing to the program coordinator.

Participants may remain on a leave of absence for one year at a time upon the approval of their local coordinator. It is the volunteer's responsibility to stay in contact with their local program coordinator regarding their intentions to return to active status.

Returning to active status after more than two years as an inactive Master Gardener will require an additional 10 hours of continuing education to be recorded, in addition to the 10 hours that are required annually.

A volunteer who adopts a Leave of Absence status:

- Remains an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer or a member of the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program
- May report volunteer service or continuing education hours.
- May attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences at the local coordinator's discretion.
- Are required to stay up to date on all background checks and sign the annual Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct and Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement forms.
- May not serve in a local county leadership capacity.

- May not apply or serve on the State Advisory Board.
- Time (years) in Leave of Absence status will not count toward years of service awards.

**Temporary Inactive-** Active volunteers who did not fulfill or record the minimum requirements (20 volunteer service and 10 continuing education hours) before December 31 of the previous year automatically receive an Inactive status.

To return to Active status, the volunteer must fulfill and report the minimum 20 volunteer service and 10 continuing education hours within the next calendar year, or they will become Permanently Inactive and lose their Master Gardener certification. Time (years) in Inactive status does not count toward years of service awards.

Volunteers with Temporary Inactive status:

- Are eligible for all volunteer activities in the local county program and offered by the state program.
- Are encouraged to attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences.
- Are required to stay up to date on all background checks and sign the annual Extension Code of Conduct and Master Gardener Volunteer agreement forms.
- May not serve in local county leadership capacity.
- May not apply or serve on the State Advisory Board.

# **Permanent Inactive**

Permanent Inactive status is used to define an individual who has voluntarily or involuntarily left the Extension Master Gardener volunteer program. They are no longer volunteering on behalf of the program and may not present themself as a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener.

Permanently Inactive volunteers:

- Do NOT remain an Extension Master Gardener Volunteer or a member of the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program
- Do NOT have access to program and Extension resources, staff, websites, etc.
- Are NOT eligible for any volunteer activities in the local county program and offered by the state program.
- Are NOT required to complete a background check or sign the annual Code of Conduct or Master Gardener Agreement forms.
- Does NOT report volunteer service or continuing education hours.
- Are NOT eligible to serve in local county leadership capacity.
- Are NOT eligible to serve on the State Advisory Board.
- Do NOT attend monthly meetings, continuing education classes, and conferences.
- Do NOT attend local social gatherings, including awards banquets and holiday parties.

Individuals on Permanent Inactive status may return and become reinstated as Active volunteers in the Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program if approved by the local program coordinator. To rejoin the program, the volunteer should complete a volunteer application and contact the local program coordinator, who will confirm that the returning volunteer completed a background check

and is in good standing. Returning to active status after more than two years as Inactive will require additional training, as well as a new background screening.

# Emeritus

Emeritus Status is an honorary title bestowed to an active Master Gardener who has served with distinction and plans to retire from the program.

Emeritus members are exempt from the annual service, education, and attendance requirements. They may be allowed to attend monthly meetings, scheduled events, and tours based on the local county staff's discretion. They may not vote, serve on committees, hold elected offices, or provide volunteer service. An emeritus member cannot be returned to active status. Emeritus status may be bestowed posthumously.

The criteria for being awarded Emeritus status are as follows:

- At least 10 years of active membership
- Has demonstrated leadership, superior involvement, and outstanding participation in one or more aspects of the program.
- Has completed at least 1,000 volunteer hours over the course of their service.
- Exceptions to the above may be made by the Selection Committee in the case of unique circumstances.

Master Gardeners may be nominated for Emeritus status by themselves, a fellow Master Gardener, or a staff member using the emeritus nomination form. Contact your local coordinator for access to the nomination form. The selection committee reserves the right to select additional candidates for Emeritus status than only those nominated.

The selection and approval committee shall consist of a combination of the local Extension staff, comprised of the program coordinator, educator, and county director.

# Use of the Master Gardener Title

The title "University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program in which the trained and certified Master Gardeners conduct educational programming and answer gardening questions to the general public in assistance to University of Illinois Extension. Master Gardeners are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work in this University of Illinois Extension-sponsored program. The titles are valid only when the volunteer is participating in the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program.

When an individual ceases to actively participate, their designation as a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener becomes void. They then become known as a former Master Gardener volunteer.

Certification as a Master Gardener is restrictive in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in a University of Illinois Extension-sponsored or endorsed program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be re-certified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment.

# **Conflicts of Interest**

A Master Gardener should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener at a place of business unless that place is conducting an authorized University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener activity. It is improper to imply that University of Illinois Extension endorses any product or place of business. **Master Gardeners must not use their title in any form of commercial advertisement.** 

The Master Gardener program is a general public service program established to provide unbiased information, and the title "Master Gardener" is to be used only when conducting unpaid volunteer work in the program. When Master Gardeners make public presentations on horticultural subjects, it is permissible for them to accept unsolicited gifts or be reimbursed for legitimate expenses incurred in conducting the class. However, it is inappropriate to seek pay for personal gain for speaking engagements conducted as a Master Gardener. Such speaker's fees or honoraria are permissible when the fee is turned over to the local Extension Unit Office.

# **Master Gardener Identification**

Name badges indicative of the level of the Master Gardener participant may be used. Temporary name badges are appropriate for Master Gardener Trainees and Master Gardener Interns.

Active Master Gardeners should use official University of Illinois Extension name badges to identify themselves as representatives of University of Illinois Extension while conducting programs as Master Gardeners unless anonymity for the safety of the volunteer is important.

#### **Master Gardener Apparel**

Official University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener apparel may be ordered through the <u>Illinois</u> <u>Extension Merchandise Storefront</u>. Master Gardeners apparel must<del>f</del>ollow University of Illinois Extension logo guidelines.

#### III. Training

#### **Application Procedures**

Recruitment of trainees will be based on pre-planning and an established need for local Master Gardener volunteer activities. Coordinators or the planning committee will develop and implement a plan to achieve full representation of the community. University of Illinois Equal Opportunity, Affirmative Action and program compliance policies must be followed.

#### **Screening of Applicants**

Screening techniques, such as in-depth applications, in-person interviews, and other sources will be used as needed to determine if candidates are appropriate for the program.

All Master Gardener trainees who have been accepted into the program are required to complete the full Illinois Extension volunteer screening process.

#### Steps to Become an Illinois Extension Volunteer

- Application Submission and Review
- Reference Checks
- Interview with Illinois Extension Staff
- Criminal History Check and Registered Sex Offender check through Sterling Volunteers
- Illinois Department of Children and Family Services Child Abuse and Neglect System (CANTS) check
- Illinois Extension Child Protection Training
- Volunteer Orientation/Training

# **Regular Background Checks**

Illinois Extension is dedicated to regularly screening current volunteers every 3 years to ensure the safety and security of those we serve.

# Annual

• National Registered Sex Offender Registry check

# **Every 3 Years**

- Criminal History check through Sterling Volunteers
- CANTS check
- National Registered Sex Offender Registry Check

#### **Required Forms\***

Once

- Extension Risk Waiver (signature required)
- Talent Release Form (signature required)
- Child Protection Training Certificate

#### Annual

- Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct
- Master Gardener Program Volunteer Agreement

As Needed

• Emergency Medical Form

\*Additional steps or forms may be required by individual programs.

Applicants should receive explanations of volunteer opportunities, particularly those that the individual will commit to for the internship. If these opportunities are not suitable to the candidate (i.e., conflicts with schedule, no interest in offered program areas, etc.), then the candidate should be advised to reapply to the program again in the future.

#### **Protection of Minors Training**

All Master Gardener volunteers must complete online Child Protection Training developed by University of Illinois Extension as a requirement of becoming and continuing to be a volunteer. A

certificate is given at the end of training-acknowledging they are aware of University of Illinois policies regarding protection of minors and understand their responsibility for mandated reporting incidences of abuse and/or neglect of minors to the University of Illinois Police Department (217-333-1216) AND to a U of I Extension employee within the unit in which they are volunteering (e.g., County Director). Calls to the UI Police Department for mandated reporting should be made together with the County Director or other Extension employee, such as an Extension Educator.

**Trainee/Intern Agreement** – All University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener trainees and interns must sign the annual Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement as part of their commitment to the program. A digitally signed copy of the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement will be on file in the Illinois Extension Volunteer Gateway.

# **Core Course Training**

**Course Format-** Master Gardener training may take place in a variety of formats depending on the local unit's needs. Online Illinois Gardener Training is an online, self-guided training course that is available for those interested in becoming a certified Master Gardener volunteer. This online course is currently offered three times a year in Winter, Summer, and Fall. Both participants who intend to volunteer and those who are not interested in volunteering can take this online course.

Hybrid Master Gardener training is a flipped classroom style training where trainees have at least 4 hours of independent study to complete online prior to each weekly live session. During the weekly in person meeting time, trainees participate in a live webinar presented by Extension Educators. Trainees then work in small groups within the unit to discuss case studies and hands-on activities. Attendance is required at these weekly sessions. This hybrid course is currently offered two times a year in Winter and Fall.

Some units may still offer full in-person training as well, but most are held either online or in the hybrid format. The type of training offered is determined by the local unit.

**Course Topics** - University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Core Course training consists of a minimum of 60 hours of instruction based on the Illinois Master Gardener Manual. The exact topics presented may vary due to local needs. However, all programs will include sessions on the following topics:

Introduction to the Master Gardener program and Extension

Botany Soils Plant Diseases/Diagnosis Horticultural Insects Integrated Pest Management Small Fruits and Tree Fruits Vegetable Gardening

Annuals/Perennials/Groundcovers

Lawns

Trees/Shrubs/Vines

Additional topics covered in the Illinois Master Gardener Manual, which may be part of the core course, are:

Propagation Weeds Herbs Nuts Bulbs Ornamental Grasses Houseplants Roses Landscaping Wildlife Management

Topics not covered in the Illinois Master Gardener Manual may also be part of core course training, provided approval of the topic and instructor is obtained from the State Master Gardener Office.

**Attendance** – Master Gardener Trainees are expected to attend all in-person training sessions if they are being offered. In the event a live training session must be missed, it is the responsibility of the trainee to make arrangements to make up the missed session.

**Quizzes and Exams** – A comprehensive open book exam on all subject matter in the course will be given. In addition to the comprehensive final exam, a quiz on the topic(s) will be given. Exams and quizzes will be submitted to the local Master Gardener coordinator or designated Master Gardener team for grading if training is being held in person or automatically scored in the case of online/hybrid training.

Trainees who achieve an 80 percent or higher cumulative average at the end of the training will receive a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Intern certificate and will continue to the internship portion of the program.

**Course Fees** – Master Gardener course fees for in-person and hybrid training are set by local units offering the training and are based upon suggested state pricing guidelines. The Illinois gardener online training course fees are \$300 or \$320, depending on the manual selection.

In instances where a course applicant indicates they prefer not to complete the volunteer internship portion of the course or if, a non-volunteer option for training is available. Those selecting this option will not become Certified University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners. This option may be attractive to commercial horticulturists who would like the information from the course but don't have the time to volunteer in the program. The non-volunteer option training may have an additional fee to be determined by the local county office.

# IV. Volunteering in the Master Gardener Program

# **Screening for Active Volunteers**

Yearly, all active Master Gardeners must sign a copy of the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement and Extension Code of Conduct, and have their name checked against the National Sex Offender Website. A volunteer background (DCFS CANTS) check and criminal history check with Sterling Volunteers must be renewed no less than every three years of volunteer service.

A volunteer charged with a criminal offense but not yet convicted may be suspended as determined by consultation between the Unit/county staff, Regional Director, and state program leadership. The volunteer will be notified (with a receipt requested) that they are on suspension as a Master Gardener volunteer pending resolution of the matter. Upon resolution of the matter, the individual may request their volunteer appointment be restored to "active" status. The County Director, in consultation with administration and the Master Gardener program leadership, will determine whether the volunteer's appointment should be restored based on the facts and circumstances.

# Annual Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement and Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct Documents

All University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners must sign an Annual Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement and Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct as part of their commitment to the program. A digitally signed copy of these agreements will be on file in the Illinois Extension Volunteer Gateway.

**Types of Volunteer Work Eligible** – Volunteers are required to discuss with their local Master Gardener coordinator all planned activities prior to conducting the program. This information is essential for liability coverage. Generally, volunteer work is completed in your local community, but need not be limited to local programming efforts. While the Extension unit office is the center of Master Gardener programming, some volunteer work may be done outside of the Extension office. Many projects may involve interaction with parks and recreation departments, nursing homes, schools, county or city agencies, and other civic organizations.

All work undertaken by Master Gardeners is directed toward individual home gardeners and nonprofit, noncommercial community groups. All other entities are directly handled by Extension educators. If in doubt, check with your local county coordinator and the appropriate educator or specialist. Master Gardeners will only provide non-biased research-based horticultural information endorsed and sanctioned by the University of Illinois Extension. Furthermore, Master Gardeners must abide by the Illinois Department of Agriculture licensing requirements for the application of pesticides when acting as a Master Gardener volunteer. See the <u>Pesticide Use in Demonstration</u> <u>Gardens</u> document for additional details. For liability reasons, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners are not permitted to conduct home visits as part of their volunteer role.

# **Questions and Topics Not Covered by Master Gardeners**

In general, if a topic is not covered in the Illinois Master Gardener Manual or Illinois Extension does not have supplemental advanced training on the topic, Master Gardeners should not present or respond to questions about that topic. Some specific examples include:

1. Hemp, CBD, and Medical Marijuana Questions- For the immediate future, University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener volunteers will not answer questions involving hemp, CBD, medical marijuana, or similarly related topics. Currently we do not have the research information from the University and have no training available on this topic for our volunteers at this time.

When responding to questions, let a client know that we do not have any information to share at this time. If they are calling to inquire about commercial hemp production on a large or small scale, please refer that question as you would any commercial question to your coordinator and/or educator.

- 2. **Glyphosate and Cancer Questions to Master Gardeners-** Extension does not have a policy or opinion on glyphosate. If the client wants to use the product, they should read and follow all label instructions. Additionally, if a client determines they are not interested in chemical weed control volunteers may recommend other weed management strategies using the Pest Management for the Home Landscape book as your source of herbicide and alternative control information. Offer all the options to the client, leaving out your own personal bias towards a particular management solution.
- 3. **Mushroom Identification and Edibility Questions to Master Gardeners-** It is Extension's policy not to comment on the edibility of a mushroom or any other garden item, or if it can be safely ingested. This is due to the hazards associated with wild mushrooms and how improper diagnosis can be made based on similarities in species. Official positive identification of a mushroom involves lab analysis. Simply let the client know that Extension does not comment on edibility. This policy protects not only the client but also Extension.
- 4. Herbs for Medicinal Purposes and other Related Medicinal Plant Questions to Master Gardeners- Like hemp, CBD, and medical marijuana as listed above, we simply do not have the scientific, university research-based information or training to support any medical claims for using plants for medicinal purposes. Therefore, we do not answer questions related to these uses or present programs on the topic.
- 5. Herbicide Damage Identification- Volunteers should not confirm or deny whether herbicide damage may have occurred to a client's plant. These inquiries should be shared with the local Extension staff person who can contact the Illinois Department of Agriculture if deemed necessary. See the How to Handle Pesticide Drift Complaints Guide for additional information.

# **Educational Efforts**

Educational efforts are those activities or programs in which the Master Gardeners educate the public. This includes presentations at demonstration sites, presentations at fairs, booths, and plant clinics, and educational presentations to identified audiences, such as garden clubs, school groups, homeowner associations, and church groups. This also includes training of other volunteers, such as other Master Gardeners, Boy Scouts, civic groups, or other identified groups of volunteers, to assist them in delivering a program.

Work to construct or develop a site used for educational programming, such as a landscape demonstration garden, qualifies as educational efforts. Educational efforts include the time spent planning, implementing, and reporting on educational efforts. As a good rule-of-thumb in determining which activities are appropriate educational programming, use the questions: "Is the program educational in nature?" and "Does this activity contribute to the goals and mission of the local Extension unit?"

# Administrative Efforts

Administrative volunteer efforts that count toward volunteer time include conducting general Master Gardener business meetings, working on a Master Gardener newsletter, communication efforts such as telephone trees, and any other activities that maintain the Master Gardener program.

# **Non-Educational Programming**

Design, installation, upkeep, and maintenance of public or demonstration gardens without the inclusion of educational activities (such as active demonstrations, hands-on workshops, etc.) must be approved and documented by an Extension Educator or County Director as contributing to the goals and mission of the local Extension program. Non-educational programming may also include travel time and other non-work time necessary to volunteer.

#### **Continuing Education**

Active Master Gardeners must remain current in annual continuing education and volunteer service requirements set by the local Master Gardener program or, in the absence of local requirements, follow the state minimum requirements of 20 hours of volunteer service and 10 hours of approved educational updates.

Approved continuing education are such things as the State Master Gardener Conference, local Master Gardener update sessions, and University of Illinois Extension-sponsored webinars and short courses. Credit horticulture or plant science classes, or other horticultural classes, must be pre-approved by the local Master Gardener coordinator.

#### **State Master Gardener Conference**

Each year a State Master Gardener Conference will be held. The conference is held at different locations around the state, with local Master Gardener groups acting as hosts.

Program content for the conference is coordinated by the State Master Gardener Office. Attending classes and workshops at the State Master Gardener Conference can help fulfill the minimum continuing education requirement.

# International Master Gardener Conference

In odd-numbered years, an International Master Gardener Conference is held in the U.S. or Canada. Attending classes and workshops at the International Master Gardener Conference will count towards continuing education requirements.

# Local and Regional Updates

Many local Master Gardener groups plan periodic informational meetings and education updates for active Master Gardeners and Interns. These also apply toward continuing education credits.

# **Training Time**

Time spent in training, educational conferences or other settings that qualify as continuing education should not be counted as volunteer time. Instances where the Master Gardener is the recipient of information or training, rather than the presenter of information, count as continuing education or re-certification time.

# **Reporting Volunteer Activities**

Master Gardeners will report their volunteer and continuing education hours using the online platform, <u>Givepulse</u>. Volunteers should also record the number of people impacted by the particular activity if they are assigned by their local coordinator as the demographic reporter.

Travel time to a volunteer activity is reported as volunteer hours. Travel to attend a continuing education event does not count towards the required continuing education hours and should not be reported. The information from the reporting system is needed to re-certify the Master Gardener for the following year. Master Gardeners for whom annual report summaries and Annual Master Gardener Volunteer Agreements and Illinois Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct are not received will be removed from the Active Master Gardener rolls.

#### **Master Gardener Transfers**

Master Gardeners who have completed their core training and internship in Illinois and received a positive recommendation from their local Master Gardener coordinator prior to moving to another part of the state are eligible to become volunteers in the locale of their new residency.

However, they may be required to take additional course work also required of all local Master Gardeners in the new locality and will be subject to the guidelines of the new locale. Master Gardeners who have not completed their internship prior to moving will be required to complete their internship with their new unit before becoming Certified Master Gardeners.

Master Gardeners moving from out-of-state as well as returning Master Gardeners (i.e., someone who trained in Illinois, moved away, and is returning to Illinois) may be required to complete the entire Master Gardener training prior to volunteering in Illinois, depending on their demonstrated knowledge and skills in this geographic area. Generally, active Master Gardeners from neighboring

states, upon recommendation from their previous local Master Gardener coordinator, can be accepted without the need for further demonstration of horticultural knowledge. For those Master Gardener transfers or inactive former Master Gardeners away from the program for 2 years or more, retraining is required.

# Volunteer Performance and Renewal of Active Status Procedure

Volunteer performance will be a continuous assessment process in order to ensure the goals, objectives, and mission of the Master Gardener program are being met in a manner that best serves the needs of the University of Illinois and the Master Gardener program. The review process may include oral and written feedback on volunteer performance and can be used as a basis to invite the Master Gardener back for the following year.

# **Project Performance**

The performance of local Master Gardener projects may also be assessed on a yearly basis in order to ensure that projects continue to meet the educational Master Gardener mission, fulfill the needs of the local community, and are an appropriate use of time and resources.

# Grounds for Dismissal of a Master Gardener Volunteer

A University of Illinois Extension volunteer can be relieved of the title and privileges at any time, at the discretion of the local Extension staff coordinating the Extension program. Possible reasons for dismissal may include a volunteer who demonstrates actions that conflict with the mission, purpose, and objectives of University of Illinois Extension. Examples of conflict include but are not limited to, failure to comply with University of Illinois volunteer policies and code of conduct and misuse of the Extension program title. At the time of dismissal, the volunteer will be required to turn in his or her name badge and other Extension property to the local Extension staff coordinating the program. See the University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook for additional guidance.

#### **Procedure for Dismissal**

See the University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook for guidance on volunteer dismissal.

#### **Risk Management**

#### **Incident/Accident Reporting**

Each time there is an incident or accident that causes harm or injury to a youth, volunteer, or staff member, an Incident/Accident Investigation form must be completed and shared with the County Director, Assistant Director, Program Specialist, and Associate Director of Workforce Development.

Registration materials, including health forms, photo releases, and risk waivers, should be maintained for twenty years for youth and ten years for adults. These files can be kept digitally.

**Bus Coverage** Extension units and Master Gardeners must follow the University policies for bus charters with approved insurance. University guidelines for making charter bus arrangements can be found on the Business and Finance website: <u>6.1.3 Select Bus Charters with Approved Insurance</u> - Business & Finance (uillinois.edu)

# **Agreements and Contracts**

Volunteers of the University of Illinois Master Gardener program are prohibited by state statutes from signing agreements that contain harmless or similar clauses. In the event that the lessor will not waive the hold harmless or similar clauses, the event must be changed to another location.

# V. Recognition and Awards Certificates

Upon satisfactory completion of training, a completion certificate is awarded to the participant. After completion of the 40-hour internship, the Master Gardener Intern becomes a certified University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener and is awarded a Master Gardener certificate. Certificates may be presented at an annual graduation or volunteer recognition ceremony. In succeeding years, the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners who remain active by keeping their continuing education and volunteer service requirements current may be awarded a "Years of Service" certificate and pin.

**State Awards** – State-level Master Gardener awards are given annually at the State Master Gardener Conference. Awards are based on nominations submitted by local Master Gardener coordinators, Extension Educators, and or County Directors. The State Outstanding Master Gardener Award is based on the following criteria:

- Nominee must be a currently active University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener.
- Nominee must have completed at least 120 hours of Master Gardener volunteer service beyond the required 40-hour internship (160 total).
- A maximum of 2% of statewide active Master Gardeners will be recognized with this award annually.

Nominees for the Sustained Excellence Award must:

- Be a currently active University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener.
- Have been active in the Illinois Master Gardener program for at least 3 years beyond internship (a minimum of 4 years total).
- Be a previous State Outstanding Master Gardener Award recipient.
- Have completed at least 300 hours of Master Gardener volunteer service since receiving the State Outstanding Master Gardener Award (a minimum of 480 hours total).

The State Teamwork Award is based on the following criteria:

- At least 3 or more members of the team must have been active Illinois Master Gardeners or Master Gardener Interns during the award year and have substantially contributed to the project.
- The project was active during the award year.
- Only 1 teamwork award nomination per extension unit will be accepted.

#### VI. Program Compliance

**Equal Opportunity Statement** – See the University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook for guidance.

Affirmative Action - See the University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook for guidance.

**Americans with Disabilities Act** – See the University of Illinois Extension Volunteer Handbook for guidance.

# VII. Information Management

Keeping accurate and updated records is vital to a successful volunteer program. This includes record retention as well as properly maintaining filing systems. It is important to remember that the University of Illinois sets forth policies and guidelines for these areas. For reference to these guidelines, please review the Campus Administration Manual or CAM located at the following: http://cam.illinois.edu/

# **Policies On Volunteer Record Retention & Filing Systems**

# Volunteer Mailing Lists and Directories

Email/Mailing lists and volunteer directories are for the sole use of Extension personnel. They shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or federal government agency. Volunteers may choose to share their personal contact information with fellow volunteers, but Extension personnel will not share or organize that information.

Email/Mailing lists and volunteer directories are not federal records and are not subject to the provisions of the Federal Freedom of Information Act.

# Givepulse and Gateway Privacy Policy

Volunteer data in Givepulse and the Volunteer Gateway is for the sole use of Extension personnel and shall not be furnished directly or indirectly to any other person, firm, association, or federal government agency. Volunteer data is compiled for official use only and is confidential. Volunteer data is not federal record and is not subject to the provisions of the Federal Freedom of Information Act.

#### **Web Privacy Policy Information**

Extension volunteer programs follow all web privacy policies as outlined by the University of Illinois:

https://www.vpaa.uillinois.edu/resources/web\_privacy

#### **VIII. Setting and Amending Master Gardener Policies**

The State Master Gardener office has final authority in setting and amending statewide Master Gardener policies.

Recommendations for policy changes are directed through the State Master Gardener Advisory Committee which has the following purposes:

- Serve as advisory council to state-level Master Gardener administration.
- Encourage equitable distribution of state Master Gardener resources.
- Recommend minimum standards for University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener core course training.
- Strengthen state Master Gardener education and training.

- Increase awareness of University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener programs.
- Support an annual University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Conference.
- Recommend policies and guidelines for University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener programs while recognizing local needs.

The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener Advisory Committee consists of:

- Two (2) certified University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners from each of the five (5) University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener regions. If no certified Master Gardener applicants are available from a given region, a Master Gardener Intern may represent that region.
- Two (2) Extension staff members from each of the five (5) University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener regions.
- The State Master Gardener Coordinator.

Ex-offico members may include:

- One (1) representative from the University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program at Chicago Botanic Garden.
- One (1) representative from the University of Illinois Extension administration.
- This ex-offico member of the committee may be chosen by the state Master Gardener Coordinator or at the discretion of the extension administration.

Guest Master Gardeners and University of Illinois Extension staff are welcome to attend State Advisory Committee meetings as non-voting observers. Official notification of state Master Gardener policy changes will be communicated through the local Master Gardener coordinators. Additionally, all County Directors and extension educators will be notified directly via email or direct mailing of any policy changes.

Adopted November 15, 2000

Revised September 2002, November 2005, February 2006, November 2008,

February 2009, October 2013, September 2015, June 2020, January 2023, December 2024