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## ILLINOIS STATE MASTER GARDENER NEWS

Wishing you Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for a Great New Year! Please enjoy this [thank you video](#):

Happy Holidays  
from the Illinois  
Master Gardener  
Program!



**Illinois Extension**  
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS URBANA-CHAMPAIGN

### 2020 Highlights

#### New Master Gardener Website

- A project that has been in the works for a long time, we were excited to launch a new website this summer! Check it out at <https://extension.illinois.edu/mg>. There is a tab for Current Volunteers with many great resources for you all in one place. The Become a Master Gardener tab has also been a great way to welcome new volunteers.

#### Virtual Awards Ceremony

- Since we couldn't host our annual State Master Gardener Conference in person, we pivoted our Master Gardener Awards Ceremony to virtual in order to still recognize our outstanding volunteers! 29 volunteers were awarded the Outstanding Master Gardener Award, 11 were awarded the Sustained Excellence Award, and 9 Teamwork Awards were celebrated. You can still watch a recording of the awards [here](#), along with the great presentation by May Berenbaum.

#### Creative Volunteer Opportunities

- As you know, 2020 has been a year like no other and we have had to make many pivots to the Master Gardener program this year in order to keep our staff and volunteers safe. Due to the limited number of volunteer opportunities safely available this year, we waved the 30 hour requirement for volunteer hours in order to maintain active MG status. We felt this would help alleviate any additional demand or stress that volunteers may have felt in trying to fulfill that requirement, especially at the beginning of the pandemic.
- Despite the challenges, it was still amazing to see the creative thinking that came from our Extension staff and volunteers to come up with ways to safely still make a difference in your communities!

#### Lots of Continuing Education

- While we were all at home, our Extension Educators did an amazing job of creating LOTS of horticulture content and learning opportunities for Master Gardener volunteers. Many of the recordings and upcoming webinar news can be found on [this site](#), as well as on the [University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Youtube Page](#). There is still time to get those 10 hours of continuing education in!

#### Volunteer Hours

- Lastly a reminder to still enter your hours for the year at <https://volunteer.extension.illinois.edu/> if you have not already.
- Even with the volunteer hour requirement waved this year, many of you still contributed your 30 hours of volunteer service and beyond. We greatly appreciate your efforts and contributions to your communities. Your volunteer service has allowed University of Illinois Extension to help many more people learn to grow this year!
- Even though we paused any special volunteer hour recognitions this year, we are very grateful for the hours you may have been able to contribute this year. Just know that whether you were able to volunteer hours in 2020 or not, I would like to personally thank you for your commitment to the program and we truly appreciate you!

#### Looking Ahead to 2021

##### Continuing Learning Opportunities

- The Horticulture Team will continue to create many excellent webinars for you all to learn from.
- A revised and updated Advanced Training program will be shared in early 2021 with topics available in IPM, Local Foods, Ecology and Sustainable Landscaping.
- The Mastering Urban Tree Health and Identification Advanced Training will open again for online training and hands-on workshops later in 2021.

##### New Core Training Options

- We continue to welcome many new Master Gardener Interns through the online training course and are excited to pilot a new hybrid training course in 2021. A spin on our webinar trainings from previous years, trainees will complete a majority of their learning online with weekly live sessions in person or online as well.

## Save the Date

- Save the date for the 2021 State Master Gardener Conference to be held in Will County on September 9-10, 2021! Right now we are still planning this as an in-person conference with our fingers crossed that we can safely make that happen.

Thank you again for your volunteer service as a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener! From myself and all Illinois Extension staff, Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for a Great New Year!

- Candice Hart, State Master Gardener Specialist

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