MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM



2022 VOLUNTEER SURVEY

What volunteers say



- 93% of volunteers recommend the Master Gardener program.
- **98%** say their work makes a difference in their community.
- While most volunteers find CE (92%) and volunteering requirements (82%) easy to meet, 44% call for more volunteer opportunities.
- Widespread goals among volunteers include increasing gardening knowledge, making a difference in the community, and connecting with other gardeners. 80% say their goals are met well/very well.
- There is room for additional development in mentoring to find a volunteer niche; support for connecting volunteers with local partners; and providing opportunities for engagement with other volunteers.
- Suggestions to improve the MG program include increasing opportunities (more flexibility, meetings/volunteer activities at different times, activities for volunteers with physical limits); and increasing support for volunteers (mentoring, state communication).

Volunteer training wishlist

Horticulture: Native plants (47%); Greenhouse and season extension; Container gardening

Cultivation/management: Weed identification (41%); Sustainable landscape practices; Invasive species ID/management; Pruning trees and shrubs; Tree identification; Plant propagation and seed starting

Volunteer skills: Garden tours & interpretation (42%); Photography/videography

State office next steps



Review rules and requirements to identify opportunities to simplify if possible.



Develop continuing education on priority topics, including advanced training.



Expand state communication and resources for volunteers.



Share successful approaches to mentoring and providing volunteer support.



Prioritize expansion of volunteer opportunities, e.g. at state level.

Local recommendations



Provide range of times, types, and locations of volunteer opportunities and trainings.



Bring volunteers together in-person when possible.



Strengthen mentoring of newer volunteers.

About this evaluation

This statewide volunteer survey was conducted to hear from volunteers how the state Master Gardener office can improve program effectiveness. The program plans to conduct this survey every other year.

For information on the Master Gardener program or this survey, or to share additional feedback, contact State Master Gardener Coordinator Candice Hart (mille116@illinois.edu).





SPEAKERS BUREAU SPOTLIGHT

What is the Speakers Bureau?



Resources on each topic include:

- Slides
- Scripts
- Teaching guide
- Handouts
- Training video/example presentation (most topics)

More than 35 presentations on many topics are available in these categories:

- General gardening
- Fruits and vegetables
- Trees
- Ornamentals
- Insects
- Landscaping
- Native plants

For more information

Interested in learning more? See the resources below or contact Bruce Black (brucejb@illinois.edu) or Ken Johnson (kjohnso@illinois.edu). Organization of local Speakers Bureau programs may vary—please check with your local coordinator.

- Speakers Bureau Tips go.illinois.edu/SpeakersBureauTips go.illinois.edu/SBHowtoPresent (video)
- Resources go.illinois.edu/SpeakersBureauResources
- Training videos go.illinois.edu/speakersbureautraining

What volunteers say



- 27% of volunteers have used Speakers Bureau resources.
- Of these,70% have used SB resources to increase knowledge to help with volunteering generally.
- Half of volunteers using SB resources have used them for outreach.
- Use of SB training is less common (15% of all volunteers) than use of resources
- Since 2019, SB resources were used in 224 activities reaching 3,033 participants.
- 42% of MGs said they did not know what was available.
- Most commonly used resources are Native pollinators; Vegetable gardening in raised beds and containers; Beneficial insects, Fall garden cleanup, Pruning basics, and Tool maintenance.

Next steps



Spread awareness on how to access and use resources through newsletter, video program introduction.



Where possible, update past presentations for format and content.



Collect feedback and tips from MGs on an ongoing basis (see below).

Have you done a Speakers Bureau presentation?

Your input is valuable! If you have feedback for educators or tips for other MGs, click here:

go.illinois.edu/SpeakersBureauFeedback

