

EXTENSION
SNAPSHOT

Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell

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Twelve new volunteers are currently working through their Extension Master Gardener training requirements via the on-line course. In addition to the on-line modules, trainees are connected with a local EMG mentor and encouraged to volunteer at established EMG projects.

On-line Extension Master Gardener Training Sees Increase In Unit Participation

The number of people going through online training to become a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener increased in 2020. Since the summer of 2020, twelve people have enrolled in online training program from Fulton, Mason, Peoria and Tazewell counties. This is an increase from 2019 when two people enrolled in the online training.

“The online training is a good option for those who are looking for a flexible schedule,” noted Nicole Flowers-Kimmerlee, Extension horticulture educator. “We encourage trainees to set aside four hours per week to complete that week’s module. Modules include watching videos, reading the manual, assessment, and other assigned activities. At this rate, finishing the training takes 14 weeks.

“In our unit, we make extra efforts to connect our online trainees with current Master Gardeners and our Extension staff,” Nicole continued. “During the initial application process we meet the applicant and get to know them, and once they begin the online training, we connect them with an EMG mentor. Connections are an important part of a successful EMG program.”

The online training includes modules focused on botany, insects, trees, shrubs, soils, annuals, perennials, lawns, vegetables, fruits, integrated pest management and plant disease. Extension horticulture educators throughout the state are the instructors for these lessons. Trainees can re-watch videos and go through lessons as many times as they wish.

When the online training is complete, the participant is ready to use what they learned to volunteer in their community. Once trainees have completed 60 volunteer hours, they graduate to be official Extension Master Gardeners.

“We have over 25 volunteer projects in progress throughout our four counties,” Nicole explained. “As trainees begin their volunteer work, we invite them to volunteer at several different established projects, work alongside other EMGs, and hopefully feel welcomed into our local volunteer family.”



There are currently 155 active Extension Master Gardeners in Fulton, Mason, Peoria, and Tazewell counties. In 2020, they volunteered for 4,300 hours which is \$108,000 value to the communities in this unit.