 

**Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Policies**

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service trains Texas Master Gardener Volunteers in the field of horticulture. In exchange for the minimum of 50 hours of Master Gardener Training, the first-year volunteer commits to the following:

* To extend research-based information to the public on behalf of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.
* Provide a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service to the horticultural programming efforts in Dallas County within the first (intern) year following successful completion of classroom instruction and assessment
* Volunteer hours must be completed by designated dates as defined by each cohort group.
* Volunteer hours must be recorded in the designated tracking system in prescribed time frames as defined by each cohort group.

Upon successful completion of the intern year requirements outlined above, the student is awarded the status of Certified Master Gardener Volunteer. In that capacity the Certified Master Gardener Volunteer is expected to

* Maintain active status as a Certified Master Gardener Volunteer.
* Volunteer a minimum of 30 hours and gain a minimum of 6 continuing education hours annually after intern year.
* Provide a record of services provided as directed by the Master Gardener Program Coordinator in Volunteer Management System (VMS).
* Comply with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Background Check policy which requires providing your full social security number. The background check and Volunteer Agreement is to be

renewed every three years.

When acting as a Texas Master Gardener volunteer the volunteer*:*

* Consistently exhibits a positive professional manner toward and about Texas A&M AgriLife Extension

Service, the Master Gardener Program, the Master Gardener Coordinator, other Master Gardener volunteers and clients.

* Acts in accordance with the highest standard of ethics:

Does not physically, verbally or sexually harass/abuse anyone

Refrains from illegal or unsafe behavior

Dresses appropriately

Does not use harsh language

* Carries out and discharges all duties in a responsible and timely manner.
* Avoids conflict of interests:

Does not use the Master Gardener status to promote any commercial activity or private business

Volunteer’s efforts for their place of employment are not considered volunteer service to

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.

* Recommends and uses only Texas A&M AgriLife approved information for any public pesticide, herbicides, fertilizer or cultural practices when functioning as a Master Gardener.
* Provides their own transportation and pays their own expenses incurred as part of official volunteer activities.

(Expenses may be tax deductible with proper documentation.) Dallas County Master Gardener

Associations may assist volunteers with expenses to certain types of events. Check with the Dallas County Master Gardener Program Coordinator for more information on specific association policies and procedures.

* Is not acting as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employee, does not receive pay or employee benefits, is not covered by workers’ compensation laws in connection with volunteer affiliations
* Understands and agrees that Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the volunteer both have the right to end volunteer relationships with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at any time, for any reason, and without advance notice

Regarding Master Gardener Coordinators, Master Gardener volunteers:

* Recognize the responsibilities of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service staff/ Master Gardener Coordinator in setting program priorities, standards and direction. Specific projects for the performance of the volunteer work are determined locally and reflect local needs.
* Refer all commercial horticulture inquiries to the Master Gardener Coordinator or other Extension staff.

Regarding Master Gardener Colleagues, Master Gardener volunteers:

* Welcome volunteers from all backgrounds.
* Respect and safeguard the individual rights, competencies, safety, and property.

Regarding Clients, Master Gardener volunteers:

* Provide quality service to the public without regard to socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service also:

* Provides training, supervision, and direction to Master Gardeners through the local county Extension office.
* Communicates expectations and responsibilities of the program to volunteers.
* Matches volunteer skills and interests with volunteer opportunities within the county.
* Supports Master Gardener volunteers and the local Master Gardener Program.
* Provides continuing education opportunities.
* Provides access to Extension horticulture reference materials and reasonable access to Extension professionals.
* Upholds and cultivates a trustful relationship between staff and volunteers.
* Reassigns and/or terminates, if necessary, any volunteer who does not uphold Texas Master Gardener policies, procedures, guidelines, and/or values.

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