



**MASTER
GARDENER**
UF UNIVERSITY of
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IFAS Extension

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FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM STRUCTURE

The University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service (“UF/IFAS Extension”) oversees the State of Florida’s Master Gardener program. The Master Gardener program trains and maintains horticulture volunteers for UF/IFAS Extension throughout the State of Florida. The goals of this program are to increase the availability of horticultural information for the community at large and to improve the quality of life for the residents of each county in Florida through horticulture volunteer activities.

UF/IFAS Extension does not require Florida counties to have the Master Gardener program. Rather, each individual County Extension office determines the focus and structure of the program. The volunteers (or MGs as they call themselves) execute a variety of outreach tasks as determined by the County Master Gardener coordinator (usually the consumer/home horticulture agent). Duties are quite varied and include, but are not limited to: answering horticultural questions over the phone, in person or through the media; participating in public service projects; giving educational programs; supporting youth activities; performing soil sample evaluations; assisting in field research; and other activities. The ultimate end to all these activities is to increase the availability of horticulture information thereby extending the vision of UF/IFAS Extension - protecting and sustaining natural resources and environmental systems; enhancing the development of human resources; and improving the quality of human life through the development of knowledge in agriculture, human and natural resources and making that knowledge accessible.

As stated above, each county Master Gardener Coordinator determines the structure of that County’s Master Gardener Program. A formal Master Gardener organization is not required. If your county already has a structured organization or you develop one later, the following Master Gardener bylaws must be included and implemented. Additional requirements may be added with the approval of the County Master Gardener Coordinator and State Master Gardener Coordinator so long as such requirements do not vary or override the required principles. If a county’s Master Gardener organization forms or has formed a non-profit corporation to carry out the mission of the organization, these bylaws shall be incorporated into the corporation’s organizational documents (i.e., articles of incorporation and by-laws). Additionally, the organizational documents shall include additional provisions relating to the County Extension Office’s oversight and authority over the corporation and such organizational documents and amendments thereto shall be subject to approval of the County Master Gardener coordinator, the State Master Gardener Coordinator, the County Extension Director and the appropriate District Extension Director.

Any County Master Groups who have 501(C)(3) status must complete a Memorandum of Agreement with UF/IFAS Extension.

**UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA/IFAS
COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
_____ COUNTY MASTER GARDENER BYLAWS**

NAME

The name of this organization shall be the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____
County Master Gardeners.

PURPOSE

The University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardener program trains and maintains horticulture volunteers for UF/IFAS Extension. The goals of this program are to increase the availability of horticultural information for the community at large and to improve the quality of life for the residents of _____ County through horticulture volunteer activities.

MEMBERSHIP

- A. Membership in the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardener program will be granted upon successful completion of Master Gardener training classes and the final exam, and by remaining a member in good standing. The program is open to all interested persons without regard to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act.
- B. Upon completion of the Master Gardener training class conducted by UF/IFAS Extension, first year Master Gardeners are required to pay back 75 volunteer working hours in activities approved by the county Master Gardener Coordinator and acquire an additional 10 hours of continued education within 12 months of the completion of their class.
- C. To remain a Master Gardener in good standing after successful completion of their first year of service, one must:
- 1) Complete at least 35 volunteer hours or more as determined by the County Master Gardener Coordinator during the membership year.
 - 2) Complete 10 learning hours during the membership year.
 - 3) Must comply with the Florida Master Gardener Annual Agreement, the Master Gardener Code of Conduct and abide by the programs identity standards, including University of Florida rules and regulations and federal, state and local laws.
- D. If an individual's annual working and learning hours are not completed within the first twelve (12) months after the completion of the Master Gardener Training class, he or she will no longer be considered a Florida Master Gardener. Those who have completed their first year of service and are unable to continue to donate a minimum of 35 hours each year will be placed on inactive status. Inactive status is defined as:

An inactive Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional 35 hours annually at present, but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify him/herself in the future. The following policies apply:

- 1) An inactive Master Gardener is one who has completed their original commitment of 75 hours of volunteer service in the first twelve months following the completion of their training, but is not able to continue to volunteer the minimum of 35 hours per year.
- 2) The inactive Master Gardener must apply to the County Master Gardener Coordinator for recertification. If accepted, he or she must then attend or have attended 10 hours of acceptable horticultural training as approved by the coordinator to re-certify.
- 3) The inactive Master Gardener must take and pass a comprehensive examination provided by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- 4) An inactive Master Gardener may re-certify at any time as long as the above criteria are met.
- 5) Inactive Master Gardeners are ineligible to apply for awards of excellence, receive mailings, attend monthly meetings, or register for continued training opportunities.

The county Master Gardener Coordinator can make exceptions in unusual circumstances.

- E. Persons who have successfully completed the Master Gardener training in another Florida county and were members in good standing in that county, may petition for immediate membership in another county if they have moved their residence to that county. Membership in the new county may depend on the completion of a prescribed training program as determined by the County Master Gardener Coordinator.
- F. The reporting year for University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners is January 1 to December 31. All hours must be turned in by the date specified by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- G. All Master Gardeners are expected to report their working and learning hours in order for UF/IFAS Extension to comply with federal requirements. Failure to do so may result in dismissal. Master Gardeners are also expected to keep and report clientele contact numbers and information as instructed by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.

OFFICERS AND ELECTIONS

- A. The members of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners who shall serve as the Executive Committee shall be: Past President; President; President-elect; Secretary; Treasurer; one member elected at-large from the membership; one member elected from the current or most recent training class. The county Master Gardener

Coordinator shall serve as advisor. The President-elect, Secretary, and Treasurer shall be elected at the annual meeting by a majority vote of the membership present, for a term of one year or until their successors are elected. The President-elect transitions to President and serves for one year in this roll. The at-large member and new member representative shall be elected, for a term of one year, at the first business meeting following the conclusion of the training classes. No person may hold more than one office at the same time. No person may hold any office for more than two successive years.

- B. The President, with the approval of the Executive Committee, shall appoint a nominating committee of three members. The committee must supply a slate of nominees at a membership meeting at least one month before the annual meeting. All nominees shall be University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners in good standing. Following the report of the nominating committee, additional nominations may be made from the floor, provided that consent has been secured from the nominee.
- C. Vacancies among the officers and standing committee chairs shall be appointed by the President, with approval of the Executive Committee, for the remainder of the unexpired term. If the office of the President becomes vacant, the President-elect will assume this office. However, if the office of both the President and the President-elect become vacant, they will be filled by a special election by the general membership. If an officer has served more than half a term, the individual is considered to have served a full term in that office.

DUTIES OF THE OFFICERS

- A. The President shall preside at all member meetings at which he or she is present. The President and County Master Gardener Coordinator shall be responsible for selecting committee chairs for various committees and for assuring that the committees are functioning as necessary. The President shall appoint an auditing committee at least 60 days prior to the annual meeting to review the financial records.
- B. The President Elect shall serve as Program Committee Chair for membership meetings and shall perform the duties of the President whenever the President is absent or unable to perform his or her duties.
- C. The Secretary shall maintain written records (minutes) of all meetings of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners and meetings of the Executive Committee. He or she shall:
 - 1) Maintain a file of all documents and papers belonging to the _____ County Master Gardeners.
 - 2) Conduct the correspondence of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners at the direction of the President and the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
 - 3) Keep meeting minutes and provide them to the membership and the County Master Gardener Coordinator.

D. The Treasurer shall work with the County Master Gardener Coordinator and the County Extension Director to make sure funds are set up in accounts as prescribed by UF/IFAS Extension Policies and Procedures for Handling Funds in County Extension Programs. The Treasurer shall:

- 1) Pay out all money, by check only, to cover the expenses of the group as advised by the Executive Committee and authorized by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- 2) Report the amount of money in the treasury at each meeting of the general membership.
- 3) Prepare an annual budget in consultation with the Executive Committee and county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- 4) Work with the audit committee to facilitate the annual audit of the books.
- 5) Provide an annual written financial report at the end of the reporting year.
- 6) Supply a copy of the annual report to the County Master Gardener coordinator, the County Extension Director, and the District Extension Director to be filed as a permanent record by January 30th of each year.
- 7) The Treasurer shall be responsible for filling an IRS FORM 990 series tax return (if necessary), and any other requested documents, on behalf of the county Master Gardener group and providing a copy to the County Master Gardener Coordinator and County Extension Director within 30 days of filing with the IRS.

The Treasurer of the Master Gardener group is entrusted with custody of its funds. He or she may be required to be bonded, at the discretion of the Master Gardener Coordinator and the County Extension Director, for a sum sufficient to protect the Master Gardener group from loss. The premium on any bond required shall be paid from County Master Gardener funds.

All fundraising activities must begin with and follow preplanned goals for the money raised and receive prior approval from the County Master Gardener Coordinator. Care should be taken to ensure that the use of any funds matches the purpose and mission of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Master Gardener Program and the _____ County Master Gardener organization and that these funds are used in a timely manner rather than reside in dormant accounts.

E. The duties of the Executive Committee shall be to act as an organizational body of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners and to assist the County Master Gardener Coordinator in the running of the program. The county Master Gardener Coordinator will provide leadership to the Master Gardener Program in the county and will have the final decision regarding all business conducted by the Executive Committee.

ROLE OF THE COUNTY AGENT

The county Master Gardener Coordinator is advisor to, and administrator of, the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners and as the UF/IFAS Extension representative in _____ County is the final authority on its Master Gardener program. However, to facilitate everyday management, the organizational directives set forth in these bylaws will provide a functioning set of guidelines. Should the county Master Gardener Coordinator leave his or her

position, the County Extension Director will assume the role as county Master Gardener Coordinator or will appoint an interim coordinator until such time as the position is filled.

UF/IFAS Extension reserves the right to terminate its relationship with, and revoke each Master Gardener organization's use of the Master Gardener name and logo, if it determines or has reason to believe, in its sole and absolute discretion, that the organization is not supporting the UF/IFAS Extension and county's mission and vision for, the Master Gardener Program, the Master Gardener organization is not using its resources consistent with the purposes of the county's Master Gardener program or it otherwise deviates from these bylaws.

COMMITTEES

The President and County Master Gardener Coordinator may create committees as needed and shall appoint committee chairpersons. These committees will be categorized as one of three types:

- 1) Project Committees - committees to manage ongoing University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners sanctioned projects;
- 2) Ad Hoc Committees - short term committees to meet an immediate and short term goal; or
- 3) Standing Committees - permanent committees necessary for the continued existence of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners.

MEETINGS

- A. General membership meetings shall be held _____ (i.e. monthly, quarterly etc.) At business meetings, members present shall constitute a quorum. Meetings shall be conducted following *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- B. The annual meeting of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners, with election of officers, shall take place in _____ (month) of each year.
- C. The Executive Committee shall meet as needed. All Executive Committee members and the County Master Gardener Coordinator will be notified of meeting time and location by the President. Members of the Executive Committee present, if not less than three, shall constitute a quorum.
- D. Special meetings of the Executive Committee may be called by the President, County Master Gardener Coordinator, or at request of a majority of the officers.

FINANCES

- A. **General:** The University of Florida/IFAS Extension _____ County Master Gardeners, will serve as the fiscal agent for the _____ County Master Gardener Program under the direction of the County Master Gardener Coordinator and the County Extension Director in accordance with UF/IFAS Extension policies for financial and resource management.

- B. **Agent Approval:** The County Master Gardener Coordinator, under the supervision of the County Extension Director, shall approve or deny requests to conduct fundraising efforts, and shall reserve the right to approve or deny any and all use of funds.

All requests for changes to the above bylaws must be approved by the state office prior to notifying the membership. Written notice of the approved proposed changes must be sent to the membership at least twenty-one days before the time of the vote. Changes must be approved by a majority vote of the membership in attendance at the called and properly noticed meeting.

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