

Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Annual Agreement

Within the state of Florida, most counties maintain active Master Gardener Volunteer programs. This being the case, a need exists for the establishment of standards for all Florida Master Gardener Volunteers to represent their county in a manner consistent with exemplary citizenship and leadership.

To become a certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteer, one is required to attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service. This certification is restrictive in nature and is valid only for one year and when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the coming year. All Florida Master Gardener Volunteers must agree to be screened as outlined by the program's screening guidelines and as deemed appropriate by the County Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator. **All volunteers working with youth must successfully complete the online Youth Protection Training – YCS800 annually.**

As a certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteer, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Continued Training Conference offered by the University of Florida, as well as local educational programs and field trips provided by the County Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator. Master Gardener Volunteers are also provided with the most recent information available on environmental horticulture issues and related topics by the County Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator and State Extension Specialists.

An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer is one who is unable to commit to an additional ____ 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 Volunteer 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 ____ hours per year.
- 2) The inactive Master Gardener Volunteer must apply to the County Master Gardener Volunteer 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 Volunteer must take and pass a comprehensive examination provided by the county Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator.
- 4) An inactive Master Gardener Volunteer may re-certify at any time as long as the above criteria are met and upon receiving approval from the county Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator.
- 5) Inactive Master Gardener Volunteers are ineligible to apply for awards of excellence, receive mailings, attend monthly meetings, or register for continued training opportunities.

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

Master Gardener Volunteers are encouraged to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping), be responsive to the reasonable requests of the County Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Whenever injuries do occur, they should be reported to the County Master Gardener Volunteer Coordinator or County Extension Director immediately.

Master Gardener Volunteer Code of Conduct

Along with active participation, Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to uphold a professional demeanor. The University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service functions 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. All volunteers, including Master Gardener Volunteers must follow all University of Florida rules, regulations and policies, abide by the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program identity standards and all federal, state and local laws. The University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service does not tolerate unlawful or unprofessional behavior, including, but not limited to the following:

- ❖ Possession or use of alcohol or drugs on volunteer service assignments;
- ❖ Abuse or theft of public or personal property;
- ❖ Sexual harassment or misconduct;
- ❖ Verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with other Master Gardener Volunteers, staff members or the public
- ❖ Possession or use of weapons or fireworks on volunteer service assignments;
- ❖ Defamation of the organization;
- ❖ Creating an implied or outright University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business;
- ❖ Misrepresentation of sources of information;
- ❖ Creating unauthorized social media pages or any other web presence;
- ❖ Consistently and knowingly giving out incorrect information;
- ❖ Use of state and/or county equipment without authorization.

Master Gardener Volunteers are volunteers as defined in section 110.501, Florida Statutes and University of Florida Regulation 6C1-3.0031 (1) (b), who serve at the discretion of the University. Like all University volunteers, Master Gardener Volunteers may be released from service for any lawful reason, including, but not limited to when the University determines the volunteer's service is no longer needed, the volunteer ceases active participation in the program, inappropriate or unprofessional conduct, or a violation of a University rule, policy or regulation, state or federal law. Any Master Gardener Volunteer engaged in illegal activity will be referred to law enforcement. Those individuals not continuing in the program are prohibited from representing themselves as Florida Master Gardener Volunteers.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program are valuable and may rightly be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and

while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardener Volunteers shall not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer at the place of business. Experienced Florida Master Gardener Volunteers may be invited to speak before various community groups. Master Gardener Volunteers are prohibited from accepting payment, monetary or other, for speaking appearances. Master Gardener Volunteers shall be entitled to workers compensation and state liability protection under the same conditions as state employees in accordance with chapter 440, Florida Statutes. A Master Gardener Volunteers' services may cease, at any time, at the discretion of the University. A notice stating the effective date of the release from service shall be provided to the volunteer in accordance with University of Florida Regulation 6C1-3.0031 (5) (b). The title "Florida Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer Program in which trained and certified Florida Master Gardener Volunteers answer gardening questions and educate local residents. Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work on the behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service. Florida Master Gardener Volunteers shall not use the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer title in any advertisements or activities not related to University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener Volunteer activities. The Florida Master Gardener Volunteer program represents a University of Florida Extension Service public education program; Master Gardener Volunteers are prohibited from endorsing commercial products or implying UF/IFAS endorses any product or place of business.

In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener Volunteers **MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED** University of Florida/IFAS Extension recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specially covered by University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener Volunteer considers appropriate. If you are making a recommendation based on personal experience, state clearly that you are speaking for yourself and not the UF/IFAS Extension Service. Questions concerning any commercial horticultural enterprise (vegetable production, fruit crops production, landscape maintenance of golf course, park, school grounds or commercial nursery production) are to be referred to the local Horticulture Extension Agent.

I have read and fully understand the above agreement regarding my services as a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer and agree to abide by the terms of this agreement, including the Master Gardener Volunteer Code of Conduct, UF rules and regulations, and all federal, state and local laws. I further agree to perform at least 75 hours of service in my first year and at least ____ hours in each subsequent year to the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program in return for the training provided by the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service. I enter into this agreement knowingly and voluntarily

Signature of Agent	Date
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Signature of Volunteer	Date

