



**Martin County Extension**  
**University of Florida**  
**Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences**  
**Board of County Commissioners, Martin County**



---

University of Florida/IFAS – Martin County Extension, 2614 SE Dixie Highway, Stuart, Florida 34986  
(772) 288-5654 Fax: (772) 288-4354

September 23, 2008

Dear Prospective Master Gardener,

Thank you for your interest in the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Upon completion of training, you as a Master Gardener will have one of the best gardening references available for Florida. You will have the opportunity to learn from several University of Florida Extension Agents, professors, and invited guests. Classes will begin Tuesday, April 7, 2009 and will continue every Tuesday, from 9 am to 4 pm, for 11 weeks. Space is limited.

In order to be considered for the Spring class, it is necessary for you to do several things:

- Study this attached Sprouting Kit and bring the questionnaire with you on the first day of class
  - Complete the following forms:
  - Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Application (pg. 11-12)
  - Sprouting Kit Questionnaire (pg. 9)
- Call (772) 288-5654 sometime before March 24 to schedule an interview with the Master Gardeners and me.

There is a \$150 program fee that covers the cost of materials required to participate in the Master Gardener training. Please make your check payable to Martin County Master Gardeners. (The fee will be refunded to you immediately if you are not selected for this year's program.)

Return the volunteer application and your check on or before March 24.

Wendy J. Pattison  
Martin County Extension  
Master Gardener Coordinator  
772-288-5654  
wpattiso@ufl.edu

This sprouting kit contains information that will be helpful to you in understanding the Master Gardener program as well as the role and responsibilities of a volunteer Master Gardener. It will also give you insight into the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, how it functions and how Master Gardeners operate as a part of Cooperative Extension. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to call Wendy at (772) 288-5654 or send her an email at wpattiso@ufl.edu.

## **The Master Gardener Program**

### **History**

The rapid urban growth in the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service agents. Many of these questions are routine or seasonal in nature, and are relatively easily answered assuming that one has some horticultural training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Agent in the State of Washington reasoned that well trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as Extension Homemakers and 4-H Leaders had always been a part of the Extension Service but never in the area of homeowner horticulture. The Extension Agent selected, trained, and certified volunteers as Master Gardeners. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact they exceeded his expectations. And so it was the Master Gardener Program began.

Since that time, the Master Gardener Program has grown and is now active in 45 states. Florida's began in 1979. The program has been a tremendous success and is now active in over half of Florida's counties. The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agriculture Sciences (IFAS) of which the Cooperative Extension Service is a part sponsor the Florida Master Gardener Program.

Just what is the Cooperative Extension Service? For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862 when the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act. This Act established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the Federal government. They became known as "Land Grant colleges," a name which persists today. These colleges would emphasize teaching practical subjects such as agriculture and home economics. The 1887 Hatch Act provided for Experiment stations at Land Grant Colleges that conduct research for agricultural problems.

Then in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as part of these colleges as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida in Gainesville is Florida's Land Grant College; The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the University that administers the Cooperative Extension Service.

The term "cooperative" refers to the method by which extension services are funded. In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds: The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), the State through legislative appropriations, and the counties through appropriations by county governments. The word "cooperative" also implies a sharing of information generated through sound research programs at the Federal and State levels. The term "extension" defines this organization's purpose - to extend the information generated at the State and Federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service."

The Cooperative Extension Service is an informal education organization that provides information in four main areas: Agriculture, Natural Resources, Family and Consumer Sciences and 4-H Youth Development. Community Development, Marine Biology, and Energy are associated programs. The motto and goal of the Cooperative Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

#### **Martin County Master Gardener Program**

Selection to become a candidate for the Florida Master Gardener Training Program is not predicated on prior training, education, knowledge or experience. Neither do age, sex or physical handicap dictate selection. A SINCERE DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS, A DESIRE TO LEARN, AND A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEER SERVICE ARE THE MAJOR SELECTION CRITERIA INVOLVED. Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful but they are by no means a requirement for selection for the Master Gardener Training Program.

#### **Initial Training**

The Master Gardener Training Program is demanding and intensive. Formal classroom work constitutes more than half of the 60-hour training period. Subjects include basic botany, soils, fertilizers, vegetables, citrus, turf grasses, entomology, pest management, houseplants, ornamentals, diseases and related topics. All information is based on the knowledge and research of the University of Florida.

Each week about six - seven hours of instruction is provided, with an emphasis on practical, hands-on activity related to the theory just presented. Included are the most commonly asked questions by homeowners and the answers. This will prepare the Master Gardener for the day when that first homeowner question must be correctly answered.

Each trainee is also provided, for a fee, a Master Gardener notebook containing extensive reference materials from the University of Florida. These materials are updated frequently so that Master Gardeners always provide the most current recommendations approved by the University at Gainesville.

Master Gardeners deal only with homeowner-type questions. Extension Agents responds to all commercial/professional growers' and landscaping problems.

During the 60-hour training period, all Master Gardener trainees are required to satisfactorily pass a comprehensive examination on the materials covered. Only then can the trainees be certified and be awarded the title of Master Gardener. Once certified, Master Gardeners must abide by a set of policies set out by the University of Florida and IFAS. Those "Policies Regarding Master Gardeners" are attached and should be carefully studied.

## **Master Gardener Activities**

Most Master Gardener activities center around the Extension Service office in Stuart. The first hours of volunteer service for each new Master Gardener is spent there. This is in fact a continuation of the training as the new members become familiar with the Office, its personnel and facilities, and the Extension Service Agents become familiar with their new helpers. The remaining required service hours may be spent in a wide variety of activities that are related to some aspect of horticulture and contribute to community education and service. Many Master Gardeners continue their close association with the Extension Service

by answering telephone calls, providing leadership to horticultural groups, or making presentations for garden clubs and other civic associations. Others choose to work in the "shade-house", a plant production facility, the gardens at the office, or write newspaper articles. Master Gardeners are also important in support of 4-H and school enrichment programs.

As the Master Gardeners assist the Extension Service Agent and staff, they are in effect "extending the Extension Service." As such, they provide advice and recommendations that have been well documented as a result of experimentation and testing and are approved by the University of Florida.

There is something for almost every skill at every level. Many Master Gardeners far surpass the mandatory seventy-five service hours. Some exceed several hundred hours in a year, and some have given over one thousand hours of service over the years.

## **Continuing Education**

Training never ceases for the certified active Master Gardeners. Throughout the year, Master Gardeners attend in-service workshops or visit local gardens, nurseries, parks and similar facilities. Specialized knowledge is gained to better enable the Master Gardener to give expert advice. Advisory committee meetings are also used for planning, reporting on various projects and UF information exchange and updates. To be an active Master Gardener, a person will have to complete 10 continuing education hours each year.

Once a year the University of Florida conducts "post-graduate" Master Gardener training on the University campus in Gainesville. This voluntary two-day session serves to offer Master Gardeners continued education with regard to some topics that may not be covered in the local training as well as to offer a time for Master Gardeners from throughout the state to share information and to receive recognition for the jobs they perform. The program is presented by the State Master Gardener Advisory Committee, State Extension specialists and County Agents striving to bring all Master Gardeners into "sync" with the latest horticultural developments and provide a look into the future of horticultural research. There are also regional and international Master Gardener Conferences available to our volunteers.

## **Conclusion**

The Master Gardener program is a wonderful opportunity to learn and help. We hope that you will become a part of this "growing" experience. Master Gardeners are the kind of people who make America beautiful, who have bonded together through a common interest in gardening, horticulture and the spirit of volunteerism, and will keep it great.

## **STATE POLICIES REGARDING FLORIDA MASTER GARDENERS**

A Florida Master Gardener must attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service before becoming a certified Master Gardener. This certification is restrictive in nature in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Program and for one year only. If an individual ceases active participation, the certification as Master Gardener becomes void. New certification will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be recertified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

Once you are a certified Florida Master Gardener, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Continued Education Conference offered by the University of Florida, as well as local educational programs and field trips provided by the county agent. You will also have access to diagnostic and information services from the County Extension Agents and State Extension Specialists. Master Gardeners are also provided with the most recent information available on issues relating to environmental horticulture and new extension publications as they are developed.

The title "Florida Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program in which trained and certified Master Gardeners answer gardening questions. Master Gardeners are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work in the Extension Horticulture program.

Florida Master Gardeners are advised not to advertise their names or their place of business, nor to be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardeners. This is a University of Florida Cooperative Extension Service public service program. Appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products or giving implied University of Florida Extension Service endorsements of any product or place of business violates our impartiality and is improper.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener program are valuable and may rightfully be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardeners should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener at the place of business (unless the place of business is specifically designated as a Florida Master Gardener Clinic location by the County Extension Agent).

Experienced Florida Master Gardeners may be invited to speak before various community groups. Please do not seek or accept payment for such speaking appearances. Gratuitous personal payments (i.e. in the form of cash) for such presentations are not encouraged.

Master Gardeners are expected to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping), be responsive to the reasonable requests of the county agent in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Master Gardeners should report any and all injuries or physical assaults to the County Extension Agent as soon as possible. Along with active participation, Master Gardeners are expected to uphold certain standards of behavior including, but not limited to the following - there will be no:

- Possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace or on job assignments outside the Extension office.
- Abuse or theft of public or personal property.
- Sexual harassment or misconduct.
- Verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with others, including other Master Gardeners, staff members and/or the public.
- Possession or use of weapons or fireworks in the workplace.
- 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.
- Consistently giving out incorrect information.
- Use of state and/or county vehicles without authorization.

Any violations will result in dismissal pending due process. Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement.

In making recommendations that include the use of chemicals (e.g. insecticides, herbicides and fungicides), Florida Master Gardeners MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED Cooperative Extension Service recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specifically covered by Cooperative Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments that an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. If you are making a recommendation based on personal experience, state clearly that you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest management in a agricultural production or commercial landscapes are to be referred to the local County Extension Agent.

**Special Note of Caution:**

Individuals who are not acting on behalf of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service are strongly urged to make every effort to minimize the appearance of being on duty before making any recommendation in the area of horticulture. Speaking "off the record" is your right, however, make sure everyone knows you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service.

## **MARTIN COUNTY POLICIES REGARDING FLORIDA MASTER GARDENERS**

### **RECERTIFICATION - ACTIVE STATUS**

A Master Gardener may recertify for participation in the Martin County Program for another year by completing the Annual Volunteer Agreement Statement.

Recertification means:

1. Committing to a minimum of 75 hours of volunteer work to be completed in the first year and 35 hours after that.

#### **AND**

2. By completing or having completed 10 hours additional horticulture training. This training must be approved as accepted by the County Extension Agent. Examples of this are:

- New Master Gardener Training
- Annual Master Gardener Continued Training Conference
- Annual Native Plant Society Meeting
- Florida Federation of Garden Club seminars
- University or Community College course work, etc.

When the volunteer and the Agent have completed the Annual Agreement, the Master Gardener is considered to be an Active Master Gardener for the remainder of the program year.

### **INACTIVE STATUS**

An Inactive Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional 75 hours at present, but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify themselves in the future. The following policies apply:

1. An Inactive Master Gardener is one who is in good standing, having completed their original commitment of volunteer service per year.

2. The Inactive Master Gardener must attend or have attended 10 hours of acceptable horticultural training in order to recertify (see Recertification #2).

3. The Inactive Master Gardener must take and pass a comprehensive examination.

4. An Inactive Master Gardener can recertify at any time as long as the above criteria are met.

5. Inactive Master Gardeners are not eligible for the following benefits provided to active Master Gardeners:

\*Participation in University of Florida Continuing Training Conference.

\*Eligible to apply for Master Gardener Achievement awards.

\*Invitation to attend Master Gardener recognition events.

Note: This agreement is completed at the end of the Master Gardener Training class and is renewed each year you are an active Master Gardener.

**ANNUAL VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT  
MARTIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**

I have read and agree to comply with the State policies regarding my services as a Master Gardener volunteer. I also agree to provide 75 hours of service including at least 10 hours of training to the Martin County Master Gardener Program my first year and 35 hours there after in return for the training provided by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service. In addition, I am aware there is a due process procedure available to me if I feel I have been wrongfully charged with a violation of program standards.

I have also read the state and county guidelines regarding active/inactive status of Master Gardeners, and understand the re-certification policy.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Volunteer

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
County Extension Agent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Name:

### **SPROUTING KIT QUESTIONNAIRE**

Please CIRCLE the correct answer(s) and return this along with the volunteer application and fee. Remember to indicate your choice of interview dates/times.

1. The Master Gardener Program is sponsored by:
  - A. The University of South Florida
  - B. IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences-UF)
  - C. The U.S. Department of Agriculture
  - D. Florida Division of Plant Industry
  
2. The Cooperative Extension Service was created by a legislative act called:
  - A. The Morrill Act (1862)
  - B. The Smith-Lever Act (1914)
  - C. The Hatch Act (1887)
  - D. The Larson Act (1898)
  
3. The Cooperative Extension Service is funded by:
  - A. The Federal Government
  - B. The County Commissioners of Martin County
  - C. The State of Florida
  - D. All of the above
  
4. The Martin County Master Gardeners must volunteer a minimum of how many hours of public service?
  - A. 25 hours total for as long as they remain active
  - B. 50 hours for each year they remain active
  - C. 35 hours for as long as they remain active.
  - D. 75 hours for each year they remain active.
  
5. Martin County Master Gardeners are required to attain how many additional hours of horticultural training in order to recertify for another year?
  - A. 3 hours
  - B. 6 hours
  - C. 10 hours
  - D. 15 hours
  
6. The main purpose of the Master Gardener Program is to increase or extend the service and output of information offered by the Cooperative Extension Service?
  - A. True
  - B. False
  
7. The Cooperative Extension Service provides information to the community in the program(s) area(s) of:
  - A. Home Economics
  - B. Youth
  - C. Agriculture
  - D. All of the above
  
8. Master Gardeners make recommendations to homeowners based on:
  - A. Public sources such as books, magazines and newspaper articles.
  - B. Personal, practical experience.
  - C. Information generated by the University of Florida's IFAS.
  - D. All of the above.



## Florida Master Gardener Application

I wish to become a Florida Master Gardener and would like to be accepted into the training program beginning April 7, 2009 and ending June 9, 2009. I will agree to donate at least 75 hours of public service through the Florida Master Gardener Program the first year and 35 hours every year there after.

Please Type or Print

NAME

ADDRESS

PHONE

EMAIL

Have you applied for Master Gardener training before? Yes                      No

If yes, when?    Where?

Please list any training and/or practical experience you have had in gardening, horticulture, farming, or related fields:

Please list any specialized gardening interests or hobbies you have, e.g. vegetables, house plants, ornamentals, turfgrasses, landscaping, etc:

Do you live here year-round or seasonally? If seasonally, please indicate which months?

What gardening affiliations do you have, e.g., garden clubs, horticulture societies, etc.?

Are you currently active in other types of organizations (e.g. Cancer Society, Kiwanis Club, PTA, etc)?

How did you learn of the Master Gardener Program?

Why do you want to become a Master Gardener?

Date Received:

Date of Interview:

MG Interviewing:

Disposition:

Date Fee Received: Check No.