

# **Extension Master Gardener Program**

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# What/Who are Master Gardeners?

- Trained core of volunteers who assist County Extension Agents/Educators in Horticulture programming
- Began by Washington State University in 1971
- Currently >50,000 Master Gardeners active in US and Canada

# What do Master Gardeners Do?

- Master Gardener program was never meant to be just a horticulture training program
- Assist County Agents/Educators
  - Demonstration gardens
  - Educational programs
  - Site visits
  - Answer questions (clinics/phones/Web)
- Community Service Projects

# The Kentucky Master Gardener Program

- MG Organization
- MG Training
- Impact to Extension



# Master Gardener Organization

- **County Agent must coordinate the local program**
  - Sets program schedule and theme
  - Determines volunteers needed
    - 30 hrs – initial certification
    - 20 hrs/year – continuing certification
  - Advanced MG training offered by some counties – requirement for answering questions
  - Costs range from \$65-200

# Recruitment

- **Brochure: “Become a Kentucky Master Gardener”**
- **Mailing/waiting list**
- **Newspaper announcements**
- **Word-of-mouth**
- **Master Gardener events and activities**

# Master Gardener Training

- **Core content (24 hours total)**
  - Cooperative Extension and Volunteerism
  - Basic Botany
  - Soils and Fertility
  - Plant Pathology
  - Entomology
  - Pesticides and Safety
- **Specialized training (according to county needs)**
  - Ornamentals/Landscaping
  - Fruits and Vegetables
- **Courses taught by county agents, specialists, local professionals**
- **Hands-on experiences (field trips and laboratories)**

# Impact of MG programs to Extension

- Impact data collection - 2003
- Master Gardener programs active in 26 counties in all regions of the state
- Around 1,250 Master Gardeners active
  - ~ 1000 veteran Master Gardeners active
  - ~ 250 new Master Gardeners trained
- 20,678 volunteer hours logged
  - At \$15/hr = >\$300,000
- Over 50,000 direct contacts with Extension clientele

# Kentucky Master Gardener Projects

- **Community Education**
  - Demonstration Gardens
  - Information tables
  - Plant sales/exchanges
  - Mass media
- **Community Service**
  - Beautification of public space
  - Community gardens for at-risk youth

# Kentucky Master Gardener Projects

- **Large educational events**
  - Garden Gurus
  - Partners in other events state-wide
- **Educational programs in correctional facilities**
  - Master Gardener training used for skills development
  - Participants report increased self-esteem
  - Food produced is used on site



University of Kentucky – Lexington Arboretum





Master Gardener Vegetable Garden at the Arboretum



Accessible Garden at Arboretum



UK

# Junior Master Gardeners

- Program for school-aged children
- Administered through Texas A&M University ([www.jmgkids.us](http://www.jmgkids.us))
- Standardized curriculum and materials (including soils and water)
- Growing in popularity in Kentucky



Junior Master Gardener Program





**Junior Master Gardener programs are now active in 5 counties.**

# Master Gardeners Nationwide

- **USDA Leadership**
  - Master Gardeners as a “front-lines” resource for addressing environmental issues
  - National framework for Master Gardener Coordinators being developed
  - Example – Sudden Oak Death - Ramorum Blight (*Phytophthora ramorum*)

# PRED Training

Phytophthora ramorum Educate to  
Detect Training

Trains Master Gardeners as “front-line”  
detectors for Ramorum Blight

<http://nature.berkeley.edu/comtf/>

# Master Gardeners and Water Quality

- Sustainable/healthy landscapes
- Several states have introduced water quality issues specifically into Master Gardener curricula
- Master Gardener projects starting to include subjects like rain gardens and rain barrels
- Regional training of Master Gardener Coordinators

# Successfully Engaging Master Gardeners

- **Provide educational resources**
  - Fact sheets
  - PowerPoint presentations coordinators' use in training
- **Joint projects or integration of concepts into existing demonstrations**
  - Water gardens
  - Rain barrels
  - Train them to teach others
- **Sustain engagement**
  - Joint ownership of project
  - Grants
  - Feedback (2-way)
  - Share impact data

# Master Gardener Programs

[www.ahs.org/master\\_gardeners/index.htm](http://www.ahs.org/master_gardeners/index.htm)

