



An Introduction to



Being a Master Gardener Volunteer



EM 8749
Revised January 2010

Oregon State | Extension
UNIVERSITY | Service



University Outreach & Engagement
Vice Provost Office
Oregon State University, 101 Ballard Extension Hall, Corvallis, Oregon 97331-3606
T 541-737-2713 | F 541-737-4423

Dear OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Volunteer:

Welcome to Oregon State University Extension Service! OSU Extension is charged with providing informal educational programs for all Oregonians, by delivering objective, research-based information to help solve problems, develop leadership, and manage resources wisely. You are key to helping us achieve that mission.

In your role as a Master Gardener, you join more than 23,000 volunteers working in Extension's five major program areas. OSU Extension volunteers contribute about 1.5 million hours annually, helping Extension reach nearly 2 million Oregonians. That is equivalent to more than 700 full-time employees! Extension volunteers have tremendous impact in their state and communities. It is important to us that you directly benefit from your voluntary association with the OSU Extension Service. These benefits may include improved personal skills, increased self-confidence, community recognition, and direct access to a variety of educational opportunities.

We welcome you with enthusiasm and appreciation, knowing from past experience that volunteers help us do a better job.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "A. Scott Reed".

A. Scott Reed
Vice Provost, University Outreach & Engagement
Director, OSU Extension Service

Contents



The OSU Extension Service3



The Extension System Nationwide4



History of the Master Gardener Program5

The Oregon Master Gardener Program5



Master Gardener Program Policy Guidelines7

Plant Clinic Procedures for Master Gardeners10

Master Gardener Jobs13



OSU Extension Master Gardener Position Description16

Glossary of Master Gardener Terms17



Pest Control Recommendation Agreement19

An Introduction to



Being a Master Gardener Volunteer

The Oregon State University (OSU) Extension Service Master Gardener Program is a voluntary educational program designed to meet the community's gardening needs. Its purpose is to teach people more about the science and art of growing plants. Specifically, it aims to provide information and technical assistance about general horticulture and sustainable gardening to the public through qualified, certified volunteers.

Applicants receive formal training from professionals in topics such as basic botany, sustainable pest management, plant problem diagnosis, and backyard food production. To become an OSU Master Gardener, you must complete the training program, pass an examination, and volunteer a specific number of hours of public service through your local Master Gardener Program.

The OSU Extension Service

The Oregon State University Extension Service is a partnership involving OSU, local governments, and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This partnership cooperates with local governments and citizens to extend information from the university to all Oregonians.

OSU Extension is made up of five unique parts, which are called program areas. Through these program areas, OSU Extension engages the people of Oregon with research-based knowledge and education that focus on strengthening communities and economies, sustaining natural resources, and promoting healthy families and individuals. These program areas are as follows:

- 4-H Youth Development
- Agriculture and Natural Resources

- Family and Community Health
- Forestry and Natural Resources
- Sea Grant

The OSU Extension Master Gardener Program is part of the Agriculture and Natural Resources program area.

OSU Extension can be found in each of Oregon's 36 counties, where over 20,000 volunteers donate countless hours in service to support more than 2.3 million educational interactions. These educational interactions occur when a 4-H youth leader teaches a class on animal husbandry, a Master Gardener works with a homeowner to solve a plant problem, or a Master Food Preserver teaches a class on canning. In addition to these in-person educational opportunities, OSU Extension offers a variety of information and resources online (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu>).

Outreach and education are central to Extension in Oregon and beyond. As stated in the 1914 Smith-Lever Law, the objectives of the Extension Service are "to aid in diffusing among people of the United States useful and practical information on subjects relating to agriculture and home economics and to encourage the application of the same." In other words, we are here to "help people help themselves."

Your OSU Extension staff

Central staff, housed at OSU's main campus in Corvallis, consists of specialists, program leaders, regional directors, an associate director, and the director of OSU Extension Service. Extension specialists provide information in areas such as soils, turf, home food production, youth development, insects, ornamentals, food



Weston Miller is the Urban and Community Horticulture Extension Agent for the Portland metropolitan area.

safety, family finance, and many more. Program leaders provide guidance for each of the five program areas. The associate and regional directors provide administrative leadership and support to county Extension offices. The director provides leadership for the vision, direction, and priorities for the OSU Extension Service.

Local county staffs consist of Extension agents, program assistants, support staff, administrators, and volunteers. Their role is to identify community needs through advisory groups, provide information and other resources, and conduct programs that help citizens improve their lives. They provide information through written publications, Web sites, news stories, development of new curricula, community classes, call-in phone hotlines, and other methods.

Extension educators (commonly referred to as agents) in county Extension offices are assigned special program areas in one or more counties. Agents can have one or more program assignments, such as horticulture and 4-H. Each agent is an Oregon State University staff member and is part of an OSU department. For example, an agent assigned to community horticulture is often a faculty member of the Department of Horticulture.

Volunteers play an integral role in assisting the Extension Service. When you are in an Extension office, you will find staff working with volunteers in many program areas. In addition to horticulture and agriculture, there are volunteer programs in food preservation, youth development, wildlife stewardship, recycling, woodland management, and family and community leadership. Across all program areas, OSU Extension volunteers contributed 1.3 million hours,¹ valued at \$23 million worth² of education and service to their communities in 2008.

The Extension System Nationwide

The nation's Cooperative Extension Service (CES) was established by Congress in 1914 to distribute information developed by land grant universities and research stations to citizens. Each state's Extension service functions in cooperation with local, state, and federal governments. However, the organization is different in each state. In Oregon, for example, we are known as the Oregon State University Extension Service. In the state of Washington, Extension is known as Washington State University Extension.

¹ Volunteer hours reported in the 2007–2008 annual Outreach and Engagement report, which may be accessed at <http://extension.oregonstate.edu/extadmin/academic-reports>.

² Calculated as 1.3 million hours multiplied by \$17.90, the estimated dollar value of volunteer service in Oregon for 2007, as determined by Independent Sector. See http://www.independentsector.org/programs/research/volunteer_time.html.

The state Extension services differ from state departments of agriculture in structure and function. The function of the CES is to provide education and technical resources to enable local residents to identify and solve concerns and problems. All CES functions are coordinated through each state's land grant university system.

State departments of agriculture, on the other hand, are regulatory and promotional departments of state government. In Oregon, for example, the Department of Agriculture's function is to implement rules governing the sale of agricultural products, including turf and ornamentals, to regulate the use of pesticides, to develop procedures for controlling epidemic pests, and to promote the sale and use of Oregon's agricultural products. The Oregon Department of Agriculture (ODA) is under the direction of the governor's office.

Although the original intent of the Cooperative Extension Service was to improve agricultural practices, the scope and function of CES are now much broader. Across the country, in classrooms, fields, and greenhouses, on paper, through Web sites, over the phone, and on foot, Extension agents teach and distribute information that supports sustainable environments and healthy communities. Extension publications, available free of charge or for a nominal fee, are available from local cooperative Extension offices, by mail, and on the Web. These publications cover everything from rejuvenating neglected apple trees with proper pruning to choosing plant materials that minimize the risk of wildfires.

History of the Master Gardener Program

In recent decades, a decline in the number of commercial agricultural producers in urban counties led to a serious drop in funding for many state Extension services. At the same time, more amateur gardeners were asking for information as they learned about Extension's educational resources.

In 1972, Dr. David Gibby, an Extension horticulture agent in King and Pierce counties (Washington state), was overwhelmed by requests for gardening information from the public. To solve this problem, he proposed

finding gardeners who, in exchange for specialized training in horticulture, would volunteer to answer questions from the public.

The program was an immediate success, with the newly trained Master Gardeners putting in far more hours answering other gardeners' questions than anyone could have anticipated. Dr. Gibby's first budget was about \$300. Cooperative Extension administrators didn't know if the program would be successful and couldn't risk much money on the new venture.

Today, Extension Master Gardener programs exist in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, and two Canadian provinces. In 2009, after completing several weeks of instruction and volunteer service, 94,865 people were certified as Master Gardeners in the United States.³

What makes these volunteers special is that they are trained mostly by experts associated with land grant universities. These experts offer the latest research and technical assistance to their trainees, enabling them to teach everything from basic botany, pesticide safety, vegetable gardening, and integrated pest management. In some counties, local professionals and knowledgeable volunteers teach some of the training classes. Trained volunteers then multiply the university's knowledge and share it with their county's citizens.

The focus of volunteer training is to teach home horticulture and community gardening in a holistic manner. Training emphasizes sound gardening practices that minimize negative impacts on the environment.

Master Gardeners staff horticulture hotlines and plant clinics to diagnose plant problems and offer research-based, objective solutions that minimize hazards to humans and to the environment. Additional educational programs can be found below, under "Master Gardener jobs."

The Oregon Master Gardener Program

The Oregon Master Gardener Program is one of the oldest in the nation. It was started in 1976 by Duane Hatch, Lane County Extension agent, and Gray Thompson, Clackamas County Extension agent. Duane and Gray

³ Number of Master Gardener volunteers reported, via a nationwide survey of Master Gardener Program coordinators. See http://pubwiki.extension.org/mediawiki/files/f/f5/Extension_MG_Survey_4-9.pdf.



Statewide Master Gardener Program Leader Gail Langellotto chats with a Master Gardener at an event.

“Oregonized” the program to fit our needs. They began training classes in Lane and Clackamas counties, training in total about 36 people.

In 1978, Dr. Ray McNeilan, urban and home horticulture Extension agent in Multnomah County, became the state Master Gardener program coordinator. Ray developed the Oregon program into a nationally known model. After Ray retired in 1996, Dr. Ann Marie VanDerZanden was hired as the program coordinator, a position she held from 1997 to 2003. Jan Powell McNeilan served as interim coordinator from 2003 to 2007, simultaneously serving as the consumer horticulture agent for the three counties in the Portland Metro area. In 2007, Dr. Gail Langellotto was hired and continues to serve as statewide coordinator of the Oregon Master Gardener Program.

In 2008, the Master Gardener Program had programs in 28 of Oregon’s 36 counties and 3504 active volunteers.⁴ Thus, in a little over three decades, the OSU Extension Master Gardener Program has grown almost 1,000-fold in terms of the number of active volunteers and several more orders of magnitude in terms of the number of volunteer hours donated and education contacts made (173,270 hours and 162,369 contacts in 2008).

The program is managed in each county by the Extension agent responsible for horticulture education programs or by a designated program assistant. The

thrust of Oregon’s program still is to help local Extension offices serve their clientele, but county program managers continue to find new roles for Master Gardener volunteers. New programs include community gardening, youth gardening, adaptive gardening, public seminars, civic functions to make communities more livable and enjoyable, and finding ways to use our environmental resources in a sustainable way. For more insight into the breadth of the Master Gardener Program, visit the statewide program Web site (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/>).

Who are our clients?

Although you may hear them referred to as clients, customers, the public, homeowners, taxpayers, walk-ins, and/or phone callers, all these people are served by Master Gardener programs. The people we serve (where “we” refers to Extension faculty and staff and Master Gardener volunteers) trust us to give them straight answers supported by the University’s research-based work. In this way, we provide an essential and objective service that is difficult to find from other sources. We extend information derived from the research-based university–USDA system. Our clients have confidence in the reliability and credibility of our information. This confidence is the foundation upon which the Extension Service is built.

⁴ Annual report of the OSU Extension Master Gardener Program. See http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/sites/default/files/al_Report_of_the_OSU_Master_Gardener_Program.pdf.



Master Gardener training can include lectures, demonstrations, and workshops such as this hands-on class on composting methods.

Clients look to us to solve their problem or answer their question. From their point of view, their issue or question is extremely important. Dealing with these clients requires many of the same skills as other service-oriented jobs. Offering good service is the best way to get repeat customers and foster public support for the Master Gardener Program.

Are clients always right? Of course not, but they *always have rights*. Our clients have the right to courteous treatment, a response based on respect, and an honest answer, even if the answer is “I don’t know.” It is reasonable for them to expect us to research the question and formulate the best research-based, objective answer in a timely manner. Clients *do not* have a right to abuse Master Gardener volunteers or to be discourteous. If you do not feel comfortable handling a question, refer the client to an Extension agent.

Oregon State University does not discriminate. We offer services without regard to age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran’s status.

Master Gardener Program Policy Guidelines

Volunteers are defined as Extension staff who give time and expertise without receiving or expecting monetary pay. The purposes of involving volunteers in the Extension horticulture program are to increase the

effectiveness of Extension agents and to provide personal development opportunities for each volunteer.

As you complete your training, you will become an important source of information for others. You will often deal one-on-one with clients who have questions about a plant or landscaping issue. To effectively diagnose a problem and deliver research-based objective recommendations, you need to be a knowledgeable horticulturist, detective, and teacher.

You complete a comprehensive training program in horticulture. Additionally, the job of a Master Gardener is often people-oriented and often requires good people skills. As part of the OSU Extension Service’s volunteer staff, you will work in many capacities, in nearly all cases communicating ideas to others and serving Extension’s clients.

Training

Formal training is provided by the Extension Service. Instructors include agents, specialists, and/or experienced Master Gardeners. As needed, other professionals and knowledgeable volunteers may be involved. Each Master Gardener trainee is expected to participate in every session.

A fee is charged for the training program and/or for training materials. The fee is determined by the Extension agent in charge of the local training program and may vary from one county to another depending on local situations.

The training program provides a balanced, integrated, practical course in gardening. Special topics, based on local needs, are part of the curriculum. A balance of lecture and hands-on activities is used. Core training is conducted during a two- to three-month period, in accordance with local needs. Continuing and advanced training is provided as needed or as opportunities occur.

Most Master Gardener volunteers receive training at a site, under the guidance of their local county Extension offices. Other Master Gardener volunteers receive their training via an online version of the Master Gardener basic training course. Whether training is received at a site or online, trainees must pass a final exam and complete their volunteer service practicum before they are certified as Master Gardeners. Attending the training classes (on-site or online) is only one step in the process of becoming an OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer.

Examinations

In order to become a Master Gardener, each trainee must pass a final examination. Examinations are prepared by the local Extension agent in collaboration with class instructors. The test is typically distributed to trainees at the next-to-last class, completed at home, and reviewed at the final class. Examinations are open-book and are designed to test trainees' ability to retrieve information from class notes, the Master Gardener handbook, and other horticultural resources. A 70% score or higher is needed to pass.

Volunteer commitment

In most counties, volunteers may begin serving before they have completed classes and passed their final examination. They may continue in the volunteer service practicum if they complete training and pass the examination. In other counties, volunteers may not begin serving until they have passed their finals. Usually the volunteer and the local Extension agent or program assistant decide together on the work of the practicum. Many options are available, and it is hoped that each Master Gardener's talents can be used effectively to benefit the gardening community.

Specific locations for the performance of volunteer service are determined locally and reflect local needs. The intent of the volunteer practicum program is to provide

objective information to the public while utilizing community resources.

In exchange for your volunteer service, you may accept per diem expenses or honoraria, if offered. For example, an organization may offer to pay your mileage expenses if you travel to present a talk or class in your capacity as a Master Gardener volunteer. However, the work you perform for the OSU Extension Service is free and voluntary. For example, local newspapers that would like to hire a Master Gardener to write a weekly gardening column cannot pay the Master Gardener volunteer a salary or put the Master Gardener on the payroll, but it can provide a modest honorarium in recognition of the Master Gardener's service. These donations are often passed on to the volunteer's local Master Gardener program or chapter of the Oregon Master Gardener Association.

During your volunteer work, you will be supported by OSU Extension agents. This support includes follow-up training, mentoring, and technical assistance. You also will be provided Extension publications as needed for your work.

Certification

After completing the training program, passing the final examination, and satisfying the requirements of the volunteer practicum, each Master Gardener is given a Master Gardener badge and certificate. These are usually distributed at a graduation ceremony within the county where the volunteer practicum was completed. The Master Gardener badge should be worn whenever you are volunteering as an OSU Extension Master Gardener.

Certification as a Master Gardener is valid for 1 year. Recertification is encouraged and can be accomplished by attending training sessions or by testing. Recertification is at the discretion of the county Extension agent and/or staff, and opportunities for recertification vary by county.

The primary purpose of recertification is to ensure that Master Gardener volunteers are up to date and apprised of the latest and most current information on sustainable gardening. Topics such as integrated pest management and pesticide safety are constantly refined and revised as we learn more about proper control of pests in home gardens. In addition, the identity of particular pests within gardens is not constant over time. Some years,



Master Gardener badges are a way of recognizing the training and service completed by Master Gardener volunteers. Only certified Master Gardeners are given a badge, which must be displayed whenever working in an official capacity as an Extension volunteer.

gardeners will see more of one particular pest, and none of a pest that gave them serious problems just a few years ago. Keeping on top of the latest research findings is essential to maintain the ability of OSU Master Gardeners to deliver research-based, objective information to the public.

Use of the Master Gardener title

The title Master Gardener and the flower-shaped logo (see cover) are registered as trademarks of Oregon State University. Also trademarked are the following terms:

- Oregon Master Gardener
- Master Gardener (when used in Oregon)
- Oregon State University Master Gardener
- Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener
- Oregon State University Master Gardener Mini-College

The Oregon State University Extension Master Gardener title is to be used only and exclusively in the Extension Master Gardener Program and not for commercial purposes. You may identify yourself as a Master Gardener only when performing volunteer work in this Extension-sponsored program.

The training, experience, and certification gained in the Master Gardener Program may be listed as qualifications on a resume or Web site, when seeking employment or listing your educational degrees and certifications. However, you can not represent yourself as a Master Gardener unless you are performing volunteer work in conjunction with the OSU Extension Master Gardener Program.

Liability

As an OSU Extension Master Gardener, you are an agent of the University, so you are covered by the University's liability insurance. This coverage applies only when you are acting in the official capacity of Master Gardener. See below for the official Master Gardener position.

Recommendations

When performing Master Gardener activities, you may make recommendations only in the areas of home horticulture, home vegetable and fruit gardening, and home yard and landscape care. **Do not** make recommendations in other areas for which you are not qualified. Refer questions concerning commercial crops and nurseries to your county Extension agent. For example, Master Gardener volunteers may be called upon to identify a spider, but they should **refer clients to a medical professional** for treatment of a spider bite.

Master Gardeners rely on research-based, objective resources when diagnosing plant problems and making recommendations. In this way, Master Gardeners provide high-quality solutions to home gardening and plant problems. Examples of these types of resources include OSU Extension publications, Extension publications from other areas of the Pacific Northwest, Extension publications from other states, and journal articles.

OSU Extension advocates a least toxic approach to pest control that will result in safe, effective management. Master Gardeners should not prescribe a specific solution to a particular problem, but instead should provide clients with a summary of those actions that are known to be safe and effective. Master Gardeners can provide additional data, if applicable, to enable clients to make the best decision for their particular situation.

If pesticides (for example, insecticides, fungicides, or herbicides) are included among the summary of management actions, the pesticide must be currently registered and legally usable by the public in Oregon for the specific purpose being considered. Any recommendations that include the use of pesticides must adhere to the information on the pesticide label, as well as published OSU recommendations.

Published OSU recommendations can be found in the *Pacific Northwest Insect Management Handbook*, *Plant Disease Management Handbook*, and *Weed Management Handbook* (called the PNW handbooks), which are updated annually. Remember, however, that the PNW handbooks have no legal status, whereas the pesticide label is a legal document. Recommendations that include the use of pesticides must not conflict with information on the pesticide label. Clients who are considering pesticides as a management option should be strongly encouraged to carefully read product labels before purchase and use. Master Gardeners can help educate clients about safe and effective pesticide use, by pointing out directions for use, precautionary statements, information on storage and disposal, the signal word (for example, caution, warning, danger), and first aid instructions. Do not calculate application rates for clients. Instead, direct them to sources of information so that they can calculate the rates on their own. See below for the Master Gardener Pest Control Recommendation Agreement.

If you have any questions about a landscape Issue, plant problem or recommendation that you are researching, please talk to your local Extension faculty and staff.

Volunteer rights and responsibilities

Volunteers working in any OSU Extension program have certain rights and responsibilities.

As a Master Gardener volunteer, you have the right to

- Have rewarding, suitable volunteer work assignments with clear expectations and support
- Be provided orientation, training, support, supervision, and evaluation
- Be kept informed and be listened to by Extension faculty and staff
- Be trusted and respected by Extension faculty, staff, and coworkers
- Be recognized appropriately for your efforts
- Be treated as a coworker
- Be valued as a person capable of unique contributions

As a Master Gardener volunteer, you have the responsibility to

- Uphold the policies of the OSU Extension Service
- Learn about current Extension policies, programs, and staff
- Participate in orientation and training programs
- Accept assignments suited to your personal interests and skills
- Act in a professional manner
- Be accountable to and supportive of OSU Extension when involved in Extension work
- Complete volunteer work assignments
- Participate in staff and program evaluations
- Be willing to use and teach research-based practices and concepts in an objective manner

Plant Clinic Procedures for Master Gardeners

“Plant Clinic” describes the phone hotline or clinic desk that Master Gardeners in most counties use to respond to gardening questions from the public. Plant Clinics are often conducted through an Extension office during



Master Gardeners take a call and strive to provide research-based, objective answers, while working the Plant Clinic hotline in Clackamas County.

specified days and times. However, it is not unusual to find a Plant Clinic desk at a local farmer's market or at a Master Gardener educational conference or seminar. Plant Clinic is a core component of the Master Gardener Program. Volunteer Master Gardeners directly interact with the public to provide research-based, objective solutions to plant problems in a manner that greatly amplifies the ability of OSU Extension to provide information on sustainable gardening to the public.

Plant Clinic telephone hotline

Many, but not all, counties operate a Plant Clinic hotline, which members of the public can call for home horticulture and gardening advice. Familiarize yourself with the procedures in your county Extension office before answering the Extension office phones or working the plant clinic hotline. Your Extension faculty or staff should be able to tell you what to say when answering the phone, as well as how to log calls.

Every time you make or receive a telephone call as a Master Gardener, you are representing the Oregon State University Extension Service. The impression you create can be lasting and may determine whether the customer will continue to turn to the Extension Service for assistance.

Phone skills, like any other skill, can be improved with practice. Consider these points when answering the phone as a Master Gardener volunteer:

- Answer promptly, using the words “Oregon State University Extension Service, XYZ County Master Gardener Program” (substitute your county's name for “XYZ”).
- Be considerate and give the caller your complete attention. As much as possible, minimize distractions, talking, and other noise in the background.
- Use simple, straightforward language and avoid technical terms and slang.

When you must leave the line to obtain information, give callers the option of waiting on hold or having you call them back. Transfer a call only when necessary, and be sure the caller wants to be transferred before doing so. If he/she does not, offer to have someone call back. In either case, make sure the caller knows that you are transferring the call or will call them back, so that their problem can be best addressed.

If the caller asks for someone who is not available, be professional. Comments such as “He hasn't come in yet,” or “She's just stepped out for coffee” can give the wrong impression. It's better to say, “Mr. Jones is not available

right now. May I ask him to call you?” When you take a message, be sure to write down the name of the caller and the telephone number, as well as the date and time of the call. Don’t hesitate to ask callers to spell their names or repeat their phone numbers.

You may occasionally speak with a caller who is having a bad day and takes it out on you. Remain calm and don’t take the comments personally. As long as you are trying to help a caller in a courteous manner, you are doing your job. Retaining your sense of humor is an important part of being a Master Gardener!

Diagnosing plant problems over the telephone

As you listen to a client’s description of an ailing plant, you are trying to understand a situation that you cannot see and may not have experienced. The situation is very familiar to the caller, however, and he or she may leave out critical details when describing something familiar. For example, the client may not know that the color of the leaf edges or the proximity of heating ducts to the plant are important clues to the problem.

You can improve the accuracy of your diagnosis by asking specific questions. By thinking of all the possible symptoms and conditions that might match the description of the ailing plant, you can pose questions that should yield enough information to find the solution.

It is a good idea to summarize and repeat your understanding of the client’s situation. Don’t be afraid to say something like, “I’m going to describe, in my own words, the condition of your plant as I understand it. Stop me if I have it wrong.” The important point is to express your understanding so the client can compare it with his or her knowledge of the situation.

Surprisingly, your horticultural expertise can be a stumbling block to communication. You might know so much about a topic that you don’t catalog everything the client says. Or you might identify the problem and possible solutions, but not describe recommendations in terms the client can understand. For example, “Germination” and “propagation” are accurate terms, but they are useless if your client doesn’t understand them or misunderstands what you are saying. Use familiar words, like “grow,” “dig,” and “water,” to help your client understand you.

As a Master Gardener, you are expected to know a great deal about horticulture. However, it is important to remember that one of your most valuable skills is your knowledge of how to use a variety of resources to find research-based, objective answers. In your work at Plant Clinics or answering the county Extension office phone, you will have access to excellent resource materials. If a client’s problem is too complex to solve readily with your knowledge and available resource materials, take the person’s name, address, and phone number. You can then take the time to research and answer the question thoroughly.

Using the PNW handbooks for recommendations

The Pacific Northwest pest management handbooks consist of a set of three reference books that are published annually by OSU. These handbooks specify control methods for insects (*PNW Insect Management Handbook*), diseases (*PNW Plant Disease Management Handbook*), and weeds (*PNW Weed Management Handbook*).

The *PNW Insect Management Handbook* is an extensive guide to insect management for commercial crops, as well as home gardens and landscapes. The *PNW Plant Disease Management Handbook* is an extensive regional guide to disease management for commercial crops and home landscapes. The *PNW Weed Management Handbook* contains limited information for weed management in home gardens, which may be found in a very brief section titled “Weed Management in Home Landscapes and Gardens.”

Master Gardeners offer management recommendations from the PNW Handbooks, the online PNW Handbooks, or other current Oregon State University Extension publications. Because the PNW handbooks contain recommendations for home and commercial management of plant pests, it is *imperative* that Master Gardeners understand how to distinguish management options available to homeowners from those that are legally permitted only to commercial applicators. This is a core component of your training program and/or your volunteer practicum.

A copy of each handbook can be found in your local Extension office. The handbooks are also accessible online (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>).

Using the Internet for diagnosis and recommendations

The Internet can be a useful tool to Master Gardeners who need to access and digest information from several sources to diagnose a plant problem and/or recommend a solution. Information on the Internet is readily available and easily accessible to anyone with a computer and a valid connection. Most Extension offices have a computer with an Internet connection available for use in the Master Gardener plant clinic. As a result, the Internet has become increasingly popular among Master Gardeners researching problems.

However, the democratic, disorganized, and dynamic nature of the Internet can make it challenging to identify high-quality, research-based, objective recommendations for home horticulture problems. The Internet is accessible to anyone with a computer and a valid connection, so anyone can post information online. This information may not always be accurate, and it is often biased. For example, search engines can return 100,000 results for the phrase “rose aphid.” Being able to sort through these sites for relevant, research-based, and objective information requires a discerning eye. Confining Web searches to sites in the edu domain is one way to help limit the information you are accessing, so that it comes from university or other educational sites. However, limiting your searches in this manner does not ensure the accuracy of the information that will be returned. As a Master Gardener, it is important that you use good judgment in assessing the quality of the information that you provide.

Despite these challenges, there are several advantages to using the Internet for research. You can quickly retrieve information 24 hours a day from virtually any computer with an Internet connection. For example, Master Gardeners can access many OSU Extension publications online (<http://extension.oregonstate.edu/catalog/>) and can use information in these publications to diagnose a plant problem and develop a summary of potential solutions. Nonetheless, it is important to recognize that many of the resources that Master Gardeners use are not available online.

Using OSU campus services for diagnosis

If you are not able to diagnose a client’s problem with the help of local resources, you should pass the question onto your local agent. Your agent may be able to identify

the problem, or you may take advantage of the services available on the OSU campus specifically for this purpose. These typically include plant identification at the OSU Herbarium, insect identification at the OSU Insect Identification Clinic, and plant disease identification at the OSU Plant Disease Diagnostic Laboratory. Clients who would like their samples identified by OSU campus resources may be asked to pay for the service.

Master Gardener Jobs

As a Master Gardener, you agree to do work related to horticulture education for your county Extension office. Answering the phone and dealing with questions of walk-in clients at Plant Clinic are the most common tasks for Master Gardener volunteers. However, Oregon Master Gardeners fulfill many other roles, including the following:

- Extending gardening information to the public through demonstration gardens, speaker’s bureau presentations, seminars or workshops, and community beautification projects
- Providing gardening information through plant clinics at farmer’s markets, county fairs, garden centers, and nurseries
- Working with youth in school outreach programs, special at-risk youth projects, and youth gardens
- Working on adaptive gardening projects with the elderly and physically challenged
- Working with immigrant or limited-income participants by translating Extension gardening publications for non-English speakers and developing classes about growing produce at home
- Working on special projects such as trial research gardens, plant or insect collections, horticulture-based slide collections, garden tours, spring fairs, and plant sales
- Providing office assistance, such as clerical or computer work, and organizing Master Gardener activities
- Working with Extension agents to promote the Master Gardener Program by developing press releases, photographing Master Gardener events, and designing brochures



A Master Gardener helps to teach a class on pruning at the GrassRoots Garden in Lane County.

- Writing or contributing to newsletter articles, news articles, Web site content, local press releases, or other materials

Your agent will provide an overview of the opportunities available in your local program. However, if you can think of another job that will utilize your talents, while providing service to OSU Extension and your community, please suggest it to the agent with whom you are working.

A note about writing newsletter and newspaper articles

As a Master Gardener, you may have several opportunities to use your writing skills. For example, some Master Gardeners help produce chapter newsletters, or write columns for the local newspaper. If you are interested in contributing to the Master Gardener program in this manner, please inform the Extension faculty and/or staff member who manages your local program.

When you are writing an article or other material, be certain not to infringe upon a copyright by using the text or images of previously published materials. This includes (but is not limited to) the use of articles, recipes or art for Master Gardener newsletters, Web sites or other published materials. Before you use copyrighted material or even parts of that material, you must obtain written permission from the publisher (and often from the author or artist as well). Remember that materials

published online are covered by copyright laws just as printed materials are. Most Extension materials may be used for Extension purposes even if they are copyrighted. Nonetheless, it is always wise to obtain specific, written permission prior to publishing or reprinting OSU Extension materials.

Guarding against volunteer burnout

Being a Master Gardener volunteer is similar to any other job, hobby, or avocation. Just because you are volunteering doesn't mean you can't burn out. As you get more involved in being a Master Gardener, you sometimes will need to step back and reevaluate why you first got involved with the program and why you continue to participate. Being a Master Gardener volunteer should be an enjoyable and rewarding experience that provides the opportunity to further your horticultural knowledge, enhance others' understanding of horticulture, and create a network with like-minded individuals. If you're not having fun, please reevaluate your commitment to a particular project or to the Master Gardener program in general.

If you feel you are approaching burnout, talk with the local Extension agent, program coordinator, or program assistant who manages the Master Gardener Program in your area. You may gain a renewed sense of satisfaction with your involvement in the Master Gardener Program simply by changing your volunteer work assignment. Or, it may be necessary for you to take time off from your

work as a Master Gardener to contribute to the program in a manner that is satisfying to you, your fellow Master Gardeners, and the Extension faculty and staff with whom you work.

Can a volunteer be fired?

As an OSU Extension Service Master Gardener volunteer, you are expected to follow the same personnel rules that all Extension employees follow. Oregon State University, and hence the OSU Master Gardener Program, does not tolerate discriminatory behavior, sexual or other forms of harassment, or alcohol or drug use on the job. We will do all we can to provide you with an enjoyable volunteer experience, but sometimes we must “deselect” folks who cannot follow the basic rules of Oregon State University or who do not conduct themselves appropriately when working as a Master Gardener volunteer. Such decisions are usually made by the county

Extension agent and program staff in a county, in conjunction with the statewide coordinator of the Master Gardener Program.

The Master Gardener paycheck

As you know, volunteers receive no monetary compensation, but we hope the gratitude of your fellow paid workers in the Extension office and state staff will help you feel your work is appreciated. Certainly, the number of citizens who come to you with plant problems indicates that you and your knowledge are needed.

As you do your job, you probably will begin to notice some of the “pay” that volunteers traditionally enjoy. You are, after all, a Master Gardener, and your horticultural and communication skills qualify you to do interesting work. Your sense of accomplishment and pride in a job well done are assets that only you can collect.

OSU Extension Master Gardener Position Description

Title	Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener volunteer
Purpose	To provide OSU Extension Service educational programs on sustainable horticulture (including home vegetable and fruit gardening, lawn and landscape maintenance, pest management, and associated topics) through trained and certified volunteer Master Gardeners.
Brief description of the position	<p>Answers questions from the public about gardening, landscape maintenance, pest management, and related topics by telephone, at clinics, demonstrations, workshops, or informal classes, or in other practical ways.</p> <p>Cooperates with and assists local OSU Extension staff.</p> <p>May assist in preparation of specific educational resources.</p> <p>Keeps appropriate records.</p>
Requirements	<p>Must be available to participate in the training program provided for Master Gardener volunteers.</p> <p>Must be available to participate in a volunteer service practicum during the year of training, where the time spent in the service practicum is equivalent to the hours of training received.</p> <p>Must be able to effectively communicate with the public by telephone, personal contact, group contact, or writing.</p> <p>Should have some knowledge and skills in basic horticulture and related areas.</p> <p>Should enjoy working with people.</p>
Supervision	<p>The county Extension agent with responsibility for the local Master Gardener program provides overall supervision and support. If no agent in the county has this responsibility, program support and supervision comes from the Master Gardener Program state coordinator.</p> <p>A program assistant, if available, may manage training and/or activities of the volunteer Master Gardener staff.</p>

Glossary of Master Gardener Terms

Advanced training—Classes conducted by community horticulture teachers and others who are considered experts in a particular field. These classes are offered to veteran Master Gardeners to maintain and update their knowledge of horticulture and recent advances in the field. Advanced training classes often count toward recertification.

County Oregon Master Gardener Association (OMGA) chapter—Most counties with a Master Gardener program also has an OMGA chapter. The chapter is made up of local Master Gardeners. It promotes educational programs for the local gardening public in the form of seminars, community classes, spring fairs, harvest fairs, and other special events. The chapter continues the fellowship for Master Gardeners after the training is finished.

Experiment station—See OSU Agricultural Experiment Station.

Extension agent—See OSU Extension agent.

Extension office—Each county or group of counties has an Extension office staffed by agents, support staff, and volunteers. In most county Extension offices, the funding for staff comes from a combination of funds from Oregon State University and the local county. The partnership between the county and the university makes the Extension Service possible. In most counties, a portion of Master Gardener payback time is spent in the local Extension office answering gardening questions.

Extension Service—See OSU Extension Service.

Gardener Mini-College—An annual four-day conference cosponsored by the OSU Extension Service and OMGA. It includes classes, workshops, and seminars on horticultural topics, a quarterly meeting, and an annual awards banquet. It is an opportunity to receive advanced training and to enjoy meeting and learning from Master Gardeners from around the state. It also is open to the gardening public.

Master Gardener—See OSU Extension Service Master Gardener.

Master Gardener handbook—Textbook used in Master Gardener training and as a reference for answering gardening questions.

Master Gardener Program—A teaching and management program for volunteers who want to expand their home horticulture skills and who agree to give of their time to extend gardening knowledge to others. Its purpose is to provide OSU Extension Service educational programs in home horticulture to community members through trained and certified Master Gardener volunteers. Direct questions regarding the Master Gardener Program to your county Extension agent or program assistant or, if there is no county agent, to the Master Gardener Program state coordinator.

Master Gardener training—A series of weekly, day-long training classes in community horticulture taught by Extension personnel and other experienced teachers. Training is typically held every year during the winter. Trainees agree to volunteer a comparable number of payback hours during the following year based on how many hours of training they receive.

Mentor—A veteran Master Gardener who agrees to support one or more new Master Gardeners during training and the volunteer service practicum. A mentor also helps volunteers progress from new Master Gardener to active member of their local Master Gardener Program.

MG—Abbreviation often used for Master Gardener.

Oregon Master Gardener Association (OMGA)—A separate organization from the OSU Master Gardener Program, the purpose of this statewide, nonprofit organization is to enhance and supplement the OSU Master Gardener Program. The county chapters together make up the state association. OMGA is financed by dues contributed at the county chapter level. Representatives from each chapter meet with OMGA state officers at quarterly meetings held in various locations around the state. These meetings provide a networking opportunity and a forum for chapters to share ideas and activities. OMGA cosponsors the annual Gardener Mini-College with OSU.

Oregon State University—The campus is located in Corvallis, and each county office is an extension of the university. The university has three missions: resident teaching, research, and extension. You now are part of OSU's volunteer staff. Congratulations! (School colors are orange and black; the school mascot is the ferocious beaver.)

OSU Agricultural Experiment Station—The principal agricultural research agency in Oregon, headquartered at Oregon State University. Experiment stations are located in several areas around the state, and each one typically specializes in research relevant to commercial agriculture in that area. In some cases, commercial horticulture Extension agents are housed at experiment stations.

OSU Extension agent—A person employed by Oregon State University to extend information and services to the citizens of Oregon. Each agent has a particular area of expertise and an assigned area (one or more counties) and is a faculty member in an OSU department. Most, but not all, Extension agents with Master Gardener responsibilities are members of the OSU Department of Horticulture.

OSU Extension Service—The educational outreach arm of Oregon State University that “extends” the research and services of Oregon State University to the citizens of Oregon. As part of the land grant university system, the OSU Extension Service serves both rural and urban dwellers. Extension Service personnel include Extension agents, program assistants, specialists, support staff, and a large number of volunteers like yourself. Extension works in five program areas: 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture and Natural Resources, Family and Community Health, Forestry and Natural Resources, and Sea Grant. The OSU Extension Master Gardener Program is part of the Agriculture and Natural Resources program area.

OSU Extension Service Master Gardener—Person who has completed the Master Gardener training offered by the OSU Extension Service, as well as the volunteer service practicum, and who performs volunteer activities in the Extension office and the local community.

OSU Extension Service Master Gardener Program state coordinator—Person who is responsible for helping agents develop teaching programs for the Master Gardener volunteers and who coordinates the activities and needs of the Master Gardener Program across Oregon.

Plant Clinic—In most counties, Master Gardeners set up Plant Clinics at the Extension office or at various locations in the county on a specific day, usually for several hours, and answer gardening questions from the public.

PNW handbooks—Reference books published annually by OSU that specify control methods for insects, diseases, and weeds. There are three handbooks: the *PNW Plant Disease Management Handbook*, the *PNW Insect Management Handbook*, and the *PNW Weed Management Handbook*.

Recertification—A program to ensure that veteran Master Gardeners update their knowledge and skills. It can be accomplished by attending recertification training sessions or by testing and is at the discretion of the Extension agent and/or staff. Recertification opportunities vary by county.

Volunteer Service practicum—Master Gardener trainees volunteer their time in a service practicum, where they put the knowledge that they learned during training classes to practical use. The specific content of this practicum varies from county to county, but often includes work at the Plant Clinic desk or in a Master Gardener demonstration garden.

Veteran MG—A Master Gardener who has completed training and payback and continues to volunteer for the program. (Politically correct term for an old MG as opposed to a new MG. Also known in some counties as a “perennial MG.” Check your local dialect!)

Pest Control Recommendation Agreement

Oregon State University Extension Service Master Gardener

Misuse of pesticides can have adverse effects on the environment and on the personal safety of gardeners and their families. Chemical treatments are never a substitute for sound gardening practices. Given the variety of plantings and diverse maturity dates of crops in a home garden, it is difficult to comply with preharvest intervals, application rates, and other restrictions associated with specific pesticides. Therefore, alternative methods are often more appropriate to manage pests in home gardens.

Oregon State University, other land grant universities, and federal and state agencies focus substantial amounts of time and money toward developing agricultural pest management methods that rely less on the use of pesticides and more on an integrated approach to pest management. OSU Master Gardeners are strongly encouraged to become thoroughly familiar with the process of Integrated Pest Management, as it applies to the home, lawn and garden.

OSU Master Gardeners should explore all types of research-based information appropriate to their local climate. Rather than being prescribed a particular solution, clients are given several possible methods to manage pest problems. These methods may include cultural, mechanical, biological, and chemical controls that are safe and effective. When giving recommendations, clarify the source of the information (for example, Extension materials or research papers). The client determines which method to use.

You will receive training during your Master Gardener classes that will enable you to provide research-based, objective recommendations that fit OSU Extension policy guidelines. This contract will serve as a formal basis for Master Gardener involvement in pest control recommendations.

1. I understand that as a Master Gardener, my pest control recommendations must be limited to home, lawn, and garden problems; questions concerning commercial crop production, commercial pest control, aquatic weed control, and pesticide liability are to be referred to the county Extension specialist.
2. I understand that as a Master Gardener I may recommend a chemical for home and garden pest control only if that use has been recommended by OSU or other approved resources.
3. I understand that as a Master Gardener I may recommend biological control organisms or other non-chemical alternatives for home and garden pest control only if the recommended use is contained in current OSU Extension publications or other publications recognized as credible by OSU scientists.
4. I understand that as a Master Gardener I will provide a summary of effective and safe pest management recommendations, which may include nonchemical and chemical pest management options, allowing the client a choice of strategies.
5. I understand that pesticides must be applied with care and only to plants, animals, or sites listed on the pesticide label and recommended by OSU. When mixing and applying pesticides, all label precautions must be followed to protect the applicator, other persons, and the environment. It is a violation of federal law to disregard label directions. If there is any apparent conflict between label directions and the pesticide uses suggested by OSU publications, the county Extension specialist must be consulted.
6. I understand that as a Master Gardener I am not required to be a licensed pest control applicator or consultant to recommend pesticides registered for home and garden use.

7. I understand that as a Master Gardener I am considered a volunteer representative of OSU. Therefore, OSU will assume liability for my pest control and pest management recommendations, but only if my recommendations are limited to control measures that are in accordance with the pesticide label and recommended by OSU for home and garden use.

Please check one of the following, sign, and return with your materials fee and application form.

_____ Yes, as an OSU Master Gardener, I will subscribe to the above requirements.

_____ No, I cannot subscribe to the above policy, and I understand that I therefore cannot be certified as an OSU Master Gardener.

Signature

Date

Printed name

An Introduction to Being a Master Gardener Volunteer
EM 8749

Prepared by Gail Langellotto, OSU Extension Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator; Ann Marie VanDerZanden, former OSU Extension Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator; Jan Powell McNeilan, former OSU Extension Master Gardener Statewide Coordinator (retired); and Ray McNeilan, OSU Extension Faculty Emeritus.

© 2010 Oregon State University. This publication was produced and distributed in furtherance of the Acts of Congress of May 8 and June 30, 1914. Extension work is a cooperative program of Oregon State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Oregon counties. Oregon State University Extension Service offers educational programs, activities, and materials without discrimination based on age, color, disability, gender identity or expression, marital status, national origin, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or veteran's status. Oregon State University Extension Service is an Equal Opportunity Employer.

Published January 2000. Revised January 2010.