



# OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

## POLICY STATEMENT

### PURPOSE

The Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) Program is an educational program designed to meet the consumer horticulture needs of Ohio citizens. Its purpose is to train volunteers and utilize their expertise to teach people more about plants and pests, their culture, and their importance to the environment and to our quality of life. MGVs provide technical assistance to their county Extension office in order that consumer horticulture activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently delivered to Ohio's gardening public.

MGV trainees receive formal training from their county Extension office covering a wide range of pertinent horticultural topics. To become a MGV, the trainee must complete the training program, pass the required exams, and volunteer a specified number of hours to OSU Extension.

The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of different ways depending on the determined needs of the county residents. After the completion of the initial required training and volunteer hours, one becomes a certified OSUE MGV. Volunteers are encouraged to continue with the program by recertifying and assisting with the horticulture program as a certified OSUE Master Gardener Volunteer.

The Ohio MGV Program is supported on the state level by the OSU Extension Agricultural and Natural Resources Program Area. The State MGV Program Director, Program Manager, along with the guidance of a State MGV Advisory Committee develops policies and guidelines for the operation of the program; develops and implements the state support budget; provides training and recognition materials; in-service opportunities; and other resources for counties conducting the program. On the county level, the program is coordinated by an Extension professional who manages the program directly or supervises a MGV program coordinator.

### TRAINING

The formal training program is the responsibility of the county Extension professional managing the program. Instructors are The Ohio State University faculty, Extension Specialists, Extension Associates, experienced Master Gardener Volunteers, and other experts.

The training program is to provide a balanced, integrated practical course in plant science. Core topics that are to be part of the training in every county are Orientation to Extension and the Master Gardener Volunteer Program; Basic Botany and Plant Physiology; Soils and Fertilizers; Basic Entomology; Basic Plant Pathology and Plant Disease Diagnostics; Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Use and Safety; Home Lawn Care; Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs; Trees and Shrubs; Home Vegetable Production; Home Fruit Production; Houseplants; and Backyard Wildlife Management. Special topics, based on local needs, may also be part of the curriculum.

The principle resource for the training will be the Ohio MGV Training Manual that includes the core topics and material appropriate to Ohio. Core training is held during a 2-3 month period, with continuing education or in-service training provided during the year in accordance with county and regional needs and resources. An

annual statewide conference is offered to assist in fulfilling continuing education requirements, give program updates and present awards.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Each MGV trainee is expected to attend every class session. The trainee is responsible for initiating provisions to make up any missed sessions. Missed sessions may also be made up online for a \$10.00 fee per class. A limit on the number of allowable absences may be made by the county MGV coordinator.

### **EXAMINATIONS & QUIZZES**

Each trainee must pass all quizzes and examinations with a cumulative average of 70% or better. There will be quizzes that test the trainees' knowledge of broad plant science principles, as well as a final open-book or take-home exam to test the trainees' abilities to retrieve information from reference materials.

### **CERTIFICATION**

Upon entering the training program, each trainee becomes a MGV intern. Upon fulfillment of the training classes and the 50 hour volunteer commitment, the participant will receive an official MGV certificate.

### **VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT**

The MGV training course consists of a minimum of 50 hours of instruction. A volunteer then completes 50 hours of service to OSUE to become a certified OSUE MGV. Only unpaid public service in Ohio State University Extension-sponsored activities counts toward the requirement. Other volunteer activities may be counted after receiving prior approval by the local coordinator. The required volunteer hours should be completed within one year of completion of the training course or other time period designated by the county MGV program coordinator.

Each MGV will complete an online background check, a completed Application, a signed OSU Extension Standards of Behavior, a signed Pest Management Information Policy (see below), a signed Abuse Recognition and Reporting Form, and have a service record kept on file by the local OSU Extension office. This information is treated confidentially. Volunteers' records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained Extension staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the information on their application (i.e. address, phone, email) and their service record is kept current and accurate. This is necessary for liability reasons and for the protection of the volunteer as well as program clientele.

### **USE OF THE TITLE**

The title "Ohio Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Ohio MGVs are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work under the auspices of the Ohio State University Extension. MGVs are advised not to advertise their place of business during extension-sponsored activities, and are not to be listed as MGVs on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. Since Ohio State University Extension is a source of unbiased, research-based information, appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University endorsement of any product or place of business is inappropriate.

### **PESTICIDE RECOMMENDATIONS**

Ohio MGVs, when performing MGV activities, are considered unpaid staff of Ohio State University Extension. MGVs are trained by Extension personnel and other experts and are provided with Extension publications. In addition to their training, MGVs receive diagnostic support from the C. Wayne Ellet Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic at OSU, and from various Extension Specialists. When it is necessary to make recommendations that include the use of pesticides, MGVs must follow product labels or OSU Extension recommendations. They are not to rely on their own personal experience, that of others, or common garden folklore.

## **RECERTIFICATION**

Once an individual has completed the necessary requirements and is certified as an Ohio MGV, he or she is not automatically a MGV for life. MGVs must be recertified each year to remain on the “active” list and maintain the MGV title. MGV Recertification is achieved by fulfilling the following requirements:

- 1) Completing a minimum of **twenty (20)** hours of volunteer service each year, and
- 2) Completing a minimum of ten (10) hours continuing education by any of the following options:
  - \* Participation in State, Regional, National or International MGV Conferences.
  - \* Participation in county or district-sponsored continuing education sessions.
  - \* Participation in any other programs approved by the local MGV Coordinator for recertification.
- 3) Paying \$10.00 per year State Support fee.
- 4) Completing a criminal background check every four years if working with youth (care, custody and control)
- 5) Completing MGV program recertification online annually that consists of reviewing the MGV Standards of Behavior, Pest Management Policy, Abuse Recognition and Reporting form, and other OSUE policies.

Each county MGV program may set its own recertification standards above and beyond these minimum requirements.

## **INACTIVE STATUS**

An inactive MGV is one who is unable to commit to the annual recertification requirements listed above at some point in time, but would like the opportunity to remain in the program and recertify in the future. The following policy applies:

- 1) To request Inactive Status the MGV must be in good standing, having completed the original commitment of training, exam, and volunteer service.
- 2) The inactive MGV must obtain ten (10) hours of acceptable Continuing Education Credits during the total inactive period of time. (See Recertification #2)
- 3) An inactive MGV may recertify within three (3) years as long as the above criteria are met. Individuals on inactive status for more than three years must, in addition to meeting the above continuing education requirements, also retake and pass the final exam and complete a criminal background check.

## **RESIGNED**

A volunteer who has left the program due to termination, resignation, death, or other reason will be considered RESIGNED. They are no longer a volunteer for the OSUE MGV program.

## **EMERITUS**

This status and associated criteria are left up to each individual County Coordinator to determine. However, if the county allows Emeriti to volunteer for any activities, Emeriti must pay the state support fees, be included in the County's volunteer liability insurance list each year, and report all volunteer hours and activities to the county Coordinator who then reports this to the state. If the volunteer is active in working with youth in a care, custody and control capacity, they must complete a fingerprint background check every 4 years and have their OSUE Liability Insurance paid.

## **OUT-OF-STATE TRANSFERS**

A MGV who was certified in another state may be admitted into the Ohio MGV Program by meeting the following criteria:

- 1) obtain an online criminal background check;
- 2) show that he/she is a MGV in good-standing in the other state;
- 3) complete the Volunteer Involvement packet for his/her file;
- 4) acquire a current Ohio MGV training manual;
- 5) pay the \$10.00 State Support fee;
- 6) acquire an Ohio State University Extension MGV name badge;

- 7) score a minimum of 70% on a final exam administered by the county MGV coordinator;
- 8) meet the recertification requirements listed above.

### **IN-STATE TRANSFERS**

Ohio MGVs transferring from one county to another must also be in good standing and have their file transferred to the new county. The Coordinators in each county should communicate so this goes smoothly.

### **DISMISSAL OF A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER**

Disregard for the policies and guidelines established by the Ohio State University Extension, the Ohio Master Gardener Volunteer Program, and the OSUE County Program are grounds for dismissal as a MGV. When the county MGV coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer must be informed in writing of the termination of his/her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become part of the volunteer's confidential file.



**THE OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY**

COLLEGE OF FOOD, AGRICULTURAL,  
AND ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCES

**MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER APPLICATION**

(All sections must be completed for consideration as a Master Gardener Volunteer)

Our Mission: We are Ohio State University Extension trained volunteers empowered to educate others with timely research-based gardening information.

<b>I. GENERAL INFORMATION</b>
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Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                     (First)                                    (Middle)                                    (Last)

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
                                     (Street)                                    (City)                                    (Zip)

Length of time at this address (years): \_\_\_\_\_ Birthday: \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_ / \_\_\_\_

Phone: Day: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call (am/pm): \_\_\_\_\_

Eve: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Best time to call (am/pm): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Have you participated in Ohio State University Extension activities or programs previously? (List most recent involvement) \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

If you have been a Master Gardener Volunteer in another state, please list the state, county, year of training program and program supervisor's name:  
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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

## II. VOLUNTEER INTEREST

Why are you interested in becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer?

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What is your gardening philosophy?

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Work Experience: (List current or most recent experience first)

Employer

Position Title

Year

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Volunteer Experience: (List current or most recent experience first)

Organization

Volunteer Role

Year

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Have you had any teaching or public speaking experience? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

This could include reading at church, speaking to school age children, leading activities or meetings, etc.

Personal Experience includes: \_\_\_\_\_

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Other special skills, training, interests (i.e. bird watching, social media, publishing, writing, etc.):

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Type of activities in which you are interested:

- |   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Plant and Pest Clinic    | <input type="checkbox"/> Public Presentations | <input type="checkbox"/> Community Gardens       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Demonstration Gardens    | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Youth   | <input type="checkbox"/> Working with Adults     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Social Media/ Newsletter | <input type="checkbox"/> Garden Writing       | <input type="checkbox"/> Health and Horticulture |

Other interests \_\_\_\_\_

We ALWAYS have many more applicants than volunteer positions, and consequently must choose among equally qualified individuals. Please explain why you think you would make a good Master Gardener Volunteer:

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## IV. Application Certification and Next Steps

To be considered for the program I understand that:

1. **I understand that I am applying to a volunteer program.** As soon as training is completed, I will need to complete 50 hours of volunteer service hours for the following year.
2. I authorize the contact of listed references and understand that I am required to submit to an online background check prior to final consideration of my application to volunteer.
3. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of required information is just cause for non-appointment as a volunteer with Ohio State University Extension.
4. I understand that I serve at the pleasure of the Ohio State University Extension and agree to abide by the policies of Ohio State University Extension and individual program areas and to fulfill the volunteer responsibilities to the best of my ability.

Applicant Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please return the application by August 1st, 2023. Contact us** if you have any questions or wish further information. Thank you!

### Next Steps

1. Return application as soon as possible. Applications will be reviewed in the order by which they are received.
2. You will be contacted for an interview. Interviews will be held at the Portage County Extension Office or via Zoom.
3. If you are accepted into the program, you will:
  - a. Be given the details on training
  - b. Be required to complete a background check
  - c. Pay class fee of \$225.00
  - d. Sign a pest management policy
  - e. Sign a standard of behavior agreement
  - f. Photo Release





## Volunteer Standards of Behavior: Master Gardener Volunteers

These Standards of Behavior are accepted by volunteers who commit to an Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program as a condition of their volunteer status. The Standards of Behavior shall guide volunteer's behavior during their involvement with the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Just as it is a privilege for Ohio State University to work with individuals who volunteer their time and energies to the organization, a volunteer's involvement with OSUE is a privilege and a responsibility, not a right.

The OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program provides unbiased, research-based educational programs accessible to all Ohio residents. The primary purpose of this Standards of Behavior is to ensure the safety and well-being of all Master Gardener Volunteer Program participants (i.e., target audiences, professionals, and volunteers.) Master Gardener Volunteers are expected to function within the guidelines of Ohio State University Extension and the OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

### Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteers will:

- Uphold volunteerism as an effective way to meet the needs of youth and adults.
- Uphold each individual's right to dignity, self-development, and self-direction.
- Accept supervision and support from professional Extension staff while involved in the program.
- Accept the responsibility to represent their individual county Master Gardener Volunteer Program and The Ohio State University with integrity.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous and respectful manner, with fairness, honesty, dignity, and integrity, and provide positive role models for all with whom they work.
- Respect, adhere to, and enforce the rules, policies, and guidelines established by their individual county Master Gardener Volunteer Program, the State Master Gardener Volunteer Program and OSUE.
- Not possess or consume intoxicating substances including drugs or alcohol while responsible for the care, custody, or control of youth participants.
- Not engage in abusive behaviors that physically or verbally threaten or harm any Extension program participant, including youth.
- Not engage in any act prohibited by law.
- Comply with all civil rights laws and policies, including but not limited to OSUE equal opportunity, anti-discrimination laws, nondiscrimination policies, and program participant policy.
- Perform duties in a responsible and timely manner as outlined in the position description.
- Immediately report any threats to the volunteer's emotional or physical well-being to the county Extension professional coordinating the Master Gardener Volunteer Program.
- Accept the responsibility to promote and support Master Gardener Volunteer activities in order to develop an effective county, state, and national program.
- Handle animals and operate machinery, vehicles, and other equipment in a responsible manner.



**I understand and agree that as a volunteer:**

- In accordance with The Ohio State University policy, *Self-Disclosure of Criminal Convictions Policy 4.17*, I am required to self-disclose criminal convictions within three business days of the conviction. If I have been background checked and have had a break of service for less than 12 months, I will disclose any convictions that occurred during the break within three business days of commencement of participation in activities and programs with minors. If the break in service is longer than 12 months, I must be background checked again.
- I will uphold and support the responsible and lawful use of social media. In so doing, I will not create or post social media content that is abusive, threatening, defamatory, obscene, harassing, or creates a hostile environment.
- I will report any red-flag behaviors, child abuse, sexual abuse, or neglect in accordance with university policy.
- I will not intentionally or purposefully place myself in a position alone with a member of a vulnerable population in a one-on-one situation, including, but not limited to sleeping quarters with minors.
- I will not, under any circumstances, physically, verbally, or emotionally abuse or fail to provide the basic necessities of care, such as food or shelter to participants.
- I will endeavor to provide a safe and healthy program experience for all participants.
- My volunteer status is subject to immediate suspension or termination based on any act or omission that Extension determines to be contrary to any portion of these standards or otherwise in conflict with the goals of OSUE at the OSUE's sole discretion.

**OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER TITLE USE AGREEMENT**

The title **OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER** is to be used only and exclusively in conjunction with activities associated with the Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program.

- I will identify myself as a "Master Gardener Volunteer" only when engaged in unpaid public service in an Ohio State University Extension sponsored program.
- I will not appear as part of a commercial activity, have association with commercial products, or give implied Ohio State University or Ohio State University Extension endorsement of any product or place of business while serving as a Master Gardener Volunteer.
- In such service, I will use only labeled or Ohio State University and Ohio State University Extension approved recommendations.

I have read, understand, and agree to be bound by the Standards of Behavior and the Master Gardener Volunteer Title Use Agreement outlined above.

- I agree to give the Ohio State University Extension the specified number of hours of volunteer service in approved programs as specified by my county MGV program.
- I understand and agree that any act or omission on my part that contradicts any portion of these standards is grounds for immediate suspension and/or termination of my volunteer status with the Ohio State University Extension program.

Printed Name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

