



Cornell University
Cooperative Extension of
Onondaga County

Master Gardener Volunteer Expectations
Guidelines



Revised November 2012

Onondaga County Master Gardener Volunteer Expectations

I PURPOSE: The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is designed to increase the levels of horticultural knowledge and improve horticultural skills among program participants. As a consequence of training, a pool of Master Gardener volunteers becomes available to share horticultural knowledge with others in the Onondaga County community (e.g. home landscaping, vegetable and fruit gardening, ornamental plant selection, and pest management in and around the home). The Master Gardener Volunteer Program is an integral part of the Outreach Program of Cornell Cooperative Extension and functions in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws of the organization.

II QUALIFICATIONS:

- A. A basic interest in and/or knowledge of gardening/horticulture.
- B. Enthusiasm for acquiring and sharing horticultural knowledge and skills.
- C. A flexible time schedule to allow participation in community educational programs and Parker Scripture garden activities/maintenance.
- D. Interest in helping others.
- E. Interest in making new friends.
- F. Ability to communicate.

***In addition, all Master Gardener Volunteers are required to submit an Authorization/Consent form for a background check as of September 2005.**

III BENEFITS:

- A. Receive extensive horticulture training, based on research carried out through Cornell University.
- B. Receive research-based literature, Home Grown fact sheets and publications, available free or at a nominal cost, on a wide variety of horticultural subjects.
- C. Have fun while learning and helping others. You can concentrate your horticultural interests following core instruction in a variety of garden areas in the Parker Scripture Garden.
- D. Take field trips to area growers, greenhouses and gardens. Learn from others about new and unusual plants.
- E. Meet and make new friends with similar interests in gardening. Exchange information and learn gardening ideas.
- F. Provide the opportunity to develop new skills such as public speaking, answering horticultural hotline, working on the websites, working at flower shows, etc.

IV ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS (Definitions)

- A. Level 1- Student Gardener: From acceptance into the program, through successful completion of the initial training.
- B. Level 2 - Apprentice Gardener: From successful completion of the initial training to the completion of 200 volunteer hours.
- C. Level 3 - Master Gardener: From completion of both levels 1 & 2 and through the continued participation in the program.
- D. Alumni: An alumni gardener is informed about meetings and activities, but is not required to fulfill all requirements of an active member.

V REQUIREMENTS

○ Applicant

To be considered for the Program, potential candidates must:

1. Fill out a Volunteer Application;
2. Submit three work/character references;
3. Complete the Criminal Background Authorization/Consent forms and sign the Association's Volunteer agreement and accompanying Code of Conduct.

○ Level 1- Student Gardener

1. Participate in a minimum of 30 hours core training
2. Participate in assigned garden groups
3. Participate in mini learning session program
4. Successfully complete final examination
5. **Fulfill core requirements***

○ Level 2-Apprentice Gardener

1. Work towards the completion of 200 hours of Master Gardener activities (minimum of 50 hours annually)
2. **Fulfill core requirements***

○ Level 3- Master Gardener

Fulfill Core requirements*

***CORE REQUIREMENTS**

- a. Volunteer a minimum of 50 hours per year
- b. Actively participate in a garden group (8 hrs. per month May- September)
- c. Attend at least 6 Master Gardener meetings per year
- d. Actively participate in public education (both in and outside the gardens).
- e. Participate in advance trainings, field trips & tours
- f. Submit log hour sheets bimonthly
- g. Abide by Master Gardener Code of Conduct

To remain active in the program the Master Gardener must complete core requirements annually.

VI VOLUNTEER HOURS INCLUDE:

1. Attendance at monthly Master Gardener Meetings.
2. Hours spent doing administrative work inside or outside the Extension office.
3. Hours spent on pre-approved field trips to local gardens, greenhouses, etc. (travel time does not count).
4. Time spent on other approved forms of community horticultural teaching, including radio shows, news articles, school programs, etc.
5. Other specific horticultural activities, which are discussed and approved in advance by the Extension Program Coordinator. Example: Guidance on what to grow in a flowerbed at a community agency site.
6. Answering inquiries on the Horticultural Answer phone lines and e-mails.
7. Coordinating and/or instructing public workshops.
8. Helping to increase our educational efforts on TV, radio and with the print media.

NOT INCLUDED:

1. Travel time to and from events.
2. Visits to Botanical Gardens while on vacation (unless a special training is involved and approval is received from the program director).
3. Standard garden maintenance of community project areas (Need to be pre-approved – maintenance hours, planting hours do not count unless specific teaching is also happening).
4. Required Core Instruction Training for student Master Gardeners.

VII PUBLIC RELATIONS

- A. As the Master Gardener Program grows, the opportunity for the program to reach out and interact with other in-house programs and community-wide programs also increases. Master Gardeners will often come in direct contact with community leaders and media representatives.

Master Gardeners should follow the guidance of appropriate Cornell Cooperative Extension staff members to ensure that the technical content of all information offered shall be based on unbiased, research-based findings will be implemented.

Cornell's horticulture standard is based upon ecologically sound principles. That usually means recommending environmentally friendly practices before any harsher method. When using Pest Management Around the Home, Part I and II, for instance, Master Gardeners should quote information in Part I (Cultural Methods) before quoting information in Part II (Pesticide Information). Other research-based information may be less environmentally sensitive.

B. All media productions:

1. Must be based upon the research, educational and regulatory policy of the Cornell Cooperative Extension.
2. Must be reviewed and approved prior to mailing in the case of written communications with an Extension Educator.
3. Should be approached from a positive viewpoint. The most successful programs approach both problems and opportunities with enthusiasm and optimism.

VIII Changes In Master Gardener Volunteer Status

To retain the integrity of the Master Gardener Program in New York State, all applicants must agree to the following before beginning the training: "At a time when I am no longer active as a Master Gardener Volunteer, I agree to refer to myself only as a graduate of the Master Gardener Program or a former Master Gardener."

Inactive and/or Master Gardener on Leave of Absence is one who wishes to take time off from their volunteer commitment for personal or other reasons. The individual must petition the Master Gardener coordinator in order to take a leave of absence from the program. Master Gardeners on leave will remain on the roster and continue to receive mailings for a period of one year. An annual enrollment form is required to retain inactive status.

Released Master Gardener is one who wishes to be released from the program with no plans of returning in the future, or one who does not renew their volunteer commitment (Master Gardener Reenrollment form) by February 15, 2013. A Master Gardener who has moved out of county, cannot be reached, or has not contacted us nor has submitted a Volunteer Hour Report within the past year, will be considered released from the program. Released Master Gardeners who are taken off the MG Roster will no longer be sent mailings.

IX FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I Take a Leave of Absence?

Yes. If you need to take time off from your volunteer commitment, contact the Consumer Horticulture Educator and request to be placed “on leave”. For a period of one year, you will still receive electronic monthly newsletters and your status on the MG roster will state that you are “on leave.” When you’re ready to come back, submit a “Letter of Intent” to the Consumer Horticulture Educator, and your active status will be reinstated.

Can I be released from the Master Gardener Program? What happens if I have to relocate?

If you are relocating out of the region, or wish to be released from the program with no plans of returning in the future, contact the Consumer Horticulture Educator. You will be taken off the roster and no monthly newsletter or mailings will be sent to you.

Similarly, if you have not submitted bi-monthly hours nor contacted the Consumer Horticulture Educator within one year, you will be taken off the roster and no monthly newsletter or mailings will be sent to you.

Can I transfer into the Onondaga County program from another County or out of state?

Prospective volunteers who wish to transfer in from another county in NYS must go through the application process and provide references from the county in which they previously volunteered. In addition to completing the volunteer application and signing a Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct form, the applicant will write an essay of their past experiences as a Master Gardener, and what they wish to bring to the CCE Onondaga County as a MG. A background check will be done, as for all Master Gardeners.

I took the training in Onondaga County in the past, but never completed my initial 200 hours. Can I rejoin the program?

To be reinstated into the program, you must go through the application process again. In addition to completing the volunteer application and signing a Volunteer Agreement and Code of Conduct form, the applicant will write an essay of their past experiences as a program participant, and what they wish to bring the CCE Onondaga County as a MG. A background check will be required.

If you have any further questions regarding Volunteer Expectations, please contact the
Consumer Horticulture Educator,
Fran Lawlor
315-424-9485 ext 236

Master Gardener Volunteer Training Agreement

The Master Gardener Core Qualifying Course is pre-requisite to becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Onondaga County (hereinafter referred to as the “CCE of Onondaga County”).

During the time that you are enrolled in the qualifying course, you will be a Master Gardener Student.

Please affirm your acceptance of the terms of this agreement, stated below, with your signature. Also please accept our sincere thanks for your valuable contribution to Cornell Cooperative Extension.

1. I agree that as a CCE Master Gardener Student, I must attend every class in order to gain a broad education on the many aspects of the horticultural sciences. I will talk with my county’s Master Gardener Coordinator about the feasibility of what is an acceptable solution, if I miss any class due to illness or emergencies.
2. I understand that I am committing my volunteer time in exchange for education. At the successful completion of the qualifying course, I agree to provide **200** hours of volunteer time to the Master Gardener Program in Onondaga County during a 2 to 4 year period.
3. I understand that a the fee for participating in the Master Gardener Qualifying Course is \$175 for Onondaga County Residents and \$200 for out of County, to cover costs associated with running this program. This cost does not reflect staff time involved in planning, teaching or evaluating the course effectiveness.
4. I agree to study the required reading materials, be an active participant in lectures and other training sessions, successfully complete exams and any other special requirements during the qualifying course.
5. I will wear an identifying badge as a Master Gardener Student at the appropriate times, and as a Master Gardener Volunteer at public events.
6. I will disseminate research-based information and refrain from giving out information from personal gardening experience that could be construed by the public to be an official statement from Cornell.
7. I will become a certified Master Gardener Volunteer when I receive a certificate from CCE of Onondaga County. At a time when I am no longer active as a Master Gardener Volunteer, I agree to refer to myself only as a graduate of the Master Gardener Program or former Master Gardener.
8. I agree that as a CCE volunteer my participation in the activities outlined in the attached volunteered position description is without monetary or other compensation.
9. I understand that CCE shall have the right to suspend or release me as a volunteer at any time and for any reason, within the discretion of CCE. I also understand that I have the right to terminate this agreement, recognizing that if I receive significant training for the volunteer position that there is an expectation of volunteer service.
10. I understand that CCE does not provide volunteers with medical insurance; therefore CCE is not responsible for any medical expenses incurred by me. Further, I understand that I am neither covered by Worker’s Compensation nor entitled to employee benefits as a result of my CCE volunteer affiliation.

11. CCE will cover me as a volunteer under the CCE commercial general liability to protect me against any covered claims for injury to persons or damage to property arising out of my activities as a volunteer. In exchange for volunteer liability insurance protection I. On behalf of myself, my heirs and my representatives, do hereby release Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Association, its officers, directors, employees and other volunteers from any liability whatsoever for any injury to myself, including death, or damage to my property that arises out of or is in any way related to my volunteer activities unless my injury is the result of the sole negligence of Cornell Cooperative Extension or the Association. I understand that the liability insurance coverage only applies when I am on duty, acting in accordance with CCE guidelines for my volunteer assignments, and all other applicable pre-conditions for coverage under the CCE insurance policy are met.
12. I am aware of the terms and conditions of this agreement and agree that the provisions of this agreement do not constitute a contract, either expressed or implied, for employment between CCE and myself.
13. This agreement is valid until it is terminated by CCE or by me.

Signatures;

CCE Volunteer _____ Date _____

CCE Representative _____ Date _____

Name

Title

Master Gardener Position Description

CORNELL COOPERATIVE EXTENSION ONONDAGA COUNTY **VOLUNTEER POSITION**

Title: Master Gardner Volunteer

The Master Gardener Volunteer provides home and community gardeners with unbiased gardening information that is based on research or reliable experience, through a “neighbors-teaching-neighbors” educational program.

Responsibilities:

- Successfully complete the required Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program and remain current through participation in recommended training opportunities throughout the agreed term of volunteer service.
- Serve as a horticultural resource as outlined in the plan of work of Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County.
- Represent Cornell Cooperative Extension Onondaga County within the community; encourage enrollment in and support for the organization.

Training and Support:

- Orientation to the Cornell Cooperative Extension, its mission and that of the Master Gardener Volunteer Program
- Attend a core qualifying course in gardening, as well as refresher classes, field trips and workshops to enhance expertise and ability to communicate information related to ecological gardening and related topics to the public
- Orientation to the operational and risk management procedures
- Periodic opportunities for statewide, regional and national conferences; participation is encouraged to expand knowledge and remain current
- One on one consultation with Extension Educator

Reporting:

- Each Master Gardener Volunteer is expected to maintain records of program contacts, recommendations and time devoted to volunteer activities.

Time Commitment:

- An Onondaga County Master Gardener Volunteer is expected to contribute a minimum of 50 hours annually.
- To reach Master Gardner status he/she must have successfully completed training and have given 200 hours of volunteer time.

Qualifications:

- Has a basic interest in and knowledge about landscape and food gardening
- Has enthusiasm for acquiring and sharing horticultural knowledge and skills
- Interest in teaching others
- Good verbal and written communication skills
- Has a time schedule compatible with program activities.
- Willingness to volunteer time on horticultural projects and educational activities that support the goals of the Cornell Cooperative Extension Program

Master Gardener Volunteer Application

There are many ways you can contribute to the Master Gardener Volunteer Program. The information you provide on this form will help us find the most satisfying and appropriate volunteer opportunity for you. Your cooperation in completing this form is appreciated.

Name_____

Address_____

Telephone (home)_____ (other)_____

Best time to contact_____

What are you hoping to get out of the experience of training and volunteering in the Master Gardener Program?

What is your favorite type of gardening?

In which type of gardening do you feel you have the least experience?

When are you available to volunteer? Please circle the days you are available and write the time you are available next to the day.

Mon _____ Tues _____ Wed _____ Thurs _____ Fri _____ Sat _____

How do you plan to meet the 50 hrs for this program? (Please see the enclosed copy of the bylaw criteria for the Master Gardener Program)

Interests (Please mark each item according to your level of interest.)

What I like to do	All the time	Most of the time	A little	Not at all
Take responsibility				
Speak to groups				
Speak to other gardeners				
Meet people				
Look up Information				
Write letters/instructions				
Draw and sketch				
Surf the internet				
Talk on the telephone				
Guide children				
Help the elderly				
Assist with the disabled				
Lead discussion groups				
Take notes				
Attend lectures				
Do gardening				
Talk about gardening				
Make decisions				
Follow instructions				
Teach				
Work independently				
Work with one or two others				
Improving your community				
Improving you own garden				
Conduct telephone interviews/surveys				

Active Master Gardeners Participants - 2013

The Master Gardener Program is having a huge impact in Onondaga County. Now is the time to renew your commitment to the program for 2013. Please consider the following:

The Mission of the Master Gardener Program is to train volunteers to teach others how to protect the environment and grow plants more effectively.

Expectations of Master Gardener Volunteers:

- **Volunteer a minimum of 50 hours per year as outlined in Bylaws.**
- **Attend up to 12 hours of advanced training** to keep yourself up-to-date on current practices. Advanced trainings may include approved monthly meeting programs, educational field trips, and pre-approved advanced classes.
- **Attend a least 6 MG monthly meetings per year**
- **Teach others** what you have learned
- **Submit Volunteer Reports monthly** – record keeping is a reality of this program. Record your hours in your calendars then transfer to volunteer log hour forms.
- **Abide by the Cornell Cooperative Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct**

Communication with Fran Lawlor, Extension Educator is a key factor in the Master Gardener Program.

Monthly Volunteer Log Hour Reports must be submitted to receive credit with the Master Gardener Program each year.

The Master Gardener Program is a great way to increase your own horticulture skills while helping others in your community do so as well. I hope you'll be able to commit to the 50 hour goal this year to not only make the program a success, but to make yourself feel good about being involved in such a worthwhile effort.

Please sign and return the attached Master Gardener Re-enrollment form to Fran Lawlor by January 15, 2013.



Cornell Cooperative Extension Volunteer Code of Conduct

Cornell Cooperative Extension (CCE) Volunteers are required to accept and adhere to the following standards of behavior when engaged in assigned volunteer activities.

Having signed a Cornell Cooperative Extension Volunteer Agreement I accept responsibility to represent CCE with dignity and pride, conducting myself as a positive role model for program participants. I will adhere to the following standards of behavior:

To maintain a responsible relationship with Cornell Cooperative Extension I will:

- respect and adhere to CCE rules, policies and guidelines that relate to volunteer activity and the program I serve;
- execute CCE business in an ethical manner;
- preserve the confidentiality of information about program participants and CCE internal affairs that has been entrusted to me;
- refrain from using my CCE volunteer status for personal or business financial gain;
- fulfill my assigned volunteer duties, including completion of required records or reports, in a timely manner;
- use time wisely and work cooperatively with Extension staff and other volunteers;
- participate in required training programs and use the recommended policies and procedures;
- accept supervision and support from professional Extension staff and/or management volunteers;

To maintain a respectful relationship with individuals encountered through volunteer activities I will:

- respect and uphold the rights and dignity of all staff, other volunteers and all individuals who participate in CCE programs, recognizing that people's values, beliefs, customs, and strengths differ;
- encourage participation of and respect for individuals of diverse backgrounds, cultures, and perspectives;
- commit no illegal or abusive act;

To maintain a safe and healthful environment for program participants I will:

- follow child protection guidelines;
- refrain from the use of alcohol and inappropriate language, especially in the presence of minors, and never attend or participate in a CCE activity or event under the influence of alcohol or controlled substances;
- use tobacco products only where legally permitted and refrain from the use of tobacco products while conducting or assisting in any Extension program or in other group situations that may glamorize such use in the eyes of young people;
- bring no firearm to any CCE program except when essential to the purposes of the program;
- use any potentially dangerous item in accordance with the safety procedures prescribed for the program;
- report all unsafe conditions and accidents to professional Extension staff as soon as possible;
- handle any animals, machinery, equipment, vehicles or other CCE property that has been entrusted to me in a safe and responsible manner;
- observe all state and federal laws with respect to power equipment and minors.

Cooperative Extension Volunteer Agreement

We are pleased that you have accepted a volunteer assignment to Cornell Cooperative Extension in the County of Onondaga (hereinafter referred to as "CCE").

Please accept our sincere thanks for your valuable contribution to Cornell Cooperative Extension. Please affirm your acceptance of the terms of this agreement, stated below, with your signature.

1. I agree that as a CCE volunteer my participation in the activities outlined in the attached volunteer position description is without monetary compensation or other valuable consideration. That document, including the Code of Conduct it contains, shall be considered a part of this agreement.
2. I understand that I do not have a formal work appointment for the agreed upon services. I understand that CCE shall have the right to suspend or release me as a volunteer at any time and that I also have the right to terminate this agreement unless I am committing my volunteer time in exchange for education.
3. I understand that CCE does not provide volunteers with medical insurance; therefore CCE is not responsible for any medical expenses incurred by me. Further, I understand that I am neither covered by Worker's Compensation nor entitled to employee benefits as a result of my CCE volunteer affiliation.
4. CCE will cover me as a volunteer under the CCE commercial general liability to protect me against claims for injury to persons or damage to property arising out of my activities as a volunteer. In exchange for volunteer liability insurance protection, I, on behalf of myself, my heirs and my representatives do hereby release Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Association, its officers, directors, employees and other volunteers from any liability whatsoever for any injury to myself, including death, or damage to my property that arises out of or is in any way related to my volunteer activities, unless my injury is the result of the sole negligence of Cornell Cooperative Extension or the Association. I understand that the liability insurance coverage only applies when I am on duty and act in accordance with CCE guidelines for my volunteer assignment.
5. CCE agrees to provide the orientation, training, supervision and support necessary for my successful fulfillment of responsibilities.
6. I am aware of the terms and conditions of this agreement, and am signing this agreement of my own free will.
7. This agreement is valid from _____ to _____ (no greater than 2 years).

Signatures:

CCE Volunteer _____ Date _____

CCE Representative _____ Date _____

Name

Title

First Agreement Renewal

1. Evaluation of my volunteer performance was conducted on (date) _____ by the individual whose signature appears below, and I attest that my reinstatement or reassignment has been accomplished by mutual consent.
2. I reaffirm my acceptance of the terms of this agreement which is extended through (no greater than 2 years) _____. The attached position description indicates amendments: __ Yes __ No

Signatures:

CCE Volunteer _____ Date _____

CCE Representative _____ Date _____

Second Agreement Renewal

1. Evaluation of my volunteer performance was conducted on (date) _____ by the individual whose signature appears below, and I attest that my reinstatement or reassignment has been accomplished by mutual consent.
2. I reaffirm my acceptance of the terms of this agreement which is extended through (no greater than 2 years) _____. The attached position description indicates amendments: __ Yes __ No

Signatures:

CCE Volunteer _____ Date _____

CCE Representative _____ Date _____