

## ***UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener Program***

Our Mission: *To assist Extension Agents in providing research-based horticultural education to Florida residents.*

The Florida Master Gardener Program is a volunteer-driven program that benefits UF/IFAS Extension and the citizens of Florida. The program relies on dedicated volunteers who have an interest in gardening and in giving back to their communities.

### ***History of the Master Gardener Program***

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

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

### ***History of Extension***

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

Then in 1914 the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a part of these colleges as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college; The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the university which has responsibility for the Extension Service.

In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds to the Florida Extension Service: the U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State through legislative appropriations, and the counties through appropriations by county governments. There is sharing of information generated through sound research programs at the federal and state levels. The term "extension" defines this organization's purpose -- to extend the information generated at the state and federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service." The Extension Service is an informal education organization which provides information in three main areas: agriculture, human and natural resources, and the life sciences.

The motto and goal of the Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

### ***Master Gardener Program Structure***

Within Florida, each county Extension office chooses whether it wishes to participate in the statewide program. Active counties select a Master Gardener Coordinator, typically the horticulture Extension agent for that county, who coordinates that county's volunteer recruiting, training, and management efforts.

The Statewide Master Gardener Coordinator provides overall guidance and a centralized curriculum to the county coordinators. The statewide office also issues programmatic policies that counties with active programs must follow

## ***Polk County Program***

The Polk County Master Gardener Program began in the late 1980s. Over the years, participation, responsibilities, and structure of the program grew. From just a few, to a hundred volunteers, the variety of projects also expanded to meet the needs of a growing and diverse population. Residential horticulture provides challenges in teaching residents to handle emerging issues, and through UF/IFAS, Master Gardeners continue to learn research-based information in their service to residents.

Polk County statistics include:

- Agri-Fest, a program that Master Gardeners have been involved in since the program's inception in 1988. Master Gardeners designed and delivered a program that would in time become nationally recognized for "Service to Youth" in 2009
- In 2014, UF/IFAS Extension Polk County Master Gardener Volunteers educated over 25,000 residents
- 107 UF/IFAS Extension Polk County Master Gardener Volunteers contribute over 14,000 volunteer hours annually

The ultimate end to the educational outreach efforts of the Florida Master Gardener Program is to extend the vision of the University of Florida/Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, all the while protecting and sustaining natural resources and environmental systems, enhancing the development of human resources, and improving the quality of human life through the development of knowledge in agricultural, human and natural resources and making that knowledge accessible.

## UF/IFAS Extension Florida Master Gardener Application

The following pages contain the required Master Gardener application materials, including:

1. Florida Master Gardener application
2. Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement
3. Record of Volunteer Service

To be considered for the 2017 UF/IFAS Extension Polk County Master Gardener Training Program, please complete all of the aforementioned documents and provide them, along with the \$150 registration fee, to UF/IFAS Extension Polk County at the address below before 5:00 p.m. on October 28, 2016. You may also scan and email your materials to [anneanne@ufl.edu](mailto:anneanne@ufl.edu).

UF/IFAS Extension Polk County  
1702 US Hwy 17 South (also known as Spressard Holland Pkwy.)  
Bartow, FL 33831

Attn: Anne Yasalonis, Master Gardener Coordinator



## Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Application 2017 Training Class

This application must be completed for consideration into the UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener program. Acceptance is contingent on return of this form to your county Extension office for submission and clearance through appropriate screening processes as well as payment of the registration fee. These processes are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of all Extension program participants.

*Please return your completed application, forms and payment to UF/IFAS Extension Polk County at the address below before 5:00 p.m. on October 28, 2016. You may also scan and email your materials to [anneanne@ufl.edu](mailto:anneanne@ufl.edu).*

### General Information

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Male  Female

Physical Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ County: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been at this address? \_\_\_\_ Years \_\_\_\_ Months

(If less than five years, please provide all previous addresses in the last five years)

Previous Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone number: \_\_\_\_\_

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

List *work* experience during the past five years, with most recent experiences first.

Employer	Position/Title	City/State	Years
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List all *volunteer* experience during the past five years, with most recent experiences first. Identify work with youth and community groups.

Organization/Group	Role/Title	City/State	Years
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Personal Interest

Why are you interested in volunteering with the Florida Master Gardener Program?

References

List three references who have knowledge of your qualifications but are not related to you.

Name

Mailing Address

Phone

Name	Mailing Address	Phone

Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense within the past seven years? Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense involving a minor (including a deferred imposition of sentence)? Yes  No

If yes, please explain:

I certify that the above information is correct. I authorize the University of Florida IFAS Extension Service to request information for conducting a background check and to contact references. I authorize a check of my driver's license record as needed. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of the facts requested is just cause for non-appointment as a UF/IFAS Extension program volunteer. My signature and information below are necessary to process this application.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of birth

\_\_\_\_\_  
Driver's License Number (State)



## ***Florida Master Gardener Annual Volunteer Agreement***

Within the state of Florida, most counties maintain active Master Gardener programs. This being the case, a need exists for the establishment of standards for all Florida Master Gardeners to represent their county in a manner consistent with exemplary citizenship and leadership.

To become a certified Florida Master Gardener, one is required to attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service. This certification is restrictive in nature and is valid only for one year and when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Program. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the coming year. All Florida Master Gardener Volunteers must agree to be screened as outlined by the program's screening guidelines and as deemed appropriate by the County Master Gardener Coordinator. All volunteers working with youth must successfully complete the online Youth Protection Training – YCS800 annually.

As a certified Florida Master Gardener, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference offered by the University of Florida, as well as local educational programs and field trips provided by the County Master Gardener Coordinator. Master Gardeners are also provided with the most recent information available on environmental horticulture issues and related topics by the County Master Gardener Coordinator and State Extension Specialists.

An inactive Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional 50 hours annually at present, but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify him/herself in the future. The following policies apply:

- 1) An inactive Master Gardener is one who has completed their original commitment of 75 hours of volunteer service in the first twelve months following the completion of their training, but is not able to continue to volunteer the minimum of 50 hours per year.
- 2) The inactive Master Gardener must apply to the County Master Gardener Coordinator for recertification. If accepted, he or she must then attend or have attended 10 hours of acceptable horticultural training as approved by the coordinator to re-certify.
- 3) The inactive Master Gardener must take and pass a comprehensive examination provided by the county Master Gardener Coordinator.
- 4) An inactive Master Gardener may re-certify at any time as long as the above criteria are met and upon receiving approval from the county Master Gardener Coordinator. 107 Mehrhof Hall PO Box 110675 Gainesville, FL 32611-0675 Phone: (352) 273-4521 Fax: (352) 392-1413  
<http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu>
- 5) Inactive Master Gardeners are ineligible to apply for awards of excellence, receive mailings, attend monthly meetings, or register for continued training opportunities.

The county Master Gardener Coordinator can make exceptions in unusual circumstances.

Master Gardeners are encouraged to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping), be responsive to the reasonable requests of the County Master Gardener Coordinator in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Whenever injuries do occur, they should be reported to the County Master Gardener Coordinator or County Extension Director immediately.

## ***Master Gardener Code of Conduct***

Along with active participation, Master Gardeners are expected to uphold a professional demeanor. The University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service functions without regard to race, creed, color, religion, age, disability, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, marital status, national origin, political opinions or affiliations, genetic information and veteran status as protected under the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Assistance Act. All Volunteers must follow all University of Florida rules regulations and policies, abide by the Florida Master Gardener Program identity standards and all federal, state and local laws. The University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service does not tolerate:

- ⊞ Possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace;
- ⊞ Abuse or theft of public or personal property;
- ⊞ Sexual harassment or misconduct;
- ⊞ Verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with other Master Gardeners, staff members, and/or the public;
- ⊞ Possession or use of weapons or fireworks in the workplace;
- ⊞ Defamation of the organization;
- ⊞ Creating an implied or outright University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business;
- ⊞ Misrepresentation of sources of information;
- ⊞ Consistently and knowingly giving out incorrect information;
- ⊞ Use of state and/or county equipment without authorization.

Master Gardener Certification may become void when an individual ceases active participation in the program or dismissal may result from violations described above. Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement.

Those individuals not continuing in the program are prohibited from representing themselves as Florida Master Gardeners. Such prohibited representations constitute a breach of the terms of the UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener program are valuable and may rightly be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardeners shall not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener at the place of business.

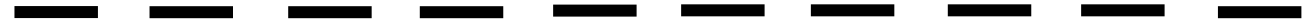
Experienced Florida Master Gardeners may be invited to speak before various community groups. Master Gardeners are prohibited from accepting payment, monetary or other for speaking appearances.

The title "Florida Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service Master Gardener Program in which trained and certified Florida Master Gardeners answer gardening questions and educate local residents. Master Gardeners are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work on the behalf of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service.

Florida Master Gardeners shall not use the Florida Master Gardener title in any advertisements or activities not related to University of Florida/IFAS Master Gardener activities. The Florida Master Gardener program represents a University of Florida Extension Service public education program; Master Gardeners are prohibited from endorsing commercial products or implying UF/IFAS endorses any product or place of business.



In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (i.e., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardeners **MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED** University of Florida/IFAS Extension recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specially covered by University of Florida/IFAS Cooperative Extension Service recommendations may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. If you are making a recommendation based on personal experience, state clearly that you are speaking for yourself and not the UF/IFAS Extension Service. Questions concerning any commercial horticultural enterprise (i.e., vegetable production, fruit crops production, landscape maintenance of golf course, recreational park, school grounds or commercial nursery production) are to be referred to the local Horticulture Extension Agent.



I have read and fully understand the above agreement regarding my services as a Florida Master Gardener Volunteer and agree to abide by the terms of this agreement, including the Master Gardener Code of Conduct, UF rules and regulations, and all federal, state and local laws. I further agree to perform at least 75 hours of service in my first year and at least 50 hours in each subsequent year to the Florida Master Gardener Program in return for the training provided by the University of Florida/IFAS Extension Service. I enter into this agreement knowingly and voluntarily

\_\_\_\_\_

Agent

\_\_\_\_\_

Date

\_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Applicant

\_\_\_\_\_

Date



