

POLK COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER SPROUTING KIT

This "Sprouting Kit" contains information that will be useful to you in understanding the Master Gardener program as well as the role and responsibilities of a volunteer Master Gardener. It will also give you insight into the Florida Cooperative Extension Service, how it functions and how Master Gardeners operate as a part of the Extension Service.

Please read the enclosed materials carefully. Complete the application form and questionnaire at the back of this packet and return them to:

David Shibles
Extension Agent - Environmental Horticulture
P O Box 9005, Drawer HS03
Bartow FL 33831-9005
(863) 519-8677

The Mission of the Cooperative Extension Service

The Master Gardener Program

Part I - History

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening, have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service Agents.

Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and are relatively easily answered assuming that one has horticultural training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Service Agent in the State of Washington reasoned that well trained volunteers could respond to many of the every day 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. And so it was the Master Gardener Program began.

Since that time, the Master Gardener Program has grown and is now active in over 30 states. Florida's program began in 1979. The program has been a tremendous success and is now active in nearly half of Florida's counties. The Cooperative Extension Service which is connected to the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) sponsors part of the Master Gardener Program in Florida.

Just what is the Cooperative Extension Service? For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862, when the U.S. Congress passed the Morrill Act that 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 emphasized teaching practical subjects such as agriculture and engineering. The 1887 Hatch Act provided for experimental stations at Land Grant Colleges to conduct research for those colleges' agricultural problems.

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 one of Florida's Land Grant Colleges; the Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is the part of the University, which has responsibility for the Cooperative Extension Service.

The term "cooperative" refers to the method by which extension services are funded. In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State through legislative appropriations and counties through appropriations by county governments. The word "cooperative" also implies a 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 Cooperative Extension Service is an informal education organization that provides information in 3 main areas: Agriculture, Home Economics and 4-H youth. Community Development, Marine Biology and Energy are associated programs. The volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

Part II - Polk County Master Gardener Program

Selection to become a candidate for the Master Gardener Training Program is not predicated on prior training, education, knowledge or experience. Neither does age, race, sex or physical handicap dictate selection.

A SINCERE DESIRE TO HELP OTHERS, A DESIRE TO LEARN AND A PERSONAL COMMITMENT TO VOLUNTEER SERVICE ARE THE MAJOR SELECTION CRITERIA INVOLVED. Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful, but they are by no means a requirement for selection into the Master Gardener Training Program.

Part III - Master Gardener Training

The Master Gardener Training Program is demanding and intensive. Formal classroom work constitutes more than 50% of the 60 hour training period. Subjects include basic botany, soils, fertilizers, vegetables, entomology, citrus, turfgrasses, use of (and alternatives to) chemicals, house plants, ornamentals, diseases and related topics. All information is based on the knowledge and research of the University of Florida.

Each weekly session is a minimum of five hours and a portion of each is practical, hands-on activity related to the theory just presented. Each session concludes with the "ten most asked questions: relating to the subject matter". These are the questions most commonly asked by homeowners and serve to prepare the Master Gardener for the day when that first homeowner question must be correctly answered.

There is a registration fee of \$110.00 (made payable to Polk County Master Gardeners). Each trainee is provided a Master Gardener notebook containing extensive reference materials from the University of Florida. Of this fee, \$75.00 pays for the training manuals and the remaining balance pays for additional materials including a Master Gardener Shirt (the fee is non-refundable).

These materials are updated frequently so the Master Gardeners always provide the most current recommendations approved by the University of Florida at Gainesville.

Master Gardeners deal only with homeowner-type questions. The Extension Service Agents themselves respond to all commercial/professional growers' problems.

On completion of the 60-hour training period, all Master Gardener trainees are required to satisfactorily pass a comprehensive examination on the materials covered. Only then can the trainees be certified and be awarded the title of Master Gardener for one year. Master Gardeners may be re-certified by meeting the requirements in the Policies section.

Once certified, Master Gardeners must abide by a set of policies set out by the University of Florida and IFAS. Those "Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners" are attached and should be carefully studied.

Part IV - Master Gardener Activities

All graduating Master Gardener trainees will be required to put in 75 hours of service to the Master Gardener Program their first year. Ten hours of service will be required in the plant clinic at the Extension Office in Bartow and the remaining required 65 hours of service may be spent in a wide variety of activities, which are related to some aspect of gardening and contribute to community education and service. After the first year, Master Gardeners are required to put in 35 hours of service to remain in active status.

Many Master Gardeners continue their close association with the Center by answering telephone calls, mailing out brochures in response to requests, or developing presentations for garden clubs and other civic associations. Others choose to work in the demonstration garden or demonstration Xeriscape.

Master Gardeners present classes to the public in these gardens helping the typical new-to-Florida homeowner adapt his gardening techniques to the horticulture peculiarities of Florida and Polk County in particular.

Other activities include, but are not limited to, plant clinics conducted throughout the county, staffing information booths at fairs and flower shows, giving presentations at garden clubs, working with groups (4-H, Schools, and Scouts), developing community gardens, helping the disadvantaged and handicapped in gardening, and tasks such as responding to e-mail and telephone questions.

There is something for almost every skill at every level. Many Master Gardeners far surpass the mandatory 35 service hours with some exceeding several hundred hours in a year. Master Gardeners select the activities they are most comfortable with.

As the Master Gardeners assist the Extension Service Agents, they are in effect "extending the Extension Service." As such, they provide advice and recommendations, which have been well documented as a result of experimentation and testing and are approved by the University of Florida.

Training never ceases for the certified and working Master Gardener. Once a month, from January - November, Master Gardeners get together for planning the status reports on

various projects and information exchange and updates. Field trips are also planned to local gardens, nurseries, parks and similar facilities. Specialized knowledge is gained to better enable the Master Gardener to give expert advice.

Once a year IFAS conducts "post graduate" Master Gardener training at the University of Florida in Gainesville. This voluntary two-day session serves to acquaint Master Gardeners with the laboratory and diagnostic facilities there, which will respond to requests for help through the Extension Service Agents. State Extension Specialists strive to bring all Master Gardeners into "sync" with the latest horticultural developments and provide a look into the future of horticultural research.

Part V - Conclusion

This is the Master Gardener Program in words - a very poor substitute for the real thing. Words cannot describe the sense of accomplishment one feels in helping someone become a better gardener. Master Gardener, people wanting to help others, make the program what it is. These are the kind of people who make America great and who, bonded together through a common interest in gardening, horticulture and the spirit of volunteerism, will keep it great.

THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM IS A WONDERFUL OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN AND TO HELP. WE HOPE THAT YOU WILL BECOME A PART OF THIS "GROWING" EXPERIENCE.

State Guidelines Regarding Active/Inactive Status Of Florida Master Gardeners

The following guidelines are provided to assist county coordinators in determining the activity status of MGs and the extent of which MGs may participate in Extension programs. Further, they suggest reasonable requirements and methods for recertifying veteran MGs for further terms of service. Each county coordinator has the prerogative to adopt these policies, depending on the particular advantages/disadvantages they may present for the individual county.

Active Status

1. A Florida Master Gardener on Active Status is one who has completed all the requirements for becoming a Florida MG, who has received a Certificate of Completion of Training, and who has been granted a certification/identification card signed and dated by the county coordinator.
2. The Active Status is valid for one year from date of certification (or recertification).
3. If a Master Gardener ceases active participation in the program, the certification as Master Gardener may be voided by the county coordinator, as stipulated in "State Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners, (Appendix B-2) or that person may be placed on Inactive Status.

Inactive Status

An inactive Master Gardener is one who has met all the requirements of the Master Gardener program and has completed the designated hours of service, and who intends to recertify for Active Status in the near future. The following policies apply:

1. The county coordinator is responsible for determining whether or not a Master Gardener may be given Inactive Status. Consideration must be given to proper reasons, intentions, degree of commitment, and other circumstances.
2. Inactive Master Gardeners are ineligible to participate as or represent themselves as Active Master Gardeners.
3. County coordinators should maintain names/addresses of all

inactive members in their files for reference.

4. Inactive Master Gardeners are ineligible for mailings or continue training in Gainesville provided to active master Gardeners.

Recertification

Recertification is the process by which Master Gardeners retain or obtain "Active Status." The following policies apply.

1. Recertification is for a period of one year from the date "Active Status" is recertified.
2. Following recertification, Active Status may be voided should the Master Gardener cease active participation in the program (see "Active Status", part 3).
3. A Florida Master Gardener may recertify by:
 - a. Committing to the appropriate hours of service designated by the county coordinator (a minimum of 35 hours) as indicated by signature on updated State Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners from (Appendix B-2).
 - b. Satisfactory completion of 10 hours of horticultural or related training in addition to their initial basic training. Examples of acceptable training are: MG Basic Training; MG Continued Training; Horticultural field days; Florida Federation of Garden Club Seminars; IFAS Extension Seminars; Florida State Horticultural Society meetings; college course work; Annual Native Plant Society meetings, etc. County Coordinators must approve acceptance of training. It is suggested that Coordinators consider only that additional training which was received in the two-year period prior to recertification.
 - c. Passing a brief test to determine adequate horticultural knowledge, if deemed necessary.
4. County Coordinators should provide each Master Gardener recertified to "Active Status" an identification card appropriately signed and dated.

State Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners

A Florida Master Gardener must attend the prescribed hours of instruction and pass an examination administered by the Florida Cooperative Extension Service before becoming a certified Master Gardener. This certification is restrictive in nature in that it is valid only when the individual is participating in the Florida Master Gardener Program and for one year only. If an individual ceases active participation, then the certification as Master Gardener becomes void. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be recertified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

Once you are a certified Florida Master Gardener, you will be eligible to attend educational programs such as the Florida Master Gardener Update Training offered by the University of Florida, as well as, local educational programs and field trips provided by the county agent. You will also have access to diagnostic services via the County Extension Agent and State Extension Specialists. Master Gardeners are also provided with the most recent information available on issues relating to environmental horticulture and new Extension publications as they are developed.

The title "Florida Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener Program in which trained and certified Master Gardeners answer gardening questions. Master Gardeners are expected to use the title only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work in the Extension Horticulture program.

Florida Master Gardeners are advised neither to advertise their names or their place of business, nor to be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardeners. This is a University of Florida/Florida Cooperative Extension service public service program. Appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University of Florida Extension Service endorsements of any product or place of business is improper.

The training and experience gained by participation in the Florida Master Gardener program are valuable and may rightfully be listed and featured as qualifications when seeking employment. Once employed, and while serving as a paid employee, or if self-employed, Master Gardeners should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Florida Master Gardener at the place of business (unless the place of business is specifically designated as a Florida Master Gardener Clinic location by the County Extension Agent- this will only be for a specified number of days).

Experienced Florida Master Gardeners may be invited to speak for various community groups. Please do not seek payment of such speaking appearances. Gratuitous personal payments (i.e., in the form of cash) for such presentations are not encouraged.

Master Gardeners are expected to participate in all components of the planned program (including record keeping, be responsive to the reasonable requests of the county agent in charge, and be respectful of the need for personal safety and the safety of others. Master Gardeners should report any and all injuries or physical assaults to the County Extension Agent as soon as possible. Along with active participation, Master Gardeners are expected to uphold certain standards of behavior including, but not limited to the following-there will be no: possession or use of alcohol or drugs in the workplace or on job assignments outside the Extension Office; abuse or theft of public or personal property; sexual harassment or misconduct; verbal abuse or failure to cooperate with other, including 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 giving out incorrect information use of state and/or county vehicles without authorization. Any violations will result in dismissal pending due process. Illegal activities will be referred to law enforcement.

In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (e.g., insecticides, herbicides and fungicides), Florida Master Gardeners **MUST FOLLOW PUBLISHED** Cooperative Extension Service recommendations. Cultural problems that are not specifically covered by 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 Extension Service. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops are to be referred to the local County Extension Agent.

Special note of Caution:

Individuals who are not acting on behalf of the Florida Cooperative Extension Service are strongly urged to make every effort to minimize the appearance of being on duty before making any recommendations in the area of horticulture. Speaking "off the record" is your right; however, make sure everyone knows you are speaking for yourself and not the Extension Service.

I have read the above policies regarding my services as a Master Gardener volunteer and do hereby agree to give 75 hours of service to the Master Gardener Program in return for the training provided by the Florida Cooperative Service. In addition, I am aware there is a due process procedure available to me if I feel I have been wrongfully charged with a violation of program standards.

I have also read the state guidelines regarding active/inactive status of Master Gardeners and understand the recertification policy.

Dean of Extension Service	Date
Signature of Applicant	Date
County Extension Agent	Date

(Keep this for your copy. I will have you sign a copy when you complete the training program.)

Please return the Florida Master Gardener Application and
Questionnaire to the Polk County Extension Service.

Florida Master Gardener Application

PLEASE TYPE OR PRINT LEGIBLY

Name _____

Nickname, if
any _____

Address: _____ Home Phone: _____
City _____ State: _____ Zip Code _____

Have you applied for Master Gardener training before? Yes ___ No ___

If yes, when? _____ Where? _____

Are you employed? Yes ___ No ___

Where? _____ Schedule? _____

Please list any training and/or practical experience you have in gardening,
horticulture, farming, or related
fields: _____

Please list any specialized gardening interest or hobbies you have, e.g.,
vegetables, house plants, ornamentals, turf grasses, landscaping,
etc. _____

What gardening affiliations do you have, e.g., garden clubs, horticultural
societies,
etc? _____

Are you currently active in other types of organizations (e.g., Cancer
Society, Kiwanis Club, PTA,
etc: _____

How did you learn about the Master Gardener
Program? _____

Why do you want to become a Master Gardener? _____

What ideas do you have of the type of volunteer work you can do in completion of your commitment? (Answering information request, maintenance of vegetable or fruit gardens, horticultural presentations, etc: _____

List all periods during the next year that you know you will not be available for volunteer service due to vacations, job, etc: _____

What are the best days for you to do volunteer work, e.g., every Friday afternoon, first Thursday of each month, etc? _____

I wish to become a Master Gardener and would like to be accepted into the program. I understand that, if accepted, and I successfully complete the course of instruction, I agree to donate at least 75 hours of public service in the next 12 months through the Master Gardener Program. I have also read, understand, and agree to abide by the "Policies Regarding Florida Master Gardeners".

Date

Signature

Return application and questionnaire to:
 Polk County Extension Service
 Attn: David Shibles, Extension Agent
 PO Box 9005, Drawer HS03
 Bartow, FL 33831-9005

SPROUTING KIT QUESTIONNAIRE

Please circle the letter indicating your answer and return this along with your application.

1. The Master gardener Program is sponsored by:
 - a. The University of South Florida
 - b. The U.S. Department of Agriculture
 - c. IFAS (Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences, University of Florida)

2. The Cooperative Extension Service was created by a legislative act called:
 - a. The Morrill Act (1862)
 - b. The Smith-Lever Act (1914)
 - c. The Hatch Act (1887)
 - d. The Larson Act (1898)

3. The Cooperative Extension Service is funded by:
 - a. The Federal Government
 - b. The State of Florida
 - c. The County of Polk
 - d. All of the above

4. The Polk County Master Gardeners are required to volunteer how many hours to public service?
 - a. 25 hours total for as long as they remain active.
 - b. 75 hours for the first year and 25 hours for each year they remain active.
 - c. 50 hours total for as long as they remain active.
 - d. 75 hours for the first year and 35 hours for each year they remain active.

5. Polk County Master Gardeners are required to attain how many additional hours of horticultural training in order to recertify for another year?
 - a. 3 hours.
 - b. 6 hours.
 - c. 10 hours
 - d. 15 hours.

6. The main purpose of the *Master Gardener Program* is to increase or extend the service and output of information offered by the *Cooperative Extension Service*.

- a. True
- b. False

7. The *Cooperative Extension Service* provides information to the community primarily in the program(s) and area (s) of:

- a. Home Economics
- b. 4-H Youth
- c. Agriculture
- d. All of the above

8. *Master Gardeners* make recommendations to homeowners based on:

- a. Public sources such as books, magazines and newspaper articles
- b. Personal, practical experience
- c. Information generated by the University of Florida's IFAS.
- d. All of the above

9. The title "*Master Gardener*" is to be used only in association with the *Master Gardener Program* and not for commercial purposes.

- a. True
- b. False

10. *Master Gardeners* are occasionally called upon to extend information to people involved in commercial agricultural/horticultural endeavors.

- a. True
- b. False