

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS **Washington County Master Gardeners**

VOLUNTEER AND EDUCATION HOURS

- **How important is it to record all volunteer hours?**

All active members and trainees should record all volunteer hours - education and work/project and committee hours. Each hour volunteered is important for the funding of Washington County and state MG programs.

- **How many volunteer hours and education hours are required for a trainee?**

Trainees should record at least 20 hours of volunteer work on sanctioned projects or committees with the remaining 20 hours on sanctioned projects, committees, or non-sanctioned projects, as well as 20 hours of continuing education beyond the training class.

- **What is an approved non-sanctioned project?**

Non-sanctioned projects can consist of providing horticultural advice, expertise, or information to individuals requesting assistance; presenting a gardening program to a garden club; landscaping a church or other public area which is not an official Master Gardener project.

- **What are examples of approved continuing education activities?**

Many activities count as education. Simply attending monthly Master Gardener meetings count as two hours of education each month! Other activities include watching gardening shows on TV, attending webinars and programs online, listening to gardening podcasts, reading magazines and seed catalogs, visiting gardening websites, going to flower shows and events hosted by garden clubs – all these things and more count as education. More complete information can be found in the WCMG Member Resource Guide – Education Hours Descriptions.

- **What is the deadline for a trainee to complete and record those hours?**

Trainees have a growing season to earn and record their hours by December 15 deadline.

- **How many volunteer hours and education hours are required for active Master Gardeners?**

Active members should record at least 10 hours of volunteer work on sanctioned projects or committees with the remaining 10 hours on sanctioned projects, committees, or non-sanctioned projects (see non-sanctioned project examples above;) as well as 20 hours of continuing education (see continuing education examples above.)

- **What is the deadline for an active Master Gardener to complete and record those hours?**

Active Master Gardeners must complete and record their hours by December 15 deadline.

- **How many volunteer hours and education hours are required for Lifetime Master Gardeners?**

Lifetime members are encouraged to continue recording volunteer and education hours to accumulate years of service recognition beyond 15 years. They should record at least 10 work/project hours each year to receive Lifetime-Plus designations. More complete information can be found in the WCMG Member Resource Guide – Bylaws

- **Can travel time be counted in volunteer and education hours?**

No, only active volunteer or education time can be counted.

DUES

- **Is there a cost to being a Master Gardener?**

Except for lifetime members, Master Gardeners pay annual dues to maintain their membership. Dues are currently \$20 a year if paid by December 1 and \$25 after December 1. For trainees, the first year's dues are included in the course fee. Dues are our primary revenue source.

RECORDING HOURS

- **What is the web address for recording volunteer and education hours?**

Go to uaex.uada.edu, then click on Yard and Garden and select Master Gardener Program. Scroll down to a red box that says Enter Volunteer Hours.

- **How do I record my volunteer and education hours?**

Instructions are found in the Member Resource Guide's Introduction Section, "Online Recording of Hours."

Please record all your volunteer hours - education and work project/committee hours. They are very important for the funding of Washington County and state MG programs.

If you have questions or need help, contact your county Online Reporting Managers:

Kathryn Birkhead at kathrynbirkhead@gmail.com or

Annette Pianalto at annettepianalto@gmail.com.

- **What is my username and password for the uaex.uada.edu website?**

Your username is your email address. The first time you log in, after you have entered your username, click on Forgot Password to set up your password. A link will be sent to your email address. Click on that link and follow the directions there.

- **When is my account activated so I can record my hours?**

Your account will be activated after you complete your Master Gardener Basic Training.

- **How do I record volunteer hours and additional education hours I accrued while I was still in the training class, before I have a username and password?**

Keep a record of any sanctioned and authorized non-sanctioned project work you do, all monthly meetings you attend during your training (monthly meetings count as two (2) education hours, regardless of actual length), any events such as Trainee/Mentor Meet and Greets, state-level events, Zoom trainings, and the like. Record those hours on a random date of your choosing when you are granted access to your account.

- **I am a visual learner. Can you walk me through the process?**
Your Mentor will be glad to assist you. There is also a short video on YouTube that may help you. Write to Kathryn Birkhead at kathrynbirkhead@gmail.com, and she will send you the link.

WEBSITES, USERNAMES AND PASSWORDS

- **Do I have more than one password?**
Yes. You have an individual username and password to record your hours as described above, but there are other restricted Master Gardener member pages that use common passwords.
- **Does Washington County have a Master Gardener website?**
We do! You can find it at wcmgar.org, and it contains lots of information. The public portion of the website has gardening tips, links to other gardening organizations, descriptions of sanctioned projects, and more. There is also a Member Portal section of the site restricted to Master Gardeners.
- **How can I access the Member Portal portion of the Washington County Master Gardeners site?**
*Go to wcmgar.org and select the Member Portal, then enter the password **Zinnia2022** when prompted. You will find the Member Resource Guide, a link to the site to record volunteer hours, information on the photo contest, and much more.*

SANCTIONED PROJECTS

- **How do I join a sanctioned project?**
WCMG members and trainees can join a project at any time; spring is the time most projects begin gardening. The list of projects can be found in the Member Portal section of wcmgar.org. Project location, co-chairs, their contact information, and schedule is located in the Member Resource Guide.
- **How do I know which project I want to join?**
Go to the Sanctioned Projects tab at wcmgar.org to learn about the projects. It is a good idea to look at a project's location, its workdays and times, and its emphasis. If you are interested in learning more about butterflies, for example, you may want to look for a project that gives you opportunities in that area. Also talk with the project chair to learn more about it. If you would like to work at a project whose workday does not fit your schedule, you may be able to go to an orientation and then work at a different time or on a different day.
- **Can I work on more than one project?**
Yes! As a matter of fact, that is a great idea. Lots of Master Gardeners work in multiple locations.

- **What are the requirements for a project to be sanctioned?**

Sanctioned projects must be at non-profit organizations or government facilities. They cannot be at churches or businesses. The sponsoring organization must provide a budget for the purchase of plants, soil amendments, etc., and there must be access to water.

An active Master Gardener should submit a project proposal to the Project Proposal Committee and be willing to serve as project chair. After the committee reviews the proposal and visits the potential site, a recommendation goes to the Executive Committee. If the Executive Committee approves the project, it goes to the membership for approval.

- **Which projects receive funds in the WCMG annual budget?**

Only the Extension Office Grounds and Compost Demonstration Site projects receive Master Gardener funding, since we are the sponsoring organization and it is at our building. All other projects must be funded by their sponsoring organizations.

- **Does committee service work count as sanctioned project volunteer hours? Can I join any committee I want?**

Time spent on committee work does count for volunteer hours. Most committees are open to any interested member, although the number of members on a committee may be limited for practicality's sake. The list of committees can be found in the Member Portal tab of wcmgar.org. Membership on the Peer Review, Bylaws, Finance, Awards, and Nominations committees is limited to members who have been nominated to serve on them by the Executive Committee.

OVERSIGHT AND GOVERNANCE

- **How is the Master Gardener program administered?**

Washington County Staff Chair Katie Teague and County Extension Agent for Agriculture Colin Massey oversee the Master Gardener program. The County Extension Agent is responsible for the program and works very closely with the Executive Committee and other Master Gardener members. Please contact appointed WCMGs before approaching County Extension Service (CES) staff.

- **What is the Executive Committee?**

The Executive Committee, which provides guidance to the organization, consists of the president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, three members at large, past president and an optional parliamentarian. Normally the vice-president serves as president the following year, and the assistant treasurer becomes the treasurer.

- **How is the Executive Committee selected?**

The president names a nominations committee which is confirmed by the Executive Committee in April of each year. In July, the committee brings a proposal for the following year's slate of officers and at-large members to the Executive Committee. If that slate is approved, it is submitted to the general membership at the August meeting for the vote in September.

- **What are the rules of the organization?**

*All the actions of the Washington County Master Gardeners must fall within the bylaws of the organization, which can be found in the Member Portal section of **wcmgar.org**. The Bylaws Committee reviews the bylaws at least every three years and recommends any necessary changes to the Executive Committee in July. Proposed changes are presented to the general membership in August, with voting on changes at the September business meeting.*

*WCMG Policies & Procedures also provide operational guidance to WCMGs, which can be found in the Member Portal section of **wcmgar.org**. Each section of Policies & Procedures is dated for tracking convenience. The Policies & Procedures Committee reviews the Policies and Procedures at least every three years and recommends any necessary changes to the Executive Committee as needed. Once the Executive Committee votes in any changes, that section is updated and posted to the **wcmgar.org** website.*

- **How is the budget prepared, and how is the money used?**

An annual budget is created by the Finance Committee and typically includes expenditures for meeting expenses, community outreach, awards, etc. The budget is presented to the Executive Committee for approval by September. It then goes to the membership for approval at the October meeting.