

## **2026 POLICIES and PROCEDURES** **Washington County Master Gardeners**

### **LIABILITY**

1. Two laws enacted by the state legislature protect volunteers from being held civilly liable for personal injury or property damage resulting from any act or omission in carrying out their volunteer activities. (Copies of the laws are on file in the Little Rock state office.)
2. County Extension agents, using Master Gardeners to answer client questions, shall have all contacts documented with the response given (i.e., telephone calls answered in the Extension Office).

Approved by Executive Committee on October 19, 2021

### **USE OF THE TITLE MASTER GARDENER**

1. The title Washington County Master Gardener (WCMG) shall be used by volunteers only when engaged in University of Arkansas (U of A) Cooperative Extension Service-sponsored projects or related educational activities.
2. The title Master Gardener shall not be used by individuals, businesses, or organizations in relation to any commercial venture or in any form of advertisement. Implying Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service endorsement of any product, service or place of business is not allowed.
3. The U of A Cooperative Extension Service makes no guarantee, either implied or warranted, regarding the skills or knowledge of persons completing the Master Gardener training program and/or those persons identified as active members.
4. Education and experience may be used as qualifications when seeking employment, but not the Master Gardener title.

Approved by Executive Committee in April 2014

### **CODE OF CONDUCT**

1. Washington County Master Gardeners shall conduct themselves in a manner that strengthens the public's trust and confidence in our organization. Honesty and fairness, accountability, transparency, and commitment to the WCMG organization are to be our guiding principles.
2. Although travel expenses may be reimbursed by a host group, members representing WCMG shall not accept any stipend or honorarium for speaking before groups on horticultural subjects. While gifts may be accepted, unsolicited monies must be donated to the WCMG General Fund administered through the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service financial account.
3. Only programs or events approved by the *Garden Thyme* newsletter editorial staff shall be advertised in the WCMG *Garden Thyme* newsletter.
4. Master Gardener contact information shall be used only for Master Gardener business and shall not be used for personal gain. It shall not be shared outside our organization.
5. Social media accounts managed by and for Washington County Master Gardeners acting in their official capacity shall conform to these guidelines:
  - a. Posts containing personal attacks, profanity, nudity, hate speech, illegal material or political rhetoric, including endorsements and ads, are prohibited.
  - b. WCMG account administrators reserve the right to remove any post that might create a hostile or intimidating environment; to revoke a user's privilege to post on the WCMG accounts; and to block the content of any post. Every effort will be made to review posted comments in a timely manner.

- c. Opinions expressed on social media pages are not necessarily those of the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture and its staff, and no guarantee of the accuracy of any post is given or implied. Posts shall be used only for non-commercial purposes. Solicitation of funds or promotion of commercial entities shall not be allowed in any post or comment.

Approved on May 27, 2014

## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION**

1. Any conflict or issue brought by or related to a WCMG should immediately be reported to the President or Vice President, who will notify the Extension Agent responsible for managing the MG program. The Extension Agent and two members of the Executive Committee, preferably the President and Vice President, will promptly address the conflict and take the necessary steps to resolve the conflict after discussions with the individuals involved. All discussions and agreements will be documented and kept by the Extension Agent. The Extension Agent shall inform the State Master Gardener Program Coordinator about the matter and resolution.
2. If resolution at the Washington County level is not possible, the Extension Agent must contact the State Master Gardener Program Coordinator for inclusion in the resolution process. The State Program Coordinator is responsible for issuing a final recommendation which is to be followed by the County Extension Staff and WCMG(s). The State Program Coordinator shall inform the Ozark District Director in the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service of the final recommendation.
3. Every effort shall be made to achieve prompt, effective problem resolution with thorough two-way communication at the lowest level possible.
4. This conflict resolution policy does not apply to conflicts involving civil rights. Civil rights issues utilize a separate mediation process.

Approved by Executive Committee on January 23, 2025

## **CERTIFICATION AS A MASTER GARDENER**

An individual must complete the following requirement during the first year to become an active member of WCMG:

1. Sign the UA Cooperative Extension Service and Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement & Expectations for Volunteer Groups. Copies are available on [wcmgar.org](http://wcmgar.org) website in the Member Resource Guide in the 'Member Portal.'
2. Attend 40 hours of formal Master Gardener training;
3. Earn and record at least 20 volunteer hours on sanctioned projects or committees with the remaining 20 hours on sanctioned projects, committees, or non-sanctioned projects. Non-sanctioned projects could 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; etc.; and
4. Earn and record 20 hours of additional education, which may be obtained through the following means:
  - a. By attending Master Gardener monthly meetings and programs. Each membership meeting counts as two (2) education hours.
  - b. Credit for other programs is equal to the number of hours in the presentation.
5. By attending lectures, programs, classes, workshops, conferences, demonstrations, seminars, garden club programs of other organizations, etc.
6. By going on garden tours, field trips to nurseries, horticultural operations, etc.
7. By going to fairs, lawn and garden shows, botanical gardens, etc.
8. By listening to gardening podcasts; reading books, magazines and catalogues; watching TV, YouTube or other videos of gardening/horticultural programs; exploring garden-related websites.
9. By researching information to present at a meeting or program.

Hours must be recorded by the deadline (*see Recording Volunteer and Education Hours on page 3*).

During the second year and subsequent years, a member must complete the following to remain an active member:

1. Earn and record at least 10 volunteer hours on sanctioned projects or committees with the remaining 10 hours on sanctioned projects, committees, or non-sanctioned projects (*see non-sanctioned project examples in first year*);
2. Earn and record 20 hours of continuing education (*see first year education examples above*); and
3. Pay annual dues.
4. Hours must be recorded by the deadline (*see Recording Volunteer and Education Hours*)

Revised by Executive Committee on February 18, 2025

### **UNFINISHED NEW MASTER GARDENERS/TRAINEES**

1. A spring trainee who has completed at least 75 percent of the volunteer hours of their first-year requirement may request that the hours they are lacking be added to their following year's commitment. There must be a compelling reason they were unable to complete their hours, such as serious illness, injury, or unanticipated work requirements.
2. There will be no extension for education hours.
3. If the Master Gardener does not complete the remainder of the training year's hours plus the regular requirement for the following year, they cannot continue as a Master Gardener. No additional extension is available.
4. This policy applies only to spring trainees and is not applicable to on-line or fall trainees.

Approved by Executive Committee on May 16, 2023

### **RECORDING VOLUNTEER AND EDUCATION HOURS**

1. All WCMGs are requested to input their volunteer and education hours monthly, if not more frequently. The reported hours are important to the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service.
2. Volunteer and education hours must be completed and recorded in the online recording system by December 15.
3. The above date may be changed by the Executive Committee due to extenuating circumstances.
4. Travel to and from a Master Gardener activity shall not be counted as volunteer hours.
5. Preparation for a committee meeting or a sanctioned project volunteer day shall be counted as volunteer hours for that project or committee.
6. Unless other arrangements have been made, each WCMG member is responsible for entering his or her own hours. Members who do not have a computer should contact the Membership Committee Chair to arrange for a committee member to enter their hours.

Approved by Executive Committee February 18, 2025

### **NEPOTISM POLICY**

To avoid conflicts of interest which may result from family members serving on the WCMG Executive Committee (President, Vice President, Past President, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, Secretary, Member at Large, etc.) during the same period, family members in the same county shall not hold an Executive Committee position at the same time.

Arkansas Master Gardener Program Management Guide update emailed on April 7, 2025

### **MEMBER REINSTATEMENT PROCESS**

1. If a former Washington County Master Gardener volunteer left the MG program in good standing and wishes to rejoin the county program within 7 years of becoming inactive, he or she shall complete and submit the Request for Return to the Master Gardener Program form to the Washington County Extension Agent (*see Member Resource Guide – Forms*).
2. Upon the approval of the Washington County Extension Agent and the Executive Committee, a former WCMG member may be reinstated in the county program if he or she:
  - a. Completed the first-year requirements and was recertified the following year;

- b. Is not on a Leave of Absence or Sustainer status;
- c. Agrees to complete pro-rated volunteer and education hours for the year of reinstatement; and
- d. Signs a new Volunteer Agreement form.
- e. A member may be granted reinstatement only one time. After seven (7) years, a former Master Gardener must repeat Master Gardener training.

Revised by Executive Committee on May 25, 2015

### **ADVANCED MASTER GARDENER CERTIFICATION**

1. Advanced Master Gardener certification is provided by County 76 and is open to active members in good standing.
2. New WCMGs/Trainees can take part in advanced training as soon as they complete their required 40 hours of volunteer their first year.
3. Master Gardeners must remain in good standing in their county program to continue taking courses and to achieve advanced certification.
4. Master Gardener Sustainers will be allowed to participate in advanced training opportunities if space is available, but hours will not count toward advanced certification.
5. Master Gardeners have an opportunity to attain five levels in the Advanced Master Gardener program.

Revised by AR MG County 76 in 2025

### **SANCTIONED PROJECT OR COMMITTEE CHAIRPERSON(S) RESPONSIBILITIES**

1. Being the leader for a Washington County Master Gardener (WCMG) sanctioned project or committee can be a very fulfilling and rewarding job, providing opportunities for leadership, learning, organization, community-building, and fostering new friendships.
2. An active WCMG member who assumes leadership as a chair or co-chair for a sanctioned project or committee must have completed annual volunteer and education requirements.
3. Project/committee leaders' general responsibilities:
  - a. Have a planning meeting each spring to formulate the project's measurable goals and objectives.
  - b. Determine schedule of volunteer days and times.
  - c. Determine objectives and measurable goals for the year.
  - d. Plan gardens, beds and equipment requirements.
  - e. Display the permanent Master Gardener Project sign.
  - f. Recruit, mentor and provide educational opportunities for volunteers.
  - g. Wear name tags and/or MG shirts each volunteer day and to any project-sponsored activities.
  - h. Have morale-building gatherings such as meals together or off-season projects to help maintain interest and involvement of project/committee volunteers.
4. Project/committee leader(s) responsibilities for each volunteer day:
  - a. Contact volunteers before each volunteer day, especially if there is a cancellation.
  - b. Be present on volunteer days or appoint a substitute.
  - c. Plan tasks to be done and encourage team input.
  - d. Gather needed plants and materials.
  - e. Assign duties to each volunteer.
  - f. Remind volunteers to record their hours.
  - g. Post the "Master Gardeners at Work" sign. Store sign on-site or at a designated place when not in use.
5. Project leaders' responsibilities to project sponsors:
  - a. Be the liaison with the sponsoring organization to determine annual project scope, goals, and budget.
  - b. Have a meeting with the sponsor(s) prior to March to discuss funding, measurable goals and objectives.
  - c. If the project sponsor's liaison changes, meet with the new liaison to determine continuing goals, funding, etc.

- d. If there are significant changes in the project’s scope or funding, a new project proposal form may be needed.
6. Project budget:
  - a. Be knowledgeable about the project’s budget and stay within the established limits.
  - b. Be prompt in submitting receipts for reimbursement to the project sponsor.
  - c. Submit requests for additional funding prior to the time expenditures are planned.
  - d. If the project’s funding is held by the Extension Office, carefully follow all the guidelines for purchasing and reimbursement.
7. Project education components:
  - a. Research for historical accuracy of plants, if required by the project sponsor.
  - b. Share plants and gardening practices with other projects or community members.
  - c. Other examples include plant labels, educational handouts, how-to gardening demonstrations, seed giveaways, plant lists, or garden maps.
  - d. Participate in local events, schools, Arbor Day activities, or presentations by WCMGs or guest experts.
8. Project documentation responsibilities:
  - a. Provide archival information about plants that do well or do not thrive.
  - b. Provide project photographs or assign photography to a WCMG volunteer.
  - c. Celebrate successes, recognize both individual and team efforts, including nominations for the annual WCMG awards.
  - d. Publicize successes to others through social media and/or the *Garden Thyme* newsletter.
  - e. Share the optional annual summary report with the project sponsor and project team members; include accomplishments, special recognition, education, challenges, needs, and photographs.
9. Project reports:
  - a. Annual reports are no longer required, yet they certainly may be done if it is beneficial to the project and its volunteers and sponsors. Annual reports are an excellent tool to assess the year’s successes and challenges.
  - b. Attend semi-annual meetings of project chairs (or send a representative from the project).
  - c. Present project status report (5 minutes or less) with photos and information via slides at a monthly WCMG membership meeting as scheduled biannually.
10. Contact information:
  - a. Contact the Sunshine Committee if there is an illness or death within your MG community so that cards can be sent.
  - b. Contact the Project Review Committee any time help is needed with project issues or problems. If the Project Review Committee is unable to resolve an issue, they will then take it up the “chain of command” to resolution. Always know that the Project Review Committee values and appreciates the project leaders very much.

Approved by the Executive Committee on October 15, 2024

### **SANCTIONED PROJECT OR COMMITTEE CHAIR(S) SUCCESSION PLANNING**

1. A succession plan is to ensure the continuous and effective leadership of the WCMG Sanctioned Project or Committee by identifying and preparing future leaders to step into key roles as needed. The plan aims to facilitate a smooth leadership transition, maintain project or committee continuity, and support the ongoing success of WCMG initiatives.
2. Identify and define the primary responsibilities, skills and qualifications for each chair’s role.
3. Evaluate current leadership and identify potential successors.
  - a. Assess tenure of current leaders to anticipate potential vacancies due to term limits or other factors.
  - b. Identify potential successors within the committee or WCMG community based on needed experience, skills, interest in leadership, and commitment to the project or committee.

4. Develop and train successors:
  - a. Provide training and mentoring opportunities for potential successors.
  - b. Include participation in leadership meetings, decision making processes, and tasks/responsibilities.
5. Create a leadership transition plan:
  - a. Establish a transition timeline, particularly for term-limited roles or anticipated vacancies.
  - b. Arrange for overlap periods, if possible, for the outgoing leader to work alongside the incoming leader to transfer knowledge and provide support.
6. Communicate the succession plan:
  - a. Share the succession plan with all project or committee members to ensure transparency and confidence in the future leadership.
  - b. Regularly update the plan to reflect changes in project or committee membership, leadership, or project focus.
7. Review and adjust the succession plan: Adjust based on feedback, changes in project or committee needs, or availability of new leadership candidates.
8. Encourage an inclusive and diverse leadership:
  - a. Promote diversity and inclusivity in the selection and development of future leaders to reflect the mission, values, and goals of the WCMG program.
  - b. Encourage participation from a wide range of volunteers to bring diverse perspectives and ideas into leadership roles.

Approved by the Executive Committee on October 15, 2024

#### **ENDOWMENT FUND**

1. The WCMG Endowment Fund exists to award scholarships to University of Arkansas at Fayetteville (U of A) Horticulture students.
2. Funds donated to the Endowment Fund shall be held in an account managed by the UA Foundation Agricultural Development Council (ADC).
3. WCMG members and others in the community may make donations to honor or memorialize individuals or to make general financial contributions to the WCMG Endowment Fund at any time.
4. Donations may be made online.
5. Donations not made online must include a completed Washington County Master Gardener Endowment Fund form which can be found in the Member Portal section of [wcmgar.org](http://wcmgar.org).

Revised by Executive Committee in November 2022

#### **OTHER DONATIONS OF CASH OR NON-CASH ITEMS**

1. Washington County Master Gardeners and others in the community may donate funds to the Washington County Master Gardeners organization.
2. Gifts in-kind may also be made and are subject to approval by the U of A Foundation Agricultural Development Council.
3. Each type of donation or gift of any value shall be reported to the Washington County Extension Office.
4. The UAEX Staff Chair shall ensure the University of Arkansas County Extension Service (UADA-CES) financial guidelines are followed for all gifts and donations.

Revised in 2021

#### **ANNUAL CONTRIBUTION TO STATE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM**

1. By December 31 of each year, the WCMG organization shall contribute at least \$200 annually to the state Master Gardener support areas for the following year.
2. The Executive Committee shall determine the amounts to be contributed to the awards, MG State Conference, college scholarship fund, and/or sanctioned project scholarship fund as approved in the annual budget.
3. Additional amounts may be contributed to the MG state conference, college scholarship fund, and/or sanctioned project scholarship fund as approved in the annual budget.

Approved by Executive Committee on December 17, 2024

## **REIMBURSEMENT OF WCMG SANCTIONED PROJECT AND COMMITTEE EXPENSES**

1. All expenditures must receive pre-approval and signature of the project/committee chairperson prior to any purchases, as well as have been included in the current fiscal year's budget approved by the membership. WCMG members shall be reimbursed only for pre-approved expenditures.
2. All unbudgeted expenditures must be approved by the Executive Committee prior to purchase.
3. Refer to Member Resource Guide – Forms section for the Purchasing Protocols for Master Gardeners and the Master Gardener County Depository Purchase Request forms.

Revised on March 19, 2024

## **ARKANSAS STATE MASTER GARDENER AWARD RECIPIENT REIMBURSEMENT**

For WCMGs who also win at the state level, one representative for each award who participates in early registration needs to coordinate with Colin Massey, the Extension Agent responsible for managing our WCMG program, and Julie Treat, AR MG State Horticulture Program Associate, to have the early registration charged to the WCMG program before registration to ensure proper charge-back to the WCMG program.

Revised on September 16, 2025

## **COUNTY 76 PLANT-NURTURE-GROW LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE REIMBURSEMENT**

Washington County Master Gardeners shall fund up to three incoming Executive Committee members' registration to attend. Coordinate with Colin Massey, the Extension Agent responsible for managing our WCMG program, and Julie Treat, AR MG State Horticulture Program Associate, to have the early registration charged to the WCMG program before registration to ensure proper charge-back to the WCMG program.

Revised on September 16, 2025

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF SANCTIONED PROJECTS AT THE EXTENSION OFFICE**

1. The WCMG will budget \$1,000 annually for projects at the Extension Office: \$400 for the Compost Demonstration Site project, with an additional \$100 specifically allocated for educational training related to composting, and \$500 for the County Extension Office Grounds project.
2. Unused funds may not be carried over to the next calendar year.

Revised on July 15, 2025

## **QUALIFICATIONS OF TREASURER AND ASSISTANT TREASURER**

1. A WCMG member nominated for Treasurer or Assistant Treasurer shall have accounting or bookkeeping experience.
2. The Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer are required to have experience with Microsoft Excel and current financial software is required. The Treasurer's laptop utilizes Microsoft and Quicken.

Revised on March 19, 2024

## **EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING AGENDAS**

1. WCMG members who wish to submit an item to the Executive Committee's monthly meeting agenda shall contact the President at least thirty (30) days prior to the Executive Committee meeting. Urgent business matters may be approved closer to the meeting date at the President's discretion.
2. The President shall provide a written agenda to Executive Committee members prior to the monthly meeting.

Revised on August 19, 2025

## **PRESERVATION OF WCMG DOCUMENTS**

Following their approval by the appropriate body, the following documents shall be sent in portable document format (pdf) to the Archivist. The person responsible for sending each document is indicated in parenthesis:

1. Monthly Membership meeting minutes (Secretary).
2. Monthly Executive committee minutes (Secretary).
3. Monthly Treasurer's report (Treasurer).
4. *Garden Thyme* newsletter (*Garden Thyme* editor).
5. Reports produced by the following committees:
  - a. Awards (Chair).

- b. Membership (Chair).
  - c. Mentoring (Chair).
  - d. Projects (Chair).
  - e. Bylaws and Policies and Procedures (Chair).
  - f. Reports from other committees (Chairs) as suggested by the President.
6. Photos, newspaper articles, and other documents as suggested by the Executive Committee.

Approved by the Executive Committee on July 19, 2022

### **RECORDING POLICY CHANGES AND ADDITIONS**

The President shall forward to the Chair of the Bylaws and Policies & Procedures Committee any new policy and change in an existing policy following its approval by the Executive Committee.

Approved by Executive Committee on November 21, 2023

### **GUIDELINES FOR RECOGNITION OF DECEASED MEMBERS**

1. A Master Gardener in good standing at the time of their death shall be memorialized on the public-facing portion of the Washington County Master Gardener web page ([wcmgar.org](http://wcmgar.org)). Good standing is reflected by inclusion in the current year's membership directory.
2. When available, the memorial article shall include a photo of the deceased, preferably while volunteering at a sanctioned project; a brief biography; and mention of the date of the publication of the obituary.

Approved on September 22, 2023