



THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM 2008-2009

# REFERENCE GUIDE

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*Cover Illustration: Paisley Rice, Santee, CA (age 10)*

# ABOUT THE MASTER GARDENER ORGANIZATION

The seed for the Master Gardener (MG) program was planted in 1972 by Washington State Cooperative Extension. MG volunteers were trained to extend Extension's outreach to community residents in educating people about horticulture. The MG program began in Wisconsin through the UW-Extension in the late 1970's. Local MG groups banded together in 1992 to form the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association (WIMGA).

The **individual Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV)** is, of course, the focus of the MG program. Every person who has taken training and completed their volunteer hour commitment is a certified MGV. Individuals may become a member of their **Local Association** (if there is one in their area) and both individuals and local associations are encouraged to be members of the **State Association** (the WIMGA). The **MG Program Office** provides support to all MGs, both individual MGVs and local associations, and works closely with the WIMGA. Horticulture and other staff in the local **UW-Extension Offices** around the state also work closely with the MG program. These specific parts of the MG program are discussed in more detail in subsequent sections of this guide. A more detailed history and discussion of the MG program is in the first chapter of the General MG Training Manual, *Welcome to General Training for the MG Program* (pages i-ii through i-iv).

The goal of the MG Program is to train enthusiastic volunteers so they can, in turn, provide research-based information on a wide variety of horticultural topics to the general public in their communities.

**Annual Calendar of MG Activities**

January 31	Deadline for submitting dues to WIMGA Treasurer (Byron Hacker)
February 1	Normal deadline for March WIMGA newsletter
March or April Board Mtg	Face to Face WIMGA Board meeting — all local reps invited to participate
April 1	Normal deadline for May WIMGA newsletter
June 1	Normal deadline for July WIMGA newsletter
August 1	Deadline to submit applications to host Annual Conference in two years
August 1	Normal deadline for September WIMGA newsletter
August Board Mtg	WIMGA Educational Grant proposal guidelines distributed
August Board Mtg	Annual Accomplishment Report (AAR) guidelines distributed
October 1	Deadline to submit WIMGA Educational Grant proposals
October 1	Individual hours due to local recordkeepers
October 1	Deadline for completing elections for WIMGA Board District Directors whose terms have expired
October 1	Normal deadline for November WIMGA newsletter
October Board Mtg	Face to Face WIMGA Board meeting — all local reps invited to participate
October 20	County hour reports due to Program Office
November	WIMGA Educational Grants announced
November 1	Local association annual accomplishment reports due in Program Office
December 1	Normal deadline for January WIMGA newsletter
date TBA	WIMGA annual meeting (at conference)

**Upcoming Events for 2009 and beyond**

January 6-15, 2009	MG Tour of Costa Rica
March 22-26, 2009	International MG Conference, Las Vegas, NV
Oct 2-3, 2009	WIMGA Annual Conference, Wisconsin Dells, WI
July 2010	WIMGA Annual Conference, Sheboygan, WI
Oct 11-14, 1011	International MG Conference, Charleston, WV

# MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

The Master Gardener general training program is more than just a gardening class. It is designed to train volunteers to assist UWEX in community horticultural programs through volunteerism, education, and environmental stewardship. Participants should be made aware of the focus of the program — before they participate in training — and should be encouraged to continue their volunteer activities after completing the initial certification.

The Education Director provides the general training course in spring and the advanced training course (one of three topics) in fall. This includes scheduling, preparing and distributing course materials, arranging fiber-optic, PowerPoint and/or WisLine presentations. A video collection is also maintained for general training.

The training program is the responsibility of UW-Extension (not MGVs or a MG association). Locally, Extension may delegate facilitation of the program to MGVs, but Extension is still ultimately responsible for decisions regarding training. This may be provided by participating in the standardized program offered in spring through the WI MG Program Office. Alternatively, training may be offered at another time or in another format with instruction conducted primarily by the county Extension agent. Extension Specialists, experienced MGVs, and local professionals may be utilized to supplement the training.

## **Initial Scheduling**

About three months prior to the scheduled start date the Education Director sends an announcement regarding topics, dates and schedules electronically to all county UW Extension Offices. Interested counties are expected to indicate to the Education Director their intent to host MG training during that session. They are then placed on a email distribution list to receive additional program information, including advertisement and promotional materials, site registration forms (essential for fiber optic, digital and WisLine electronic connections), program topic schedules, etc. Such information is shared with participating counties electronically.

## **Recruiting New Volunteers and Advertising the Program Locally**

Promotional materials advertising MG training should emphasize that this is a volunteer program (as opposed to merely a gardening class). Standard brochures on becoming a MGV are available from the MG Program Office.

Individual host sites are expected to handle their own advertising and correspondence to participating students. Please note that Advanced Training is only open to certified MGVs; General Training is a pre-requisite for these courses.

Each individual that submits an application should be sent a letter stating their acceptance or non-acceptance into the program. Details regarding non-acceptance should be general in nature – limited to comments on the number of candidates in relation to available space, the large number of qualified individuals, etc. Non-accepted individuals should be informed that their application will be retained on file and that they will be notified when the next volunteer training session is offered (unless they are not accepted because of the results of their background check). Individuals accepted into the program should be mailed a class schedule, a list of volunteer opportunities, MG program policies, and a Volunteer Agreement to sign and return.

## Selecting New Volunteers

UW-Extension is an AA/EEO employer and provides equal opportunities in employment and programming, including Title IX and ADA requirements. The same principles apply to recruitment of volunteers.

A selection process is valuable in developing high quality volunteers and essential when there are more applicants than there are available positions in the training program. The county Extension agent is encouraged, but not required, to utilize an application form (the standard application form is available on the website or from the Program Coordinator) and form a selection committee to review applications, but he/she will make the final decision. See the MG Operating Policies for more detail on selection of volunteers.

Candidates outside the county can be accepted, although the training agent is not required to accept a resident from another county. The issue of where volunteer hours can or should be done and to whom the hours are to be submitted should be resolved before acceptance.

## Criminal Background Checks

The MG Program began requiring criminal background checks of all NEW participants in the program in January 2008. This policy is intended to protect vulnerable populations (especially youth, but also the elderly or individuals with disabilities). This requirement will be applied to everyone who applies to become a UW-Extension MG. A criminal history record check is done through the WI Department of Justice's Crime Information Bureau and all names are checked against the Dru Sjodin National Sex Offender Public Website.

The background check must be completed before the first class session. This will allow us to inform anyone with an unsuitable criminal history that they have not been accepted into the program before training begins. Training manuals will be sent only for those who have submitted the completed background check by the deadline – three weeks before the first class session. Individuals who do not submit the background consent form will NOT be allowed to participate in the class (except currently certified MGs who audit the class). It is the responsibility of the training facilitator to distribute a form to each participant, collect the forms, and mail them as a group to the MG Program Office no later than 3 weeks before the first day of class.

A list of prospective students with their contact information (mailing address, phone number and email address) must be submitted along with the background checks (either with the forms or emailed separately). This is to facilitate an efficient check of the national sex offender registry by zip code, as well as to confirm the spelling of poorly written names on the forms. Background checks will not be processed until the list is submitted.

## Participant Information

The county Extension office is encouraged to provide temporary name tags for class participants. **A list of class participants must be submitted to the State MG Program Coordinator along with the background check forms.** This should include the name to be used on mailings, the address of each individual, and an email address (if they have one). This can be submitted on paper or electronically. This information will be entered into the statewide database and will be used for one part of the background checks, mailing the newsletter, surveys, etc.

## Volunteer Agreement

Every new participant in the MG Program must sign the Volunteer Agreement provided by the MG Program Office. It is suggested that the form be given to prospective candidates along with the application form (so they have time to read it thoroughly) and collect the forms when they turn in their registration materials and fees. Alternatively, the form could be distributed with the manual and other program materials for collection during the first class or a subsequent session. Signed forms should be kept on file in the local UW-Extension office (do not send them to the MG Program Office). This agreement is important for liability reasons because MGVs are representing UW-Extension in their volunteer service.

This form can be downloaded from the MG website ([www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/UWEX-MGVolunteerAgreement08.pdf](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/UWEX-MGVolunteerAgreement08.pdf)) or requested from the Program Coordinator.

## Training Materials

Each participant receives a set of training materials. For General Training, this includes a “Yellow Manual” (the General MG Training Manual — that traditionally has a yellow cover) and a *Handbook for Wisconsin Gardeners* (a compilation of UWEX publications). Advanced Training participants receive a handbook of compiled UWEX publications and other reproduced materials relevant to the subject matter. The manual is not for sale to the general public; manuals are given to program participants upon payment of the training class fee and completion of the background check. **The UW MG Program Office copyrights the manual. Reprinting or copying any part of the manual without written permission is a violation of federal copyright laws.**

Manuals and other training materials are delivered to participating counties one to two weeks prior to the beginning of the class. For General Training, manuals will only be sent for those participants who have completed the background check.

Videos, CDs, DVDs or other media for class use are delivered either as a set before the session begins, or as needed. These materials MUST be returned promptly.

## Fees

Fees for general training are established by the MG Program Office. The fee covers the cost of the training manual, *Handbook for WI Gardeners*, cost of the background check, one year WIMGA membership, CDs, shipping, distance education charges (if applicable) and overhead costs. The county can add a local fee to cover costs for room rental, refreshments, volunteer recognition, name badges, and other necessary MG program expenses, but should not be used for general revenue generation. Additional resources can be offered to students on an optional basis, but fees should cover actual cost. The purchase of additional resources should not be used as a fund raising mechanism. The possibility of a scholarship for limited resource individuals is encouraged, but must be funded locally. Training and material fees should be managed through an Extension account. Membership dues and funds generated by a MG Association should be managed by association officers.

The collection of a deposit (to be refunded if volunteer hours are completed) is not prohibited, but also not encouraged. Charging a small amount belittles the value of 24 hours of volunteer service to the program and provides little incentive to volunteer in order to get it back, whereas higher amounts will likely prohibit lower income people from participating in the program.

## **Billing**

Payments by students are given to the site facilitator (UW Extension agent, MG volunteer, or other designee). About three to six weeks into the program, the Education Director sends a bill to the facilitator. Checks should be made out to “Master Gardener Program” and sent to the Education Director’s office (Robert Tomesh, 1575 Linden Drive, Madison, WI 53706). Payments are due upon receipt of the bill.

## **Examination**

Agents are encouraged to give a take-home quiz at the end of each class (testing can be a valuable learning tool).

Participants are expected to pass (70% correct) a comprehensive take-home or open book final exam. A standard exam is provided by the Educational Director, but Agents may substitute their own exams. One retest can be done for those who do not make a passing grade on the final exam.

## **Modifications to the “Standard” Program**

Ideally, MG General Training should be taught in person by UW Specialists. However, because of the large number of student MGs spread throughout the state, this is not possible. Distance education is a compromise to allow the largest number of people access to the class.

Many facilitators would prefer to offer a more hands-on experience for their MG students. The MG Program Office encourages any facilitators who are considering this, to do so at whatever level they feel comfortable. Many possibilities exist, from substituting a local speaker or hands-on activity for one of the WisLine sessions to developing an entire course independent of the distance education sessions. The only restrictions on developing a local MG training are:

- The Education Director must be contacted in advance.
- The course content must cover the same topics included in the MG General Training Manual.

The training class must include an orientation to Extension and the WI MG Program. Additional short presentations that focus on specific aspects of the MG Program should be introduced throughout the course. For more details on the General Training class, see the MG Reference Guide (available on the MG website) or contact the MG Program Office (Program Coordinator and / or Educational Director).

To aid facilitators in improving the quality of their programs, an online **Facilitator’s Manual for General Training** is being developed. Please note: at this time the site has only very rudimentary content, but will be added to as materials become available. This manual offers suggestions for supplemental or alternative activities, and has downloadable PowerPoint presentations for many of the units. The Facilitator’s Manual can be accessed at [www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/GT/facilitator.htm](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/GT/facilitator.htm). It is on the MG website server, but is NOT linked directly from the MG website (to make it harder for the casual browser to access). You must put in the entire address to get to the first page of the manual.

**MG Training Online**

The MG Program Office has decided NOT to offer training online for a number of logistical reasons. However, because of the reciprocity agreement with Minnesota, Wisconsin residents can participate in the University of Minnesota's electronic Master Gardener course. Wisconsin participants are expected to meet with their local UWEX Agent before taking the training and must complete their volunteer hour requirements locally in their own Wisconsin community. For more information on UM's online training program see the MN MG website ([www.mg.umn.edu/](http://www.mg.umn.edu/)).

**For More Information**

More information on the WI MG Program is available from the MG Program Office and on the WI MG website ([www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener)).

## BEYOND TRAINING: WHAT AGENTS, ADVISORS OR OTHERS FACILITATING TRAINING NEED TO KNOW

The MG Program is not just a class on gardening; it is a volunteer organization for participants to extend the knowledge they acquire in the training class. This means there is an on-going need to facilitate not only the instruction, but the volunteer program as well. This section provides some additional information about the MG Program that will assist you in offering the highest quality experience for our volunteers.

### **Mailing Lists for MG students**

Participants in MG training receive a year's membership in the WIMGA, which includes the bimonthly newsletter (March, May, July, September, November and January). The registration fee paid to the MG Program Office automatically includes \$5 dues that are sent to the WIMGA Treasurer. The information that the facilitator supplies (the list of names and current addresses) to the MG Program Coordinator along with the background check forms is used for the mailing list. Everyone will be sent a message when they begin the class informing them

### **Volunteer Agreement**

All participants in MG training must sign a volunteer agreement that will be kept on file in the UW-Extension office. See page 7 for more information

**ALL MGVs** (Intern or Continuing) are required to complete 24 hours of volunteer service for certification or recertification each year. For recertification, 10 hours of Continuing Education are required annually. These are the statewide MINIMUMS for volunteer service; local groups can establish their own higher requirements if they wish (but will not affect certification by the MG Program Office).

### **Volunteer Hours**

After your participants complete the training and pass the exam, they should be working on their volunteer hours as Intern MGVs. It is important that they are aware of the expectations of the program. Intern MGVs must complete the minimum number of hours of volunteer service within a year of the completion of their training class, and submit their record of these hours to their local recordkeeper to be certified. As the facilitator for MG training, you (or someone you designate) are (is) the local recordkeeper.

Guidelines and suggestions for activities that qualify for volunteer hours are outlined on the back of the standard timesheet. However, the local facilitator is the final authority on determining what is acceptable. A general rule of thumb is that the activity benefits the community (not just an individual). Contact the MG Program Coordinator if you want to discuss specific situations.

### **Continuing Education**

Please note that the restriction on horticulture TV programs for continuing education credit has been changed. Previously, *The Wisconsin Gardener* was the only acceptable

TV program. Now any program that is approved by the local UWEX agent can be used for CE hours. That means YOU will have to make the determination on which programs you will accept in your county. (The MG Advisory Committee declined to designate specific programs that are acceptable primarily because broadcasts vary regionally and many of those on the committee do not have access to even the more common programs.)

### **Timesheets**

A standardized individual volunteer hour report sheet is provided by the MG Program Office for your convenience. It is available from the MG Program Coordinator or can be downloaded from the MG website as a pdf or Word file (click on State Association, then MG Program Office). This form is updated annually to reflect any changes in requirements of the program.

However, it is NOT necessary to use the standard form. Some counties/associations have developed their own forms. You may use whatever format works best for your group as long as the pertinent information (number of volunteer hours in youth education, community education and support services, and continuing education) can be calculated.

### **Collecting Individual Hour Reports**

Individual MGVs should turn in their individual volunteer hour reports (timesheets) to their local recordkeeper by October 1 each year. It is perfectly acceptable to have an earlier deadline for submission if you choose, but make sure the participants are aware of this! It is important that YOU announce this deadline and remind your participants to encourage compliance.

Individual hour reports should be kept on file in the local UWEX office. Do NOT send individual hour reports to the MG Program Office.

### **Compiling and Submitting County Volunteer Hour Reports**

County (or association) volunteer reporting forms are sent from the MG Program Coordinator each year about a month before individual hour reports are due. The local recordkeeper is responsible for transcribing the totals on the individual hour records to this composite report. This report is due back to the Program Office by Oct 20 each year.

It is vital that these reports be submitted in a timely manner. The information is used to develop the statistical reports for inclusion in the annual accomplishment report (see page 16) which documents the importance of MGVs in their communities. If county reports are received too late, your county's contributions may not make it into the report.

### **Certificates for Newly Certified MGVs**

MGVs that complete the requirements for the General MG training program are entitled to receive a certificate indicating their completion of the program. Certificates are NOT automatically sent for a variety of reasons (some groups do not use the standard certificates; some groups want to present certificates to everyone at the same time at a meeting or awards presentation; in some areas people are given their certificate whenever they complete their hours; etc.). **The facilitator MUST request certificates.**

Certificates can be obtained at any time after the minimum volunteer service has been completed. Certificates are available from the MG Program Coordinator, and can be obtained blank (for you to fill in the name) or printed with the name of the recipient. The Certificates

will come with the signature of the Program Coordinator and a space for the UW-Extension Agent (or other facilitator if there is no participating Agent) to sign. If you wish to have the Certificates printed for you, all you have to do is send the Program Coordinator a list of names (by email or regular mail).

### **MG Membership Cards & Stickers**

Those MGVs who have completed the requirements for certification or recertification will receive Member-in-Good-Standing cards. The wallet-sized cards that indicate they are a UW-Extension “*MG-in-Good-Standing*” for the coming year will be sent to the County office (or facilitator) along with year stickers to be applied to the cards, and a second set of stickers for members to affix to their name badges if they choose. You do not need to request these cards or stickers, as they will be sent automatically, approximately 2-4 weeks after the county volunteer hour reports have been submitted.

### **MG Name Badges**

All Certified MGVs are eligible to order a Wisconsin MG name badge. More information about ordering name badges is on page 19.

### **Annual Accomplishment Report**

All WIMGA-affiliated local associations are solicited for their contribution to this report compiled by the MG Program Coordinator. However, in counties where there is no official association, a UWEX Agent or group of MGs may wish to submit information in order to include their contributions in the report. Several Agents have done this in the year prior to their association becoming a member of the WIMGA, then passed the responsibility on to the Association. For more detailed information about the AAR, see page 16. If you wish to submit a county report, please contact the MG Program Coordinator.

### **Transfer Master Gardener Volunteers**

Out of state MGVs wishing to be certified as WI MGVs:

1. Must verify their original certification by giving their local WI Extension agent a copy of their original MG course certificate or a letter from the certifying body in their transfer state stating the date MG training was completed, final exam was passed and required volunteer hours were completed.
2. Must complete, during the first year they seek WI certification, the minimum number of volunteer hours and 20 hours of continuing education that is approved by UWEX. This is to better acquaint them with WI Extension bulletins and gardening conditions in WI. WI MG recertification guidelines apply once Transfer MGVs are certified in WI.
3. Must purchase the current WI MG training material for the General MG Course.
4. Are encouraged to join a local MG association and the WIMGA.
5. Are encouraged to take the next available UWEX MG training session in their area.

These requirements may be relaxed for MGVs coming from adjacent states with similar gardening conditions and similar training materials. This is left up to the discretion of the local facilitator.

## INFORMATION FOR INDIVIDUAL MGVS

As a MGV you have joined a huge family of volunteers in horticulture. This offers an excellent opportunity to become involved in your community and educate others in a variety of areas related to gardening and horticulture. To become and remain an active MGV, every individual must complete (and turn in a record of) their volunteer service to their community, and report amount of time and the activities to their local Extension office on an annual basis.

### Volunteer Projects

There are hundreds of ways to complete your volunteer hours. Your local facilitator, or local association members, may provide opportunities for you to participate in already-established activities. But if these are not readily available you may choose other activities such as giving talks at public events; designing and staffing exhibits, displays, or demonstrations at local fairs or other events; writing articles on horticultural topics for local newspapers; making presentations to 4-H groups, youth organizations, or youth clubs; or designing or planting park gardens and public areas. It's always a good idea to obtain your Agent's approval for these projects before you embark on them, however!

MGVs may work at the local county Extension Office or other sites and locations. Some volunteers perform tasks that can be done after hours at home or another site, such as research, writing, telephone calling, helping with meetings, and record keeping. Volunteer work should generally be done within the county; however, special arrangements can be made with the Extension agent or designated coordinator to participate in activities outside the county (e.g. Farm Technology Days, regional and state meetings).

### Recording and Submitting Individual Volunteer Hours

Record sheets are a method to keep track of the hours you volunteer as a MGV. If possible, record your volunteer and/or continuing education activities when you complete them. If you wait until the end of the year to write this down, you may forget how much time you really spent on projects and underestimate your contributions (or just decide it's too much trouble and get no credit for your hard work). Keeping records is an important part of the MG Program. Not only do they allow for recognition of volunteers for their hard work, but they are also valuable for program evaluation. These provide a record of the many ways MGs serve the public. Local and state governments, which fund the program, are very interested in how effectively Extension uses tax revenues. Detailed record sheets benefit both the MG Program and its clients.

A timesheet should have been supplied during training, but if you can no longer find it, you can obtain another from your Agent or Association, or download the form from the MG website as a pdf or Word file (<http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/>, then click on State Association, then MG Program Office, Providing Information and Resources).

Turn your reports in by the deadline to your **designated** local coordinator. This is often the Agent, but may be another MG in your Association. Ask at the local office if you are unsure. Although you should always try to turn in your hours by the deadline each year, if you miss that date, don't despair. Your hours can still be turned in for credit, although they may be "held" until the following year to simplify recordkeeping and database entry.

## Requirements for Initial Certification

Intern MGVs must complete the minimum number of hours of volunteer service within a year of the completion of their training class, and submit their record of these hours to their local recordkeeper to become a certified MG. A minimum of 24 hours of volunteer service are required for certification by the MG Program Office, although local requirements may be higher.

## Requirements for Recertification

Recertification is required annually to remain a Certified MG in good standing. In order to maintain certification, every MG must complete the minimum of 24 hours of volunteer service AND 10 hours of Continuing Education annually. The continuing education (professional development) may include programs such as WisLine programs, horticulture programs at your local meetings, twilight meetings, field days, horticultural seminars at local colleges, botanical gardens, or presentations by MGVs, MG conferences, specialized training or advanced training courses, or approved TV programs. Some of these programs include *The Wisconsin Gardener*, *Great Lakes Gardener*, *P. Allen Smith's Garden Home*, and *The Victory Garden* (all on Wisconsin Public Television), but there may be others that are approved in your area. Of course, MGVs are always encouraged to do more than the minimum!

## Membership in WIMGA

Every MG may become a member of the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association. Membership in WIMGA includes the bimonthly newsletter and other benefits. The initial year of membership is included in MG training fees, but after that year, dues must be paid to remain a member. Individuals may join the WIMGA on their own, but it is preferable to join through a local association (if one is available in your area). See the section on WIMGA (pages 22-23) for more details on dues and benefits of membership.

## MGV Titles

A person can only use the title of "Master Gardener Volunteer" when:

1. They are a member in good standing. This means that they have completed the training course, volunteered a minimum number of hours, and passed the final exam. Each year following the initial training, a person must attend a minimum of 10 hours of approved horticulture education sessions and volunteer 24 hours of Extension approved service to their community or county Extension office.
2. They are performing volunteer tasks for Extension. The MGV title can only officially be used when working on UWEX-approved volunteer projects. You cannot receive remuneration for these projects. It is permissible at any time or place to say that you have completed the WI MG training program. However, you can only answer questions and perform tasks representing yourself as a MGV when you are actually volunteering for Extension. Master Gardener training and experience may be given as qualifications when seeking employment. However, once employed, MG credentials should not be displayed. MGVs are advised not to advertise as MGVs in their names or places of business, nor be listed as such in business advertising. The name or MG logo cannot be used for personal gain, including to influence anyone to do business with you.

## THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM OFFICE: SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED TO ALL MGVs

The MG Program Office, housed in the Department of Horticulture on the campus of UW-Madison, is the centralized location for administration of the MG program. The MG Program Office provides support services to MGVs throughout the state. The MG Program Coordinator, Susan Mahr, and Education Director Dr. Robert Tomesh work closely together to plan, organize and implement various projects for MGVs in Wisconsin.

### **Program Coordinator**

Susan Mahr  
Master Gardener Program Office  
Department of Horticulture, Rm 481  
1575 Linden Dr.  
University of Wisconsin – Madison  
Madison, WI 53706  
semahr@facstaff.wisc.edu  
(608) 265-4504

### **Education Director**

Bob Tomesh  
Master Gardener Program Office  
Department of Horticulture, Rm 481  
1575 Linden Dr.  
University of Wisconsin – Madison  
Madison, WI 53706  
rjtomesh@facstaff.wisc.edu  
(608) 265-4536

Some of the services provided by the MG Program office include:

- Respond to inquiries by phone or email and provide information on the MG program, policies, projects, activities, and training, and general horticulture questions.
- Maintain the WI MG website. A calendar of events and educational articles are updated frequently (a new title approximately every 10 days, and events as frequently as daily).
- Publish the bimonthly 8-page newsletter that is direct mailed (or emailed on request) to all members of the WIMGA, each county Extension office and others.
- Produce the WIMGA annual accomplishment report.
- Collect annual volunteer hour reports, tabulate in database, and summarize statistics for reports.
- Assist WIMGA in planning annual and regional conferences and produce conference registration forms and publicity materials.
- Evaluate and improve training materials.
- Provide program supplies to MGVs and local Associations including name badges, certificates, member cards, banners, displays, and more.
- Promote the MG Endowment Fund (managed by UW Foundation; provides capital for long-term support of the MG program).
- Provide general training course during spring and advanced training course during fall via distance education.
- Maintaining video collections for general and advanced training.
- Organize horticulture demonstration gardens and education and vendor booths for Farm Technology Days.
- Provide a Horticulture Inservice for new agents, part-time summer agents and MGVs volunteering in county UW-Extension offices.

## Annual Accomplishment Report

An Annual Accomplishment Report of the Master Gardener Program in Wisconsin is compiled by the MG Program Coordinator each year. The report is sent to each local association affiliated with the WIMGA, to Extension agents throughout the state, and to selected administrators. A summary of the current year's report is posted on the MG website (click on State Association, then Accomplishments) and complete reports from that and previous years can be downloaded as a pdf file.

This report documents the statewide activities of the WIMGA, the Master Gardener Program Office, and the activities of MGVs throughout the state in a brief executive summary, provides statistical information on MGV volunteer hours reported in Wisconsin, and includes one-page narrative reports submitted by local associations.

Local associations (or county offices where there is no official association, but a motivated agent or group of MGVs) are encouraged to submit information for use in the report. It would be wonderful to have full participation of all the WIMGA-affiliated local associations. The format allows each association to mention 5 activities (or types of activities) in a bulleted list and provide a more in-depth discussion of a single highlighted activity (that may include a photo or two), as well as allowing each group to provide some general information in a narrative section (space permitting). Information relating to the annual theme is requested as well for use in the executive summary.

The executive summary is a short article that describes the activities of the MG program on a statewide basis. It focusing on a different topic or theme each year, but mentions other general types of activities as well. Past themes have included beautification, hunger prevention, and youth gardening. The theme for 2007 is "Enabled Gardening." There is no expectation that associations must participate in specific activities related to the theme; the theme is merely a means of focusing on a distinct aspect of the MG program to tell a story. The intention is to produce a promotional article that puts the spotlight on the ways MGVs are contributing to their communities in varied ways.

Requests for contributions are made in late summer (in August or September), with the deadline for submission on November 1. The report is produced within a month, so publication and distribution is in December.

## Awards

Awards are presented yearly to MGVs who have given exceptional service to the program. Award cards are given for completion of 150, 250, 500, and 750 hours of volunteer service. A certificate is awarded for 1000 hours and 10 years, while special awards are given for higher levels. These awards are sent to the county UW-Extension office for distribution locally.

Awards are based on records of volunteer service in the statewide database, so it is essential that MGVs turn in their hours regularly to be eligible for awards.

## Banners

Several banners are available to check out from the MG Program Office for use at various events, such as conferences, seminar, fairs or other public gatherings. Two large horizontal MG banners and four vertical banners can be reserved. The vertical banners measure 2 feet by 5 feet.

To reserve a banner send a request to the MG Program Coordinator. You will be notified if the banner(s) is available, and the banners will be delivered in the most efficient and economical manner (this may be by mail, or if convenient, someone may drop it off at your local county Extension office). You will be responsible for returning the banner(s) promptly to the Program Office or delivering it to another group if so instructed.



## Certificates

MGVs that complete the requirements for the General or Specialized MG Training programs are entitled to receive a certificate for the appropriate program. These certificates must be requested by the Agent or other facilitator. See page 11 for more information on ordering certificates.

## Database & Recordkeeping

The MG Program Office maintains a statewide database that includes all Master Gardeners who have taken training since 2000 — before that records were kept locally and records for inactive MGs were generally not included in the statewide database. The database contains contact information and annual records of volunteer and continuing education hours. The data in the statewide database are used to calculate total volunteer hours for each county for inclusion in the WIMGA annual accomplishment report.

Under the Wisconsin Public Records Law, UW-Extension ordinarily must release lists in its custody to the public upon request. The contact information included in the database must be released to individuals, organizations or businesses that request it, except for those people who have requested confidentiality in writing. For convenience, the back of the timesheet includes a brief release form for MGVs to sign and date to withhold their personal information.

See page 11 for more specific information on submitting county volunteer reports and page 13 for details on submitting individual timesheets.

## Educational Materials to Loan

The MG Program Office maintains a small collection of educational videos, CD-ROMs, displays and other materials. These are available for loan without charge (although the borrower is responsible for the cost of returning them) on a first come, first served basis.



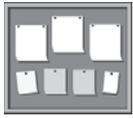
### Videos available include:

- ***Compost...because a rind is a terrible thing to waste!*** (7:00, Cornell Waste Management Institute) — this short video was produced for a conference on food waste composting in large institutions to promote this to institutions who are considering doing this.
- ***Compost Truth or Consequences*** (15:00, Cornell Waste Management Institute) — designed to take the mystery out of home composting by teaching the science behind the solutions. Using a quiz show format to present common questions, it shows home composters learning how to provide the right conditions for composting without problems.
- ***Composting for the 90's: A Reason and Method for Everyone*** (50:00, Gardening Nature's Way) — A how-to guide covering different ways to make and use compost.
- ***Don't Bag It*** (7:30, Texas Ag. Ext. Service) — Good info, even for WI, on benefits of leaving clippings on lawn. Good graphics on how mulching mowers work; easy to understand statistics on environmentally sound lawn care for better recycling, save time and money, and improve lawn quality.
- ***Insect Parasitic Nematodes: "Tools for Pest Management"*** (30:00, Ohio State Univ.) — This video covers the basics of what nematodes are, the different commercially-available species, their potential uses, and application requirements, as well as the limitations of these biological control agents. The dramatization involves golf course pests, but the discussion includes usage for agricultural and horticultural applications.
- ***It's Gotten Rotten*** — (20:00, Cornell Waste Management Institute) — provides an introduction to composting as a means for engaging high school students in inquiry-based science.
- ***Vermi Video: Our Best Friend*** (10:53, Recycling Council of Ontario) — Goofy substitute teacher Mr. Wormley teaches unruly elementary school class about the benefits of recycling and vermicomposting.
- ***Right in Our Own Backyards*** — (15:00, Rodale Institute) humorous and educational overview of home composting, lawn care and worm composting basics from Organic Gardening Magazine.
- ***Turning Your Spoils to Soil*** (15:00, University of Connecticut; also a Hmong language version at 19:30) — factual educational video on home composting basics with a science emphasis. Recipes, types of bins, uses of finished compost, mulch, and worm composting.
- ***Wormania*** (26:10, Flowerfield Enterprises Production) — features close up scenes of live earthworms in natural habit and worm bins. Mary Applehoff, Worm Woman guru, offers lots of facts and sing along fun with campy Billy Brennan and kids.
- ***Yard Waste to Yard Riches*** (17:00, UWEX Media Collection #16824) — Melinda Meyers discusses ways of handling yard waste including composting (with instructions for several methods), selecting the right plants for the right location to reduce pruning, and using waste as mulch.



### CDs available include:

- ***A Beginner's Guide to Vegetable Gardening*** (Purdue Univ.) — This program is targeted at novice vegetable gardeners and uses original text, photographs, and video clips to illustrate different vegetables and proper gardening techniques for the Midwest. Experienced gardeners will find value in its fully-linked index and additional resources.
- ***The UC Guide to Solving Garden and Landscape Problems*** (Univ. California) — This interactive CD-ROM lists pest and disorders on 40 fruits and vegetables and more than 80 ornamental trees and shrubs; details nontoxic management options; and introduces many beneficial insects through more than 4800 color photos and hundreds of line drawings. Although developed for the West, most of the information is useful for gardeners anywhere in the U.S.



### Displays available include:

- **Backyard Composting** (SHWEC) — this display provides education on backyard compost bins or heaps, with a quick “recipe” for building a home compost pile, and points out materials that should and should not be included in a backyard pile. It also suggests ways to use the finished compost product. Designed for use on table top panel boards with dimensions approximately 4 ft. high by 8 ft. wide.
- **Gypsy Moth: Alien Invader** (UWEX) — A spaceship theme shows how to recognize the gypsy moth’s four life stages, present how gypsy moths spread and provide defense recommendations for homeowners. There are 17 display pieces printed on sturdy, washable styrene. Designed to fit on a 46” by 72” three-section display board with three 46” by 24” panels.
- **Vermi-composting** — this depicts a simple method for constructing a worm bin, care and feeding of the bin and worms, and uses for the finished product. Designed for use on table top panel boards with dimensions approximately 4 ft. high by 8 ft. wide.

### Membership Cards and Stickers

The MG Program Office provides wallet-sized cards and yearly stickers to all MGVs that complete the requirements for annual recertification. The cards are sent automatically to the county UWEX office of MGVs that qualify to be distributed locally.

### Name Badges

All Certified MGVs are eligible to order a Wisconsin MG name badge (any MGV who is active and has completed their initial certification within the last year or is currently recertified). This is verified from volunteer hour records submitted by local associations and the MG Program Office.

The official WIMGA name badge is white plastic with screenprinted logos, engraved letters and a pin back, and is approximately 2 x 3½ inches.

Order name badges from the MG Program Coordinator. Currently name badges are \$6.50 each (with a \$2.00 s/h fee for orders of 3 or less), and payment should accompany any badge order. Group orders are preferred rather than individual orders (to save on delivery costs), but each person can write an individual check. If you are not affiliated with a local association, send in an order form and payment. Checks must be made payable to **UW-Horticulture**. An order form can be downloaded from the MG website (State Association, then MG Program Office, Providing Information and Resources), but it is not necessary to use this.



Name badges are delivered to the local association as soon as possible, but because names are held until there is a minimum number, the length of time will vary considerably. An estimated arrival date will be provided with the confirmation of the order.

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### Newsletter

The bimonthly WI MG newsletter contains informative articles about MG activities, horticulture education, resource materials, upcoming events and more. Each 8-page issue of the newsletter is mailed directly to everyone who is a paid member of the WIMGA (see page 23 for more information on dues). Multiple paid members at the same address will receive one copy of each newsletter unless alternate arrangements are requested to the WI MG Program office.

Submit information for inclusion in the newsletter to the MG Program Coordinator by email or mail. Deadlines for the January, March, May, July, September and November issues are December 1, February 1, April 1, June 1, August 1 and October 1, respectively.

Every attempt is made to ensure delivery by the first week of the month, but delays with publication, printing, mailing services and the U.S. Post Office (the newsletter is sent by bulk mail) may result in a later arrival some times.

As an alternative, MGVs may request to receive their newsletter electronically (by email, as a pdf file).

There are many advantages to receiving the WIMGA newsletter electronically instead of on paper. The content of the e-newsletter is identical to the printed version, but is better because it has:

- Color photographs – instead of the grainy black and white things on paper.
- Embedded links – just click to go to that website or bring up a new email message with the email address already inserted.
- Arrival on the first of the month (or occasionally before, when the new month starts on a weekend) – with the printed version you're at the mercy of the US Postal Service and whenever they want to deliver that bulk mail to you.

In addition, everyone on the distribution list gets these bonus features available exclusively for those receiving the state newsletter electronically:

- Notice whenever a new horticulture article is posted on the MG website. This means you're always up-to-date with the latest info available.
- The special monthly electronic publication, Susan's Scoop, featuring timely information in several categories that don't quite fit in the WIMGA newsletter or as web articles (such as websites to check out, a seasonal recipe, a recent photo of something interesting in Susan's backyard (or elsewhere) with a short description of it, and a timely tip from UWEX Hort Agents and Specialists).
- A special prize each month to one lucky MGV selected randomly from the distribution list. This might be an educational resource (book, CD, etc.), some seeds, a plant, a food item, or a horticulturally- or botanically-themed item, usually related to one of the topics.

### **Timesheets**

The MG Program Office provides a standardized individual volunteer hour report sheet. It is available from the MG Program Coordinator or can be downloaded from the MG website as a pdf or Word file (click on State Program, then MG Program Office, Providing Information and Resources). This form is updated annually to reflect any changes in requirements of the program. The form can be personalized or modified if desired.

## Website

The WI Master Gardener website (<http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/>) provides up-to-date information on horticultural topics and upcoming events, connections with local associations, news of state association activities and policies, and extensive listings of resources in horticulture. Find links to other websites on a variety of topics in the “Gardening Online” section of Horticulture Information, and links to UW-Extension Garden Fact Sheets and UWEX Publications in the “Resources” section of Horticulture Information.

Each local association in the WIMGA has their own page, linked from the “Local Associations” page on the MG website to provide information for their own members, other MGVs, or people who might be interested in becoming a MGV in that county (or a combination of all of the above). There is no set format for these pages, other than you should have some contact information, preferably your Board Representative and County Extension Agent. It would be nice to have a list of your officers, but this isn’t essential. Some possible items to put on your page(s) include calendar of local meetings or events; descriptions of your major annual projects, photos and descriptions of recent activities, lists of committee members, details on upcoming training classes or member profiles. Many local associations have their newsletters posted on their pages on this website.

You can send the information (files with text and/or photos) to the MG Program Coordinator who will convert it to the appropriate format, or you can create your own .html file using Microsoft Front Page or an equivalent program. Contact the MG Program Coordinator for more specific information.

## ABOUT THE WIMGA

The WIMGA is a statewide organization whose mission is “to support and provide leadership to individual master gardeners and local organizations in their mission to assist UW-Extension in community horticultural programs through volunteerism, education and environmental stewardship.”

The WIMGA is the communication link between MGVs throughout the state and a voice for ideas and issues relating to the MG program. Members of the WIMGA Board of Directors sit on the WI MG Advisory Committee with UW-Extension Horticulture Specialists and Agents to recommend policy for the MG program.

### Board of Directors

WIMGA's Board of Directors is made up of 15 dedicated MGs, with two representatives from each of the 6 UW-Extension districts plus three Members-At-Large. They meet monthly over the WisLine network and at least twice a year face-to-face.

Each member local association has a Local Representative. The District Representatives are elected to the WIMGA Board from and by the Local Representatives in each district. Each month the Local Representatives receive a summary of the WIMGA Board meetings and other important information that they need to share with their local MGs. They can also be active in WIMGA by serving on WIMGA committees:

- Conferences
- New Association and Board Member Orientation
- Finance
- Long Range Strategic Planning
- Procedures
- Resource Development
- Retention

Anyone interested in serving on a committee should contact the chair of that committee For the names of committee members, see the MG website ([www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/)), then click on State Association, WIMGA & Board Information, WIMGA Committees).

### Annual activities of the WIMGA

- Conducting an Annual Conference for MGVs that is hosted by local association(s) in various locations that rotate around the state.
- Working closely with the MG Program Office.
- Awarding Education Grants to local MG associations
- Awarding scholarships to high school students participating at the Youth Plant Sciences Day to further compete in the National Jr Horticulture Association competition.
- Assisting UW-Extension with a booth at Farm Technology Days.

### Benefits of Membership

The WIMGA offers educational opportunities, educational grants, and support to local associations. Individual members receive the bimonthly newsletter mailed directly to their home and are invited to attend the annual conference each year.

## Educational Grants

The WIMGA offers a number of small grants (currently \$100, \$250 and \$400) each year to local associations to help with their educational activities. Applications are due by October 1st of each year. See the MG website ([www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/), click on State Association, then WIMGA & Board Information, then WIMGA Guidebook, and select Section I-H, Continuing Education Grants) for details on applying.

## Dues

WIMGA dues are \$5 per person and are used to cover the expenses of mailing one copy of the bimonthly WI MG newsletter to each address, as well as to support the other activities and programs of the Association.

Dues are to be paid to the **WIMGA Treasurer** by **January 15** of each year. For local associations, it is the responsibility of each association's treasurer (or another designated member) to assure dues and a list of paid members with current addresses are sent to the WIMGA Treasurer by the deadline each year. MGVs not affiliated with local associations should send their dues and address directly to the WIMGA current Treasurer.

Participants in MG training offered through the MG Program Office automatically become members of the WIMGA for the remainder of the calendar year (the following year for those in fall training) because the registration fee includes dues.

## Conferences

MG conferences are held every year. Not only are they an excellent educational opportunity, but they also allow MGVs to interact with other MGVs from outside their local communities. Optional tours are normally offered at conferences held during the growing season, giving people a glimpse at local horticultural attractions or businesses, interesting MG projects, and even the special yards of individual MGs of that area. There is often a trade show associated with these conferences, with vendors offering many horticulturally-related products for sale.

There are three types of MG conferences that are offered: the annual WIMGA conference, a Midwest regional conference and International MG conference.

- The WIMGA sponsors an annual conference each year. It is hosted by different local MG associations (individually or in a regional collaboration) in different areas throughout the state each time. Typically the program starts on a Friday night, with a featured speaker (this session may be open to the public, depending on conference facilities and other factors). Saturday is an all-day event, with speakers, workshops, the annual WIMGA meeting, a catered lunch, and more. The 2009 conference will be in Wisconsin Dells on Oct 2-3.

- A Midwest Regional Conference is hosted by the states of Wisconsin, Illinois, Iowa and Minnesota in rotation in even numbered years. It is generally held in the summer over a period of two to three days. Illinois will host the next conference in 2010.

- The International MG Association offers a three or four day conference in odd-numbered years. This meeting is held in diverse locations throughout North America. Previous conferences have been held in San Antonio, TX, Orlando, FL, and Cincinnati, OH, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, Canada and Little Rock, Arkansas. The next IMG conference will be March 22-26, 2009 in Las Vegas, Nevada.

## LOCAL ASSOCIATIONS

In more than half of the counties in Wisconsin there is already a local MG association. After participating in MG training, Interns are encouraged to join or organize a local/county MG organization. A local association helps provide a more structured environment for MGVs to participate in the MG program and helps develop sustained volunteer projects (and makes things more fun!). This also allows new MGs to connect with other people with similar interests, provides a continued means to learn and share ideas, and offers a system for organizing and addressing community volunteer needs.

If your county does not have such an organization, the MG Program office or the WIMGA can provide you with general information on starting an association. Members of other local associations are an excellent source of information on the benefits of forming an association and can provide personal experience to help guide this process. If you are interested in organizing a group in your area, ask your local Extension agent or program facilitator to assist in the process. The MG Program Office and the WIMGA Secretary can also help you with the organization and establishment procedures, including electing a leadership structure, establishing a meeting schedule (e.g. monthly), designing a system to communicate with other members (e.g. newsletter, telephone), and writing by-laws.

### Local Associations in the WIMGA

There are currently 48 local associations throughout the state that are affiliated with the WIMGA. To find out more about these groups, see the MG website ([www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/](http://www.hort.wisc.edu/mastergardener/), click on Local Associations).

### Retention of MGVs

Keeping those who take MG training in the program is generally a goal for most local associations; however, overall throughout the state, many more people take the MG course than actually complete the volunteer requirement and become certified. Many class participants never intend to become a “master gardener,” but take the class simply for the gardening information. Others complete the program and become certified, but then stop participating. To help with these issues, it is important to promote the MG organization PRIMARILY as a volunteer group dedicated to teaching others about horticulture and the benefits of gardening. The horticulture training MGVs receive can only be a SECONDARY purpose of the organization.

There are many approaches to improving retention, and no one solution will solve the problem for all associations because of the differences between groups around the state. The following list of strategies outlines some possibilities that local groups can pick and choose from. Each association must consider how serious they want to be about retaining all the volunteers they train, and put a corresponding amount of work into that effort. Examples of brochures, forms, and other materials used in implementing these strategies are available from the WIMGA Retention Committee.

#### 1. Promote Volunteerism

- At a minimum, all UW-Extension MG literature, brochures, and presentations should emphasize that this program trains volunteers in horticulture, and give this precedence over other information that is used to promote the program.

**2. Publicize the Program Requirements**

- Ask prospective volunteers for their specific area of interest in fulfilling the volunteer requirement when they enroll for the training.
- Ask for a commitment to specific projects before the end of the training.
- Collect a deposit from trainees that would be refunded when the initial commitment is completed.
- Require prospective trainees to sign an “up-front” agreement about their commitment to complete volunteer hours in exchange for the training.

**3. Prescreening**

- Require prospective trainees to complete an application form before being accepted into the program
- Conduct interviews with prospective trainees to eliminate those uninterested in volunteer work

**4. Provide Support to New MGVs**

- Local groups provide suggestions for projects already underway or proposed, that volunteers can sign up for to complete their hours.
- Assign a mentor to each trainee for at least a year. Mentors can encourage trainee’s involvement, help them fill out reporting forms and remind them of meetings, projects and events.
- Use newsletters and meetings to introduce new members and help them become acquainted with the existing group.

**5. Incentives**

- Provide awards for initial completion of the certification, along with media coverage and recognition.

### **Tax Identification Number**

Local organizations need an EIN number to open a bank account. EIN stands for Employer Identification Number. It is also known as a Federal Tax Identification Number, a nine-digit number the IRS assigns to business entities.

Form SS-4, Application for Federal Identification Number, is available on the IRS website at [www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov), by telephone (1-800-829-4933), by fax (1-859-669-5760) or by mail (IRS, EIN Operation, Philadelphia, PA 19255). Online is the fastest way and a number will be issued right away. Personal social security numbers should never be used for those accounts.

### **Tax-Exempt Status**

Local associations are independent of WIMGA and UW-Extension, and therefore must establish their own identity for taxation purposes.

### **Becoming a 501(c)(3) Charity**

It is helpful to have someone with accounting or legal experience assist in the process when applying for non-profit status.

Forms and instruction booklets needed can be requested online ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)) or by telephone (1-800-829-3676) or forms can be downloaded to print off the IRS website.

- Form SS-4 ( Application for Federal ID number) and instructions
- Form 1023 (Application for Recognition of Exemption under Section 501(c)(3) and instructions
- Publication 557 (Tax Exempt Status for your Organization)

Call the IRS with any questions at 1-800-829-4933 or call the local IRS office in your area.

You will also need to have completed By-Laws and Articles of Association (not listed as Corporation or Organization) in order to fill out the application. Treasurer's reports need to be up-to-date as they will need to be attached to the Form 1023 application.

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*The mission of the Wisconsin Master Gardener Association is to support and provide leadership to individual Master Gardeners and local organizations in their mission to assist UW-Extension in community horticultural programs through volunteerism, education and environmental stewardship.*