

**2017 INTERNATIONAL MASTER GARDENER SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES  
DEADLINE FOR SFE APPLICATIONS IS AUGUST 1, 2016**

Search for Excellence (SFE) is the recognition program of Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteer work throughout the United States, Canada and South Korea. SFE has seven categories in which EMGs can demonstrate their outstanding contributions to their communities. All SFE applications must show that significant learning took place, whether by the EMG or the general public.

All Extension Master Gardener volunteer projects are significant to their communities, but not all are SFE projects. The SFE is designed to recognize outstanding group projects, and not an individual who does outstanding work.

Project submission must meet the following guidelines to qualify for SFE awards:

1. Choose the category that best fits the project. Only one project may be submitted by a group per category
  - a. Youth Programs
  - b. Demonstration Gardens
  - c. Workshop or Presentation
  - d. Community Service
  - e. Innovative Projects
  - f. Special Need Audiences (Senior, Disabled Audiences or Horticultural Therapy)
  - g. Research (Applied Scientific Methodology)
2. Projects will be judged on their merit from work done between the years 2015-2016. Projects entered must have completed a full year to be entered. Program projects that have previously won International Master Gardener Committee (IMGCC) SFE awards are not eligible in any category.
3. *Simple to replicate.* A goal of SFE is to share the excellent ideas and programs so that they can be replicated by other MG groups. A 20-acre botanic garden would be difficult to replicate, but the gardening ideas inside it might be easy to recreate at another site. A step-by-step “how to do this” would be a great way to share your project.
4. *Practicality.* A SFE program is one that is easy to use and fits well for its intended situation. In other words, you have found the best way possible to meet a need of your community. For example: You could develop a wonderful program with a \$20.00 admission cost, but if people can’t afford the cost, they won’t come.

5. *Original and creative.* We are looking for that added touch that makes this program your own, or that reflects the personalities of the Master Gardeners involved. We don't want you to recreate the wheel, just maybe parts of it so that it fits your situation.
6. *Compatible with Extension and EMG missions.* Make sure to specifically link your project with the goals listed in a-d, below. Do not assume that the reader can figure out that your project is compatible with Extension and EMG missions.
  - a. Projects should have an educational component.
  - b. Projects must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientations, national origin, and marital or family status.
  - c. Projects should extend the resources of the University to the public wherever they live, helping them use knowledge to solve problems at work, at home, and in their communities.
  - d. Information provided should be university research-based.
7. We also consider whether significant learning occurred, as well as the number of people impacted by program.

## **APPLICATION Instructions**

1. The Search for Excellence project application must be written by the Master Gardeners involved, and not by Extension staff. Use the application template and provide your response in a WORD or PDF document. It should include the following information:

### **TEMPLATE**

- Name of MG Program, County and State/Province (e.g. Coos County, Oregon or Toronto, Canada)
- Name, address, phone and email of MG volunteer contact person
- Name, title, address, phone, email of MG coordinator / staff person
- Category: must select and submit in only ONE category
  - Youth
  - Demonstration Garden
  - Workshop or Presentation
  - Community Service
  - Innovative Project
  - Special Needs Audiences
  - Research (applied scientific methodology)
- Name of Project

- Description of project. Include target audience, goals, location and partnerships
- Methods. Discuss planning, implementation and evaluation (e.g. how results, learning and impact were documented)
- Results
- Significant learning and impact
- Budget narrative
- Names of active Master Gardeners ONLY who are involved in the project from start to finish, and that should receive a certificate. Please do not include their role. Please do not include any other individuals in this listing.

2. An emailed verification letter from your Extension Advisor/Coordinator is required and must come directly from that individual. The Extension Advisor/Coordinator's email must verify that:
  - a. Extension Master Gardeners involved are currently in good standing
  - b. Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the photos or as required by the applicable laws of the local state or province
  - c. All application documents have been reviewed.

The deadline for receipt of this verification is the same date as the application deadline: August 1, 2016. Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.

3. The application document should be in Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF format and must be no longer than four pages in length using Times New Roman in a 12 point or larger font. Up to six digital photos in JPEG format may be submitted with the application. Your Extension Advisor/Coordinator must email the verification letter along with the application and pictures **as attachments** (pictures, application and letter must all be attachments) to: Sharon Box ([sharonbox2001@comcast.net](mailto:sharonbox2001@comcast.net)) **AND** to the Box Account we are using to receive SFE applications ([upload.2017 ln.n2b5md9a98@u.box.com](mailto:upload.2017 ln.n2b5md9a98@u.box.com)). The Box Account will not accept emails that are sent without attachments. **Please put the MG program, county and state/province in the subject line of all emails.** Questions should be directed to Sharon Box via email ([sharonbox2001@comcast.net](mailto:sharonbox2001@comcast.net)). No hard copy of mailed applications will be accepted.
4. Do not send handouts or other large files with this application. If possible, size your photos for use in a PowerPoint presentation. No large picture files, please! Submit only the items listed in the application instructions 1-3 above (e.g. application, verification letter, up to six photos). Any files, extra pictures, handouts etc. will be disqualified. Any applications longer than four pages will also not be accepted for competition.

5. Receipt of the Extension Coordinator's email containing the application and attachments along with the Extension Coordinator's verification comments will be verified via email from the IMGC SFE Committee within two days of receiving it. If the Extension Coordinator fails to receive verification within 4 business days of submission, contact Sharon Box ([sharonbox2001@comcast.net](mailto:sharonbox2001@comcast.net)). We cannot be responsible for applications that we do not receive due to spam mail blockers, etc.

## **SIGNIFICANT LEARNING AND IMPACTS**

Significant learning, change in attitude and practices are outcomes that Extension uses to evaluate the impact of their services and programs. Impacts from Extension Master Gardener projects should improve people's lives. Explain how this project augmented learning, increased knowledge, or changed practices to enhance quality of life. These impacts could be economical, environmental, educational, health, community-based, etc. SFE projects should be developed to reach the most people possible from the target audience. Impact numbers are not as significant if the target audience does not learn or utilize information. Make sure you ask participants how this information helped them and record this as an impact. Depending on the nature of the project the evaluations may be very informal (i.e. casually asking questions) or formal (i.e. pre-test/post-test).

For example: Evaluation questions that ask, *"How do you plan to use this information?"* or *"Can you share specific information that you learned today?"* can help show impact—especially if you can show that 70% of the participants plan to change a gardening practice such as use fewer pesticides.

Look to the Extension Master Gardener blog

(<http://blogs.extension.org/mastergardener/tag/2015-sfe-awards/>) for information about the 2015 winning SFE projects.

## **EXPECTATIONS**

1. If you are selected as a Search for Excellence first place winner, you will be expected to provide a short (3 minute, maximum) talk about your project at the 2017 International MG Conference, which will be held in Portland, Oregon, July 10-14, 2017 (<http://blogs.oregonstate.edu/2017imgc/>). This presentation can be done in person by a designated representative or by sending a pre-recorded video. The presentation must be coordinated in advance with the SFE committee. Second and third place winners will be acknowledged at the conference, but will not be asked to give a talk.

2. BLOG POST: Each 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner will be expected to create a short blog post about their winning projects for the National EMG Blog <http://blogs.extension.org/mastergardener/>
3. POSTER: Each 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> place winner will be expected to prepare a poster to be displayed at the 2017 International Master Gardener Conference.
4. There is no reimbursement for your registration fees or travel expenses to the International MG Conference. We will inform you of the outcome of your Search for Excellence application by October 8, 2016, to allow your group to take advantage of early registration discounts for the 2017 International Master Gardener conference.
5. The Master Gardener program, rather than individual Master Gardeners, will receive a monetary award and plaque for winning first place in each Search for Excellence category. Second place winners may receive a monetary award if funds are available. Second and third place winners in each category will receive a certificate.

## IMPORTANT DATES

- August 1, 2016: Search for Excellence applications due (emailed to Sharon Box ([sharonbox2001@comcast.net](mailto:sharonbox2001@comcast.net)) AND to our Box Account ([upload.2017\\_in.n2b5md9a98@u.box.com](mailto:upload.2017_in.n2b5md9a98@u.box.com)))
- October 8, 2016: Applicants will hear back about the status of their SFE application by this date.
- October 10, 2016 – January 13, 2017: 2017 IMGC early registration
- January 14, 2017 – May 31, 2017: 2017 IMGC registration (no discount)
- June 1, 2017 – June 9, 2017: 2017 IMGC late registration (as space allows)
- July 10-14, 2017: 2017 IMGC in Portland, OR

## CRITERIA FOR SELECTION (100 point scale)

1. All applications are judged independently by at least three Extension Faculty and three Master Gardeners who are members of the SFE Committee. They will use the following criteria:
  - a. Simplicity of project (easy to replicate): 10 points
  - b. Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project for situation: 10 points
  - c. Originality or creativity: 10 points
  - d. Consistent with Extension and MG missions: 20 points
  - e. Clarity and completeness of project application: 20 points
  - f. Did significant learning occur?: 20 points
  - g. Number of people impacted: 10 points

**TOTAL: 100 points**

All of the judge's scores will be totaled and divided by the number of judges.

2. Projects that do not achieve a score of 80% or better will not receive a SFE Award.
3. A judge will be excused from judging an application from the state in which they work or volunteer as an EMG.
4. An aggregate score sheet along with all of the judge's comments will be returned to the applicants as soon as possible. We hope that the comments will help to strengthen your volunteer work. All decisions and scoring by the judges will be considered final.
5. In the case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.

We applaud all the volunteer work done by the Master Gardeners. We hope that this work is being recognized on the local, state and regional levels. The International Master Gardener recognition is a SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE of the highest quality within Master Gardener programs across the United States, Canada and South Korea.