

2018-2019

Guide to Volunteering OSU Extension Master Gardener™ Program Benton or Linn County



Oregon State University
Extension Service
Master Gardener™

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Welcome to the OSU Extension Master Gardener™ Programs of Linn and Benton Counties!

Master Gardener volunteers are people from all walks of life who are excited about the art and science of making things grow. We are all part of a team that works together to:

- Learn how to grow plants for food and beauty.
- Discover tested and trusted resources.
- Solve plant problems.
- Teach what we discover.

Together we learn and share research-based sustainable gardening practices to promote healthy landscapes, healthy foods and healthy communities.

We value your contributions to this amazing volunteer program and are looking forward to a great year together!

This resource guide is intended to provide concise information on the Program and explain the different elements of it. This guide provides answers to frequently asked questions and is meant to be a resource to you throughout your time as an OSU Extension Master Gardener volunteer.

Information in this volunteering resource guide includes:

- Your connection with Oregon State University
- Master Gardener classifications
- County Master Gardener Associations (BCMGA & LCMGA)
- Types of volunteer opportunities
- Recording your volunteer and continuing education hours
- How to count & report public 'contacts'
- Annual volunteer paperwork & MG recertification
- Program volunteer forms and background check policy
- The weekly MG eNews
- Social media, Extension website, and public eNewsletter
- Submission procedure & publication calendar for GROWING

Do you have questions or concerns? We want to make it right. Your Extension staff and faculty members are here to talk about:

- Challenges with completing your volunteer service.
- Conflicts between volunteers.
- Questions about roles and responsibilities of Extension and Master Gardener volunteers.
- Helping you get the most out of your Master Gardener experience.

Please also reach out with any questions or suggestions for items to include in future versions of this volunteering resource guide. We each serve two counties, so please call ahead to make sure one of us is in the office.

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YOUR CONNECTION WITH OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY— The main campus is located in Corvallis, and each county office is an “Extension” of the university. The University has three missions: resident teaching, research, and outreach. As a Master Gardener, you are now a volunteer representative of Oregon State University.

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE— This is the educational outreach arm of OSU that “extends” research and education services of OSU to the citizens of Oregon. As part of the land grant university system, the OSU Extension Service serves both rural and urban dwellers. Extension Service personnel include Extension agents, program assistants, specialists, support staff, and a large number of volunteers like yourself. Extension works in five program areas: 4-H Youth Development, Agriculture, Family and Community Health, Forestry, and Sea Grant (ocean and coastal issues). As a Master Gardener, you are part of the Agriculture area.

OSU EXTENSION OFFICE—Most counties in Oregon have an Extension office staffed by agents, support staff and volunteers. Funding for staff typically comes from both Oregon State University and the local county. The partnership between the counties and the University makes the Extension Service possible. A portion of your Master Gardener volunteer service time will be spent in the local Extension office answering gardening questions.

OSU HORTICULTURE FACULTY AKA “EXTENSION AGENT”—This is a person employed by OSU to extend information and education to the citizens of Oregon. Each agent has a particular area of expertise and an assigned geographic area (one or more counties) and is a faculty member in an OSU department. Most, but not all, Extension agents with Master Gardener responsibilities are members of the OSU Department of Horticulture. Brooke Edmunds is the Extension Agent who provides overall program supervision and support for the program in Benton & Linn Counties.

OSU EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM ASSISTANT – the program assistant manages many aspects of the Master Gardener Program. Elizabeth Records is the Program Assistant in Benton & Linn Counties and supports the Master Gardener Program.

OSU EXTENSION SERVICE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM STATE COORDINATOR—Gail Langellotto is the State Coordinator and has responsibilities for coordinating the Master Gardener Program on a statewide basis. These responsibilities include helping agents develop teaching programs for Master Gardener volunteers and coordinating activities and needs of a statewide nature.

LINN & BENTON COUNTY EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER WEBSITE – visit this website for general Master Gardener information and upcoming public events and classes: <https://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/linn-benton> Opportunities that are only for current Master Gardener volunteers are sent out in the weekly eNews email or posted on this volunteer resource website.

Master Gardener Classifications

OSU EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM CLASSIFICATIONS

Master Gardener Trainee: a first year Master Gardener in the process of completing the program requirements, which include participating in the training program, passing the final exam, and contributing 66 hours of volunteer service in approved activities (46 of which must be in plant clinics).

Certified Veteran Master Gardener: a veteran Master Gardener who has completed the program, wishes to remain active in the program beyond the initial year and volunteer in an educational role. Certified veteran Master Gardeners are required to recertify each year by completing 20 hours of volunteering, 10 hours of continuing education and submitting completed OSU volunteer paperwork.

Veteran Master Gardener (non-certified): a Master Gardener who has completed the program and wishes to remain active in the program beyond the initial year but not volunteer in a direct educational role(s). Non-certified Veteran Master Gardeners are still required to complete the OSU Conditions of Volunteer Service form annually. *Non-certified Veteran Master Gardeners are not eligible to provide education to public (presentations, plant clinic, serving as a mentor, any direct education, etc.) until they become certified.*

COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATIONS (BCMGA & LCMGA)

Many volunteers in OSU's Master Gardener Program choose to participate as members of their county Master Gardener Association Chapters. Membership in these chapters brings with it membership in the statewide organization, the [Oregon Master Gardener Association](#) (OMGA™).

While OMGA and its subsidiary Chapters were created principally to support and supplement OSU's Master Gardener Program, OMGA and the Chapters are separate entities, distinct from the OSU Master Gardener Program itself. OMGA acts autonomously and is governed by a Board of Directors consisting of a State Representative from each of its county chapters. OMGA is a tax-exempt organization 501(3)(c) Incorporated in the State of Oregon. There is a [Memorandum of Agreement](#) with defines the relationship between OSU and OMGA. *(description adapted from the OMGA website)*

Please visit your county Master Gardener Association website to find Association contacts, board meeting minutes, upcoming monthly meetings & social events, governing documents, membership and annual dues information, forms, and more.

[Benton County Master Gardener Association temporary internal website](#)

[Linn County Master Gardener Association internal website](#)

LCMGA public website: <https://www.linnmastergardeners.com>

CHAPTER ASSOCIATION CATEGORIES

Below is a summary, please contact your county MG Association for full details on all membership categories.

Active Member: volunteers who are in good standing in the Master Gardener program and have paid annual Association dues

Lifetime Master Gardeners: ‘Lifetime’ is a title bestowed by a Master Gardener Association to a Master Gardener based on their high level of contributions to the good of the Association.

Associate Member (Benton County only): This is a membership category offered by the BCMGA to individuals who would like to support the work of the Association but are not OSU Master Gardeners. These members are not considered OSU Extension Master Gardeners (not eligible to participate in Master Gardener programs nor covered by OSU’s liability insurance). Please contact the BCMGA for more information.

VOLUNTEERING AS A MASTER GARDENER

New and recertifying Master Gardeners must complete a minimum number of volunteer service hours in approved activities to complete their certification. It is important to track your volunteer hours. Master Gardener projects provide educational opportunities beyond the end of classroom training. By participating in these projects with other Master Gardeners, you will continue to learn, make new friends, and help OSU Extension meet the information and education needs of gardeners in our community. Make sure to wear your badge when volunteering so you are clearly identified as an OSU Master Gardener.

For current year approved volunteer projects in each county, please see the project lists posted on the volunteer resource guide website: [Benton County](#) [Linn County](#)

Have you been asked to speak/teach for an outside group? Want to start a new volunteer project? Want to volunteer for a community project that is not listed in our eNewsletter or website?

If so, please reach out to the MG Program Assistant (Elizabeth Records) prior to volunteering

All new outreach events need approval by Extension and larger volunteer projects also need approval of the County Master Gardener Association. This is to ensure that all of our educational projects meet the OSU Extension Master Gardener Program mission and can be adequately supported by available volunteers and funding. You may be asked to submit a ‘new project request’ form. This process is in place for several reasons: it allows the Extension staff and faculty to provide adequate supervision by ensuring that volunteer opportunities meet the OSU Extension Master Gardener program mission, that OSU’s volunteer liability coverage covers your activities, ensures that advertising of public events is done according to OSU guidelines, and avoids duplicate projects by potentially connecting you to other volunteers and/or funding resources for work in similar projects.

Recording Your Volunteer and Continuing Education Hours

A record of volunteer hours is key to the long-term health and success of the Master Gardener Program. Your hours are included in an overall description of impact of the Program across the county, region, state, and nation. Along with sharing the personal stories of how you connect with your community, this tally helps demonstrate the importance of the program to our stakeholders. Another plus is that you may be eligible for awards and honors based on your long-term participation in the Program!

Please enter both your volunteer hours and continuing education hours by October 31 each year.

We use the [Master Gardener Volunteer Reporting System](#). Please view that website for information on signing up for an account and help guides to using the system. Specific examples for categorizing your hours can be found here: [Benton County](#) and [Linn County](#). If you are not sure, contact either your Mentor (if a trainee) or the MG Program Assistant.

How to Count and Report Public ‘Contacts’

Keeping track of our contacts helps show the difference that Master Gardeners make in all our communities. A ‘contact’ is a person of any age who reaches out to you with a gardening-related question.

Are you organizing a mobile plant clinic or community event? Please help by entering contacts into your VRS entry on behalf of your group, or otherwise handing in a written record to the MG Program Assistant using the [Master Gardener Event Contact Form](#). Important: **only one person should report contacts for each event**. This form is experimental, please let us know what you think.

If you have contacts outside of a formal event (for example, someone sees you volunteering in the demo garden and stops to ask you a gardening-related question), please report these contacts with your entry in VRS. Note that informally answering gardening questions for family and friends outside of Master Gardener plant clinic cannot be counted towards contacts.

If you have any questions on reporting contacts, please reach out to the MG Program Assistant.

CONTINUING AS A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER EACH YEAR

Once an individual has completed initial training year, they are certified as an OSU Extension Master Gardener. This certification is good for one year (the MG Program year ends on 10/31).

To continue volunteering with the Master Gardener Program and be considered 'in good standing', please do these three things each each year:

1. Complete and return the annual Program Volunteer Forms by October 31st each year. (note: minimum requirement to be considered a Master Gardener in good standing with the Program)
2. If you are involved with direct education of the public, you must be recertified by October 31st each year. Please read the Recertification Process section below.
3. If you are working with youth, please read the Background Check Policy section for requirements and complete any required updates to background checks.

There is currently no fee to participate as a Master Gardener volunteer once the initial training year is completed.

Volunteer Forms

OSU and the OSU Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program require several forms be completed annually. These will be provided to all volunteers in October each year and cover the next Master Gardener year (November 1st -October 31st).

Required forms:

1. OSU's [Conditions of Volunteer Service \(both sides\)](#)
2. [Master Gardener Position Description](#) (signed every five years unless form updated)
3. Master Gardener [Code of Conduct](#) (signed every five years unless form updated)

Have questions on the forms? Please see the [Volunteer Form FAQ's](#) or contact us directly.

Recertification Process

If you are involved in any direct outreach and education to the general public (including teaching classes, serving as a mentor, answering questions at Plant Clinics, etc.) then you will

need to recertify annually. (Note: most Master Gardener volunteer opportunities require you be a 'Certified Master Gardener', with exceptions being hands-on work behind the scenes such as maintaining demonstration gardens or support work for events.)

Specifically, to be recertified for the next MG year, volunteers must:

- Have current Volunteer Forms on file with OSU Extension
- Volunteer a minimum of twenty (20) hours for educational outreach* each year, and
- Complete ten (10) or more hours of approved continuing education.
- Enter hours into the Volunteer Reporting System (VRS) by 10/31

Master Gardeners who are up to date on their certification requirements are referred to as 'Certified Master Gardeners' and receive a sticker to add to their MG badge.

* Direct and indirect educational outreach hours should constitute at least 50% of a Master Gardener's required volunteer service hours each year. An explanation of [direct educational, indirect educational, and support hours](#) can be found on the Volunteer Reporting System (VRS) website.

Background check policy

All OSU Extension volunteers who will work with youth under age 18 as part of an Extension Program, are required to clear a criminal history check administered by OSU prior to working on a youth-centered project. The background check must be cleared before participating in volunteer activities for which it is required, and every 2 years thereafter. Examples of projects that require a background history check are:

- work in school garden or other youth garden
- work with children in a classroom or other educational site, as part of a one time or continuing gardening education program
- work with children participating in a Junior Master Gardener program

Extension volunteers who participate in an Extension project, where youth may be present - but the focus of the project is not on youth education (i.e. a mobile Plant Clinic at a farmer's market or county fair) are not required to undergo a background history check. Only those volunteers who will specifically be working with youth as part of their volunteer service need to undergo the background history check and any other applicable screening and training as per Oregon State University requirements.

Not sure whether your project requires that you clear a background check? Please contact the MG Program Assistant to find out and if needed to complete the most current version of the paperwork and training required by OSU. Once processed, OSU Human Resources will email

the Horticulture Faculty and let them know whether the volunteer is cleared for service projects that involve youth. Faculty will notify the volunteer.

The school or educational site will also have their own background check and volunteer application process. ALL background checks required by project partners must be cleared prior to volunteering.

Please note that OSU requirements for volunteers working with youth are subject to change. Your program assistant may contact you with additional paperwork or reporting requirements.

COMMUNICATIONS

The weekly MG eNews

The weekly MG eNews is an internal electronic newsletter that is the primary way we convey information to Master Gardener volunteers. It is compiled by OSU MG program staff with contributions from Master Gardeners. The readers include all Master Gardener Program volunteers in each county as well as OSU staff and faculty who are involved in administering the program.

If you have information to share that is Master Gardener Association related, please send the information to elizabeth.records@oregonstate.edu. It would be helpful to indicate that it is an item for the eNews in the subject line. Items will be copy & pasted verbatim and indicate who contributed the information, so please make sure to proof-read and include your contact information.

Note: Occasionally the eNews will skip a week (due to staff being away or holidays). We will do our best to give advance notice when an eNews will be skipped.

Missed an issue of the weekly MG eNews? No problem! Find the recent archives here:

[Benton County](#)

[Linn County](#)

Social media, Extension website, and public eNewsletter

The OSU MG program faculty & staff maintain several public facing electronic communication avenues to share upcoming events and classes, gardening information, and recruit for MG program.

- [OSU Extension MG Events](#) page
- [Linn/Benton OSU Master Gardeners](#) on Facebook
- [linnbentonmastergardeners](#) on Instagram
- [The Valley Gardener](#) monthly public eNewsletter

Submission procedure & publication calendar for GROWING

GROWING is a joint print publication offered by the Linn and Benton County OSU Extension Services, and is published by the Albany Democrat Herald. *GROWING* is inserted into the *Albany Democrat Herald*, *Lebanon Express*, *Gazette Times*, *Philomath Express* and *This Week*. GROWING is published every other month (January, March, May, July, September, and November). [View archive issues here.](#)

The Extension Community Horticulture program is allocated a set amount of space in each issue. We welcome horticulture articles, special interest stories, and upcoming MG program/event advertisements. At least once a year, our program will be featured in a front page article. Brooke and Elizabeth collect content and edit for clarity. All content is then sent to the editors who make the final decision on the layout.

How to submit your content for GROWING: Please let us know as soon as possible so we can reserve space. Please note that submission deadlines are at least a month in advance of final distribution. We may need time to review and edit for clarity and space considerations.

GROWING Print Issue

May/June issue	(content due 04/02/2019)
July/August	(content due 06/04/2019)
Sept/October	(content due 08/06/2019)
Nov/Dec	(content due 10/03/2019)
Jan/Feb 2020	(content due 12/03/2019)