



Master Gardeners' Network Spreading Horticultural Information

Impact Statement

The Problem/Issue

Extension agents estimate that 75 to 80 percent of their requests for horticultural information and assistance are home horticulture/gardening related. The Master Gardener Program is designed to recruit applicants who are interested in committing the time to go through a minimum of 40 hours of intensive horticultural training and return a minimum of 40 hours of recommended volunteer service activities.

What's Been Done:

The Master Gardener Program is an educational program offered through county offices of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. Through this program, individuals are trained and certified in horticulture and related areas. These individuals, in turn, volunteer their expertise and services to help others through horticulture projects that benefit the community. The Master Gardener Program trains volunteers, who work through Extension, to bring the latest horticultural information and practices from the world of research to their communities' landscapes and gardens.

They staff horticulture hotlines, coordinate environmental and planting projects, run demonstration gardens, do research, manage some existing public gardens, work with school groups and other special populations, publish newsletters and broadcast radio and television programs as some of their many activities.

In 2003, almost 500 new Master Gardeners were trained in one of the 30 participating counties. Their work combined with more than 2,000 active, previously trained Master Gardeners amounted to more than 114,000 volunteer service hours

Why We Care:

The service of Master Gardener volunteers directly benefits the community as Master Gardeners provide leadership and involve others on beautification projects, school landscape and outdoor learning activities, environmental stewardship projects, community gardens and other horticulture- related assistance provided to the community.

Benefits include increased horticultural/gardening knowledge and skills gained by certified Master Gardeners as well as the general public with whom they share information.

Horticultural assistance provided by Master Gardeners in the county, allowing Extension agents greater time and flexibility to respond to commercial agricultural clientele.

Improvements to home landscapes, community properties, schools and better stewardship of the environment and natural resources.

Healthier eating through home and community gardens which provide fresh vegetables and fruits for homeowners and distribution through food banks, churches, and other civic projects.

Gardening promotes improved quality of life and healthier living as the number one leisure time activity.