

Alabama Master Gardener Program



2010 Annual Report



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2010 Annual Summary



Shoals Area MG's install a rain garden at Anderson School.

- Number of active Certified Master Gardeners: 2112
- Number of Interns trained: 523
- Total hours volunteered: 190,439
- Number of clientele contacted: 1,818,809

Description

Kerry Smith

Alabama Master Gardener State Program

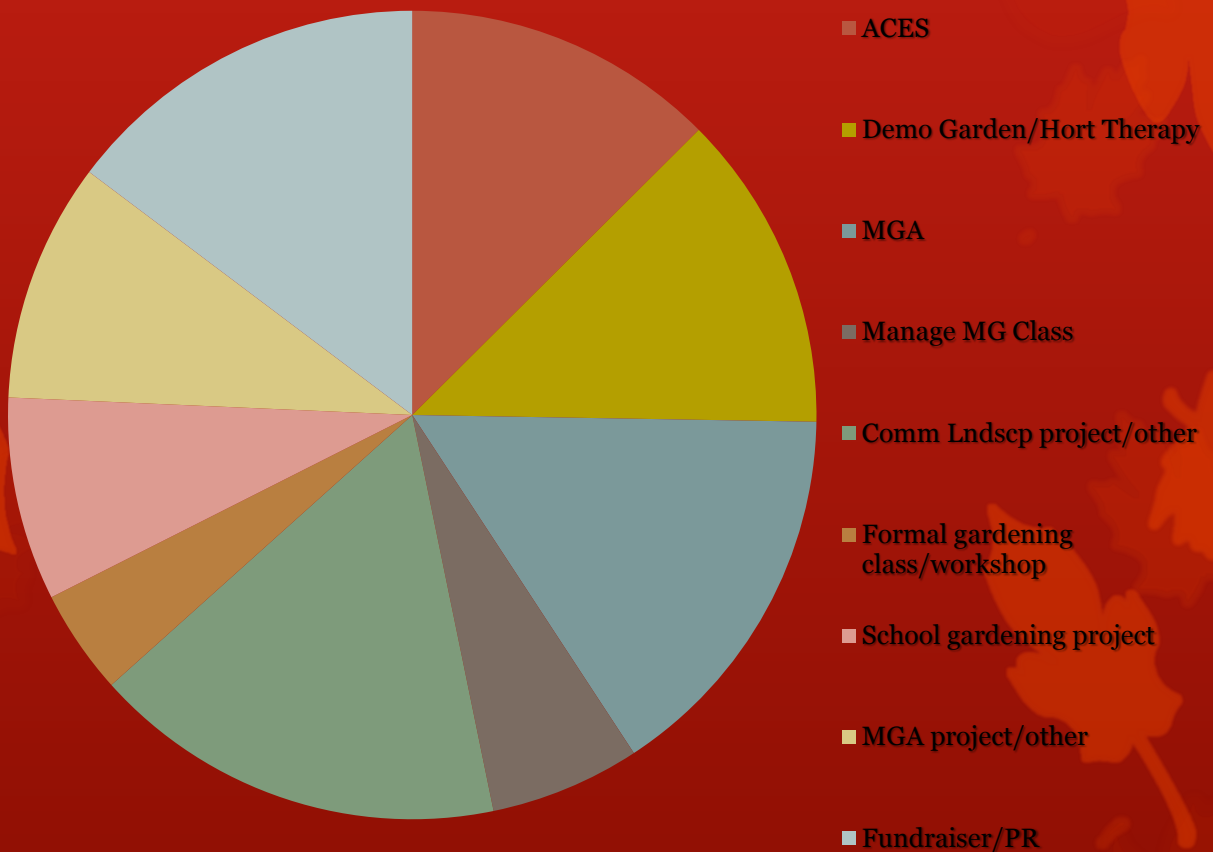
Coordinator

- Extension agents estimate that 65% to 80% of their requests for horticultural information and assistance are home grounds related. The Master Gardener Program is an educational program to address this need in consumer horticulture.
 - The program began in Alabama in 1981 to recruit and train volunteers. These volunteers, Master Gardeners, are trained by the ACES to provide educational assistance to their communities. There were 20 trainings offered in 2009.
 - This Program is part of the Home Grounds, Gardens & Home Pests PPT and is supported by an interdisciplinary team of ACES Extension Specialists, Regional Extension agents and County Extension agents.
 - Under the guidance and support of Extension staff, Intern Master Gardeners complete a training program of instruction and testing (minimum of 50 hrs), and volunteer a minimum of 50 hours to be certified as Master Gardeners. Active, Certified Master Gardeners contribute a minimum of 25 hours annual volunteer service.
 - The objective of this specific Program is to recruit volunteer leaders who will assist county offices of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in disseminating research-based knowledge and information to a greater percentage of the general public interested in landscaping and gardening information.
- Alabama Master Gardeners serve their communities and further the Program by providing leadership and involving other citizens on beautification projects, outdoor learning activities in schools, environmental stewardship projects, community and demonstration gardens, hosting Horticulture Helplines, maintaining and organizing local Master Gardener Associations, and providing other horticulture related assistance to the community.
 - ▶ Master Gardeners expanded the ACES ability to reach more people with their public contacts of 1,818,809 in 2010 and further established their tremendous benefit to the state of Alabama.
 - ▶ The general public benefits from this Program when Master Gardeners are better stewards of their environment, its resources and their own resources, as well as from Master Gardener community outreach programs.

"If you've never experienced the joy of accomplishing more than you can imagine, plant a garden." –Robert Brault

Master Gardeners' Activities

Number of Volunteer Hours
Logged per Activity
Category



of 190,439 total volunteer hours

Master Gardeners in Action

Active Associations:

Autauga County Master Gardeners
Baldwin County Master Gardeners
Barbour County Master Gardeners
Black Belt Master Gardeners
Blount County Master Gardeners
Calhoun County Master Gardeners
Capital City Master Gardeners
Central Alabama Master Gardeners
Cheaha Master Gardeners
Cherokee County Master Gardeners
Chilton County Master Gardeners
Claybank Master Gardeners
Coffee County Master Gardeners
Covington County Master Gardeners
Cullman County Master Gardeners
Dallas County Master Gardeners
DeKalb County Master Gardeners
East Central Alabama Master Gardeners
Escambia County Master Gardeners
Etowah County Master Gardeners
Fayette County Master Gardeners
Green Glove Master Gardeners

Jackson County Master Gardeners
Jefferson County Master Gardeners
Lee County Master Gardeners
Limestone County Master Gardeners
Marion County Master Gardeners
Marble Valley Master Gardeners
Marshall County Master Gardeners
Master Gardeners of North Alabama
Master Gardeners of Walker County
Mobile County Master Gardeners
Morgan County Master Gardeners
Pike County Master Gardeners
Russell County Master Gardeners
Shelby County Master Gardeners
Shoals Master Gardeners
St. Clair County Master Gardeners
Tallapoosa County Master Gardeners
Tuscaloosa County Master Gardeners
Walker County Master Gardeners
Wiregrass Master Gardeners

Volunteers' Value of Service
= \$3,437,424
(190,439 hours x \$18.05)
= 102 full time employees

Master Gardeners' Contributions to their Communities

○ Horticulture Therapy

60% of respondents to the "What Gardeners Think" survey said that gardening either made them happy or helped them relax. Master Gardeners know these beneficial effects of gardening, and have been sharing them with others who are physically unable to garden on their own. **A project of note is an on-going handicap-accessible raised bed gardens at the Center for Adult Day Care in Huntsville.**

○ Community Landscaping

By identifying needs in the community, Master Gardeners are making a difference. Associations landscape Habitat for Humanity Homes and maintain beds at libraries, churches, and other public buildings.

○ Plant Clinics

Master Gardeners set up booths at flower shows, county fairs, and other local events throughout the year and help spread gardening knowledge to the public. Publications, pH testing information, and soil test boxes are just a few of the tools they pass along.

Baldwin County MGs hosted Public Education lectures on topics such as turfgrass maintenance, plant selection, and butterfly gardening.

Wiregrass MGs set up fire ant information displays at the Peanut Festival in Dothan.

○ Plant Sales

Not only are these sales used to raise funds for local projects, they also educate the gardening public. Scholarships for Horticulture students and purchasing equipment for local high schools **(Etowah County)** are just a few of the ways MG's are giving back.

○ Demonstration Gardens

A favorite teaching tool of Master Gardeners is display gardens. Around Alabama they support 15 of these calling them community or demonstration gardens. Examples of these stretch from Houston county to Madison.

○ Types of display gardens

- Some are managed all 12 months of the year supporting local Food Banks

- Some are pure demonstration showing garden management practices, like composting, and plant variety performance.

-Another provides horticulture therapy and enrichment to at-risk teens.

-Some are established at schools to support the Jr Master Gardener Program, educate students, faculty, and parents on water conservation (Shoals MG), or to provide other curriculum support.

-Master Gardeners feel the value of these is: for community enrichment, for teaching, therapeutic, to promote resource management, and/or just plain fun.

○ Horticulture Helplines

Intern & Certified Master Gardener volunteers supplement the duties of Alabama Cooperative Extension System agents in disseminating knowledge and information to the general public interested in home grounds, gardening and pest information applicable to their area of Alabama. In 2010, 15 locations in six regions of the state hosted helpline offices.

The Alabama Master Gardeners Associations

- There are 42 Master Gardeners associations in Alabama. They provide gardening information to their membership and to the general public through support from the ACES, the Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA), and their membership. Extension agents offer support to these local volunteer groups through subject area expertise, organizational encouragement, and community involvement.
- In 1993, Master Gardeners in Alabama established the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc. (AMGA), a 501(c)(5) non-profit educational organization to enhance and support the work of the ACES's Master Gardener Program and to provide ongoing opportunities for Master Gardeners to expand their knowledge of and interest in horticulture and related subject areas. In 2006 AMGA gained 501(c)(3) status.
- AMGA's role is to provide overall leadership for Master Gardeners in the State of Alabama through the local associations. This includes providing policies and procedures necessary for efficient operation of the Associations. AMGA's responsibilities also include providing educational opportunities through conferences, workshops, field trips and other appropriate programs.



Mobile County MG's teach Florence Howard Elementary students at the GWC Gardens.

What's to Come for Master Gardeners

- In a 2010 survey of one MG intern class, 85% of Interns trained feel they will be able to make a positive influence on their communities after completing the MG course. Master Gardeners already have a positive influence on their communities, but opportunities still remain. One growing area of outreach is the Junior Master Gardener program.
- Although gardening has been replaced as the number one leisure activity, 66% of respondents to the "What Gardeners Think" survey indicated that they "enjoy" gardening, and that gardening "makes me happy." Alabama Master Gardeners are helping to spread these positive feelings to a wider range of Alabama residents. This outreach will only increase in coming years as people are living longer, retiring earlier, and becoming more health conscious.
- Beginning in 2009 and continuing through 2010, menu options for the two regions that are not served by the Master Gardener-manned Helpline were established. MGs in those regions are contributing via email and web responses to questions. Preparations were made in 2010 to allow Master Gardeners in East Central Alabama to answer Helpline calls over the computer.



Central Alabama MG's install a garden project at Wetumpka Middle School.



Your Experts for Life

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For more information, call your county Extension office. Look in your telephone directory under your county's name to find the number.