



APPLICATION TO THE ALABAMA MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

PART I: THE APPLICATION

(The completed application should be sent to your county Extension office.)

The Alabama Master Gardener Program is an educational outreach program provided and administered by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. It is a program to train individuals who will volunteer their expertise and services in support of the Extension effort related to education. We do this to increase an environmental awareness and enhance the development of an environmental ethic in the citizens of Alabama.

Certification Requirements: These are the minimum requirements for earning the Alabama Master Gardener certificate.

- Submit the necessary forms for a background check and receive approval from Extension before volunteering.
- Sign the Alabama Master Gardener Program Memo of Agreement.
- Attend 40 to 50 hours of training and instruction as specified in host location.
- Achieve an average passing score on all tests.
- Report to Alabama Extension a minimum of 50 hours of Extension-approved volunteer service.

Date of application _____

First name _____ Last name _____

Home address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

E-mail _____ Home phone () _____

If employed, where _____ Phone () _____

Emergency contact (name and phone) _____

Relationship (i.e., spouse) _____

1. Have you applied to the Master Gardener Program before? Yes ____ No ____

When? _____ Where? _____

Why are you reapplying?

2. Master Gardeners represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in their communities. Have you participated in any Alabama Cooperative Extension System programs in the past? List the most recent.

3. How did you learn about the Master Gardener program?

4. Please describe your previous or current volunteer experiences, including nongardening and gardening experiences. Master Gardener is about improving the quality of life in Alabama through volunteerism.

5. Describe specific ways you plan to contribute to the Alabama Master Gardener Program. What is your most comfortable venue or audience for public interaction (e.g., writing, phone, e-mail, face-to-face, adults, people with special needs, etc.)?

6. When is volunteer work easiest for you? Specify the best days and times for your volunteer projects.

7. List the aspects of gardening you especially enjoy. This will help us identify how your knowledge and experience can help us to meet our educational objectives.

8. Why do you want to become a Master Gardener volunteer?

9. Do you want to share other information about yourself for this application? (I can only participate if my friend is also accepted or other special considerations for your entry to the program)

10. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes ____ No ____ Date _____
 (Note: a conviction record does not necessarily disqualify your application)

All applicants should understand the following:

- Submission of this application does not guarantee acceptance to the program.
- I must donate a minimum of 50 hours volunteer time to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as an Intern Master Gardener volunteer within 1 year of training to receive certification.
- I understand my top priorities as an Intern Master Gardener are to assist a Home Grounds team program, the Master Gardener Helpline, and other county Extension office programs.
- I further understand that these priorities will be explained to me before starting the training program.
- A criminal background investigation will be conducted and must be approved before I am allowed to volunteer.
- Payment should not be sent with this application. Payment of the registration fee is due upon acceptance to the program and before the first day of training class.

Signature _____ Date _____



PART II: THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

Description

This agreement is intended to indicate the seriousness with which the Alabama Cooperative Extension System considers its relationship with all Master Gardener volunteers. The intent of the agreement is to assure you of our appreciation of your services and to indicate our commitment to do the best we can to make your volunteer experience productive and rewarding.

In the capacity of an Alabama Master Gardener volunteer, I understand and agree:

- To promote the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and further its mission.
- To disseminate research-based, Extension-approved information to all who request it without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, Veteran status, or disability.
- To cooperate with and support Extension employees and fellow Master Gardener volunteers and consistently exhibit a professional manner to all, staff, volunteers, and the public.
- To provide information only endorsed and sanctioned by Alabama Extension and to refer all questions concerning commercial horticulture and agriculture to an Extension agent.
- To make noncommercial pesticide recommendations only when they are consistent with Alabama Extension published information (ANR-0500-B). Local programs may have additional requirements for making recommendations. **Check with your Extension agent first.**
- To serve as a volunteer with Alabama Extension under the primary direction of the Home Grounds team. The _____ Master Gardener Program requires interns to volunteer a minimum of ____ hours on the Helpline and/or in direct support of the Volunteer Responsibilities listed on page 5. Certified Master Gardeners should also prioritize this same list of responsibilities.
- To comply with Master Gardener intern training (____ hours in class), report volunteer activities (minimum 50 hours), and meet all other certification requirements as described in chapter 1 of the *Master Gardener Program Volunteer Training Handbook*. Certified Master Gardeners will be familiar with and acknowledge these same policies.
- To provide my own transportation and pay my own expenses incurred as part of official volunteer activities (volunteer expenses may be tax deductible with proper documentation). I further understand that as a volunteer, I am not entitled to any financial or other employee benefits including accident, medical, or worker's compensation insurance benefits.
- To refrain from using alcohol or illicit drugs while participating in volunteer activities, volunteering while intoxicated, and from possessing any weapons during volunteer activities.
- To use the title of Master Gardener as it is intended: to identify an individual, who has received Extension training, and actively volunteering with the Master Gardener program. I understand that I may only identify myself as a Master Gardener when doing unpaid, volunteer public service on behalf of Alabama Extension. I further understand that the function and existence of the Alabama Master Gardener educational program is subject to the complete discretion of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.
- To refuse to accept any personal gratuitous payment for speaking or any other volunteer service activity on behalf of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.
- To refrain from using my name with the title of Master Gardener for commercial publicity or private business. Giving implied university or Extension endorsements to any product or place of business is in violation of Extension policies.

I further understand that the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will:

- Disseminate research-based, land-grant university, horticultural information to all who request it without regard to race, color, national origin, religion, sex, age, Veteran status, or disability.
- Support the Alabama Master Gardener Program volunteers, with Extension agents and the state Master Gardener Program coordinator serving in an educational and advisory capacity to local Master Gardener associations and the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc., respectively.
- Provide training, supervision, and direction to create a safe volunteer experience.
- Communicate the expectations of and the responsibilities to the program with volunteers.
- Uphold and cultivate a trustful relationship between Extension employees and volunteers.
- Dismiss a volunteer who violates the policies of this program.

The following are grounds for immediate dismissal: possession of or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs while volunteering, abuse or theft of property, sexual harassment or misconduct, verbal abuse of others, possession or use of weapons while volunteering, defamation of the program or its affiliates.

I have read and understand this Memorandum of Agreement and the Master Gardener Program Policy and further agree to abide by the conditions of this memorandum until it is revoked or revised.

Volunteer's name (please print)

County name

Volunteer's signature _____

Date _____

Extension agent's signature _____

Date _____

(A copy of this Memo of Agreement will be given to you as a reference to keep)



Master Gardener Volunteer Responsibilities

Master Gardeners volunteer in their communities on behalf of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and when acting or designating themselves with the title of Master Gardener. All volunteer activities should be approved by the local, sponsoring Extension agent.

The following are examples of approved activities for volunteers while representing Alabama Extension:

- Contribute to or assist a program designed, sponsored, or coordinated by Extension
- Provide the public with research-based information generated or approved by Extension
- Priority volunteer activities:
 - » Extension office assistance (e.g., answering phones, answering Helpline phones, assisting a walk-in client, preparing brochures, and other county office needs)
 - » Presentations and programs (e.g., assist Extension agent with program delivery; serve on a speakers bureau; develop, organize, research, plan, and/or present programs and classes to civic clubs and other public audiences, teach Master Gardener classes or present programs to Master Gardener associations)
 - » Cooperate with or assist Alabama Extension in preparing educational resources, including media materials, visuals, reference files, and other educational resource materials
 - » Provide educational assistance to a community or a community group
 - » Assist or represent Alabama Extension at a public event (e.g., home and garden shows, county fairs, farmers markets, information booths, diagnostic/plant clinics)
 - » Prepare displays, posters, or advertisements that benefit or represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System or any of its programs
 - » Newsletters for noncommercial gardeners (all recommendations must be from research-based information generated or approved by Extension; these activities are always unpaid contributions to articles and newsletters)
 - » Research (e.g., work on research projects and reports for the purpose of developing and disseminating information or seeking grants under the supervision of an Extension agent.)
 - » Demonstration garden or other educational garden projects (for example, a garden at an Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station location, Habitat for Humanity house project, or Botanical Gardens)
 - » Community gardening projects (e.g., assist an Extension agent, assist a Food Bank garden, mentor a new gardener, horticulture therapy)

Four guidelines for validating volunteer work are as follows:

- Will it benefit the community?
- Is it associated with a noncommercial group or project?
- Is it related to gardening, the environment, or an Extension program?
- Are you helping people learn?

Note: MGs are cautioned if applying chemicals. Using a pesticide in a manner inconsistent with the directions on the label is a violation of federal law: the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). MGs conducting demonstrations using home or garden chemicals do so only under the required applicator permit from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.



PART III: BACKGROUND CHECK – AUTHORIZATION

Description

Because all Master Gardeners represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn University when acknowledged with such title, Alabama Extension and Auburn have the right to request and perform a criminal background investigation on them.

We implement this procedure for everyone's safety: Master Gardeners and everyone associated with the program and its volunteers. Conducting a personal background check is a standard best practice for quality volunteer program management.

Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System reserve the right to deny any MG intern certification as an Alabama Master Gardener and/or to revoke certification of any Alabama Master Gardener.

Authorization and Biographical Data

Once your application request is accepted to the Master Gardener program, the local program coordinator will give you instructions for completing the background check forms. Auburn University has a web portal called AU PROTECT specifically created for this process. This web portal allows you to enter your information online, providing you a high level of security to protect your personal information. Your application is not complete until these forms are submitted. All new applicants must be approved by Auburn University and Extension before they begin volunteering.

Regarding volunteers, the background check is only checking for criminal history and verification of social security number to accurately match records. Employment history is only necessary if you have been employed during the last 7 years and phone numbers are not necessary in the Employment/Education sections.

All personal information files are strictly confidential and access to these files is restricted under Auburn University policies. The Human Resources office provides quality records services consistent with a commitment to privacy rights, affirmative action, and equal employment opportunities.