

# Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Memorandum of Understanding

The mission of the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program is to improve the lives of Alabamians through research-based horticulture education delivered by a dedicated, trained, and involved Extension volunteer team. This is a volunteer program for adults (age 19 and older).

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) indicates the significance of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's (ACES) relationship with all Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers. In it, we outline our commitment to the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program and our expectations for all participants. By signing this MOU, you indicate your commitment to this program and its participants. We greatly appreciate your service.

As an Alabama Extension Master Gardener volunteer, I understand my responsibilities and agree to the following:

- Promote through my volunteer activities the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program's mission and its full community—the national land grant system, ACES program personnel and volunteers, and Master Gardener associations (MGA/AMGA).
- Serve as an active volunteer member of the Extension Home Grounds team, the county Extension office, and local and state MGAs (where possible).
- Cooperate with and support Extension employees and EMG volunteers and consistently exhibit a professional and respectful manner to all staff, volunteers, and the public.
- Provide programs and information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. See the nondiscrimination statements on the Alabama Extension website at <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/nondiscrimination/nondiscrimination/>.
- Use research-based, Extension or analogous, approved information in all my EMG volunteer activities.
- Refer all questions involving commercial horticulture/agriculture to an Extension agent or specialist.
- Make all noncommercial client recommendations for pesticides and fertilizers (organic- or synthetic-sourced) consistent with the product label. Alabama Extension has published information about these.
- Decline any personal payment for speaking or any other volunteer service activity as an EMG volunteer. At the discretion of the hosting organization, out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed when acting as an invited speaker.
- Adhere to the conflict-of-interest policy, only using the title of Extension Master Gardener as it is intended.
  - EMG volunteers are individuals who have received Extension training and certification and are actively volunteering with the EMG Volunteer Program.
  - EMG volunteers are prohibited from using this title for personal, organizational, monetary, or professional gain and from singly endorsing any product or place of business.

As an Intern Extension Master Gardener volunteer, I understand the requirements for certification:

- Pass a background check, sign this MOU, complete all Intern training class requirements, and report a minimum of 50 assigned volunteer hours. (page 3)
- Volunteer in projects defined by an Extension Home Grounds agent. Input from a local MGA is considered where possible.
- Complete the certification requirements within 12 months of starting the Intern training course.
- If necessary, request and receive approval for delayed certification within 12 months of starting the Intern course. Ask the supervising Extension Home Grounds agent and when present, the local EMG who assists in training. Delayed certification is not accepted beyond 24 months after the first class day.

As a certified Extension Master Gardener volunteer, I understand the annual expectations to be designated as certified active:

- Initially sign and thereafter annually review my signed copy of this Memorandum of Understanding.
- Participate in and report a minimum of 25 volunteer hours and 10 continuing education units (CEU) each year. One hour = one unit.
- Support the EMG Volunteer Program's mission by volunteering in a variety of activities each year (page 3).
- When these expectations are not met, EMGs will be designated with the status "Alum" in the EMG Program Service Report directory. Volunteers can return to "Certified Active" status after signing this MOU and participating in and reporting 25 volunteer hours and 10 CEU hours each year.
- Alums must pay membership dues in the Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA) and the local MGA, as applicable. These are due no later than December 31 each year.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System agrees to the following:

- Uphold this Memorandum of Understanding. All perceived concerns will be fully reviewed by a representative from Extension Home Grounds and the local MGA. When any party is not available or has a conflict of interest in the concern, a representative from AMGA will serve as a reviewer.
- Provide programs and information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. See the nondiscrimination statements on the Alabama Extension website at <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/nondiscrimination/nondiscrimination/>.
- Support the Alabama EMG Volunteer Program, its personnel, volunteers, projects, and local MGAs.
- Provide training, supervision, and direction to create a safe volunteer experience and maintain high program standards.
- Uphold and cultivate respect and trust among employees and volunteers.

Program members involved in the following will be subject to immediate discharge from the program and withdrawal of authorization to represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System or use the title certified Extension Master Gardener volunteer.


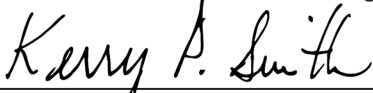
- Drinking intoxicants or using drugs while working or volunteering, particularly when there may be an adverse effect or danger to other program members.
- Disruptive conduct or other actions that interfere with the program's functioning or prevent others from carrying out their responsibilities to the program.
- Stealing or vandalizing property belonging to other program members.
- Conviction of a felony violation could lead to discharge from the program. Specific action will be determined by the nature of the offense and the employee's or volunteer's job performance.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Intern/Certified EMG Volunteer\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Home Grounds Extension Agent\*

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Kerry Smith, State Coordinator, EMG

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Mike Phillips, Director, Alabama Extension



\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Emily Burchfield, Outreach Programs

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Alabama Master Gardeners Association President

\*My signature signifies that I have read this Memorandum of Understanding and further agree to abide by its conditions until it is revoked or revised.

# Representing the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program

All Alabama Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES). They also represent one or more Master Gardener associations (MGA), when one is available and membership dues are current. Membership in an MGA is not mandatory, but when available is recommended due to greater access to social and educational activities.

Extension Master Gardener volunteers and Extension agents will use the following four guidelines for validating volunteer work.

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

All volunteer activities should be approved by the local, supervising Extension agent or specialist. The activities below are examples that represent the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program's mission.

- Collaborate with Extension Home Grounds to identify and implement projects that address local community needs.
- Assist and collaborate with a county Extension office (e.g., any Extension program, answering phones, assisting a walk-in client, preparing brochures and packets, and other county office needs).
- Collaborate with Extension Home Grounds in designated projects and connect them with local MGA projects (e.g., Grow More Give More [GMGM] gardens, school gardens or other community partners, Alabama Smart Yards [ASY] or GMGM workshops, grant-funded projects, community events, community gardens).
- Collaborate with ACES in preparing and delivering educational resources (e.g., Lunch & Learn, media materials, publications, grab & go kits, a speaker's bureau, presentations for civic clubs, connect across social media, teach EMG Intern classes, presentations to other EMGs).
- Collaborate with or assist non-Home Grounds Extension projects and programs (e.g., 4-H Chick Chain, Classroom in the Forest, Your Money–Your Life, Food Preservation Camp, a research center event or project, judging 4-H competitions, Extension event registration).
- Provide educational assistance to a community or a community group. This includes mentoring.
- Use civic events to connect the public with ACES, the EMG Volunteer Program, and local MGAs (e.g., home and garden show, county fair, farmers market, information booth, plant/soil test clinic).
- Create newsletters or other educational media for noncommercial gardeners. All recommendations must be from research-based information generated by Extension or other analogous entity.
- Participate in applied research (e.g., work on research projects, data collection, or reports; develop related educational materials; collaborate with an Extension agent or specialist to seek grant funding).
- Support demonstration and teaching gardens (e.g., a public teaching garden at a research center, botanical garden, park, school, or library; therapeutic horticulture).

Visit with your Extension office and agents/specialists. Offer your skills, knowledge, and support wherever you can volunteer. Help everyone make connections!

**\*Important Note:** EMGs are cautioned if applying chemicals (organic- and synthetic-sourced). Using a pesticide (herbicide, bactericide, fungicide, etc.) in a manner inconsistent with the labeled directions is a violation of federal law: Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). EMGs conducting demonstrations using home or garden chemicals do so only under the required applicator permit from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.



**For more information,** contact your county Extension office. Visit [www.aces.edu/directory](http://www.aces.edu/directory).

Trade and brand names used in this publication are given for information purposes only. No guarantee, endorsement, or discrimination among comparable products is intended or implied by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, this institution is prohibited from discriminating because of race, color, national origin, sex (including gender identity and sexual orientation), age, disability, and reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity. Program information may be made available in languages other than English. Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotope, and American Sign Language) should contact the Page 10 Civil Rights Program Plan Alabama Cooperative Extension System Human Resources Department at (334) 844-5531 or the State of Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD) at (888) 879-3582 or USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. To file a program discrimination complaint, a complainant should complete a Form AD3027, USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, which can be obtained online at <https://www.usda.gov/oascri/how-to-file-a-program-discrimination-complaint>, from any USDA office, by calling (866) 632-9992, or by writing a letter addressed to USDA. The letter must contain the complainant's name, address, telephone number, and a written description of the alleged discriminatory action in sufficient detail to inform the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights (ASCR) about the nature and date of an alleged civil rights violation. The completed AD-3027 form or letter must be submitted to USDA by mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; Fax: (833) 256-1665 or (202) 690-7442; or Email: [program.intake@usda.gov](mailto:program.intake@usda.gov). This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

**Revised December 2024, ANR-3045**

© 2024 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.

[www.aces.edu](http://www.aces.edu)