Extension Master Gardener Social Media Guidelines

General Guidelines

Extension Master Gardener (EMG) social media outreach should reflect the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteers (AEMGV):

"We improve the lives of Alabamians through research-based horticulture education delivered by a dedicated, trained, and involved Extension volunteer team." (www.aces.edu)

And the Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA):

"The mission of the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc. is to assist and support the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in its education outreach program. The AMGA also supports the local Master Gardener associations in their pursuit of continuing education in the field of horticulture providing volunteer service through horticultural based assistance education and community projects."
(www.alabamamga.org)

EMG social media outlets should support the AEMGV and AMGA missions by educating the public about research-based, practical, and environmentally sound horticultural practices. See Appendix A for examples.

EMG social media outlets should support the AEMGV and AMGA missions by informing the public about local association activities and involvement in their communities.

EMG social media outlets should support the AEMGV and AMGA missions by informing the public about local, county, and state workshops, events, and courses sponsored by ACES, AMGA, or local/nearby local associations.

EMG social media outlets should *not* promote for-profit businesses except as they impact AEMGV associations or AMGA directly. (Example: A horticultural business owner speaks at a local association meeting. It is okay to create a post about the meeting, including photos and thanks to the business, etc., but do not make additional posts linking to their blog or website or promote products they sell.) These social media outlets should not promote popular media information that lacks evidence of being research-based and environmentally sound horticultural practice. (Example: Soaking banana peels in water is promoted as a method to make plant fertilizer, but this is unproven information.)

Social Media Outlets Guidelines

Administrators

Prevent being locked out of your social media account.

All public Alabama Extension Master Gardener pages should list the local Home Horticulture Extension agent as a full administrator on their Facebook page. In addition, the local EMG Facebook page should have an EMG volunteer and a current board member as a full administrator. The individual association should determine the EMG volunteer, whether through board approval, association nominations, or a request to serve sent to the general association membership.

If other social media accounts are used by an association, there should be no fewer than two association members who have the passwords to those accounts. In addition, the Extension agent in the area should have the passwords to those accounts.

Naming Guidelines

If there is already a Facebook page for the association or county, add “Alabama” and “Extension Master Gardeners” to the title. If a new page is being created, the page name should be created in the following pattern: XXXXXX county Alabama Extension Master Gardeners.* A similar naming scheme can be used for non-Facebook social media outlets.

(*The association page name should contain “Alabama” and “Extension Master Gardeners” within the full title. This is not meant to change the association’s name. The intent is to give a consistent program brand across the state. A dash should separate the association’s name and Extension Master Gardeners. Examples: Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association–Extension Master Gardeners; Mobile County Master Gardeners–Alabama Extension Master Gardeners.)

Page or Group

A public Facebook Page should be set up so followers can comment on posts. Only administrators can create posts on a Facebook page. A public Facebook Page is best set up via Meta Small Business. If an association wishes to have a Facebook Group for social communication and sharing horticultural information and ideas among members, an additional members-only Facebook Group should be set up.

Logos

Please reach out to your Extension agent to obtain logos. Some associations have their own EMG logo. If possible, when using an association logo on a post, a flyer, or a social media outlet home page, etc. also include the Alabama Extension Master Gardeners logo.



Note: This is an example. Reach out to your Extension agent for a high-resolution image with locally specific branding. The statewide logo is available to download from the EMG Service Report under Resources.

Main Page Photos

These should be photos (or one photo) of local club activities, projects, workshops, plant sales, etc.

Photos

Do not post photos of anyone under the age of 19 without written permission. Ask your Extension agent if you need help finding the Media Release Form.

Copyright laws regarding posting online photos should be followed.

About Section

Appendix B shows a suggested template to use. It is Facebook specific but can be adjusted for other social media sites.

Posts

Frequency: On average, create four posts per week; up to one post per day is optimal.

Source: It is preferred that a post be original instead of shared. An original post tends to generate more views. An original post can include a shared post.

Photo: Facebook is a visual social media outlet. It is important to have a photo or an informative graphic with your post.

Caption: Include a caption with your post, even if you have an informative graphic as your photo. Captions provide screen readers (for people who are visually impaired) with text that can be converted to audio. Words shown on a graphic or image are inaccessible to a sight-impaired viewer.

Weblink: A digital reference to a web-based resource. To be compliant with the Americans with Disabilities Act, applicable weblinks must be included in the caption portion of the social media post because they are not accessible on the post’s image or graphic.

- URL addresses are weblinks used in email and printed materials. They are not accessible to screen readers when shown in a social media image file (JPEG, PNG, etc.).
- QR codes are another type of weblink used in a variety of formats. While they are clickable using a cell phone’s camera, they are not accessible to screen readers.

Instagram Sticker: Apply a URL weblink to an image file with this unique Instagram tool.

Flyers: Flyers are intended for email and print publicity. If repurposing a for-print flyer as a social media image, remove the URL addresses. Image files containing URL addresses are a potential liability.

Private Messages

Check Messages frequently (daily, if possible) and respond promptly.

Set an **Away right now** message that will appear automatically when someone private messages your page. The message should include instructions on how to contact the AMG hotline or the local EMG Helpline for gardening-related questions.

Following is an example of an **Away right now** message:

Thanks for messaging us. We are currently offline, but we will get back to you as soon as possible. If you have a question that relates to gardening in Alabama (about plants, soil, home gardens, etc.), please contact the Alabama Master Gardener Helpline at https://www.acesagmg.site/index_public.php. You may also find helpful information on the Alabama Cooperative Extension System website that offers many gardening-related articles and publications.

Notifications

Frequently check (daily, if possible) and respond to comments as needed.

Inappropriate Comments

Do not engage with a nasty comment by responding to it online. Simply delete it. If someone has a pattern of posting inappropriate comments, ban them from the page.

Appendix A

Recommended Post Topics and Accepted References

- Your association's projects and community activities
- Your association's upcoming workshops and links to past workshop recordings
- Your association's fundraisers and plant sale information/advertising
- Nearby association's workshops and plant sales
- Local Extension workshops
- Extension webinars (live and previously recorded ones) and podcasts (Back 2 Basics, Eco-Friendly Fridays, From the Ground Up)
- Information on how to become an Extension Master Gardener intern and dates for signing up
- Helpline link and phone number: https://www.acesagmg.site/index_public.php and 1-877-252-4769
- Extension Master Gardeners and Master Gardener associations appearing in local or state news media
- Post workshop information on multiple days, such as 2 weeks before the workshop and then again the day before
- New or seasonal articles on the Alabama Extension website at aces.edu
- Other states' Extension articles, especially those with regional or similar growing zone to yours such as those from the University of Georgia, Clemson University, the University of Florida, and Louisiana State University
- Topic search plus ".edu" to find research-based articles on specific topics (example: "organic mulches.edu")
- Information on plant societies
- Details about national, state, and local parks
- Other research-based references

Appendix B

About Section

Introduction: (*Your association's name*) shall enhance and supplement information in accordance with ACES standards.

Category: Nonprofit organization (describes organizations with both formal and informal nonprofit status)

Details: Address of the local Extension office

Links: Your local association website (optional)

Contact information: Phone number for the local Extension office.

Privacy and legal information: Our mission—"We improve the lives of Alabamians through research-based horticulture education delivered by a dedicated, trained, and involved Extension volunteer team." (*Your association's name*) supports several service projects in our community and partners with organizations to nurture and teach sound horticultural practices to our citizens.

(*Your association's name*) contributes annually to the Alabama Master Gardeners Association Horticulture Scholarship Endowment (or other philanthropic activities). Example from MGNA: We oversee the Jane R. Parks Memorial Grant that helps fund existing educational horticultural projects in our local area.

Page Scope, Purpose & Policy

This is the official Facebook Page of the (*Your association's name*), a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation. **Only include this sentence if your association is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation; many associations in Alabama are not.**

The scope and purpose of this page are to feature seasonally relevant best practices for home gardening and horticulture information from the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and other concordant institutions, organizations, and resources. Its further purpose is to raise awareness about the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program and (*Your association's name*) public workshops, events, fundraisers, and other opportunities where its members are serving and interacting with the general public in the (*Your Alabama region*). We are here to have fun, engage in friendly conversation, and learn about gardening.

Page Policy

Comments to posts that fall outside of the Scope and Purpose of the Page or contain any of the following may be immediately hidden or deleted:

- Hate speech of any kind or form
- Inappropriate content or language of any kind or form, including memes, GIFs, or avatars
- Promotion or recommendation of a business service, or third-party event
- Requests for donations of money or services
- Promotion or endorsement of a political official, candidate, party, lobby, or special interest group.
- Anything that infringes on a copyright

If your comment is deleted, please review the Page Policy for an explanation. Page followers who violate Page Policy a second time may be banned from the page without notice or further explanation.

It takes a community to build a community. Please help us do so!

If you see a comment that falls outside of the Page Policy, please report the comment to Page Admins for review.

Members of (*Your association's name*) are volunteers supporting the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in helping to disseminate best practices for home gardens in the state of Alabama. For more information, visit our website at (*Your association's website URL address if you have one*).

Anita Reeves, Certified Alabama EMG Volunteer, Member of Master Gardeners of North Alabama; **Rebecca Ridley**, Certified Alabama EMG Volunteer, Member of Central Alabama Master Gardeners; **Mary Townsley**, Certified Alabama EMG, Member of Mobile County Master Gardeners; and **Brian Brown**, *Extension Agent*, Home Horticulture, Auburn University

For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit 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 civil rights law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) civil rights regulations and policies, the USDA, its Agencies, offices, and employees, and institutions participating in or administering USDA programs are prohibited from discriminating based on race, color, national origin, religion, sex, disability, age, marital status, family/parental status, income derived from a public assistance program, political beliefs, or reprisal or retaliation for prior civil rights activity, in any program or activity conducted or funded by USDA (not all bases apply to all programs). Remedies and complaint filing deadlines vary by program or incident.

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact one of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's HR departments which are located on Auburn University's campus at (334) 844-1326 and Alabama A&M University's campus at (256) 372-5710. You may also contact the USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TTY) or contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program discrimination complaint, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form, AD-3027, found online at How to File a Program Discrimination Complaint and at any USDA office or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by: (1) mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410; (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

USDA is an equal opportunity provider, employer, and lender.

New October 2026, ANR-3293
© 2026 by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. All rights reserved.