

What is a “Master Gardener?”

A Master Gardener is a **volunteer** who:

- assists Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide educational horticulture programs for the public
- staffs a “question and answer” phone hotline
- has completed the Master Gardener Training Course offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension in conjunction with Cornell University

Master Gardeners assist Extension personnel with soil and diagnostic clinics, demonstrations, exhibits, lectures, and phone inquiries from Albany County residents.

The Master Gardener program is a national program of trained volunteers who work in the partnership with their County Cooperative Extension office to extend horticulture information throughout the community. The first Master gardener program was started in Washington State in 1972. Forty-six states now have Master Gardener programs with over 15,000 people participating nationwide. More than 1100 of these Master Gardeners are from New York State.

Albany County has had a Master Gardener program since 1977.

If you have not already talked with the Master Gardener Coordinator...

**Call the Cornell Cooperative Extension
Albany County Agriculture Office at
518-765-3516.**

The Master Gardener Coordinator will explain the volunteer program to you. It takes about 15 minutes to do so. Then you will receive an application in the mail.

Complete the application and mail it to:

Horticulture
Cornell Cooperative Extension
24 Martin Road
Voorheesville, NY 12186

Thank you for your interest in volunteering to help promote horticulture education.

Cornell Cooperative Extension | Albany County

24 Martin Road, Voorheesville, NY 12186
518-765-3500 • FAX 518-765-2490
www.ccealbany.com
www.facebook.com/ccealbany

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Cornell Cooperative Extension
Albany County

Albany County Master Gardener Volunteer Program



How can I become a Master Gardener?

After completing an application, candidates will be informed by email or mail of the dates for interviews in August. Those accepted will have an orientation in late August and begin weekly training sessions in September, October and November. Instructors from local Cooperative Extension offices will cover a number of horticultural topics to prepare volunteers for their role as Master Gardeners.

As part of the training program, volunteers will be matched with a MG Mentor as an advisor and they will also attend Master Gardener monthly staff meetings. At the end of the whole training period, volunteers will take a pass/fail, open-book final exam.

Beginning in the year following training, volunteers will complete 60 hours of volunteer service. Of those 60 hours, 20 will be spent in the MG office with time on the phone hotline assisting callers with gardening questions.

The remaining 40 hours may be met through any of the following:

- attending monthly meetings
- doing more phone hotline time
- Working with local schools to facilitate garden based learning
- assisting staff to host gardening classes for the public (set-up, take registration, assist speaker, clean-up, etc.)

- staffing question and answer booths at public events (Altamont Fair, Capital District Garden Show)
- giving lectures at off-site locations about gardening practices that lead to sustainability and a small carbon footprint
- working in one of the many demonstration gardens
- Joining the rain garden team
- Or assisting with other approved projects for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County
- After volunteers meet all criteria (training, exam, 60 hours of volunteer service) they receive a Master Gardener certificate, and may use the Master Gardener title when attending Cornell Cooperative Extension events.

Our goal is to have Master Gardeners remain involved in the program beyond the first year.

Sixty hours of volunteer time per year is required after the first year in order to remain active in the program. Volunteers who do not meet the 60 hours per year requirement relinquish their right to the Master Gardener title.

We follow the above procedure because volunteers represent Cornell University, and distribute information to the public. Therefore, volunteers must remain current on horticulture information. We also want to promote the sense of a “gardening family” within the Master Gardener program.

Since Master Gardeners represent Cornell University, volunteers may not use the Master Gardener title beyond Cornell Cooperative Extension sponsored events. For example, volunteers may not put “Master Gardener” on business cards, nor may they promote another business by using the Master Gardener title. Master Gardeners may not use the Master Gardener title to earn money for themselves.

Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a program that emphasizes exploring all options for pest management including: “practicing tolerance,” “practicing prevention,” “using mechanical controls,” and “using chemical controls.” Volunteers in the Master Gardener Program must be able to make suggestions based on Cornell recommendations rather than making suggestions based on “home remedies” or personal preference.

