

Georgia Master Gardener Program

Bobby Smith, ANR Agent, Morgan County

The Master Gardener program is conducted throughout the United States and Canada. The Georgia Master Gardener Program is a volunteer training program designed to help UGA Cooperative Extension Agents share research-based information about gardening and related subjects with the public by training home gardeners. Master Gardeners currently are active in most Georgia counties.

Through this program, volunteers benefit from the initial training classes sponsored by UGA and County Extension Offices as well as ongoing training is the latest in horticulture research. Local Master Gardener Associations exist to educate and sometimes assist in funding community organizations with gardening projects. Master Gardeners teach the principles of horticulture and garden maintenance to members of the organization as well as to the public.

The Master Gardener Programs were not started to perform long term maintenance but to assist in educational efforts of UGA Cooperative Extension and thereby their function is to teach local groups on ways to perform scheduled maintenance tasks effectively and efficiently and the community benefits from their service.

There is a Master Gardener training fee involved which includes a comprehensive training manual, a name badge and membership in the local as well as the Georgia Master Gardener Association for the year following graduation. Class topics include vegetable and food gardening, plant disease and identification, insect control, ornamental shrubs, tree care, turf grass management, annuals, perennials, pest identification, pest control and Xeriscaping.

Master Gardener training classes are offered in several counties throughout the state. The classes usually begin in January and consist of three months training, two days a week for 3-4 four hours per session. Upon graduation, to become a certified Master Gardener volunteers must complete 50 hours of volunteer service to the community and 25 hours thereafter to remain certified.

If you love gardening and would like to contribute to your community this could be a program for you. For more information about the Master Gardener program in your area, contact the Cooperative Extension office nearest you by calling 1-800-ASK-UGA1, 1-800-275-8421.