ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY
MASTER GARDENER
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

September 2010

University of Maryland Extension
Anne Arundel County Office

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These policies, procedures and guidelines are designed to support the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Coordinator and the Master Gardener Executive Advisory Board in implementing the Maryland Master Gardener Policies and Guidelines. Although the University of Maryland Extension Volunteer Policy Manual and the Volunteer Management in Maryland: Legal Liabilities and Insurance Issues manual were used as resource documents in creating the guidelines and policies in this Handbook, some of the policies, procedures and requirements are slightly different to reflect the needs of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program.

**Non-Discrimination Policy:**
It is the policy of the University of Maryland, College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Maryland Agricultural Experiment Station, and University of Maryland Extension that all persons have equal opportunity and access to programs and facilities without regard to race, color, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, age, marital or parental status, or disability.
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MASTER GARDENERS
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES HANDBOOK

INTRODUCTION

The University of Maryland Extension (UME) conducts the Maryland Master Gardener Program. The Program’s mission is to “educate Maryland residents about safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that build healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.” The County Master Gardeners are supported and supervised by a County Coordinator, a Cooperative Extension staff professional. Most decisions regarding Master Gardener operations and activities are made jointly by Master Gardener volunteers and the County Coordinator. However, the County Coordinator is ultimately responsible for the program’s operation.

The policies and procedures in this Handbook are designed to support the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Coordinator (Coordinator) and the Master Gardener Executive Advisory Board (EAB) in implementing the Maryland Master Gardener Policies and Guidelines (MG10). This Handbook provides additional detail for the operation of the County Program and elaborates on the requirements contained in MG10. Where there appears to be conflict between this Handbook and MG10, the matter should be brought to the attention of the Executive Advisory Board, the principle advisory body to the County Coordinator.

Master Gardeners as MCE volunteers are covered under the Maryland Tort Act when they are working as a Master Gardener volunteers. Coverage provided by the Maryland Tort Act is NOT insurance.

PART I: The Executive Advisory Board

Purpose. The purpose of the Executive Advisory Board (EAB) is to advise and assist the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program Coordinator (Coordinator) with the administration of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program.

Primary Responsibilities of the Executive Advisory Board.
(1) To direct activities of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener (MG) Program that are consistent with the Maryland Policies and Guidelines and this Handbook;
(2) To identify and resolve issues pertaining to the MG program and its volunteers;
(3) To assist the Coordinator in the effective administration of the MG Program including the grant process and equipment inventory/control; and
(4) To oversee the proper maintenance of records of volunteer service and training.
Primary Responsibilities of Each EAB member.
(1) To attend the meetings of the EAB;
(2) To perform various administrative tasks necessary for governance of the MG Program;
(3) To communicate with assigned committee chairpersons concerning directives, issues and progress reports; and
(4) To provide advice and assistance to assigned committee chairpersons.

EAB Composition.
(1) The EAB is comprised of the Coordinator and six active Master Gardeners.
(2) Four of the EAB members are elected by the active Master Gardeners and two EAB members are appointed by the Coordinator.

Candidates for the EAB. Opportunity to become a member of the Board shall be opened annually to all active Master Gardeners.

Nominating Committee Procedures. A nominating committee is created to identify qualified candidates to fill positions on the EAB. The committee shall be chaired by the immediate Past Chairman of the EAB. The current Chairman of the EAB with the concurrence of the full EAB shall appoint four active Master Gardeners to the nominating committee no later than August 1 each year. No current member of the EAB shall be eligible for appointment to the nominating committee. The committee shall canvas the membership for individuals interested in the EAB and select an active Master Gardener deemed well qualified as candidate for each vacant position on the EAB. The chair of the committee shall contact each proposed candidate to determine interest and availability to serve a two-year term. The chair shall submit the list of nominees to the EAB.

Eligibility to Vote. Only active Master Gardeners may vote in the election of EAB members.

Election of EAB Members. EAB member elections will normally be held at the annual mandatory February meeting unless the EAB notifies the membership well in advance of an alternative date.

Term of Office.
(1) EAB members serve two-year terms with two elected members and one appointed member being replaced each year.
(2) The term of office begins in March of the year in which the member is elected or appointed and ends in February two years later unless otherwise modified by the EAB at the time of election/appointment.

Resignation of EAB Member. When an EAB member resigns, the Master Gardener Program Coordinator shall appoint an active Master Gardener to complete the EAB member's term.

EAB Officers.
(1) The EAB officers shall be elected by the EAB from its membership.
(2) The EAB officers shall be Chairperson, Vice Chairperson, and Fiscal Advisor.
An EAB recording secretary shall be appointed by the EAB Chairperson. The secretary may be any active Master Gardener.

EAB members (with the exception of the Chairperson) shall serve as Project Advisors.

**Duties of EAB Officers.**

1. The Chairperson, working with the Master Gardener Coordinator, shall be responsible for the overall administration of the MG Program.
2. The Vice Chairperson shall assist the Chairperson in carrying out the responsibilities of that office and assume the duties of the Chairperson in the Chairperson's absence.
3. The Fiscal Advisor, selected from the EAB membership, shall support the Coordinator, EAB, project chairpersons, and members on fiscal issues. The Fiscal Advisor shall provide oversight of the grant process.
4. The Project Advisors shall communicate with assigned committee and project chairpersons concerning directives, issues progress reports; and provide advice and assistance.

**EAB Meetings.**

1. The EAB may establish its meeting times for the convenience of its members.
2. Unless the EAB is meeting in Executive Session, all EAB meetings are open to the general membership.

**Annual Meeting.** The EAB shall hold a mandatory meeting for all active Master Gardeners and interns in February of each year. The purpose of the meeting shall be:

1. Election of EAB members for the coming year;
2. Opportunity for active Master Gardeners to approve proposed activities for the coming year and to sign-up for volunteer opportunities;
3. Distribution of the time sheets to be used to record volunteer hours and training in the coming year;
4. Distribution of current policies, guidelines and procedures for A.A. County Master Gardeners;
5. Distribution of other master gardener program materials such as an updated master gardener directory; and
6. Discussion of any other business necessary for the coming year.

**Selection of Committees, Activities and Projects for the Annual Program.**

1. The EAB shall establish a process to determine which committees, activities and projects will constitute the master gardener program for the coming year. As part of this process, existing master gardener committees, activities, and projects are subject to approval for continuation. New committees, activities, and projects may also be proposed for approval.
2. The approval process is as follows:
   
   (A) Proposals for new Master Gardener programs or to continue an existing Master Gardener committee, activity, or project for the coming year must be submitted to the AB in November of the current year. The submission must be made in the
(B) The proposals for new and continuing committees, activities, and projects will be reviewed and approved or rejected by the EAB in advance of the February mandatory meeting. Individuals who have proposals rejected will be notified by the EAB.

(C) At the February mandatory meeting, the EAB will present the programs to the Master Gardeners for sign-up.

Addition of Activity or Project to Annual Program. The EAB may approve programs or projects as additions to the annual Master Gardener program. Request for approval of such projects with full event details must be provided to the EAB a minimum of 30 days in advance of the proposed activity commencement.

PART II: Candidates for Master Gardener Certification

Application. Candidates for certification as an Anne Arundel County Master Gardener must submit a written application in the format required.

Transfers from Other Maryland Master Gardener Programs. Master Gardeners seeking to transfer from other Maryland Master Gardener programs into the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener program must

1. Apply in writing for membership;
2. Be interviewed by the Master Gardener Coordinator (or a designee) to determine if any fees will be charged and what additional training and volunteer hours must be completed before that person becomes an active Anne Arundel County Master Gardener; and
3. Sign the standard master gardener contract, the MCE Confidentiality Statement, and a Transportation Issues statement.

Transfers from Other State Master Gardener Programs. Individuals seeking to transfer from Master Gardener programs outside Maryland to the Arundel County Master Gardener program must:

1. Apply in writing for membership into the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program;
2. Be interviewed by the Master Gardener Coordinator (or a designee) to determine if any fees will be charged and what additional training and volunteer hours must be completed;
3. Agree to the Maryland and the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program guidelines, procedures, and policies; and
4. Sign the standard master gardener contract, the MCE Confidentiality Statement, and a Transportation Issues statement.

New Applicants to the Master Gardener Program. To be awarded Master Gardener certification in the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program, a candidate who is not a transfer from another master gardener program must:
Complete the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Training;
(2) Pass the Training Course final exam;
(3) Sign the standard master gardener contract, the MCE Confidentiality Statement, and a Transportation Issues statement; and
(4) Perform a minimum of forty (40) hours of volunteer service within the first year (12 months) after completing the Training Course.

Master Gardener Training Course. To participate in the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Training Course, candidates must
(1) Submit a written application for acceptance in the Training Course;
(2) Complete an interview by phone or in-person;
(3) Agree to fulfill the volunteer responsibilities; and
(4) Pay a Training Course fee.

Master Gardener Interns. Individuals who successfully complete the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Training Course and pass the final exam are designated "Master Gardener Interns" until they complete their forty (40) hours of volunteer service within the first year (12 months) after completing the Training Course.

PART III: Maintaining Master Gardener Certification

Continuing Master Gardener Certification. To maintain Master Gardener certification and status as an Active Master Gardener, a person must:
(1) Annually complete a minimum of twenty (20) volunteer hours and ten (10) advanced training hours;
(2) Record and submit monthly on an approved time sheet the actual volunteer hours worked and training hours taken;
(3) Have a current Master Gardener contract;
(4) Attend the mandatory February meeting, unless excused in advance by the Coordinator or the EAB Chairman.

Termination of Master Gardener Certification. Persons with Master Gardener certification who do not meet the requirements in "Continuing Master Gardener Certification" may have their membership terminated.
(1) Prior to termination of certification, the individual will be contacted by phone, e-mail or letter by the Coordinator or an individual designated by the Coordinator of the possible termination of Master Gardener certification because of failure to meet the requirements specified in "Continuing Master Gardener Certification".
(2) Failure to provide sufficient evidence of hardship that prevented compliance with the requirements specified in "Continuing Master Gardener Certification" or failure to respond to the notification noted above will result in termination of Master Gardener membership.
(3) Individuals will be notified of termination of Master Gardener membership.

Revised September 2010
Leave of Absence. A Master Gardener who is unable to fulfill the requirements to remain an active member because of illness, family emergency, or other temporary circumstance, may request in writing a Leave of Absence for no more than three years.

1. The reason for the hardship must be communicated to the EAB or the Coordinator.
2. If Leave of Absence is granted, the individual must contact the Coordinator when they are ready to become active in the program.
3. "Active" status will be regained by contributing a minimum of 20 volunteer hours and attending 10 hours of advanced training within 12 months of return.
4. Documentation concerning an individual’s Leave of Absence status will be placed in individual's file.
5. The EAB shall annually review the status of Master Gardeners on Leave of Absence.

Resignation from the Master Gardener Program. Master Gardeners who wish to terminate their membership and certification in the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program shall communicate with the Coordinator their intent to resign. Requests for reinstatement will be handled by and at the discretion of the Master Gardener Coordinator.

PART IV: Volunteer and Advanced Training Hours

Volunteer Hours. Activities eligible for volunteer hours can be broadly characterized as administrative for organization support, materials development for programs and projects, teaching activities, and demonstration projects.

1. Volunteer hours shall be awarded only for activities that have been approved in advance by the Coordinator and the EAB.
2. Activities normally eligible for volunteer hours are:
   A. Administrative tasks established by the EAB for support of the master gardener program;
   B. Approved committees, programs and projects established at the annual mandatory February meeting of Master Gardeners;
   C. Teaching activities;
   D. Materials development to support programs and projects; and
   E. One-time public outreach events approved by the EAB.
3. Committee chairpersons shall assist their committee members and other Master Gardeners to determine what is or is not a "volunteer hour". When the committee chairperson or master gardener is unsure whether an activity is eligible for volunteer hours, the chairperson should ask the EAB Project Advisor for a determination.

Administrative Tasks. These tasks are established by the EAB to provide support for the administration and smooth operation of the Master Gardener program. Examples of these activities are the publication of the Master Gardener directory; time recording; new intern recruiting and screening; interviewing new interns, and transfers; organizing monthly meetings; researching continuing education opportunities; EAB meetings and tasks; and general administrative duties such as collating and copying documents, filing, and data entry.

1 The Maryland Master Gardener Program Policies uses the term “Hiatus”
Demonstration Projects. These activities involve planning, directing or participating in projects for the purpose of demonstrating/teaching gardening techniques including proper maintenance practices. The following activities are examples of demonstration projects: the composting demonstration site, the B&A Trail gardens, planting at Habitat for Humanity homes and London Town gardens.

Teaching Activities. These activities include education of the general public and other Master Gardeners. Examples are the information booth at the Anne Arundel County Fair and other public gatherings, plant clinics, workshops, lectures and presentations; Bay-Wise Site visits; and after-school and apprentice gardening programs.

Material Development. These activities are actual time spent in developing the materials used in class preparation and projects (see "Teaching Activities" for project examples), outlines, fact sheets, displays for exhibits, and articles for newsletters.

Limits on Volunteer Hours.
(1) Accrued volunteer hours cannot be carried from one calendar year to the next calendar year except by interns who are working to meet their 40 hour requirement.
(2) Project proposal development is eligible for up to (no more than) 8 hours volunteer time.

Retroactive Volunteer Hours. Retroactive volunteer hour credit will not be given for any activity that has not been approved by the EAB.

Travel Time.
(1) Time traveling to and from any location to participate in activities that are eligible for volunteer hours is considered volunteer time and is eligible for volunteer hours.
(2) Time traveling to and from any location to participate in advanced training is NOT eligible for training hours or volunteer hours.

Advanced Training Hours.
(1) A list of approved advanced training activities is published at least monthly by the Coordinator or the Coordinator’s designated Training Reviewer. The following activities are generally considered for approval as advanced training:
   (A) Classes, seminars and other educational activities offered by the University of Maryland Extension, plant societies, botanical gardens and arboreta, colleges, and nature centers or other horticultural-related training; and
   (B) Subject matter presentations made at Master Gardener monthly meetings.
(2) Any request to list an activity on the approved advanced training list should be submitted in sufficient time (normally 30 days) to allow for publication for the benefit of all Master Gardeners. Requests to add training activities should be addressed to the Training Reviewer.

Approved advanced training is listed in the Calendar of Events which is published each month

Revised September 2010
Employment-Related Training Activities. Master Gardeners who are paid to teach or to attend training classes which would ordinarily be eligible for master gardener advanced training hours will not be credited with volunteer hours or training hours for these classes.

PART V: Committees, Activities and Projects

Purpose of Committees, Activities and Projects. The committees, activities and projects of the Master Gardener Program are the mechanism for achieving the master gardener program goal of educating the general public about effective and sustainable horticultural practices and landscape problem solving.

Approval Required. All committees, activities and projects must be approved in advance by the EAB to be eligible for volunteer hours or financial support.

Duties of Committee Chairpersons. The Chairperson for a committee, activity or project serves to provide leadership, direction and coordination for committee activities. The duties are:

1. Clearly articulate for all members of the committee the purpose, goal and function of the committee;
2. Provide each committee member with a copy of the EAB approved plan and budget for the committee for the current calendar year;
3. Track all contact information. This includes direct contact (people in actual contact with, working or answering questions) and indirect contact (anyone passing through during the event, parents of children during youth events, anyone passing through an exhibit area). Include this information monthly on your time sheet;
4. Encourage committee members to turn in their hours on a monthly or, at a minimum, bi-monthly basis;
5. Delegate some of the chairperson's tasks to other committee members when possible;
6. Send monthly updates on program activities, including the dates of committee meetings and committee events, to the newsletter editor by the first day of the month preceding the month in which the activity or date will take place;
7. Prepare a list of requirements for the position of chairperson for your committee, activity or project. Include the number of committee members needed, when the program is active (months or seasons, and daytime events vs. evening or weekends), how many hours per month each volunteer should expect to spend on this program, and how many hours the chairperson spends each month. Use this information to develop the plan for next year's activities and submit the plan to the EAB or Coordinator no later than November 1st of the current year;
8. Use e-mail, the newsletter and the e-group site to keep other Master Gardeners posted on your committee's current activities and opportunities available for volunteering;
9. Notify the EAB if a Master Gardener is not fulfilling their responsibilities;
10. Work with the Coordinator, EAB or public relations volunteers to send out periodic press releases. These press releases can be a brief description about an ongoing program, or a photo and article describing a community event;
11. Take photos showing the essence or character of the program. These photos will be used for: new volunteer orientation, lectures on the Master Gardener program, publicity stills, packets for the County Council, and demonstration panels; and
12. Submit year-end report to the EAB not later than December 31st

Revised September 2010
**Duties of Committee Members.** The committee members assist the committee chairperson in reaching the goals and objective of their activity/project. The duties are:

1. Determine in advance the time commitment necessary for a committee, activity or project and be sure that you can give that time before volunteering for the committee.
2. Take your responsibilities seriously. If you cannot participate in committee meetings, notify the chairperson know well in advance. If you cannot work the time slot or event you signed up for, find a replacement, and contact the chairperson.
3. Take responsibility for one of the tasks listed under the chairperson's duties, so that the chairperson is not overburdened.
4. Attend committee meetings and contribute your talents to make the committee a success.
5. Attend the February mandatory meeting and sign-up to support your favorite committees, activities or projects.
6. Track all volunteer hours spent on master gardener committees, activities and projects and turn in your time on a monthly, or at the least, a bimonthly basis.
7. If you are an experienced master gardener, mentor a new person on your committee.

**PART VI: Master Gardener and Intern Ethics**

**Expectations for Master Gardeners and Interns.** In addition to upholding The Maryland and Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program Policies and Guidelines, Anne Arundel County Master Gardener volunteers are expected to represent the University of Maryland in a mature, professional, and respectful manner. Master Gardeners and Interns shall:

1. Serve as positive role models within the Master Gardener membership and to the public.
2. Accept training, supervision, and support from the Coordinator, the EAB, and committee chairpersons;
3. Handle duties, responsibilities, and commitments in a timely and responsible manner;
4. Get approval from the Coordinator prior to incurring any project or activity expenditures;
5. Request volunteer hours only for participation in projects approved by the EAB;
6. Only participate in committee activities that have been approved by the committee chairperson;
7. Bring concerns about the Master Gardener Program, its leadership, or its policies to either the Coordinator or to the EAB; and
8. Because the information in the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Directory is confidential, Master Gardener members shall use the information only for communication within the Master Gardener community.

**PART VII: Violating the Master Gardener Program Policies and Guidelines**

**Master Gardener Behavior.** Inappropriate Master Gardener or intern behavior or misrepresentation reflects poorly on the Maryland and Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Programs and their participants.

**Prohibited Activities.** The following activities are strictly prohibited and will be grounds for immediate termination of membership:

1. Accepting money, gifts, honorariums, services, etc., while representing oneself as a Master Gardener;
(2) Advertising oneself as a Master Gardener in a private business for personal gain;
(3) Wearing a Master Gardener name tag while working for a business as a paid employee;
(4) Implying an association with or endorsing a commercial product or business; and
(5) Any other behavior which reflects poorly on the credibility and reputation of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program.

Alleged Violation Investigation. Any alleged violation will be reviewed with the member in question at a meeting of the Coordinator and at least one EAB member to determine the facts of the situation.

1. Both the University of Maryland Extension Volunteer Policy Manual and the Anne Arundel Master Policy and Procedures Handbook shall serve as references for dealing with inappropriate behavior.

2. The meeting shall be documented in the file of the member.

3. Based on the results of the meeting, a decision will be made by the Coordinator and the EAB whether or not to allow the member in question to remain a member of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program.

4. When the Coordinator and the EAB find that circumstances warrant giving the member(s) in question an opportunity to continue as a member of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardeners, the member(s) in question will be notified in writing that further inappropriate behavior will be cause for loss of the individual(s) membership in the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program.

5. When the Coordinator and the EAB find that the member(s) in question carried out prohibited activities or that their behavior reflects poorly on the credibility and reputation of the Anne Arundel County Master Gardener Program, the member(s) in question shall be notified in writing that their master gardener certification has been terminated and their membership in the program revoked.