Greetings Master Gardener Volunteers,

We miss seeing you in the garden, but we have really enjoyed getting to connect with a large number of you virtually! We are writing to update you regarding our plans for a gradual return to limited in-person Master Gardener volunteer activity. We had previously decided that all in-person summer programs and activities will be suspended through July 31st, with the caveat that we may need to suspend those activities longer based on the state of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have been monitoring the guidance from the state, the University, and UME leadership to inform our decision regarding a return to volunteer activities.

UME offices across the state have been gradually reopening and figuring out how to navigate the return to work amidst the pandemic. In order to allow them time to establish new protocols and schedules, and due to the rise in COVID-19 cases in the state, we are extending the suspension of all in-person summer programs and activities through at least August 16th, 2020. We will continue to monitor the progress of opening offices and the progression of the pandemic in Maryland to determine if it will be safe for us to return to volunteer activity after August 16th, 2020.

We have prepared protocols to follow when we do return to limited volunteer activity. These are in alignment with the protocols established by UME for return to offices. Two related sets of protocols are included; one specifically created for volunteer activities, and the other prepared by Aly Valentine and the Area Extension Directors/ City Extension Director for office return to work protocols. We are including these protocols in order to help Master Gardeners prepare to follow them when returning to volunteering. However, as with all other things, these will be reevaluated and may change before the return to volunteer activities. Any changes will be communicated clearly via direct email and posting on the Maryland Master Gardener website.

As it has been from the beginning, our priority remains the health and safety of our employees, volunteers, and constituents. We will continue to monitor the announcements and guidelines from the State, the University, and UME Administration and will keep you informed accordingly. We are grateful for your patience, understanding, and support.

Regards,

Jim Hanson  
UME Associate Dean and Associate Director

Bill Hubbard  
UME Program Leader, Environment and Natural Resources

Stephanie Mathias  
State Master Gardener Coordinator

University programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.
Return to Volunteering Guidelines
Effective August 17, 2020

NOTE: Date and protocols are tentative and subject to change.

Welcome back! Thank you all for your patience in the previous months and for your respect of our safety guidelines. We are excited to see the return of Master Gardeners to the garden. In order to create the safest environment for you and other volunteers, the following guidelines must be followed when returning to volunteer activities.

• **Any activities must be in alignment with all county, state, and UME / UMEd protocols.** Please see the included UME Workplace Readiness document for UME protocols that must be followed.
• At this time, volunteers may not conduct in-person programming for the public. Continue hosting educational programs in a virtual format.
• Master Gardener meetings must continue to be held in a virtual format.
• All volunteer activity must be conducted outdoors. Volunteers may only be present in outdoor spaces in numbers that allow at least 6 feet distancing between each volunteer. Even if the garden is large enough, no more than 10 volunteers may be present at any time.
• Master Gardeners may not volunteer in a garden where members of the public are present in the garden.
• Volunteers must schedule all volunteer activity using the scheduling system developed by the local MG Coordinator.
  ○ Volunteer opportunities in gardens located on Extension office sites will be limited to times when the Master Gardener Coordinator is present on site.
  ○ A COVID-19 Master Gardener Work Safety Plan (see included) must be completed for any time volunteers are planning to work in a garden.
  ○ All volunteers must complete the COVID-19 Health Check survey on the day that they plan to volunteer prior to arriving at the garden.
• Volunteers must remain in their outdoor work spaces. No volunteers are to enter any buildings on premises of their garden areas except to use restrooms. When entering the building, volunteers must follow the protocols in place at that building for social distancing, cleaning, and other safety protocols.
• Volunteers must wear a mask at all times, even in outdoor spaces.
• Volunteers must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, frequently. Where soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be used.
• The use of shared equipment must be limited to one designated person per visit to the garden. That designated person must disinfect the equipment after use. Other volunteers must bring their own equipment.
• All surfaces, including entryways, must be disinfected at the end of the volunteer work. Personal tools must be removed from the garden.
• Guidelines are constantly changing. **If previously allowed activities become prohibited, volunteers must respect this and cease activity immediately.**
COVID-19 Master Gardener Work Safety Plan

Please work with your Master Gardener Coordinator to complete this form and provide details on how each of the requirements will be handled. Approval of this form by a Master Gardener Coordinator is required before volunteers may work in any garden.

Name of Individual Completing Form: __________________________________________________________

Date of Volunteer Work ____________________________________________________________

Garden Name ____________________________________________________________

Garden Location ____________________________________________________________

Garden Property Owner ____________________________________________________________

Open to the Public? ____________________________________________________________

County ____________________________________________________________

Master Gardener Coordinator Approval ____________________________________________________________

**Important Things to Remember:**

- All guidelines from UMD / UME, the State of Maryland, and the County / City must be followed.
- All volunteers must have completed the COVID-19 Health Check survey before volunteering
- Masks must be worn at all times, including in outdoor spaces

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details</th>
<th>Plan to Address</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing Plan/ Responsibilities (who will complete what tasks in the garden, who will monitor and enforce social distancing and mask wearing)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equipment Plan (what equipment is needed and who will bring it with them, if one shared piece of equipment needs to be used who will be the designated operator, who will provide cleaning supplies and disinfect the shared equipment)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social Distancing Plan (how big is the garden, how many people can fit with 6’ spacing in between, how many people will be present)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Health / Safety Plan (who will you contact in case of emergency, where are first aid supplies located)</td>
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Working together we all protect one another.

**Expectations**
- All employees are expected to follow workplace protocols for everyone’s safety.
- Employees should not come to work if ill.
- Employees should review the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) to understand leave provisions detailed within the act. [https://go.umd.edu/ffcra](https://go.umd.edu/ffcra)
- The protocols apply to UME County and City offices and UME workplaces at the Research and Education Centers.

**Building Access Protocols**
- Screening protocols will align with campus, state and county protocols, we will utilize the campus daily check-in portal. The protocol includes:
  - Health screening questionnaire
  - Temperature check if required by specific county/city governments
- Everyone entering the building must wear a mask.
- During the initial phase of returning to work, clients may enter the office by appointment only.

**Workplace Protocols**
- Facemasks must be worn; UME will permit employees to wear a mask of choice.
  - Facemasks must be worn in all public spaces (not required in individual offices).
  - Hand sanitizer and wipes will be available for each employee’s workspace – wash/sanitize hands regularly.
  - Hand sanitizer stations will be available in high traffic areas (entrances, workrooms, etc.)
  - Disinfecting/cleaning is everyone’s responsibility.
  - Employees should work in assigned spaces only.
- Social distancing should be exercised at all times; maintain 6 feet of separation. Employees should not gather in groups.
- Meetings with clients should take place in conference spaces, not individual offices in order to maintain social distancing
  - The UME faculty/staff member hosting the client meeting is responsible for disinfecting/cleaning the space after the meeting.
- Consider the purchase of disposable pens or pencils for clients to take with them.
- Consider the use of drop boxes for soil samples, plants/bugs for diagnostics.
- Continued use of technology for faculty/staff meetings.

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