

MASTER GARDENER GUIDELINES

1. When you enter the Master Gardener (MG) program, you are entering into a contract. In essence, you agree that in return for the training you receive, you will volunteer at least 50 hours service back to Extension during the following two years.
2. Becoming certified as a Master Gardener involves participating in an extensive training program. The program involves approximately 60-70 hours of training on nearly all aspects of horticulture. Included in the cost of the program is a manual filled with informational brochures, bulletins and fact sheets on gardening and horticulture. Many of the professors will hand out additional material for your manual.
3. Upon completion of the MG training course, you are designated a "Master Gardener Intern". You will be given a temporary name badge to represent yourself as an Cooperative Extension MG . Once you have completed your 50 hours of payback to the Extension program, you will receive your permanent name badge and a certificate that identifies you as a South Dakota Master Gardener. If you do not complete your payback commitment, you will not become a full-fledged Master Gardener, and you will be billed for the remaining total of the opt out fee.
4. Individuals have the option to take the MG training course for an increased fee that requires no commitment to perform 50 hours payback service. The fee entitles the individual to a copy of the manual and attendance at each of the MG training sessions. This option with no payback commitment is primarily designed for those private individuals or representatives of a business that desire to receive the training but either do not have the time or interest to provide payback to the Extension Service. The individuals who opt out do not receive a Master Gardener badge but they do receive a certificate showing they completed classroom training.
5. Training sessions will be conducted at various locations across the state. Training will utilize a variety of materials including videos, slides, power point, bulletins, handouts, samples and outdoor lab activities.
6. MG students should make every effort to attend each of the training sessions. If a session must be missed, the student should attend the same session at a different location or make other arrangements. Video tapes of sessions may be available for Master Gardeners to review a missed session. Missing two or more training sessions would prevent the student from graduating with that class of Master Gardeners. However, a student may attend the missed sessions at a later date and then be eligible to become a Master Gardeners.
7. Master Gardeners may participate in a wide variety of activities in their local county, cluster or other areas of the state. Some traditional Extension sponsored programs might include garden meetings, Achievement Days, answering phone calls at the county office or at home or assisting in a booth at the State Fair. Other activities may include, but not limited to, farmer's markets, school enrichment programs, mall displays or garden tours.

8. After completing your volunteer commitment (payback hours) to Extension during the first two years and you are certified as a Master Gardener, individuals are encouraged to continue their training by attending the yearly Master Gardener Update (conference) training sessions. Master Gardeners attending training sessions are then expected to repay with volunteer hours in exchange for the training they received. Basically, you give one hour of volunteer service for each hour of training received.

9. The title "Master Gardener" should be used only by individuals trained in a Cooperative Extension Service program. This title is only valid when used by an active Master Gardener who is participating in a program approved by Extension. When acting as a Master Gardener, you are an agent of South Dakota State University. Individuals who are no longer active should not use the title of Master Gardener.

10. Master Gardeners should not display credentials or advertise that they are a Master Gardener at a place of business unless the site is being used as an Extension program area or meeting. The title of Master Gardener should not be used for activities or business where you are paid for your services.

11. Master Gardeners are frequently asked to make pest control recommendations. Pesticide recommendations should be provided only for homeowners or noncommercial uses. (Questions from commercial growers should be referred to the county educators or state specialists.) First priority should be given to providing cultural and management information to minimize pest damage. When a Master Gardener gives advice which includes the use of chemicals, South Dakota Master Gardeners must follow current labeled or South Dakota Cooperative Extension Service recommendations. As Master Gardeners, they are expected to provide SDSU recommendations and not rely on their own personal experience, that of others or that of common garden folklore or untested home remedies.

12. Experienced Master Gardeners may often be asked to speak before groups. Although a MG may accept reimbursement for expenses involved with these presentations, the MG should not seek payment for such speaking engagements.

13. Forms for recording volunteer hours are available via the website <http://hortmg.sdstate.edu/> Look under "Volunteers Report Form" for the form in Word and Excel Spreadsheet format. It is the responsibility of the MG to coordinate their activities with their home county Extension Office to receive proper credit for volunteer time. Forms should be submitted to your home county by November 1st of each year.