

OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY EXTENSION  
MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM



POLICY STATEMENT

REVISED JANUARY 26, 2017

PURPOSE

The Ohio State University Extension (OSUE) Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) Program is an educational program designed to meet the consumer horticulture needs of Ohio citizens. Its purpose is to train volunteers and utilize their expertise to teach people more about plants and pests, their culture, and their importance to the environment and to our quality of life. MGVs provide technical assistance to their county Extension office in order that consumer horticulture activities and programs can be more effectively and efficiently delivered to Ohio's gardening public.

MGV trainees receive formal training from their county Extension office covering a wide range of pertinent horticultural topics. To become a MGV, the trainee must complete the training program, pass the required exams, and volunteer a specified number of hours to OSU Extension.

The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of different ways depending on the determined needs of the county residents. After the completion of the initial required training and volunteer hours, one becomes a certified OSUE MGV. Volunteers are encouraged to continue with the program by recertifying and assisting with the horticulture program as a certified OSUE Master Gardener Volunteer.

The Ohio MGV Program is supported on the state level by the OSU Extension Agricultural and Natural Resources Program Area and the Department of Horticulture & Crop Science. The State MGV Coordinator along with the guidance of a State MGV Advisory Committee develops policies and guidelines for the operation of the program; develops and implements the state support budget; provides some training and recognition materials; in-service opportunities; and other resources for counties conducting the program. On the county level, the program is coordinated by an Extension professional who manages the program directly or supervises a MGV program coordinator.

TRAINING

The formal training program is the responsibility of the county Extension professional managing the program. Instructors are Ohio State University faculty, Extension Specialists, Extension Associates, experienced Master Gardeners, and other experts.

The training program is to provide a balanced, integrated practical course in plant science. Core topics that are to be part of the training in every county are Orientation to Extension and the Master Gardener Volunteer Program; Basic Botany and Plant Physiology; Soils and Fertilizers; Basic Entomology; Basic Plant Pathology and Plant Disease Diagnostics; Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Use and Safety; Home Lawn Care; Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs; Trees and Shrubs; Home Vegetable Production; Home Fruit Production; Houseplants; and Backyard Wildlife Management. Special topics, based on local needs, may also be part of the curriculum.

The principle resource for the training will be the Ohio MGV Training Manual that includes the core topics and material appropriate to Ohio. Core training is held during a 2-3 month period, with continuing education or in-service training provided during the year in accordance with county and regional needs and resources. An annual statewide conference is offered to assist in fulfilling continuing education requirements, give program updates and present awards.

## ATTENDANCE

Each MGV trainee is expected to attend every class session. The trainee is responsible for initiating provisions to make up any missed sessions. A limit on the number of allowable absences may be made by the county MGV coordinator.

## EXAMINATIONS & QUIZZES

Each trainee must pass all quizzes and examinations with a cumulative average of 70% or better. There will be quizzes that test the trainees' knowledge of broad plant science principles, as well as a final open-book or take-home exam to test the trainees' abilities to retrieve information from reference materials.

## CERTIFICATION

Upon entering the training program, each trainee becomes a MGV intern. Upon fulfillment of the training classes and the 50 hour volunteer commitment, the participant will then receive an official MGV certificate, an official OSUE MGV name tag, and a 50 hour OSUE MGV logo pin.

## VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT

The MGV training course consists of a minimum of 50 hours of instruction. A volunteer then completes 50 hours of service to OSUE to become a certified OSUE MGV. Only unpaid public service in Ohio State University Extension-sponsored activities counts toward the requirement. Other volunteer activities may be counted after receiving prior approval by the local coordinator. The required volunteer hours should be completed within one year of completion of the training course or other time period designated by the county MGV program coordinator.

Each MGV will have undergo an online background check, a completed Application, a signed OSU Extension Standards of Behavior, a signed Pest Management Information Policy (see below), and a service record on file at the local Extension office. This information is treated confidentially. Volunteers' records are kept in separate files in a secured place and are accessible only by trained Extension staff. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to make sure that the information on their application (i.e. address, phone, email) and their service record is kept current and accurate. This is necessary for liability reasons and for the protection of the volunteer as well as program clientele.

## USE OF THE TITLE

The title "Ohio Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the Ohio State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program. Ohio MGVs are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing unpaid public service work under the auspices of the Ohio State University Extension. MGVs are advised not to advertise their place of business during extension-sponsored activities, and are not to be listed as MGVs on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. Since Ohio State University Extension is a source of unbiased, research-based information, appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University endorsement of any product or place of business is inappropriate.

## PESTICIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Ohio MGVs, when performing MGV activities, are considered unpaid staff of Ohio State University Extension. MGVs are trained by Extension personnel and other experts and are provided with Extension publications. In addition to their training, MGVs receive diagnostic support from the C. Wayne Ellet Plant and Pest Diagnostic Clinic at OSU, and from various Extension Specialists. When it is necessary to make recommendations that include the use of pesticides, MGVs must follow product labels or OSU Extension recommendations. They are not to rely on their own personal experience, that of others, or common garden folklore.

## RECERTIFICATION

Once an individual has completed the necessary requirements and is certified as an Ohio MGV, he or she is not automatically a MGV for life. MGVs must be recertified each year to remain on the "active" list and maintain the MGV title. MGV Recertification is achieved by fulfilling the following requirements:

- 1) Completing a minimum of twenty (20) hours of volunteer service each year, and
- 2) Completing a minimum of ten (10) hours continuing education by any of the following options:
  - \* participation in State, Regional, National or International MGV Conferences.
  - \* participation in county or district-sponsored continuing education sessions.

- \* participation in any other programs approved by the local MGV Coordinator for recertification.
- 3) Paying \$10.00 per year State Support fee.
- 4) If involved with projects with care, custody, and control of minors, completing a fingerprint background check every 4 years.

Each county MGV program may set its own recertification standards above and beyond these minimum requirements.

### **INACTIVE STATUS**

An inactive MGV is one who is unable to commit to the annual recertification requirements listed above at some point in time, but would like the opportunity to remain in the program and recertify in the future. The following policy applies:

- 1) To request Inactive Status the MGV must be in good standing, having completed the original commitment of training, exam, and volunteer service.
- 2) The inactive MGV must obtain ten (10) hours of acceptable Continuing Education Credits during the total inactive period of time. (See Recertification #2)
- 3) An inactive MGV may recertify within three (3) years as long as the above criteria are met. Individuals on inactive status for more than three years must, in addition to meeting the above continuing education requirements, also retake and pass the final exam.

### **RESIGNED**

A volunteer who has left the program due to termination, resignation, death, or other reason will be considered RESIGNED. They are no longer a volunteer for the OSUE MGV program.

### **EMERITUS**

This status and associated criteria are left up to each individual County Coordinator to determine. However, if the county allows Emeriti to volunteer for any activities, Emeriti must pay the state support fees, be included in the County's volunteer liability insurance payment each year, and report all volunteer hours and activities to the county Coordinator who then reports this to the state.

### **OUT-OF-STATE TRANSFERS**

A MGV who was certified in another state may be admitted into the Ohio MGV Program by meeting the following criteria:

- 1) complete an online background check;
- 2) show that he/she is a MGV in good-standing in the other state;
- 3) complete the Volunteer Involvement packet for his/her file;
- 4) acquire a current Ohio MGV training manual;
- 5) pay the \$10.00 State Support fee;
- 6) acquire an Ohio State University Extension MGV name badge;
- 7) score a minimum of 70% on a final exam administered by the county MGV coordinator;
- 8) meet the recertification requirements listed above.

### **IN-STATE TRANSFERS**

Ohio MGVs transferring from one county to another must also be in good standing and have their file transferred to the new county.

### **DISMISSAL OF A MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER**

Disregard for the policies and guidelines established by the Ohio State University Extension, the Ohio Master Gardener Volunteer Program, and the OSUE County Program are grounds for dismissal as a MGV. When the county MGV coordinator finds it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer must be informed in writing of the termination of his/her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become part of the volunteer's confidential file.