

ITEM 1

NASSAU COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM OVERVIEW

This "Program Overview" contains information will be useful to you in understanding the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, as well as the role and responsibilities of a volunteer Master Gardener. It will also give you insight into University of Florida/IFAS Extension, how it functions, and how Master Gardener Volunteers operate as part of the Extension Service. IFAS stands for Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences. Please read the enclosed materials (**Items 1**) and complete the application form (**Item 2**), the questionnaire (**Item 3**).

Once items 2 and 3 are completed and returned by **5 PM Friday, July 1, 2016**; we will set up a time for an interview. Should you have questions, please call Rebecca Jordi at (904) 530-6351 or e-mail rljordi@ufl.edu.

THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening has prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Agents (Educators). Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and are relatively easy to answer assuming one has horticulture training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Agent (educator) in the state of Washington reasoned that well-trained volunteers could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as 4-H Club Leaders and Master Food and Nutrition have been a part of the Extension Service but none existed in the area of homeowner horticulture. The Extension Agent (educator) selected, trained and certified volunteers as Master Gardeners. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives and, in fact, they exceeded his expectations. Therefore, the Master Gardener Volunteer Program began.

Since then, the Master Gardener Program has grown and is now active in over 30 states. Florida's Program began in 1979 and currently is found in more than 46 Counties. The program has become a tremendous success and has been offered in Nassau County since 1994. The Florida Master Gardener Program is sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS), of which the Cooperative Extension Service is a part.

What is UF/IFAS Extension?

For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we go back to 1862 when the U. S. Congress passed the Morrill Act, which established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the Federal Government. They became known as "Land Grant Colleges" – a name remains today. These colleges would emphasize teaching practical subjects such as agriculture and home economics.

The 1887 Hatch Act provided for experiment stations at lands grant colleges to conduct agriculture research.

In 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a part of Land Grant Colleges as a means of

placing in the hand of those who could benefit from it, the knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college along with FAMU. The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the University which has responsibility for Extension.

The term "Extension" defines this organization's purpose - to extend the information generated at the State and Federal levels to people at the County level in the form of a "service". UF/IFAS Extension is an information education organization, which provides information in 3 main areas: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Educational Sciences, and 4-H Youth. Community Development, Sea Grant (Marine Biology), and Energy are also associated programs. In Nassau County, the Environmental Horticulture program agent is me, Rebecca Jordi. Horticulture falls under Agriculture. In addition, I serve as County Extension Director. The Agriculture and Natural Resources agent position will be filled soon, Meg McAlpine represents Family Consumer Science, Amanda Thien and Margaret Johnson are 4-H Youth Development agents.

The motto and goal of the University of Florida/IFAS Extension is "Solutions for Your Life." Thus, you can see how well the Master Gardener volunteer concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

What is the Nassau County Master Gardener Program?

Selection to become a candidate for the Master Gardener Program in Nassau County is **not** based solely on prior training, education, knowledge or experience although those things help candidates compete for the limited numbers of training slots, which open up each year in this program. Great weight is placed by the selection committee on a potential candidate's attitude toward volunteer service work, desire to learn (even after the initial training is completed), and perceived flexibility when it comes to meeting volunteer payback hours. A sincere desire to help others, ability to work well with peers and share UF/IFAS research based information are all essential criteria for being a good Master Gardener Volunteer. Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful but they are by no means the only things looked at in making selections for the best candidates.

At no time will race, sex, religion, national origin, or handicap exclude a person from becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer in Nassau County. Cooperative Extension Office will always follow Affirmative Action guidelines in the selection process.

About Master Gardener Training

The Master Gardener Program is demanding and intensive.

- Classes are held in Duval and Nassau and will begin on Wednesday, August 3 in Duval County.
- It is conducted using numerous educators.
- Training sessions begin at 9:30 AM and conclude at 3:30 PM on Wednesdays. You are expected to stay all day.
- Graduation ceremony at the University of Florida on October 12.
- **Master Gardener Volunteers are allowed to miss only one class because of the quantity and quality of information covered at each session**
- Subjects covered include basic botany, nematology, entomology, plant pathology, animal pest control, turf grasses, annuals, soils and fertilizers, vegetable gardening, landscape design, foliage plants, pesticide safety, household pest control, plant propagation, fruits, woody ornamentals, plant identification and usage, and integrated pest management.
- Each trainee is provided Master Gardener reference materials from UF/IFAS.
- Master Gardeners are trained to answer only questions from homeowners
- Extension Agents answer commercial or professional grower questions or problems. Master

Gardeners do **not** deal with commercial/professional grower concerns.

- At the conclusion of the 50+ hour training period, all Master Gardeners are required to pass a comprehensive examination on the materials covered and a pesticide examination. After completing the first year of volunteer time, the candidate will be awarded the title of "Master Gardener Volunteer".
- Once certified, Master Gardener Volunteers must abide by the policies set out by UF/IFAS and the Nassau County Extension Office.
- This certification is restrictive in nature - it is valid only when the individual participating in and volunteering for the Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Program and for one year only.
- A \$100.00 fee is required once you are accepted into the training program. This fee will be used to purchase training manuals and cover operating costs.

Nassau County Master Gardener Volunteer Policies

The title "Florida Master Gardener Volunteer" is to be used only and exclusively in the UF/IFAS Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program in which the trained and certified Master Gardener answers gardening questions. Master Gardener volunteers are expected to identify themselves **only** when doing unpaid volunteer educational work for the Nassau County Extension office.

- Provide 75 hours first year of service, 35 hours every year thereafter with 10 hours of advanced training. The first year, 24 of the required 75 hours will be spent covering phones and 40 hours will be spent working in the demonstration gardens. The remaining hours can be on a designated project approved by the Extension agent.
- Be willing to travel to all parts of Nassau County
- **Florida Master Gardener Volunteers do not advertise themselves as Master Gardeners on their names or their places of business, nor can it to be listed on the advertisements of business places.** This is a University of Florida/IFAS Extension public service program providing unbiased information. Appearing as a commercial entity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University or Extension endorsement of any product or place of business is improper.
- In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (e.g., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardener volunteers are to follow published UF/IFAS Extension recommendations. Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops are to be referred to the local County Extension Agent.
- If an individual ceases active participation, then the certification as Master Gardener Volunteer becomes void.
- New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be re-certified and should be aware if they represent themselves as a Master Gardener Volunteer, they are violating their original commitment to the UF/IFAS Extension.
- Work well with public and co-workers
- Be flexible, follow directions
- Have volunteer time
- Desire to learn and help others



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