

# About the Master Gardener Volunteer Program

The Michigan Master Gardener Program is a horticulture education and volunteer leader training program offered by Michigan State University Extension. It provides home gardening information to Bay County citizens through a network of trained volunteers. An interest in gardening, home horticulture, a personal commitment to volunteering, and an enthusiasm for sharing knowledge with others are the only prerequisites.

The program originated in the state of Washington in 1972 and is now offered in approximately 46 states and Canada. The first program held in Michigan was conducted in 1978. Since then, approximately 57 counties have offered the course in one or more years, with a total of over 18,000 participants.

## Mission

The Master Gardener volunteer program serves two major and equal functions:

- ☛ To provide instruction in basic horticulture science to motivated

and active gardeners through an adult educational program offered through Michigan State University Extension.

- ☛ To provide MSU Extension - Bay County with trained volunteers committed to responding to the demands for gardening information, advice, and assistance through community service projects.

## Educational Requirement

Master Gardener classes meet for a minimum of eleven weeks. Extension educators, other specialist, and local gardening experts teach the classes. Trainees work from the 700 page Master Gardener Core Manual. The course provides a basic overview of major horticultural subjects, while introducing the students to a variety of resources for future reference. Topics covered in the eleven basic class sessions include:

- ☛ Introduction to Plant Science
- ☛ Soils for Plant Growth
- ☛ Flower Gardening
- ☛ Household Pest and Wildlife
- ☛ Indoor Plant Care
- ☛ Plant Health (IPM)
- ☛ Lawn Care

- ☛ Growing Small Fruits
- ☛ Growing Tree Fruits
- ☛ Vegetable Gardening
- ☛ Woody Ornamentals

There will also be sessions on water quality and volunteering.

## Volunteer Commitment

The Master Gardener training course consist of a minimum of 40 hours of instruction. An equivalent number of community service volunteer hours are required to become a certified Master Gardener. Half of these hours must be spent on Extension-sponsored projects. Examples include: working at an information booth within the Bay County library system, staffing an information booth at other county locations, and developing educational materials.

Bay County Master Gardener trainees have the opportunity to work at the I-75 Linwood rest stop, staff an information table at various Bay County libraries, and act as docents for the Bay City Garden Walk.

Other hours may be given to activities related to horticulture in the community. Some examples include: designing and planting community beautification projects, working with youth to create a school garden, using horticultural therapy with the disabled and elderly, or setting up garden programs in homes for battered women.



Master Gardener Project  
Bay County Library System  
Sage Library

For details on the Michigan Master Gardener Volunteer Program and current class schedule, contact:

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