Guidelines for the Master Gardener Program in Wyoming

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Master Gardener Program Mission Statement

The Master Gardener Program of the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service (UW CES) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) exists to extend the university to the people of Wyoming via volunteer service in horticulture. The Master Gardener Program provides sound, research-based, regionally appropriate horticultural information to the general public concerning:

- Appropriate plant materials
- Diagnosis of plant problems
- Solutions for diagnosed problems
- Proper plant care, including fertilization, pruning, watering, and propagation practices
- General information about growing seasons, proper planting techniques, plant selection considerations, and year-round yard care

While the duties of a Wyoming Master Gardener are varied depending upon the region, the following expectations of service are upheld:

- Developing educational programs to address local needs such as water issues, alternative pest management, and ecosystem characteristics, to encourage environmentally sound horticultural practices;
- Reaching out to new audiences through a variety of technologies;
- Providing life-long learning opportunities and a variety of meaningful volunteer options for Wyoming Master Gardeners resulting in a committed, active network of horticultural educators who serve communities across the state;
- Collaborating with the green industry, public agencies, and non-profit organizations to provide current, research-based information to the public.

Furthermore, individual Master Gardener volunteers must adhere to the policies stated in this document. The Master Gardener Program services a wide diversity of clientele, which may include disabled individuals, young children, elderly, and ethnic minorities. Each Master Gardener must be capable of willing service to all citizens of the state. Master Gardeners are representatives of the University of Wyoming and should conduct themselves in a professional manner.

The Master Gardener Program promotes environmentally sound horticultural methods that use the principles of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and sustained agriculture and horticulture.

IPM is a systematic approach to diagnosing and managing pest problems. It involves a variety of techniques such as mechanical, cultural, physical, biological, and chemical approaches to pest management. Sustainable agriculture and horticulture relates to the whole environment, not just the localized plant problem. Sustainable agriculture and horticulture techniques look for long-term solutions to problems that will promote and sustain a healthy environment for the entire community.

Master Gardener Program Goals

The UW CES Master Gardener Program strives to achieve the following goals:

- Provide Wyoming residents with horticultural expertise in varied zones and climates
- Provide appropriate analyses of problems and recommendations for the management of horticultural problems including insects, diseases, weeds, soil, water, the environment, and their relationships to plants
- Use volunteers for program support in diagnosing and recommending management techniques for horticultural plant problems
- Emphasize IPM principles when addressing horticultural programs
- Provide Master Gardener volunteers opportunities to participate in community projects, present information, write articles, and otherwise relay horticultural information to those who request it
- Provide continuing education to Master Gardener volunteers, enabling them to perform the above functions of the program

Master Gardener Program Policies

The Master Gardener Program originated in the early 1970s to provide research-based horticultural information to consumers via the land-grant university system. The land-grant university in Wyoming is the University of Wyoming in Laramie.

Beginning Master Gardeners receive a minimum of 40 hours of training in appropriate horticultural subjects from campus-based specialists, local educators, or other field experts. After initial training, Master Gardeners are required to provide at least 40 hours of volunteer service to their local UW CES offices. Generally, volunteer service should be completed within one year of basic Master Gardener training. Volunteer service may include any of the following:

- Responding to horticultural inquiries in a local UW CES office
- Conducting yard calls
- Researching and writing horticulture-based articles for local media outlets
- Conducting horticultural tours or working to maintain educational display gardens
- Handling booths or displays at fairs or other public functions
• Volunteering at farmers’ markets
• Presenting educational programs
• Providing educational information and research assistance

Some Wyoming Master Gardener Programs offer incentives to encourage completion of volunteer service while others offer alternatives to returning 40 hours of service. Program training costs vary from county to county.

Master Gardeners represent the university in a horticultural capacity. While Master Gardeners generally enjoy working with plants, they must also enjoy people. Master Gardeners should know that, because of the federal mandate and land-grant mission of cooperative extension, our program emphasizes research-based information.

Continuing education is an important part of the Master Gardener Program. Each succeeding year a Master Gardener wishes to continue as a volunteer, he or she must attend at least eight hours of formal horticultural instruction. These hours can be obtained by attending professional association conferences, Master Gardener courses offered through a university, county-sponsored programs, or other activities. Continuing educational requirements must be agreed upon at the local level with the county Master Gardener coordinator.

The contributions of the Master Gardeners are of value to the university, however, for legal reasons, Master Gardeners should reserve certain duties for extension educators and specialists. Master Gardeners must not attempt to diagnose or identify any plant or insect sample coming from a commercial field or operation. These samples should be forwarded to the local county educator in charge of horticulture and then sent to the appropriate specialist at the main campus if necessary. In the case of insects and spiders of human or animal health concern, the university strongly advises sending these on to the extension entomologist on campus for identification.

Some counties have established additional bylaws and guidelines pertaining specifically to their county. Some of these guidelines require additional hours of service and education. None of the county requirements may be less than the minimum number of training and service hours. They may be more than the required number stated in this document depending upon the discretion of the county Master Gardener coordinator. Please check with each individual county regarding its requirements.

Some counties have steering committees or governing groups. The state Coordinator strongly recommends democratically electing officials (chair, president, treasurer, etc.) to fill leadership roles. Rotation of leadership roles is also advisable.
All funds earned by a Master Gardener group should be utilized for education and public service. If a Master Gardener group disbands, money earned must not be rolled into a private garden club account or otherwise used for any other organization. Master Gardener groups with 501(c)(3) status are still accountable to the University of Wyoming, as their funds are earned within a UW CES program.

It should be noted certain counties have instituted a screening process before Master Gardeners are allowed to work with youth. There is a small fee required, and information is collected from the Master Gardener participant. Without this screening, Master Gardeners in such counties should not be allowed to participate in activities at which children are present. This process is voluntary, but provides security and peace of mind to the public we are serving. For more information on the screening process, contact the campus CES office at (307) 766-3566.

Not every county in Wyoming has, or will have, a Master Gardener Program. For a list of counties that offer the Master Gardener Program, contact the Wyoming state coordinator regarding the Wyoming Master Gardener Program. The State Master Gardener coordinator can be called upon for mediation services when conflicts arise. The local county-based Master Gardener coordinator should represent the university in a positive and professional manner in both appearance and behavior. Often, the public will judge the University of Wyoming based upon material taken directly from the corresponding Master Gardener Handbook chapter.

The suggested curriculum training guidelines and times are:

- Plant pathology and diagnostics – Four hours
- Entomology – Four hours
- Soils – Five hours
- Weed management – Four hours
- Plant health – One hour
- Annuals, perennials, and interior plants – Three hours
- Turf – Four hours
- Trees and shrubs – Four hours
- Vegetables – Four hours
- Pesticide use and safety – Four hours
- UW CES policies and procedures – One hour
- Testing, additional local needs – Two hours

**Sustainable Horticulture for Wyoming: A Master Gardener Handbook** is the official text. Each participating Master Gardener student should purchase a copy. The price of the text may or may not be included in the registration fee depending upon the county. All students will be quizzed on the information from these chapters. A score of 70 percent on each quiz is required to pass basic training. After each topic is presented, a quiz of no more than 20 questions will be given based upon material taken directly from the corresponding Master Gardener Handbook chapter.

**Master Gardener Program Participant Selection**

Each county Master Gardener Program is encouraged to solicit participants for the beginning training class each year. This process should always include a written application and a short interview when possible. Contact the State Master Gardener coordinator or the local county coordinator for an application. Ideally, class participants should have a working knowledge of gardening and plant material suitable for Wyoming. Participants will need to be able to discuss, in understandable terms, recommendations for solving consumers’ horticultural problems.

**Duties of the County Master Gardener Coordinator**

Duties of the local, county-based Master Gardener coordinator include scheduling class times for training, registering attendees, collecting appropriate fees (including materials and any local costs), verifying each participant’s completion of at least 40 hours of training, monitoring each participant’s 40 hours of volunteer service in the local UW CES office, and overseeing the distribution of information given to consumers regarding horticultural problems. The local coordinator will be responsible for submitting the names of Master Gardeners who have fulfilled their training and volunteer commitments to the state coordinator for recognition when requested. In turn, the university will supply information, training, support, and encouragement to the local county coordinator regarding the Wyoming Master Gardener Program. The State Master Gardener coordinator can be called upon for mediation services when conflicts arise. The county-based Master Gardener coordinator should represent the university in a positive and professional manner in both appearance and behavior. Often, the public will judge the University system as a whole on their interaction with local personnel.

**Beginning Master Gardener Training Curriculum**

Master Gardener training can be provided by UW state specialists, county coordinators, CES educators, field experts, and veteran Master Gardeners. Training topics include plant pathology and diagnostics; entomology; general plant health; annuals, perennials, and interior plants; soils; and weed management. Additional topics include turf, trees and shrubs, vegetables, pesticide use and safety, and local UW CES office policies and procedures. Some of these subjects can be covered on-site while others may be offered through ‘train-the-trainer’ programs or regional workshops. Whenever possible, Master Gardener training should be tailored to local community needs. As our extension specialists develop additional training materials, other means of participation, such as DVDs, CDs, or interactive computer presentations, may become available. Should there be a need for other topics, such as herbs, water gardening, irrigation systems, xeriscaping, or extending the growing season, these subjects should be addressed in training sessions.

**Plant Health**

- Plant pathologies and diagnostics – Four hours
- Entomology – Four hours
- Soils – Five hours
- Weed management – Four hours
- Plant health – One hour
- Annuals, perennials, and interior plants – Three hours
- Turf – Four hours
- Trees and shrubs – Four hours
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Dismissal

Individuals may be dismissed from the Wyoming Master Gardener Program and hence must cease using the title of Master Gardener.

A volunteer may be dismissed:

- At the request of the county extension educator or program associate
- At the request of the State Master Gardener coordinator
- Due to failure to complete volunteer hours, educational hours, or turn in necessary reports
- Due to problems associated with volunteer performance, including people skills and their ability to represent the University of Wyoming Cooperative Extension Service in a professional and positive manner
- Due to failure to honor volunteer commitments

Volunteers must not make inappropriate or vulgar comments and jokes while functioning in their Master Gardener role. Volunteers must observe the same level of professional conduct as an employee of the University of Wyoming. The Master Gardener program is open to everyone regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, age, political belief, veteran status, sexual orientation, and marital or familial status. All volunteers are to treat their fellow members with respect. Failure to do so will be grounds for dismissal.

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that volunteering with an organization is a privilege and not a right. Organizations may release volunteers at the discretion of the organization. Appeals or concerns can be made to the State Master Gardener coordinator.

Conflict-of-Interest

Any situation that has the potential to imply the University of Wyoming promotes or endorses a private business or product could be a conflict of interest. In some situations, it may be to the best interest of both parties to formally establish a cooperative business agreement. This is done by university officials closely following federal regulations.

Most conflict of interest problems arise from implied endorsement, i.e., to imply the service is provided by or in collaboration with the University of Wyoming or to imply the University of Wyoming is recommending a business or product.

Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers with green industry connections must exercise caution to avoid any potential conflict of interest situations. This includes small business owners and independent contractors.

- Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers may be identified as Wyoming Master Gardeners only while serving in authorized Wyoming Master Gardener volunteer activities.
- Volunteers with green industry connections may not use Wyoming Master Gardener activities as a source of business contacts or advertisement, however, it is acceptable to list Master Gardener training and volunteer experience on a resume or job application going to a few selected individuals.
- “Wyoming Master Gardener” may not be used in any marketing materials for private business.
- Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers may not wear Master Gardener name badges or Master Gardener clothing items while working as an employee or owner of a nursery, garden center, or other business.

Copyright Law

In Wyoming Master Gardener work, volunteers must not violate copyright laws.

The UW CES gives permission to Wyoming Master Gardeners to make copies of our fact sheets as part of their work as Master Gardeners. Much of this material is available on University of Wyoming Web sites.

It should be noted copyright law prohibits making multiple copies of any material for group distribution without permission of the copyright holder. Certain exceptions apply when the material is used strictly for educational purposes. Volunteers should consult with their country or state coordinator.

The Wyoming Master Gardener logo is a trademarked graphic and may only be used in association with authorized Wyoming Master Gardener activities. The logo may not be used for personal advertisement, printed on personal business cards, or displayed with the intent to garner profit. The logo may be printed on shirts, jackets, and related clothing worn by volunteers engaged in Master Gardener volunteer activities. Apparel bearing the logo should not be worn by Master Gardeners when engaged in professional for-profit service in the green industry. Apparel is to be reserved for official Master Gardener volunteer functions.

The title “Wyoming Master Gardener” or “Wyoming State Master Gardener” may not be used by volunteers who are have not continued to return the necessary volunteer hours and thus are considered inactive. Once an individual ceases to be active in the group, they must surrender use of the title or take the necessary steps to achieve active status through their local county Master Gardener coordinator.
Wyoming Master Gardeners are not authorized to give legal or medical-related advice, for example:

- Wyoming Master Gardeners do not give advice on food preparation or related topics. Canning, drying, nutrition, and storage questions should be referred to a nutrition and food safety specialist or educator. (Legal issue)
- Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers do not address hazard tree issues (concerns about the potential for a tree to fall on a house or other structure resulting in injury or property damage). Rather, refer the client to a certified arborist. (Legal issue)
- Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers do not address poisonous plant or mushroom questions. Rather refer the client to poison control or the State Extension Horticulture specialist. (Medical issue)
- Wyoming Master Gardener volunteers do not advise on the medicinal use of herbs. The public should be advised to consult a physician or pharmacist. (Medical issue)
- All reference to use of pesticides (both organic and manufactured) must come directly from CES print material or pesticide industry label materials. For more in-depth information, the client must be referred to the local county extension educator, horticulture program associate, state horticulture specialist, or the state extension pesticide specialist. (Legal issue)
- For information on how toxic a pesticide is, refer the client to the National Pesticide Information Center at 1(800) 858-7378 or the state extension pesticide specialist. (Legal issue)
- Wyoming Master Gardeners do not advise on the misuse of pesticides. Refer the client to the Wyoming Department of Agriculture or the state extension pesticide specialist. (Legal issue)

Furthermore, Wyoming Master Gardeners should avoid entering a residence, and, whenever possible, should avoid being alone during a yard call. It is recommended volunteers be accompanied by at least one other individual when visiting a residential yard. Avoid entering a home, garage, or enclosed structure and be prepared to leave if the situation becomes unsafe or uncomfortable. Always notify your county Master Gardener coordinator when you are scheduled to be out on yard calls. If a citizen you are working with appears angry or distraught, return to the CES office immediately and report the incident to your county coordinator.

1 Adapted from Colorado State University http://cmg.colostate.edu/admin/legals.htm. Prepared by David Whiting.
2 Adapted from University of Minnesota http://www.extension.umn.edu/projects/guidebook/mgbook.html.