



Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
301 Manny Martinez Sr. Drive. 2nd Floor
El Paso, TX 79905
Telephone: 915-273-3502 Extension: 2329

June 5th, 2024

Dear Master Gardener Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Master Gardener course and volunteer program. Attached please find an application for the fall 2024 El Paso County Master Gardener program. The Master Gardener program is a highly successful **volunteer training program** that has been used in all fifty states and even some foreign countries. Although the program began in the state of Washington in 1972, Texas was not far behind, and El Paso, which has been training Master Gardeners since 1982, has the second oldest program in the state.

The Master Gardener program offers 12 weeks of intensive horticulture training on a weekly basis; topics such as vegetable gardening, trees and proper pruning, xeriscaping, soils, fertilizers, plant pests and more. After successful completion of this course, **participants are required to volunteer time**, sharing with their community what they have learned through several educational related projects. Although it is helpful for participants to have some basic knowledge about gardening and other plant-related topics, **the selection process will be based more on willingness to become an active volunteer** in an elite corps of El Paso County gardeners. If you are selected for the program, you will be given an intensive horticulture training that will serve as the foundation for the much broader knowledge that you will gain after having served as a volunteer (everyone who has completed the program remarks that it is during the volunteer service of the program that they actually begin to retain the knowledge gained in the course).

After your application has been received and **pre-approved**. You will receive an email explaining the next steps to submit your information to complete a background check screening (cost is \$12). Once AgriLife Extension receives the results of the background check you will then get a phone call/email to schedule a face-to-face interview with the El Paso Master Gardener committee and



county extension agent. After successful completion of the background check and interview, you are accepted into the program and included at the orientation.

After the successful completion of the course, you will be asked to perform **at least 62 hours** of approved Extension projects and programs by October 2025. These volunteer hours will be served under the direction of the County Extension Agent and will involve answering questions from the public, volunteering with other Master Gardeners in our research and demonstration gardens, developing and delivering gardening presentations, and various other fun projects throughout the year. Although only 62 hours of volunteer service are required to complete the program and become a certified Master Gardener, it is hoped that you will volunteer many more hours in your community. To retain your certification as a Master Gardener, you must complete a combination of volunteer hours and continuing education units each reporting year. Many opportunities exist for advanced training courses, which are exclusive to the Master Gardener Association.

Orientation will be held Thursday, August 29th, 2024, with a four-hour session. Classes will meet *in-person* every Thursday from 9a.m. until 4p.m. beginning September 5th through November 14th, 2024. The classes will be held at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service - Ascarate Annex, 301 Manny Martinez Sr. Drive, 2nd Floor, El Paso, TX 79905. All classes will be taught by professionals from the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and regional local horticultural experts.

Please do not send any money with your application. The course fee will be due after orientation to the program and its requirements (August 29th). The fee for the course is \$215.00. Each participant will be provided with the Texas Master Gardener Handbook (a comprehensive horticultural text) as well as various other handouts on topics covered in each class.

The **deadline for the application is August 16, 2024.** Please return the following application to eduardo.rascon@ag.tamu.edu or mail to the address below. You can also apply online at the following website: <https://evs.tamu.edu/application/master-gardener>.

I wish you the best in your gardening ventures. Please do not hesitate to email or call me if you have any questions about the program.



Eduardo Rascon -County Extension Agent-Horticulture
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The members of the Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunities. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas.