

Becoming a Master Gardener by Beth Turlington

We have had numerous inquiries for information regarding the next Master Gardener training class. Tentatively scheduled for next winter, the exact time and day of the week will be decided and announced in the coming months. Cost for the class will be \$175, which will include a copy of the Master Gardener Handbook for each student.

One of the first things you learn in the class is the history of the Master Gardener program and the roles of Texas AgriLife Extension Service and Texas A&M University. Throughout each section of the curriculum you will learn the most current, research based information that you will be using as you forward as a Master Gardener and teach the public.

The Plant Growth and Development segment will explain how each type of plant begins its life, propagation techniques, and how environmental factors affect plant growth. The Soils, Water and Plant Nutrients section teaches what you need to know to provide a healthy growing environment, specific to our area, including our red clay.

EarthKind Landscaping will cover planning, design, and proper plant selection while conserving water and reducing the need for pesticides and fertilizers in your landscape. Plant Health Problems will discuss disease and insect damage in both ornamental and vegetable garden using the Integrated Pest Management System.

Home fruit and nut production and vegetable gardening will be covered in depth, to include the varieties recommended for our region, grafting of fruit and nut trees, use of greenhouse and cold frames for season extenders, weed control and more.

While this is the main structure of the course, other topics are offered that are area or topic specific, such as Totally Tomato, Organic Gardening, Raised Bed Gardening, Insect Identification and Herb Gardening to name a few.

As you progress through this training, you will meet and get to know members of the Wichita County Master Gardeners who are more than willing to help and share their knowledge with as well as what's growing in their yards. Great friendships have a tendency to grow among like minds and hearts.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, email your name, address and phone number to Fred Hall at fmhall@ag.tamu.edu or call the Extension Service Office at 940-716-8610.

Email your gardening questions to wichitamg@gmail.com and visit our web site at overthegardengate.gor. Now get out and garden.