What is Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service?
A unique education agency that provides programs, tools and resources on a local and statewide level which teach people improved agriculture and food production, advanced health practices, environmental protection, economic and youth programs.

What is an Extension Master Gardener? https://txmg.org/become-a-master-gardener/become-a-texas-master-gardener

MISSION: The mission of the Extension Master Gardener Program is to provide quality and relevant horticulture education to the people of Texas.

Requirements for Texas Master Gardeners:

- Intern
  - interview with County Extension Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator and Galveston County Master Gardener Leadership
  - apply through the agency's online application system
  - complete initial Extension Volunteer training modules
  - pass background screening (screening for criminal history helps the agency ensure that each volunteer is secure)
  - sign *Volunteer Agreement* (agreement outlines the expectations of the volunteer, the role of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension employees and code of conduct required by both)
  - receive a minimum of 50 hours of instruction by April 2026
    - instruction is in-person and attendance is mandatory for certification
  - pass an examination administered by Extension
  - volunteer a minimum of 50 hours of service by April 2026
- Yearly Recertification (to retain Certified Texas Master Gardener status)
  - participate in a minimum of 10 hours of continuing educational training, beginning each calendar year in January
  - provide an additional 20 hours of volunteer service, beginning each calendar year in January
  - *Every three years*
    - pass background screening (screening for criminal history helps the agency ensure that each volunteer is secure)
    - sign *Volunteer Agreement* (agreement outlines the expectations of the volunteer, the role of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension employees and code of conduct required by both)

What are Educational Training Hours?
County Extension Agents/Master Gardener Coordinators make the final determination on what educational training hours are acceptable to meet requirements for Extension Master Gardener certification and recertification. Presentations or workshops determined appropriate by the agent must be pre-approved prior to attending or reporting.

- Guidelines for Educational Training Hours:
  1. Horticulture is the focus of educational training.
  2. A volunteer's horticulture educational training does not end after completely the training course, rather educational training is continual. Continuing education training increases a volunteer's horticulture knowledge in order to better serve the public.

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. The Texas A&M University system, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts Cooperating. Persons with disabilities needing accommodations for effective participation in the program should contact the County Extension Office at least one week prior to the program or event to request mobility, hearing, visual or other assistance.

3. *"Knowledge not shared is knowledge lost."* As a result of educational training, the volunteer is expected to share their knowledge by providing educational programing to the public.

What are Volunteer Service Hours?

County Extension Agents/Master Gardener Coordinators make the final determination on what volunteer service hours are acceptable to meet requirements for Extension Master Gardener certification and recertification. Projects determined appropriate by the agent must be pre-approved prior to service or reporting.

- Guidelines for Volunteer Service Hours:
  1. Education focused, as opposed to service or maintenance-type work, understanding that some service or maintenance work is required to support educational endeavors. Direct contact is defined by actual, physical time spent before an audience or individual.
     - Examples of educational service:
       - actual time answering questions.
       - face-to-face time educating about a horticulture topic at a booth (may only be 3-5 minutes per person)
       - presenting a lecture on horticultural topics
       - provide written horticulture articles to the public
       - conducting a tour in the demonstration garden
     - Examples of service and maintenance work:
       - preparation of PowerPoint presentation
       - setting up tables and chairs for a presentation
       - researching content for horticulture articles
       - weeding and maintaining a demonstration garden
       - planning meetings
  2. Supportive of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service's overall mission and objectives.
     - Examples of AgriLife support:
       - promoting other AgriLife educational opportunities whenever possible such as handing out Better Living for Texans material at a booth
       - coaching a 4-H team with a horticulture focus
  3. Sponsored (or co-sponsored) by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
     - Collaborations with other organizations are important, but Extension does not supply other organizations with volunteers to do their work.
     - Extension Master Gardener volunteer hours may be claimed for credit with the Extension Master Gardener program or another organization, but not both.

What is the Importance of Reporting?

Volunteer Management System (VMS) is the reporting website Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) use to input both their education hours and service hours for reporting. Reporting in VMS is imperative to the continuance of the EMG program which relies upon State and Federal funding. Reporting shows the community and our stakeholders the impact of our volunteer service provided.

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