

Want to Become a Master Gardener?



Photo by David W. Marshall, UF-IFAS Leon County Extension: Master Gardeners learn both in the classroom and in the field.

David W. Marshall directs environmental education programs in the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County.
<http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu>

November 2003

Would you like to become a better gardener? Then consider participating in the 2004 Master Gardener program offered through the University of Florida IFAS Extension in Leon County . Applications are being accepted now. You may find the application and all the details at http://leon.ifas.ufl.edu/are_you_interested_in_the_master.htm ,or you may phone 487-3004 and we can mail you the information.

As a Master Gardener, you will learn a lot about what grows in this area, from vegetables to landscape plants, and how to care for the plants. You will learn how to keep your plants from having problems and what to do when they do have problems.

But, if you want to become a Master Gardener, you need to be prepared to work. Being a Master Gardener is at least a 15-month commitment. The first step of the Master Gardener program is a basic training course, each Thursday (9 a.m. to 1 p.m), February 5 through April 29. Classes will teach you about everything from basic botany, and why we need to understand it to be a better gardener, to specific plant topics such as lawns and flowers.

As a Master Gardener, you will also be required to attend a monthly training session, normally the second Thursday morning of each month, for the rest of the year. These sessions will build on what you learn in the basic training course.

Participation in a monthly garden work session, normally the third Monday of each month, will also be required of Master Gardeners for the whole year. These hands-on sessions will teach you about new plants and what's required to grow them

The second major step of the Master Gardener program is volunteer service. The volunteer service centers on working in the Extension office, answering other gardeners' questions about their plants and plant problems.

Want to Become a Master Gardener

Right now you're probably thinking, "There's no way I could do that. I don't know enough and I would be scared to death!" But, after you've answered a few questions and overcome your fear, you will find that the volunteer service will reward you richly. You're not expected to answer questions off the top of your head. You're expected to look up the answers and consult with the office staff before responding. So, the experience forces you to learn a tremendous amount about gardening. I received a bachelor's degree in horticulture and a master's degree in pest management. But how I've really learned the most about horticulture is through my 27 years experience of helping others as an extension agent. The same principle applies to Master Gardeners.

Visit the Master Gardener webpages and take a look at the course outline and the full requirements for the program. Or, call the Extension office at 487-3004 and ask us to send you the information. If you really enjoy gardening and don't mind working to learn more, you may want to submit your application. If you decide to become a Master Gardener, you will also meet a lot of other gardeners and enjoy the feeling of knowing that you're helping to make your community a more beautiful place.

###