



# APPLICATION TO THE ALABAMA MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

## PART I: THE APPLICATION

(The completed application should be sent to your county Extension office.)

The Alabama Master Gardener Program is an educational outreach program provided and administered by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. It is a program to train individuals who will volunteer their expertise and services in support of the Extension effort related to education. We do this to increase an environmental awareness and enhance the development of an environmental ethic in the citizens of Alabama.

**Certification Requirements:** These are the minimum requirements for earning the Alabama Master Gardener certificate.

- Provide the necessary information and permission for a criminal background check (details on page 6).
- Sign the Alabama Master Gardener Program Memo of Agreement.
- Attend 40 to 50 hours of training and instruction as specified in host location.
- Achieve an average passing score on all tests.
- Report to ACES a minimum of 50 hours approved volunteer service.

Date of application \_\_\_\_\_

First name \_\_\_\_\_ Last name \_\_\_\_\_

Home address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ Home phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

If employed, where \_\_\_\_\_ Phone ( ) \_\_\_\_\_

Emergency contact (name and phone) \_\_\_\_\_

Relationship (i.e., spouse) \_\_\_\_\_

1. Have you applied to the Master Gardener Program before? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_

When? \_\_\_\_\_ Where? \_\_\_\_\_

Why are you reapplying?

2. Master Gardeners represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System in their communities. Have you participated in any Alabama Cooperative Extension System programs in the past? Please list the most recent.

3. How did you learn about the Master Gardener program?

4. Please describe your previous or current volunteer experiences, including nongardening and gardening experiences. Master Gardener is about improving the quality of life in Alabama through volunteerism.

5. Describe specific ways you plan to contribute to the Alabama Master Gardener Program. What is your most comfortable venue or audience for public interaction (e.g., writing, phone, e-mail, face-to-face, adults, people with special needs)?

6. When is volunteer work easiest for you? Specify the best days and times for your volunteer projects.

7. List the aspects of gardening you especially enjoy. This will help us identify how your knowledge and experience can help us to meet our educational objectives.

8. Why do you want to become a Master Gardener volunteer?

9. Do you want to share other information about yourself for this application? (I can only participate if my friend is also accepted or other special considerations for your entry to the program)

10. Have you ever been convicted of a felony? Yes \_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Note: a conviction record does not necessarily disqualify your application)

All applicants should understand the following:

- Submission of this application does not guarantee acceptance to the program.
- I must donate a minimum of 50 hours volunteer time to the Alabama Cooperative Extension System as an Intern Master Gardener volunteer within 1 year of training to receive certification.
- I understand my top priorities as an Intern Master Gardener are to assist a Home Grounds team's programs, Master Gardener Helpline, and other county Extension office programs.
- I further understand that these priorities will be explained to me before starting the training program.
- Upon submission of this application, a criminal background investigation will be conducted.
- Payment should not be sent with this application. Payment of the registration fee is due upon acceptance to the program and is due before the first day of training class.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_



## PART II: THE MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

### Description

This agreement is intended to indicate the seriousness with which the Alabama Cooperative Extension System considers its relationship with volunteers. The intent of the agreement is to assure you of our appreciation of your services and to indicate our commitment to do the best we can to make your volunteer experience productive and rewarding.

In the capacity of a Master Gardener volunteer, I understand and agree:

- To disseminate research-based, Extension-approved information to all who request it without regard to sex, race/color, religion, national origin, age, Veteran's status, or disability.
- To only provide horticultural information endorsed and sanctioned by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and to refer all questions concerning commercial horticulture and agriculture to an Extension agent.
- To make noncommercial, home-horticulture-related pesticide recommendations, written or verbal, only when they are consistent with published Alabama Cooperative Extension System recommendations (ANR-0500-B). Local programs may require that an Extension agent handle all chemical recommendations. **Check with your Extension agent first.**
- The \_\_\_\_\_ Master Gardener Program requires a minimum of \_\_\_\_\_ hours volunteer time on the Helpline and/or in direct support of other ACES programs.
- To comply with training (\_\_\_\_ hours in class), documentation of approved volunteer hours (minimum 50), and all other certification requirements as delineated in the Master Gardener program policy. Reference chapter 1 in the Master Gardener Handbook
- To provide my own transportation and pay my own expenses incurred as part of official volunteer activities (a Master Gardener's expenses may be tax deductible with proper documentation).
- To refrain from using alcohol or illicit drugs while participating in volunteer activities, volunteering while intoxicated, and from possessing any weapons during volunteer activities.
- To my responsibilities as described in the Description of Volunteer Duties and Responsibilities (page 5). I further understand that as a volunteer, ACES and Auburn University will not provide me with medical insurance.
- To cooperate with and support Extension employees and fellow Master Gardeners to jointly further the mission and objectives of the Master Gardener program and Home Grounds team.
- To cultivate and uphold a trustful relationship with Extension staff and other volunteers, and consistently exhibit a professional manner to staff, volunteers, and the public.
- To use the title of Master Gardener as it is intended: to identify an individual, who has received training in horticulture and related subject areas, and actively volunteering with the Master Gardener program. I understand that I may only identify myself as a Master Gardener when doing unpaid, volunteer public service on behalf of ACES. I further understand that the function and existence of the Alabama Master Gardener educational program is subject to the complete discretion of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.
- To refuse to accept any personal gratuitous payment for speaking or any other volunteer service activity on behalf of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.
- To refrain from using my name with the title of Master Gardener for commercial publicity or private business. Participating in a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied university or Extension system endorsements to any product or place of business is in violation of Extension policies.

I further understand that the Alabama Cooperative Extension System will:

- Disseminate research-based, land-grant university, horticultural information to all who request it without regard to sex, race, religion, color, national origin, age, Veteran's status, or disability.
- Support the Alabama Master Gardener Program volunteers, with Extension agents and the state Master Gardener Program coordinator serving in an educational advisory capacity to local Master Gardener associations and the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, Inc., respectively.

Support will be to:

- Provide equipment, training, supervision, and direction to create a safe volunteer experience.
- Communicate the expectations of and the responsibilities to the program with volunteers.
- Uphold and cultivate a trustful relationship between Extension employees and volunteers.
- Dismiss a volunteer who violates the policies of this program.

The following are grounds for immediate dismissal: possession of or abuse of alcohol or illicit drugs while volunteering, abuse or theft of property, sexual harassment or misconduct, verbal abuse of others, possession or use of weapons while volunteering, defamation of the program or its affiliates.

**I have read and understand this Memorandum of Agreement and the Master Gardener Program Policy and further agree to abide by the conditions of this memorandum until it is revoked or revised.**

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Volunteer's name (please print)

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County name

Volunteer's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Extension agent's signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

(A copy of this Memo of Agreement will be given to you as a reference to keep)



## Description of Master Gardener Volunteer Duties and Responsibilities

Master Gardeners volunteer in their communities on behalf of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and when acting or designating themselves with the title of Master Gardener. All volunteer activities should be approved by the local, sponsoring Extension agent.

The following are examples of approved activities for volunteers while representing ACES:

- Contribute to or assist a program designed, sponsored, or coordinated by ACES
- Provide the public with research-based information generated or approved by ACES
- More examples:
  - » Extension office assistance (e.g., answering phones, answering Helpline phones, assisting a walk-in client, preparing brochures)
  - » Cooperate with or assist ACES in preparing educational resources, including media materials, visuals, reference files, and other educational resource materials
  - » Provide educational assistance to a community or a community group
  - » Assist or represent ACES at a public event (e.g., home and garden shows, county fairs, farmers markets, information booths, diagnostic/plant clinics)
  - » Prepare displays, posters, or advertisements that benefit or represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System or any of its programs
  - » Newsletters for noncommercial gardeners (all recommendations must be from research-based information generated or approved by ACES; this only applies to unpaid contributions to articles and newsletters )
  - » Research (e.g., work on research projects and reports for the purpose of developing and disseminating information or seeking grants under the supervision of an Extension agent.)
  - » Demonstration garden or other educational garden projects (for example, a garden at an Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station location, Habitat for Humanity house project, or Botanical Gardens)
  - » Presentations and programs (e.g., contribute to an ACES program; serve as a speakers bureau coordinator; develop, organize, research, plan, and/or present programs and classes to civic clubs, Master Gardener classes or meetings, conferences, or botanical gardens)
  - » Community gardening projects (e.g., assist an ACES agent, assist a Food Bank garden, mentor a new gardener, horticulture therapy)

**Note: MGs are cautioned if applying chemicals. Using a pesticide in a manner inconsistent with the directions on the label is a violation of federal law: the Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). MGs conducting demonstrations using home or garden chemicals do so only under the required applicator permit from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.**



## **PART III: BACKGROUND CHECK – AUTHORIZATION**

### **Description**

Because all Master Gardeners represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System and Auburn University when acknowledged with such title, ACES and Auburn have the right to request and perform a criminal background investigation on them.

We implement this procedure for everyone's safety: Master Gardeners and everyone associated with the program and its volunteers. Conducting a personal background check is a standard best practice for quality volunteer program management.

Auburn University and the Alabama Cooperative Extension System reserve the right to deny any MG intern certification as an Alabama Master Gardener and/or to revoke certification of any Alabama Master Gardener.

### **Authorization and Biographical Data**

Once your application request is accepted to the Master Gardener program, the local program coordinator will give you instructions for completing the background check forms. Auburn University has a web portal called AU PROTECT specifically created for this process. This web portal allows you to enter your information online, providing you a high level of security to protect your personal information. Your application is not complete until these forms are submitted.

Regarding volunteers, the background check is only checking for criminal history and verification of social security number to accurately match records. Employment history is only necessary if you have been employed during the last 7 years and phone numbers are not necessary in the Employment/Education sections.

All personal information files are strictly confidential and access to these files is restricted under Auburn University policies. The Human Resources office provides quality records services consistent with a commitment to privacy rights, affirmative action, and equal employment opportunities.