

Extension Master Gardeners (Core)

Situation

Extension Master Gardener volunteers are a vital part of K-State Research and Extension. Donating time in return for horticultural training, Extension Master Gardener volunteers help agents meet the need for horticultural information in their communities. The Extension Master Gardener program is designed to provide trained volunteers to help meet that need at a minimal cost.

The means of providing this information are diverse including horticultural "Response Lines," demonstration gardens, working garden shows and community events, public presentations, and providing garden tours. Kansas Extension Master Gardener volunteers donated 99,158 hours in 2019 for a total value of over \$2.6 million. This is equivalent to 48 full-time extension staff positions. Moreover, on average, Kansas' 1,297 Extension Master Gardener volunteers averaged 76 hours of service for KSRE. Cumulate contacts by these groups totaled over 110,000.

Through local community gardens, our EMG volunteers donated 68,253 pounds of produce to food pantries in 2019. According to Feeding America, in Kansas, 368,770 people are struggling with hunger - and of them 129,780 are children.

Our volunteers work to not only grow food for the food insecure but also to teach adults and children how to grow their own food. This work happens in our demonstration gardens, youth programs, seminars, local events, and through individual contacts in our local offices.

Extension Master Gardener volunteers are provided with the required continual education in best management practices, conservation of natural resources, lawn and garden waste management, integrated pest management, identification and selection of proper plant materials, and landscape design appropriate for healthy people, plants, and the environment.

Public Value

Nearly 1,300 Kansas Extension Master Gardener volunteers donated over 99,000 hours (76 hours each, on average) during 2019 for a total value of over \$2.6 million. This is equivalent to about 48 full-time Extension staff positions. More than 110,000 Extension contacts were reported by EMG volunteers and coordinators across the state.

Outcomes

Short-Term (Knowledge)

- Community members will have increased awareness of the EMG program.
- EMG volunteers will improve their horticultural skills and knowledge of best management practices, conservation of natural resources, lawn and garden waste management, integrated pest management, identification and selection of proper plant materials, and landscape design appropriate for healthy people, plants, and the environment.

Indicators

- Are more community members aware of the EMG program?
- Have EMG volunteers improved their knowledge and skills related to adaptable plant materials, best management practices, products, and cultural practices?

Medium-Term (Behavior)

- EMG volunteers demonstrate leadership skills that they apply in the organization and community.
- By providing timely, accurate information, our Extension Master Gardener volunteers influence our clientele to use appropriate horticultural practices.

Indicators

- What leadership skills do EMG volunteers demonstrate in the organization and the community?
- How does the information EMG volunteers provide influence clientele behaviors, including their use of fertilizers and pesticides?

Long-Term (Change in Condition)

- Extension Master Gardener volunteers, with their enthusiasm and commitment, influence family, friends, and neighbors to use proven horticultural practices.
- Extension Master Gardener volunteers have a positive impact on the environment and improve the quality of life in the community by providing research-based information and promoting sound horticultural practices.

Indicators

- Do the family, friends, and neighbors of EMG volunteers use proven horticultural practices?
- How do EMG volunteers work to have a positive impact on the environment and improve the quality of life in their communities?

Outputs

- Work together, alongside interim state Extension Master Gardener coordinator, Dr. Cheryl Boyer, to provide leadership in organizing and implementing Basic and Advanced Master Gardener Training each year as well as provide assistance with counties determining statewide rules and regulations.
- Basic training will be developed for both a “flip-the-classroom” asynchronous model and a synchronous (live) online model to increase learning options and make the program more available to counties that are not near a training site.
- Active EMGs will receive ongoing training and program guidance at the county or district level. A web-based training system will be developed. Volunteers can use the K-State Garden Hour for advanced learning hours.
- EMGs will be provided with volunteer opportunities to complete their volunteer hour requirements.
- Horticulture Rapid Response Center (Mr. Ward Upham, Dept. of Horticulture and Natural Resources) - Provide Extension Master Gardeners rapid informational support if a Horticulture Agent is unavailable.
- Weekly Newsletter (in email and blog format) - Provides timely information on current problems and appropriate cultural practices.
- New EMG training - Agents, specialists, and industry leaders provide accurate, research-based horticultural training to beginning volunteers. Potential Extension Master Gardeners are given 40 hours of horticulture training in return for 40 hours of volunteer time. The basic training course consists of a minimum of 11 core-curriculum topics.
- Fall Advanced EMG Training - Provides classes in areas not covered in Basic Training or provides more in-depth information in areas that were covered.