

News Release: June 24, 2014  
WSU Ferry County Extension  
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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

GROWING YOUR OWN FOOD IN FERRY COUNTY – Am I a master gardener or a Master Gardener?  
Sara Sly, WSU Ferry County Extension Master Gardener

Master gardener, sounds like a knowledgeable person with many years of experience gardening and a degree in botany or horticulture. Essentially a walking encyclopedia of tips, information and the right solution to every garden problem possible, to some it means this. When a State University Extension office refers to the Master Gardener program, they mean something a bit different.

Washington State University Extension has a Master Gardener program (note the capital letters) available in most of the 39 counties in Washington State. In 2012 Ferry County held their first Master Gardener training; five people completed to become active WSU Extension Master Gardeners. Now, in 2014, we have two active Master Gardeners in Ferry County and we need more! To become a WSU Master Gardener you need to be over 18, interested in gardening, willing to volunteer 40 hours of community service a year and complete the 5 month training (beginning January 2015).

Specific areas of training for Master Gardeners begin with the basic soil and soil amendments, plant identification, integrated pest management, sustainable gardening, plant problem diagnosis and more. Training involves video, workshop, and field trip and text sources of information plus tests on the Internet to verify mastery before moving to the next subject. Trainees can take each test more than once and must have 80% correct in order to pass. They are not expected to memorize information. Tests are open book and you can access Internet or class sources as well. Trainees do not even need experience gardening! As a group we support one another, learn together and share research based information regarding home gardening with the general public.

Master Gardeners through Extension may choose to give a lecture, class or workshop on a particular subject such as pruning or pest identification. They earn volunteer hours through researching WSU Master Gardener resources and research based recommendations then holding the class, lecture or workshop for the public. Another activity might be the annual plant sale or garden tour. Volunteer hours can be earned for time making signs or name tags, leading the tour or writing the advertisement and other required jobs to plan or run the event.

In Ferry County Master Gardeners write a newsletter for the monthly View on a topic that interests either the writer or people around the county. We would like to have a newsletter for our group someday and will need an editor, photographer and reporter. Most but not all volunteer hours are done face to face with the public. Future projects such as plant clinics will provide other ways to volunteer.

Each year WSU Master Gardeners re-certify by filling out a form that states they will be active for the following calendar year. If granted 1 year on inactive status, you may become active again. Any longer then inactive Master Gardener must retrain before becoming an active member again. A Master Gardener who moves to a different state or from one climate to another must also retrain for their county or state. The training teaches specifics about growing conditions in the county offering the training as well as research skills and resources for science-based information to be shared with the public.

Master Gardeners communicate what research done by WSU and other Extension offices across the country have proven to work well. Master Gardeners may only share what methods they have found to work in their own yard if it is also backed by scientific research.

Master Gardeners are volunteer staff of Extension who research and communicate with the public science based information from WSU and other state extension offices. Most of all, we have fun learning and sharing information on gardening in Ferry County. Come join us!

We will have an orientation class to answer any questions you have in November.

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Extension programs are available to all without discrimination. Evidence of noncompliance may be reported through your local Extension office.

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