



# Washington State University

Snohomish County Extension

2018

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## BY THE NUMBERS

- 355 Snohomish County Master Gardeners
- 43 newly trained MG Interns
- 31,068 hours of volunteer time valued at \$946,331 ([independentsector.org](http://independentsector.org))

# Master Gardeners

Cultivating Plants, People and Communities since 1973

## ISSUE

Over 45 years ago, Washington State University County Extension Agents identified a growing need from the public for scientifically based information about home gardening and landscaping. In the years since, that need has continued unabated as residents have become increasingly aware of both the importance of landscaping and home gardening, including edible gardening, to the quality of their personal life as well as the negative impact that poor practices have on the environment and overall quality of life.

## RESPONSE

Washington State University Extension created the Master Gardener (MG) program whose mission is to train volunteers to be effective community educators in horticulture and environmental stewardship, and thereby reach state residents with research-based information (of importance in their local communities) that enhance natural resources, sustain communities, and improve health and wellness.

Since 1973, the Snohomish County MG program has trained roughly 2500 Master Gardeners with an average retention of eight years. MGs provide information, classes, and demonstrations throughout Snohomish County that emphasize home-grown produce, sustainable gardening practices, integrated pest management, the identification and management of new invasive species, water conservation, stormwater management, composting, proper pesticide disposal, and overall low environmental impact.

Plant Problem Clinics are held at over 25 locations, often once a week during the growing season, plus a permanent weekday clinic at the Extension Office. Educational Outreach is provided through teaching and mentoring of adults and youth. Three MG Demonstration Gardens, open to the public, exhibit sustainable garden techniques.

Partnerships leverage limited resources in joint projects to increase the recycling



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Master Gardeners are trained volunteer Community Educators in horticulture and environmental stewardship who promote scientifically-based landscape practices that yield environmental, economic, and aesthetic benefits.

## QUOTES

*"Thank you so much for your help.  
We greatly appreciate it."*

- A Plant Problem Clinic client with two young children seeking an identification of a weed that showed up in her yard that proved to be both invasive and poisonous.

*"...you changed my perspective of gardening. You showed me and my class that there's more to gardening than we think. Gardening includes helping the environment be a better place and having fun doing it. We all appreciate you Master Gardeners for opening up an opportunity for us to have fun and help the environment."*

- Sixth Grade Student, Canyon Park Middle School

*"Master Gardeners have made significant impacts on improving water quality, decreasing pesticide use, vegetable production and increasing public interest in the healthy habit of gardening."*

-WSU Agriculture and Natural Resources Annual Report 2017

of organic waste and the proper use of compost and to reduce stormwater pollution through education about rain gardens and natural yard care and the proper use and disposal of pesticides.

## IMPACTS

- MGs spent over 5,000 of those hours volunteering in plant problem clinics, where they answered almost 8,000 questions from over 6,500 county residents. Previous survey results showed that intended pesticide use was reduced by three-quarters by those who consulted a Master Gardener.
- MGs volunteered over 6,000 hours conducting Educational Outreach to youth and adults to include operating three demonstration gardens and participating in over 100 other educational events.
- Over 3,000 lbs. of fresh produce grown at the Jennings MG Demonstration Garden was donated to local food banks. In addition, MGs provided education and mentoring at other community gardens that donated another 15,000 lbs.
- 43 new Master Gardeners devoted approximately 150 hours to classroom and online instruction during the 12-week training period, and then committed to volunteering a minimum of 80 hours of volunteer time over two years.
- MGs devoted almost 9,000 hours to continuing their own education in horticulture and environmental stewardship to better serve the public.
- MGs reported about 11,000 hours directly supporting the Snohomish County MG program doing such things as planning and conducting basic and advanced MG training, planning clinic and educational outreach events, and supporting the Snohomish County MG Foundation whose mission is to provide committed support for the Snohomish County MG Program through community service, educational outreach, and fundraising through the annual Plant Sale and the annual winter speaker series.

## FUNDING

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