

**Yakima County**

**Master Gardener Program**

Do you love gardening and want to become a volunteer in the WSU Yakima County Extension Master Gardener Program? While this program offers gardeners opportunities to gain personal knowledge in a variety of different gardening subjects, our primary focus is to develop community educators. You will become a part of the Yakima County Master Gardeners who have a very diverse background of gardening expertise and interests. As a result, you will also be learning from one another while making lifelong friendships.

**What is the cost of the program**? Applications are taken in the fall, and the fee is $100. We have a series of Meet & Greets with applicants to give more details on our program and allow you to ask any questions. You will also be provided with information on how to register and pay for the WSU online training course ($75.00) by credit card before the January class start date.

**MG Program overview:** If you do decide to become a WSU Master Gardener you will be part of a world-class gardening program that has been in existence since 1973. We provide professional, unbiased, research-based home gardening and horticulture information to the public. To prepare volunteers for this role, we train committed gardeners in basic botany, integrated pest management, soil science, plant identification, pest and disease diagnosis and much more through a **WSU online course**. You must have a computer to access the Internet, have an email account and a high-speed Internet is highly recommended. About 2-3 hours per week needs to be devoted to this online study.

**Yakima County Program Details:** Applicants accepted into the MG training program will be contacted by their mentor(s) before class who will assist in the educational process and be available to answer any questions. You will then attend a mandatory Luncheon Orientation, January 11, 2023 before formal classes. During this session you will learn how to access and utilize the WSU Canvas online training course. You will be given an Orientation Handbook to read and a temporary name badge that you need to wear each week to class and at any event with the public. We will then meet for formal classes every Wednesday afternoon from 12:00-2:30 pm starting January 18 at the Red Barn in the Ahtanum Youth Park. At this point your title is trainee. Classes will continue until the last week in April.

During the first class you will be given a more detailed overview of the MG program, a lecture schedule will be provided with topics for our formal class speakers each week, and your picture will be taken for the directory. You will need to sign an attendance sheet each week; we suggest that no more than two class sessions be missed. Each week you will need to come prepared by having read the assigned chapter(s) and take the open book related quiz(zes). You must have an 80% average on all the quizzes and an 80% grade attained on the open-book final exam. Once you have successfully completed the coursework you will be referred to as an Intern.

**Volunteer Requirement**. In addition to class and online training all interns are required to complete 40 hours of volunteer service before the December 31st deadline. In those hours you will need to commit at least 15 of those hours working with a veteran in the Diagnostic Clinic, and after that you can volunteer for the Farmers Market or the State Fair helping to answer gardening related questions from the public. You are not expected to know everything there is to know about gardening. You will be trained on how to access the many tools and sound resources WSU provides in order to find the answers. Please note, although MG emphasizes natural control of pests and diseases, you will also be required to provide the public with information about pesticides and chemicals that have been approved by WSU.

An additional 9 hours will be volunteering in the Greenhouse learning plant propagation; 9 hours, with 3 hours in each of our three gardens: 1) the Demonstration Garden learning planting techniques, caring for plants, landscape design; 2) our Heirloom Garden learning about vegetable gardening and seed saving 3) our West Valley Food Garden learning how to grow and harvest the produce that is then donated to a local food bank. And 1 hour answering a clinic question by using science-based resources. You can choose to give your response in a 5-minute talk during class OR write a 300-word article answering your question. You may choose to volunteer the rest of your 40 hours in any of our many other teams, hopefully several in which you are passionate. You also need to record your hours online each month using the WSU volunteer website GivePulse.

In February, of the following year, an **Award Ceremony** is held where, if all requirements are completed, you will receive a WSU Certificate with a title of Master Gardener and a permanent name badge. All subsequent years as a **Veteran**, there is no charge, you will fill out a re-application form to stay an active member, will need to attend 10 hours of continuing education and donate 25 hours of voluntary service while 'following your passion’ as a gardener.

It is a great organization, with a wonderful group of people - it is our hope that you chose to become a part of our “gardening family”.

For more information: visit our webpage at http://tinyurl.com/yakimamg, email at gardener@co.yakima.wa.us or call our Diagnostic clinic at 509-574-1604. The other important link is <http://extension.wsu.edu/Yakima/home-garden>.

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