

Shelby County Extension

Master Gardener Program 2025

Who are the Master Gardeners?

The Master Gardener Program began in 1973 in response to a rapidly increasing urban population. Originally, a single Extension Agent could work closely with just a few hundred farm families but, years later, much of this traditional farmland had disappeared, having been replaced with numerous subdivisions. The number of families an Extension Office served dramatically increased - with many of them unfamiliar with agricultural practices.

By the 1960s, the concerns of Extension had shifted away from growing enough food towards the problems of urban, low- income, and minority residents; seeking to educate and support the general public by providing up-to-date, unbiased, scientifically researched information in a manner that people could understand and use. In order to make a strong, long-lasting impact and reach more people, Extension Agents started to professionally train local



volunteers with a passion for horticulture in return for a set number of yearly volunteer hours helping Extension reach out in educating and helping the public with horticulture-related concerns.

Thus began the Master Gardeners, one of the largest volunteer organizations in the country, now amounting to over 100,000 active members across all 50 states as well as the District of Columbia.



**Kentucky Extension
Master Gardener**



Examples of Shelbyville MG Volunteer Activities:

- Maintaining the Community Garden at the Clear Creek Family Activity Center.
- Aiding Extension Personnel by answering questions from members of the community related to the Master Gardener's horticulture expertise or focus of interest.
- Visiting members of the public and providing on-site advice/instruction.
- Presenting educational material to fellow Master Gardeners as well as the public through classes, programs, and articles.
- Designing community plantings, such as the downtown planters.
- Taking part in public festivals.
- Organizing yearly plant sales.



Master Gardeners have become a vital part of Extensions' ability to provide clients with up-to-date, reliable information. It has also become a fun and useful volunteer activity that has given participants a sense of community spirit, accomplishment, and intellectual stimulation.

Requirements to Becoming a Master Gardener

The road to becoming a Master Gardener is two-part:

1. Have a background check done and complete the Master Gardener training program.
2. Volunteer 40 hours within the first year after training completion.



To be a Master Gardener, you *don't* have to be an Expert.

Step 1: The Classes

The Master Gardener program is a 12-15 class series providing basic training in a number of horticulture-related topics. The program has some flexibility that allows the local County Agent to determine where emphasis should be placed, but it has been determined that all Master Gardener candidates must complete a minimum amount of training in certain core subjects.

Required Subjects:

<u>Core Subjects</u>	<u>Number of Hours</u>
Volunteerism	2 Hours
Botany	6 Hours/Lab
Soils and Fertility	4 Hours/Lab
Plant Pathology	4 Hours/Lab
Entomology	4 Hours/Lab
Pesticides and the Environment	4 Hours
<u>Total 24 Hours Required</u>	

At the end of the training program, a candidate must pass a written final exam worth 100 points. 75% of the points will come from questions covered in the core content, while 25% of the points will come from questions developed by the County Agent on the material covered in the additional training.

Rewards for passing the exam include a Kentucky Extension Master Gardener certificate and professional Master Gardener name badge.

Content Flexibility:

Aside from the core content, final exam, and initial completion awards, the local Extension Agent has significant choice in determining the time, dates, arrangement of class content, class titles, how the classes are taught, who teaches the classes, the questions on the final exam, how the final exam is taken, and any further rewards for completion of the training program. This enables counties to offer training at their own pace and have their own personal ways of teaching, including content which may be more significant to local needs.

2025 Master Gardener Program Class Schedule:

All classes take place on a Tuesday within the three-hour time block of 5:30pm-8:30pm. Classes will be held (almost) every two weeks and the times and dates are subject to changes due to holidays, guest speaker availability, and inclement weather.

Volunteerism/Introduction – Feb 11

Plant Parts and Terminology – Feb 25

Caring for Fruit Trees – March 11

Plant Growth and Development – March 25

Vegetable Gardening – April 8

The Properties of Soils – April 22

Plant Nutrition and Composting – May 6

Diagnosing Plant Problems – May 20

Plant Pathology – June 3

IPM and Entomology – June 17

Pesticide Safety and Application – July 1

Sustainable and Organic Gardening – July 15

Final Exam – July 22

Celebration – July 29

When and Where:

All classes will take place on Tuesday in a 3-hour time block between 5:30pm and 8:30pm. Unless otherwise stated, all classes will be held at the Shelby County Extension Office. The classes will be held (about) every two weeks. Dates, locations, and times are subject to change depending on the weather, guest speaker availability, and other unforeseen events.

Can't Take the Program This Year?:

Everyone has a busy life, and three hours out of a Tuesday afternoon may be interfering with an important engagement of yours. If you feel you cannot attend most or any of the sessions this year, don't worry! Master Gardener programs are offered in many counties every year, and the times and dates of classes change constantly. If you can't come this year, yet are still interested, then wait for a program to come available at a time and date that better fits your life schedule.

Class Attendance:

Most classes contain required core content that is needed to pass the program while the remaining class content has a chance of being on the final exam. If, for any reason, you cannot attend class – please let the instructor know, since you may need to make up that class. Four classes can be missed before you're deemed to have failed the program for the year, but exceptions are made for those who present a clear effort to make them up.

Options for making up a class:

- A Zoom option can be offered to those who are sick/out of town/can't come in person but are still available during class hours.
- Those who miss a class are provided any missed PowerPoints/class materials and may be asked to read the chapters or watch a recording of the class topic and submit a make-up quiz covering that content.
- A one-on-one session can be arranged for those who have missed a class or would like a better understanding of discussed topics.

Communication Methods:

Reminders and information on any class changes will be provided by email. Upon request, text or calls can also be utilized.

Payment:

Shelby County requires a charge of \$85 to participate in its Master Gardener Program. All counties charge for the program and the expense can be anywhere between \$50-\$150. The majority of the money goes towards class materials – The Master Gardener Extension Manual, the official completion

certificates, and the name badges. The remainder goes towards food for mid-class snacks and the celebration at the end. If you intend to share a binder with another person then the collective cost of both participants is \$120.

Class Content:

- Lectures/Labs:
 - 2–3-hour classes will be delivered mainly through PowerPoint presentations which are set to take up roughly half the time of each class, followed by a break and an activity. Some topics are more content-heavy and may require a longer lecture. Alternatively, some classes are better taught hands-on and may have a longer lab component. A few labs may take place in a location other than the Extension Office, and directions will be provided well in advance of such classes.
 - Snacks and 15-minute breaks will be available midway through each class.
- Homework:
 - Most classes will be accompanied by optional/supplemental homework. The homework will never be taken up or graded but it will be discussed in the following class. Please note that many of the final exam questions will be variations of the homework questions.
- Final Exam:
 - The Final Exam will take place at the same time/day as a regular class and will be both open-book and open-note. 75% or higher is passing.

Step 2: The Hours

To be an official Master Gardener, **40** volunteer hours must be completed within the first year following completion of the Master Gardener training program and *you are not certified until they are done*.

After the first year, continuing Master Gardeners submit **20** volunteer hours and **10** continuing education hours each year to remain active in the organization.

How to get Hours:

- Volunteer hours can be gained through any horticulture-related activities that involve the community. This can include giving horticulture-related advice or presentations, working on a horticulture-related community project, participating in Master Gardener events, and many more.
- Education hours can be gained through any horticulture-related event which is educational for you. This can include participating in horticulture-related classes at any Extension Office, seeing horticulture presentations or demonstrations given by reputable sources - either in-person, on zoom, or recorded videos.

Background Checks:

Going through a background check is a very common request for any volunteer which may potentially work with minors, specialty-care elders, or other at-risk populations. Most Agents require prospective Master Gardeners to get one, looking for any recorded history of abuse or felonies. This is a one-time check that is securely stored. Forms for the background check will be supplied shortly after registering for the program.

Inactivity:

Once a Master Gardener – always a Master Gardener. Should a Master Gardener stop submitting volunteer and education hours and halt participating in the organization they will be labeled as an ‘inactive’ Master Gardener and will continue to receive emails and be invited to events unless asked to be taken off the Master Gardener email list. A Master Gardener that has been inactive for a long time does not need to retake the classes (in Shelby County) to be ‘active’ again. Merely showing up to the monthly meetings, participating in events, and restarting their volunteer and education hours will return their status to ‘active’.

2025 Master Gardener Registration Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City & Zip: _____

Phone: _____ County: _____

Email: _____

Return the form and a \$85 payment (check/cash) to Skye Drane, the Horticulture Technician.

The deadline to register and pay for the program is February Feb 11th, 2025

You will be asked to complete a background check, due the date of the second class, which is standard for all of our volunteers who may work with at-risk groups.

Address: 1117 Frankfort Drive, Shelbyville, KY 40065

Phone: (502) 633-4593

Please reach out if you have any questions.

Make checks payable to the 'Shelby County District Board.'



Welcome to the 2025 Master Gardener Program!

Before we begin, please tell me a little about yourself so that I know the best way to accommodate you and enrich your experience in this program.

1. What is your name/What would you like to be called?

2. If I had to contact you about a class, what is your preferred method of communication?

3. What horticulture-related topics are you most interested in learning about?

4. What horticulture-related topics are you least interested in learning about?

5. We'll often have classes that last long enough to justify a snack. What kinds of foods/drinks would you like to see?

6. Do you have any food allergies or diet restrictions you need me to accommodate?

7. Do you (or anyone in your household) have allergies to plants or plant parts (flowers especially). _____

8. Do you have any insect phobias or allergies? _____ What insect(s)? _____
If you have a phobia, would it make it difficult to view pictures of that insect?

9. Why did you choose to take the Master Gardener Program/What are you looking to get out of these classes?

10. Do you have any questions/comments/concerns about the classes going forward?
