

What is a “Master Gardener?”

A Master Gardener is a **volunteer** who:

- assists Cornell Cooperative Extension to provide educational horticulture programs for the public
- staffs a “question and answer” phone hotline
- has completed the Master Gardener Training Course offered by Cornell Cooperative Extension in conjunction with Cornell University

Master Gardeners assist Extension personnel with soil and diagnostic clinics, demonstrations, exhibits, lectures, and phone inquiries from Albany County residents.

How can I become a Master Gardener?

Applicants will be screened in July and interviews will be set up in August. Those accepted will have an orientation in late August and begin weekly training sessions in September, October and November. Instructors from local Cooperative Extension offices will cover a number of horticultural topics to prepare volunteers for their role as Master Gardeners.

As part of the training program, volunteers will also attend the Master Gardener monthly staff meetings scheduled for September, October, and November. Additionally, volunteers will complete a total of four hours of Hotline phone training in our Voorheesville office. At the end of the whole training period, volunteers will take a pass/fail, open-book final exam.

Beginning in the year following training, volunteers will complete 60 hours of volunteer service. Of those 60 hours, 30 will be spent as a combination of time at monthly Master Gardener meetings, and time on the phone hotline assisting callers with gardening questions.

The remaining 30 hours may be met through any of the following:

- attending more monthly meetings
- doing more phone hotline time
- assisting staff to host gardening classes for the public (set-up, take registration, assist speaker, clean-up, etc.)
- staffing question and answer booths at public events (Altamont Fair, Capital District Garden Show)
- giving lectures at off-site locations about gardening
- working in one of the five demonstration gardens
- assisting with other approved projects for Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County

After volunteers meet all criteria (training, exam, 60 hours of volunteer service) they receive a Master Gardener certificate, and may use the Master Gardener title when attending Cornell Cooperative Extension events.

Our goal is to have Master Gardeners remain involved in the program beyond the first year.

Sixty hours of volunteer time per year is required after the first year in order to remain active in the program. Volunteers who do not meet the 60 hours per year requirement relinquish their right to the Master Gardener title.

We follow the above procedure because volunteers represent Cornell University, and distribute information to the public. Therefore, volunteers must remain current on horticulture information. We also want to promote the sense of a “gardening family” within the Master Gardener program.

What is the cost?

There is a program fee to help defray the cost of Master Gardener training materials and bulletins. Volunteers receive (and keep) Cornell publications about different topics such as: pruning, lawn care, growing fruit, and insect identification. Though the fee varies each year according to materials distributed, it falls between \$125.00 and \$200.00.

Constraints

Since Master Gardeners represent Cornell University, volunteers may not use the Master Gardener title beyond Cornell Cooperative Extension sponsored events. For example, volunteers may not put “Master Gardener” on business cards, nor may they promote another business by using the Master Gardener title. Master Gardeners may not use the Master Gardener title to earn money for themselves.

Cornell University and Cornell Cooperative Extension practice Integrated Pest Management (IPM), a program that emphasizes exploring all options for pest management including: “practicing tolerance,” “practicing prevention,” “using mechanical controls,” and “using chemical controls.” Volunteers in the Master Gardener Program must be able to make suggestions based on Cornell recommendations rather than making suggestions based on “home remedies” or personal preference.

If you have not already talked with the Master Gardener Coordinator...

Call the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County Agriculture Office at 765-3516. The Master Gardener Coordinator will explain the volunteer program to you. It takes about 15 minutes to do so. Then you will receive an application in the mail. Complete the application and mail it to: Horticulture, Cornell Cooperative Extension, PO Box 497, Voorheesville, NY 12186. Thank you for your interest in promoting education in Horticulture.



Application for
**ALBANY COUNTY MASTER GARDENER
VOLUNTEER PROGRAM**



Directions: Please:

- ✓ Type or print the information indicated below using black ink
- ✓ If you need additional space, attach a separate sheet
- ✓ Sign the completed application

Name (Last)	 (First)	 (Middle Initial)
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Mailing Address (Street)	 (City)	 (State)	 (ZIP Code)
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Email Address (if any)	Daytime Phone	Evening Phone
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In case of emergency, notify: (Name)	 (Phone)
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The following questions will help us to know you better.

Are you currently employed?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Retired <input type="checkbox"/>
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What is (was) your occupation?

Have you ever volunteered for Cornell Cooperative Extension? If yes, give date, program, position.	
Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
(Date)	(Program)
(Position)	

List other previous volunteer activities.
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List current volunteer activities
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List your special skills and hobbies

What formal training do you have in horticulture or a related field?

What interests do you wish to pursue or what do you hope to accomplish by serving as a CCE volunteer?

Tell us about your gardening experiences

List any physical or health accommodations that may be needed to allow you to participate in the activity.

List 2 people, not related to you, that we may contact as references who have knowledge of your qualifications. Please provide complete addresses.

First reference (Name)	(Mailing Address)	(Daytime Phone Number)
Second reference (Name)	(Mailing Address)	(Daytime Phone Number)

Do you possess a valid NYS Driver's License? Yes No

NOTE: If the volunteer position you seek requires the transportation of others in your personal vehicle or use of CCE vehicles, you will be asked to complete a motor vehicle record request form. You do not need a driver's license to volunteer at CCE; however, you are responsible for arranging your transportation to volunteer activities.

I affirm that the statements made on this application are true. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of facts requested is cause for my non-appointment or removal as a CCE volunteer. I authorize the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Albany County to obtain from all persons, including those not named here, and /or agencies any records, documents, and other information relative to my suitability to perform the duties of the volunteer position. **I understand, if the volunteer position I seek involves unsupervised work with minors, individuals over 65, or individuals with disabilities that a criminal background check including a sexual offender search will be made.** I further release all parties supplying said information from all liability and responsibility arising from their supplying said information.

I understand and agree that the Master Gardener position is without compensation or benefits of any kind. I further understand that the provisions of this application do not constitute a contract (either expressed or implied) of employment between myself and CCE. I further understand and agree that if I am offered and accept a volunteer position at CCE, either I or CCE, may terminate the volunteer relationship at any time for any reason or for no particular reason or cause. CCE reserves the right to determine and change its policies and procedures applicable to volunteers at any time for any reason. I understand and agree that my volunteer position is contingent upon, among other things, my signing the CCE Association Volunteer Agreement, acceptance of the provisions of the CCE Association Volunteer Code of Conduct and my signing the Master Gardener Letter of Intent which outlines the policies regarding my service as a Master Gardener Trainee/Master Gardener.

Signature _____ Date _____