



COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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Sandoval County Master Gardener Policies

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Management of the Master Gardener Program

Powers of the Board of Directors

The Board of Directors shall determine policies and provide broad direction of the programs of the Sandoval County Master Gardeners (SCMG). Policies include such matters as levying dues, determining requirements for continuing education and volunteer hours, and establishing the SCMG fiscal year. The Board may amend current policies and establish additional policies as may be deemed by the Board to be in the best interest of the SCMG. To provide broad leadership for SCMG programs, the Board calls meetings of the membership and oversees the Intern training course, continuing education such as the Southwest Homeowners and Gardening with the Masters classes, and all volunteer activities in which the members interact with the general public.

Fiscal Year

The fiscal year for the SCMG shall be October 1 through September 30.

Meetings

Master Gardeners (MGs) should attend all meetings called by the Board or the New Mexico State University Sandoval County Extension Agent (hereafter Agent) and vote whenever a vote is called for. Attendance at the annual meeting, held each year in the fall, *toward the end of the fiscal year*, is strongly encouraged of all MGs. To be eligible for voting at the annual meeting, Members shall have completed their minimum required education and volunteer hours prior to the end of that fiscal year. This qualifies them for membership in the next fiscal year.

Absentee Votes

A MG who is unable to attend a meeting where a planned vote is to be taken may vote by absentee ballot. Please refer to the SCMG Bylaws under the Membership Meetings Articles for absentee balloting requirements. When online voting becomes suitable, it will be the preferred voting method.

Code of Conduct

As an NMSU Sandoval County Master Gardener, volunteers will:

- Represent NMSU Extension with dignity and pride.
- Respect and follow NMSU, county, and program policies and guidelines as well as local, state and federal laws.
- Respect all persons with whom they interact as a SCMG.
- Conduct themselves in a courteous, respectful manner and refrain from profanity, harassment, disruptive behavior, or abuse of any kind.
- Provide a positive role model when working with youth.

- Comply with equal employment opportunity and nondiscrimination laws.
- Participate as team members within the SCMG program.
- Refrain from endorsing any particular product, business or service.
- Refrain from making negative comments about any particular product, business or service.

MGs are representatives of NMSU Extension and should dress in an appropriate and professional manner. This includes always wearing one's name badge when serving as a NMSU volunteer.

Clothes should be suitable for the activity or location. Clean clothing in good repair is appropriate for speaking engagements, indoor plant clinics, and schools. Gardening work clothes are appropriate for demo gardeners and other outdoor events.

Use of the Title Sandoval County Master Gardener

The titles "New Mexico State University Master Gardener," "Sandoval County Master Gardener," and "SCMG" are to be used only and exclusively in the New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Program. New Mexico MGs are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing volunteer public service work under the auspices of the New Mexico State University Extension. MGs are advised not to advertise their place of business during extension-sponsored activities, and are not to be listed as MGs on the advertisements of businesses that they own or where they are employed. New Mexico State University is a source of unbiased, research-based information. Representing a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University endorsement of any product or place of business is improper.

Making Pesticide Recommendations

As volunteers, Master Gardeners shall not give advice on managing pests using EPA-registered pesticides. Remember, the use of chemicals is the last resort. Even NMSU employees cannot give pesticide recommendations unless they have a public pesticide applicator license. Alternative management practices such as removing eggs by hand, pulling weeds, or using a forceful spray of water from a hose to knock down aphid populations should always be the first response. Once a positive insect or disease has been identified, refer the client to a nursery or garden center for a product labeled for that pest. Emphasize the importance of using only products labeled for that pest and reading the instructions for safe use. If someone needs specific help, refer them to the County Extension Agent.

Dismissal of a Master Gardener Volunteer

Repeated and consistent disregard for the Bylaws, Policies and guidelines established by the New Mexico State University Extension and the Sandoval County Master Gardener Program is grounds for dismissal as a Master Gardener Volunteer. When the Agent and the SCMG Coordinator, jointly, find it necessary to dismiss a volunteer, the volunteer shall be informed in writing of the termination of his/her volunteer status. This notice of dismissal will become part of the volunteer's file maintained by the Agent.

Acquiring and Maintaining Master Gardener Status

SCMG Master Gardener Designations

A **Master Gardener Intern** is a trainee who is enrolled in or successfully completes Intern training and is completing their initial volunteer service requirement.

A **Veteran Master Gardener** is a volunteer who has successfully completed the basic training course, the service internship, maintains the annual volunteer service requirement for certification, and is current in payment of yearly dues.

An **Associate Master Gardener** is a MG volunteer on an approved leave of absence for up to two years.

An **Honorary Master Gardener** is a MG who is no longer able meet the volunteer service requirement for yearly certification due to hardship or disability. Honorary status can only be granted by the Agent upon recommendation by the Board. The Master Gardener seeking Honorary status should notify the Agent in writing. Alternatively, Honorary status for a specific MG can be recommended by another MG by notifying the Agent in writing. General guidelines for Honorary status are:

- A minimum of 500 hours of volunteer service, or
- Ten years of volunteer service, or
- Exemplary service to the SCMG program

A **Life Member** is a veteran MG who has 15 years of service or more. A Life Member is exempt from the annual service and continuing education requirements for certification. However, Life Members are encouraged to report their hours since the Agent reports all volunteer hours to NMSU.

An **Inactive Master Gardener** is a MG volunteer who has exceeded an approved two year leave of absence or who has failed to submit their annual volunteer hours (including continuing education) and/or annual dues by the required due dates.

Master Gardener Intern Training Course

A Master Gardener Intern Training Course shall be provided by the SCMG under the direction of the Agent. The content, schedule, and duration of this course shall be determined by the Education Committee and the Agent. Interns enrolled shall pay a course fee in an amount determined by the Board. All fees shall be collected by the SCMG Treasurer and deposited in accordance with the Bylaws.

Interns are required to attend all training course sessions as scheduled. If an absence is unavoidable, the Intern shall notify the Assistant Coordinator as soon as possible. A maximum of two missed sessions may be made up by home study of the printed material given out at the sessions and successful completion of the tests involved.

If an emergency occurs (such as illness, family emergency, or work related) and the Intern must miss an additional class, the Intern shall notify the Assistant Coordinator as soon as possible. The Assistant Coordinator will take the request to the Coordinator and the Agent, jointly, for approval. This will not apply to Master Gardener transferees (see definition, below). Vacation will not be considered an emergency.

Volunteer and Education Hours

All members of the SCMG, interns and veterans, shall complete the following time requirements to become MGs or to retain MG status. Considerable flexibility is offered in the choice of volunteer work, but all such activities must be approved by the Coordinator, with the counsel of the Agent. Community Outreach volunteer activities must be specifically approved by the Board as such to meet the requirement below.

- Minimum 10 hours of education earned either by attending the SCMG Training classes or approved continuing education classes.
- Minimum of 30 hours of volunteer activities, of which at least 10 hours must be earned in Community Outreach activities.
- Volunteer hours should be submitted by the first of September (and include planned September hours) so the total volunteer hours may be rolled up by October 1 for the Agent's annual report to NMSU and so the number of Members who are eligible to vote at the Annual Meeting may be determined. Members who have not submitted their hours by December 15 will be designated Inactive and will be required to go through the reinstatement process to regain Veteran MG status.

Additional policies regarding credit for time spent on SCMG education and volunteer activities

- Travel time may be included in the hours required, but may not exceed a maximum total of 5 hours, only one hour of which may be applied to meet the minimum 10 hours of Community Outreach. This policy recognizes that, although a MG may spend more than five hours in travel to and from volunteer activities, the MG's volunteer hours should reflect actual participation in service or educational projects.
- Each MG volunteer is responsible for being present for activities, particularly in the public interface activities, for which they are signed up. If unable to attend, the MG will contact the project chair and obtain a substitute when necessary.
- MGs are responsible for any fees associated with attending education classes, except veterans are not charged a fee for attending the SCMG Training classes. Veterans are not required to take the SCMG Training class tests. Fees may be waived by the Board for other, specific, classes.
- Approved continuing education classes include SCMG Advanced Classes, SCMG Workshops, Southwest Homeowners, Gardening with the Masters, Homescape Solutions Education, Tree Stewards Training, State Master Gardener Conference Classes, NMSU First Detector Training, and any other Extension, Community and/or University Horticultural, Landscaping, or Conservation training seminars as approved by the Agent or Coordinator with counsel from the Agent.

If a MG wishes to receive credit hours for any volunteer activity not previously approved, the MG shall request approval for the activity from the Coordinator and the Agent, who can, in turn, request a decision from the SCMG Board if concerns arise about approving such activity. MGs are encouraged to participate in a variety of volunteer activities.

Approved SCMG activities are covered for liability, as they are part of an off-campus educational program of New Mexico State University. Unless expressly approved, young children and pets (except service animals) are not allowed at volunteer activities. SCMG volunteers are expected to provide their own medical coverage.

Those MGs who participate in projects involving vulnerable populations – young children, the elderly, the disabled, and so on – may be required to undergo a background check to meet state law requisites.

Board Representation of the Intern Class, and Attending the Board of Directors Meetings

All Sandoval County MGs and Interns are welcome and encouraged to attend the Board of Directors meetings. It is recommended that the Coordinator be made aware of specific reports or concerns so that they may be added to the agenda prior to a Board meeting.

Withdrawal or Leave of Absence

Withdrawal from the SCMG Program: (Inactive Members)

To withdraw from the program, volunteers should notify the Agent in writing. After withdrawal, volunteers may not represent themselves as SCMGs.

Leave of Absence

A MG Volunteer who is unable to fulfill the service or continuing education requirement may request a leave of absence from the SCMG program for up to two years. The MG Volunteer must notify the Agent in writing to be approved for leave of absence. MG Volunteers who are on a leave of absence will continue to pay dues and are eligible to vote on SCMG issues. Typical reasons for requesting leave of absence include, but are not restricted to, education, family care, treatment for a medical condition, or military service obligation. After the approved leave of absence, these members, designated Associate Members, may be reinstated to the program by approval of the Agent and Coordinator, acting jointly. Reinstatement after approved leave of absence will include the transfer of all service years earned prior to the leave of absence. If the leave of absence extends beyond 2 years the member will be considered inactive.

Reinstatement (Inactive Member)

An inactive Master Gardener who has withdrawn from the program or is absent from the program after a period of time not covered by Leave of Absence, and who wants to be reinstated in the SCMG program must complete the following requirements:

- Obtain recommendation for reinstatement along with documentation of certified Master Gardener years from the Agent.
- Attend a SCMG orientation to understand new policies of the organization
- Complete select or all training classes as determined by the Agent and Coordinator, acting jointly.
- Pay relevant training fees and /or membership fees
- Complete the minimum required annual volunteer service and education hours.

Reinstatement will include the transfer of service years earned prior to the absence after all of the above is met. A new SCMG membership badge will be issued with the reinstatement year. Transfer years may be indicated on a separate badge or attachment.

Transfer from another County within New Mexico or from a Different State

A certified MG volunteer who transfers from another Master Gardening organization and who wants to continue in the SCMG program must meet the following requirements:

- Provide a letter of reference from the MG program coordinator in the previous county of residence to the Agent.
- Attend the annual SCMG orientation session to understand local program policies, activities, commitments, etc.
- Attend select or all training classes depending on how different the climate and conditions in the new location are from the previous place of residence and length of time since the last training. The Agent and Coordinator will make the final determination regarding education requirements for transferees. Relevant class training fees may apply.
- Receive SCMG badge only after successful completion of the above requirements and completion of the current year volunteer requirements. The current year will be indicated on the SCMG badge; not the year from the transfer location.
- The transfer of MG Volunteer Years of Service from the previous residence will be allowed and these years of service may be indicated on a separate badge or attachment.

Budget and Finances

Leaders' Budget Responsibilities

Program, committee, and project leaders shall submit their anticipated budget needs to the Treasurer before the September Board meeting, at which time the Treasurer presents the proposed budget for the new fiscal year for Board review. Budget requests above \$150.00 must be itemized and submitted to the Treasurer for review by the Board. Budgets should be an accurate forecast of the yearly need of the program/committee/ project. The fiscal year budget for SCMG is reviewed at the October board meeting and voted on by Board members for approval. Requests to make changes to the budget may be made during the year by program/ committee/project leaders as needed and will be reviewed for approval by the Board.

Approval of Expenditures

Expenditures must be approved beforehand. The process of approval follows:

- If the current budget contains a line item for a particular program/committee/project, the chair of that program/committee/project may expend funds within that budgeted amount. The chair submits receipts labeled with the program/committee/project name to the SCMG Treasurer for reimbursement.
- If the current budget does not have a line item for a particular program/committee/project, or if the proposed expenditure is larger than the existing line item, the chair of that program/committee/project must request Board approval of the expenditure beforehand. One-time emergency amounts up to \$100.00 may be approved by an authorized officer as described in the Checking Account Section.
- Expenditures are approved for the stated budget line item only. Program/committee/ project leaders are not to share their monetary budgets with other projects or committees. If there is a significant change in budget, the program/committee/project leader should present the budget change to the Board for approval. The change in budget will be updated by the Treasurer on the following month's budget

report. The Treasurer will maintain a copy of the itemized budget requests exceeding \$150.00. Unspent program/committee/project budgets will be absorbed into the general SCMG funds at the end of the year.

Checking Account

The SCMG Treasurer shall deposit all SCMG income in the SCMG checking account. Manually written check disbursements from that account shall be signed by two persons authorized to sign checks. Those authorized are the Treasurer, the Coordinator, the Assistant Coordinator and the Secretary.

The Treasurer is approved to do check disbursement by Electronic Checking for previously budgeted amounts that do not exceed \$500.00. When utilizing this procedure the Treasurer shall notify the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of each electronic check disbursement by e-mail.

Checks disbursed for previously budgeted amounts exceeding the stated cap of \$500.00 shall be:

- Signed by two persons authorized to sign checks for manually written checks.
- Use of credit card or electronic checks shall be pre-approved by the Board. The Coordinator or Assistant Coordinator may obtain emergency approval of the Board for such by email notification with a formal follow-up approval at the next Board meeting.

No checks may be disbursed for non-budgeted funds with the exception of one-time, emergency checks not to exceed \$100.00. Checks for the latter may be written or disbursed by one of the authorized officers with notification to the other authorized officers. These emergency check amounts will be then added to the appropriate line item of the current fiscal year budget by the Treasurer, unless considered petty cash.

The Treasurer will register and maintain an electronic account of the receipt of Membership fees, revolving business account fees, and class fees with the approval of the Board. Registration and electronic account information shall be shared with the Coordinator for purposes of continuity.

The Treasurer may use the SCMG debit/credit card for approved purchases in accordance with limits and restrictions established for all disbursements as previously stated. The debit/credit card is to be used primarily for SCMG purchases from businesses that do not accept a check; i.e., internet purchases. When utilizing this procedure, the Treasurer shall notify the Coordinator and Assistant Coordinator of each debit/credit card disbursement by e-mail. The Treasurer reconciles credit card statements and pays the bill.

The Board will be informed of the above transactions through the monthly Treasurer's Report.

Policy on Receiving and Reporting Donations

SCMG is a volunteer organization sponsored by the Sandoval County Extension, and an unclassified tax exempt program under the New Mexico State University (NMSU). SCMG may accept donations from their members and the public for Board approved programs and projects. For those who require it, a Donation Form is available with the SCMG EIN number listed for their tax purposes. All donations must be reported and filed with the SCMG Treasurer. Project specific monetary donations will be added to said program or project budget for spending during a designated time frame. Physical donations may be designated for organizational use or

for specific project use. In the event that the donor did not specify a program or project, the monetary donation will be added to the general budget.

Audit Policy

An audit shall be conducted after the close of the SCMG books for the year, which will be six weeks after the end of the fiscal year. The additional six weeks will ensure that all expenses for the fiscal year have been entered. The SCMG Audit Committee shall perform the following duties:

- Request from the SCMG Treasurer copies of
 1. Bank statements
 2. Completed check register
 3. Copies of all deposit slips with documentation attached
 4. Reimbursement request forms with receipts attached and project identified
 5. Copies of meetings showing the approval of items over \$500 from the Treasurer.
- Verify all deposits by checking deposit slips with supporting documentation.
- Check payment request forms for accuracy with supporting receipts.
- Compare bank statements to the check register for accuracy.
- Check Budget to Actual year-end report for accuracy.
- Verify that Board approval was made for any expenditure over \$500

Media Policy of the Sandoval County Master Gardeners

The purpose of this media policy is to identify the obligations of SCMG Members when using the title SCMG to refer to themselves, projects, organizations and Members. When communicating with the public, be it speaking to a group, answering an individual's question or blogging online, if a Member identifies her/himself as a Sandoval County Master Gardener, the MG is representing the organization and it is her/his responsibility to do it well. Review the Code of Conduct for additional information regarding the use of the title Sandoval County Master Gardener.

Social Media

Websites, blogs, videos, and social media sites that feature Sandoval County Master Gardener projects or individuals require the pre-approval of the SCMG Board. Such sites should contain a link to the primary SCMG website. This does not include sites maintained by separate legal entities, including but not limited to city, state, and federal agencies, private businesses and non-profit organizations. SCMG domain names are owned by the SCMG organization, not individuals. This does not include sites maintained by separate legal entities, including but not limited to city, state, and federal agencies, private businesses and non-profit organizations. Standards of behavior are equally important in online communication. Appendix A contains an etiquette guide for online communication.

Submitting Articles, Letters and Scripted Programs to News Media Sources

If a MG drafts an article, letter, or scripted program, for submission to any newspaper, journal, televised or recorded program in which the MG is identified as a Sandoval County Master Gardener, a draft shall be sent first to the Agent for approval before submission. It's important to recognize that SCMG is part of the NMSU Extension Service, and MGs need to respect that public words may ultimately need to be justified by the Agent.

Responding to Reporters

Local media provides an opportunity to have SCMG work known by the community at large. This will come about in a proactive manner through articles written by the Agent or by MGs. Other times, particularly in public venues, MGs may be contacted directly by a reporter. If possible, or in doubt how to respond, refer the reporter to the project leader or Communications Committee Chair. If there is a controversial issue, the request needs to go through the Agent. Maintaining a good relationship with the media is important to this organization.

Simple Communication Rules

- Respect reporting deadlines.
- If the answer to their question is not known, please give the reporter another contact who may have the information needed.
- Reporters may not know anything about SCMG, including information on our community projects and volunteers. The best effort to educate them should be done whenever possible.

There will be occasions when reporters will want information about our projects. Each project chair is responsible for responding to any reporter's questions about their specific project. If a chair does not want to take that responsibility, then the chair must designate a responsible person who can answer substantive questions about the project. The designated individual's contact information will be given to a reporter upon request. More general questions about SCMG should be handled by the Agent, or Coordinator, or an individual designated by them.

Photo Release Policy

SCMG representatives routinely take photographs and video images during SCMG sponsored programs/ activities, community events, and training. These photographs and images are intended to be used in SCMG publications of a marketing or public relations nature, such as newsletters, yearbooks, press releases, advertisements, newspaper feature articles, promotional flyers, posters, slide presentations, on the SCMG web site, social networking sites, and in various other print and digital communications. Prior to taking a photograph or video image of any Veteran Master Gardener, Intern Master Gardener, NMSU staff person, or member of the public who is visibly recognizable, a photo release must be obtained. Crowd scenes that do not include children under the age of 18, and where no single person is the dominant feature, are exempt; however, all photographs or video images of children under the age of 18 require a release form signed by parents or guardians. Each release must be in written form; oral consent will not suffice. This written consent must be kept on file for the duration of the fiscal year(s) in which the photograph or video image remains in use.

Appendix A

Netiquette:

Internet Etiquette Rules

(adapted from the book *Netiquette* by Virginia Shea
Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Manual of University of Minnesota)

When communicating online as a SCMG, the purpose is to share horticultural knowledge and support other SCMG volunteers and gardeners. Here are a few basic rules for communicating online.

The first rule of the Internet is the golden rule – treat others as you wish to be treated. Treating others with respect is key. Basically, adhere to the same standards of behavior online that you follow in real life.

- Content:
 1. Agree to disagree.
 2. Ranting online is unacceptable.
 3. Do not type in all capital letters, it's hard to read and it is considered shouting.
 4. Respect others' privacy. Do not put confidential, personal, or legally sensitive information in email or social media.
 5. Avoid sarcastic comments, teasing, or joking comments.
 6. Don't send chain letters or spread hoaxes. Forwarding such emails can spread viruses.

- Write well online:
 1. Pay attention to style, spelling, grammar, syntax, and other rules of written communication. Poorly written communication is a bad reflection on the writer, the SCMG organization, and the information being conveyed.
 2. Explain things completely but concisely. Email messages that are short and to the point are most likely to be read completely and understood.
 3. Fill in the subject line. Those who receive many emails may simply ignore an email with a blank subject line and others may view it as spam or a possible virus.
 4. Read through your email before sending.
 5. Sign your email

Appendix B

SCMG - General Safety Rules

- MGs and other volunteers engaged in SCMG-sponsored events or program activities shall be committed to ensuring a healthy and safe work environment for themselves, students, property owners, and visiting members of the public.
- If a SCMG event or program requires the use of any tools, proper precautions and safety gear; i.e., gloves and safety glasses, must be provided and worn by the individual workers. In addition, individuals must be prepared to protect themselves from harsh environmental conditions such as high heat or cold temperatures, blowing sand, etc. Be on the alert for changes in weather that might produce lightning, hail or tornadoes. Bring sunscreen, drinking water, and other common sense items to make the experience safe and enjoyable.
- Potentially hazardous power tools and machinery (chainsaws, augers, tractors, bulldozers, power rakes, tillers, and insecticide/herbicide applicators) must be operated with utmost care only by experienced personnel. Recommended protective gear must be worn to prevent serious injury or death to the operator or others.
- Any incident or accident that occurs at a SCMG event or program shall immediately be reported to the Sandoval County Extension Service Office and the SCMG Coordinator.
- The detailed SCMG Safety Plan may be found on the SCMG web site.

Appendix C

SCMG – Financial Aid for Applicants of the Master Gardener Training Class

- Financial aid covering a portion of tuition for the SCMG Training Class is one way of increasing access to the program for low-income residents of Sandoval County.
- The availability of funds for Financial Aid is based on the yearly SCMG budget.
- Qualification for financial aid is based on documented low-income status.
- Documentation will consist of one of the following:
 - SNAP card
 - Medicaid card
 - Copy of letter awarding SSI (Supplemental Security Income)
- Financial Aid awards will not exceed 50% of tuition for any one applicant.
- The Financial Aid request will be initiated through a single question included on the SCMG Application.

“Does the payment of tuition present a financial hardship for you?”
_____yes _____no
- The above question will be printed on a separate page at the end of the Sandoval County Master Gardener Application form so that the page can be torn off and kept confidential while the remainder of the application is processed.
- Applicants indicating “yes” will then be sent a Financial Aid form.
- The Agent and Coordinator, acting jointly, will screen applicants, evaluate applications, and decide awards.
- All Financial Aid screening and the decision for awards will be done after the deadline for applying to the SCMG program.
- If the applicant is unable to pay the remaining tuition in a lump sum after receiving an award, a payment plan, based on a written agreement, will be signed by the applicant and Agent.
- The SCMG Financial Aid application form will be screened by NMSU for Equal Opportunity prior to release.