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Master Gardeners of Sandoval County Handbook

**The Master Gardeners
of Sandoval County
provide horticultural
education and
leadership through
programs and
activities within the
community while
developing, improving,
and preserving the
quality of our natural
environment.**

Master Gardeners of Sandoval County

This handbook is designed to introduce new members to the Sandoval County Master Gardener (SCMG) organization, and to help them stay organized as volunteers. It answers some of the common questions that new volunteers have about the program. It does not include everything, so don't hesitate to ask questions - please ask any Veteran Master Gardener or call the Extension Office at (505) 867-2582.

The importance of volunteer contributions to the New Mexico State University (NMSU) Extension, Sandoval County, horticulture program cannot be emphasized enough. Volunteers helped create the New Mexico Extension Service in the early 1900s and continue to influence its growth with more relevant programs and greater visibility in the community, resulting in more people reached, more communities served, and greater customer confidence.

Who Are We?

Sandoval County Master Gardeners are part of the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. NMSU Extension is the outreach arm of the New Mexico State University in Las Cruces, New Mexico, a Land Grant university. We interpret horticultural knowledge developed at New Mexico State and other land-grant universities. We share this information to solve problems for local gardeners and actively participate in establishing and maintaining gardens throughout the community.



What is a Land Grant University?

In 1862, the United State Congress passed the first Morrill Act to establish Land-Grant Colleges in each state "Where the leading objective, without excluding other scientific, or classical studies, was to teach such branches of learning as are related to agriculture and mechanic arts" to the working industrial classes. The Morrill Act promoted the philosophy that all citizens, regardless of social and economic class, should have equal access to higher education.

The Hatch Act, signed on March 2, 1887, gave this nation its network of agricultural experiment stations, allowing us, through research, to become the most effective and efficient producer of food and fiber in the world. On August 30, 1890, Congress enacted

into law a Second Morrill Act. The centerpiece of this act was to provide increased funding to states to support the provisions of the first act signed in 1862. The Second Morrill Act also stipulated that black Americans should have equal access to higher education.

Master Gardener Mission

The New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Program provides knowledge to and develops the leadership abilities of volunteers who, in turn, enable others to improve the quality of their lives by enhancing their home and community environments through horticultural education and activities. (Courtesy of Ohio State University)

Master Gardener Vision

The New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Program is a statewide network of volunteers dedicated to education and leadership development as well as a consumer horticulture education delivery system that maximizes human, material, and natural resources. The program values teamwork and excellence in education programming. (Courtesy of Ohio State University)

Master Gardener Values

We value education:

- By providing educational programs to develop new volunteers and continuing education for certified volunteers
- By providing accurate, current, research-based, and understandable horticultural information and guidance to a diverse public
- By providing opportunities for hands-on learning

We value cooperation:

- By fostering cooperation and camaraderie among Sandoval County Master Gardener volunteers and with other Master Gardener volunteers state-wide
- By collaborating with others
- By enriching the community through sharing our love of gardening in fellowship with other gardeners of all ages
- By maintaining the relationship with the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service

We value self-sufficiency:

- By encouraging development of individual skills, talents, aspirations, and interests

- By developing funding alternatives

We value service:

- By fostering integrity, reliability, and promptness for each individual and through active involvement of all of our members

We value communication:

- By fostering open and honest communication among the Board of Directors, Veteran Master Gardeners, Mentors, and Mentees
- By responding to the community in a timely manner

Master Gardener Purpose

The New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Program is a volunteer educational and practitioner program designed to meet the horticultural needs of New Mexico residents. Its purpose is to train volunteers and then utilize their expertise to teach people about plants, their cultivation, and their importance to the environment and to our quality of life. Master Gardener volunteers provide technical assistance to the County Extension Agent in order that horticulture activities and programs are effectively and efficiently implemented.

Master Gardener interns receive formal training from their county Extension Office covering a wide range of pertinent horticultural topics. To become a certified Master Gardener, interns must complete the training program, pass the required exams, and volunteer a specified number of hours on projects and other activities sponsored by the Master Gardener organization.

The volunteer commitment may be fulfilled in a number of different ways, depending on the needs of the county residents. After completion of the initial certification requirements, Master Gardener volunteers are encouraged to remain as active Master Gardeners to assist with horticultural program delivery as a New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

The New Mexico State University Master Gardener Program is supported on the state level through the New Mexico State University Cooperative Extension Service. The State Master Gardener Coordinator, with the guidance of a State Master Gardener Steering Committee, develops policies and guidelines for the operation of the program, provides some training and recognition materials, and provides in-service opportunities and other resources for counties conducting the program. On the county level, the program is coordinated by the Extension Agent who manages the program directly or oversees the program in cooperation with the Master Gardener Coordinator.

Sandoval County Master Gardener Organization

The Sandoval County Cooperative Extension Agent is responsible for overseeing the Master Gardener program in the county and is also a SCMG Board member. The Agent is assisted by the Sandoval County Master Gardener Coordinator and the Board of Directors in governing the Sandoval County Master Gardeners organization. The Sandoval County Master Gardeners, under the guidance of the Agriculture Agent, assist the county residential gardeners with their horticultural questions and provide demonstrations of best gardening and landscaping practices through their community volunteer projects. The Agriculture Agent is also responsible to the commercial horticulture production industry as well as consumer horticulture or backyard gardeners. The Agent works with growers, landscapers, arborists and other green industry members addressing important and emerging issues.

Requirements to Become a Certified Master Gardener

The basic requirements to become a Sandoval County Certified Master Gardener are to:

- Complete Application and be accepted into the training class by the Agent
- Submit course fee (scholarship assistance is available on a limited basis – contact the Sandoval County Extension Office for more information)
- A Training Manual (included in course fee) is provided. Reading and study time to prepare for class will be required. Time to complete take home examinations, or class preparation, each week will also be required.
- The Intern Training Course is four (4) Hours per week for sixteen (16) weeks. In addition, thirty (30) hours of volunteer service are required for initial certification. A minimum of ten (10) of these hours must be in Community Outreach type activities (see definition, below).

Attendance

Each Master Gardener Intern is expected to attend every class session. It is recognized that situations may arise where this is not possible. 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 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. In all cases, it is required that all examinations be taken and passed.

Formal Training

The formal intern training curriculum is the responsibility of the County Extension Agent in coordination with NMSU. Instructors are New Mexico State University faculty, Extension Specialists, Extension Educators, Extension Associates, experienced Master Gardeners, and other experts.

The training program provides a balanced, integrated, practical course in plant science. Core topics that are part of the training are Orientation to Extension and the Master Gardener Program, Basic Botany and Plant Physiology, Soils and Soil Amendments, Basic Entomology, Basic Plant Pathology and Plant Disease Diagnosis, Integrated Pest Management and Pesticide Safety, Home Lawn Care, Annuals, Perennials and Bulbs, Trees and Shrubs, Home Vegetable Production, Home Fruit Production, Houseplants, and Backyard Wildlife Management. Special topics based on local needs, may be part of the curriculum.

Training is offered one day per week (usually Tuesday) from 1:00 to 5:00 pm. Training occurs in the months of January, February, March, and April. The training usually covers one or two major topics per class day.

The principal resource for the training is the New Mexico State University Master Gardener Training Manual, included in the course fee. Core training is held during a four month period as outlined above. Advanced training (continuing education) for Master Gardener recertification is provided throughout the year in accordance with local needs and resources. At least every two years, a state-wide, multi-day conference is offered to assist in fulfilling recertification requirements.



Examinations

There are weekly take home exams, all of which must be passed with a 70% or better grade in order to fulfill the Master Gardener Intern training requirements. Exams may be retaken as necessary to achieve a passing grade.

Master Gardener Intern Status

Students accepted and enrolled in the training course are termed “Master Gardener Interns.” In addition to successful completion of the intern training, interns will need the following to achieve Master Gardener status at the fall Annual Meeting:

- A minimum of 10 hours of Community Outreach activities (one hour of travel time may be included)
- 20 volunteer hours of SCMG approved projects (up to four hours of travel time may be included). Community Outreach activities beyond the minimum 10 hours may also be included
- No further continuing education hours are required, however interns are encouraged to partake of SCMG approved continuing education opportunities of interest.

Volunteer Activities

There are three types of volunteer activities in which Interns and Master Gardeners may participate to fulfill their initial and continuing volunteer requirements: Community Outreach, Volunteer Service, and Administration. The detailed lists of approved activities are found in the Time Reporting spreadsheet, a link to which is provided on the Sandoval County Master Gardener web page in the “Member Roster and SCMG Forms” tab (<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org>). All of these activities have been approved by the Board and Agent. The lists are updated annually as new activities are added and activities no longer supported are removed.

In general, **Community Outreach** activities are those in which Master Gardeners interface directly with the public, such as manning the telephone hotline, supporting the e:hotline, and manning booths to answer questions at growers markets and garden tours. **Volunteer Service** activities are more hands-on projects in which Master Gardeners create and maintain gardens throughout the community, support local school gardening projects, and represent the SCMG at county and state fairs. **Administration** support activities are usually short term and include projects such as teaching continuing education classes, performing research for the Agent, attending Membership Meetings, attending Board meetings and supporting Board members, engaging in publicity activities, and maintaining the SCMG web site.

Logging Hours and Paying Dues

Volunteer hours are tracked to demonstrate to the County Commission the monetary value of the program to the local community. It is also important that volunteer hours be recorded and submitted to NMSU by the Agent. The official timesheet is found on the Sandoval County Master Gardener web page in the “Member Roster and SCMG Forms” tab (<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org>). This is an Excel document and all interns and

veterans are expected to use it. For those who don't have, or absolutely can't use Excel, there is a manual form which may be downloaded, filled out, and submitted to the office. It is the responsibility of each intern and veteran to record their hours and submit them by year-end submission date of August 31st of each year. The total hours submitted should include an estimate of September volunteer hours to complete the fiscal year total. Interns who have not submitted their hours prior to the annual meeting in October will not be certified, and members who have not submitted their hours will not be permitted to vote. Members who have not submitted their hours by October 31 will be transferred to Inactive status. To maintain active membership annual dues are to be paid by October 15 of each year. Dues shall become delinquent after December 15, and the member will be transferred to Inactive status. From time to time the Agent may need to submit volunteer hours on a more frequent basis. In those cases, an email will be sent to the membership requesting submission of hours.

Certification

Upon successful completion of the Master Gardener training program and the required volunteer hours, the intern will receive an official Sandoval County Master Gardener certificate and badge. The presentation ceremony is usually in conjunction with the Annual Membership Meeting typically held on the third Saturday in September.

Recertification

To retain Master Gardener status, each member is required to meet the following minimum annual requirements, and to pay the yearly membership fee due on October 15, the start of the fiscal year.

- Twenty (20) hours of volunteer service,
- Ten (10) hours of Community Outreach activities
- Ten (10) hours of continuing education classes approved by the Agent

Use of Title

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

Use of Pesticides

As a volunteer, Master Gardeners should not give advice on managing pests using 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 should always be the first response such as removing eggs by hand, pulling weeds, or using a forceful spray of water from a hose to knock down aphid populations. Once an insect or disease has been positively identified, refer the client to a nursery or garden center for 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

Repeated and consistent disregard for the policies and guidelines established by the New Mexico State University Extension and the Sandoval County Master Gardener Program are grounds for dismissal as a Master Gardener Volunteer. When the County Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator 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.

SCMG Communications

To be effective volunteers, Master Gardeners and interns must communicate regularly. SCMG maintains a website where organizational information is available to all. Our web page includes content on the organization, schedules, minutes of Board meetings, forms and a host of other information required to administer our programs. Interns should become familiar with the SCMG web site and regularly check for activities and new calendar items that are updated regularly. The web site should be the first stop when information is needed or a question arises. <http://sandovalmastergardeners.org>

Membership Meetings may be called by the Sandoval County Master Gardener Board or the County Extension Agent. There is one mandatory membership meeting per year called the Annual Meeting, typically held on the third Saturday in September at which the Board of Director elections for the following fiscal year are held and new interns certified. It is the responsibility of all Master Gardeners to attend membership meetings and to vote on membership business when requested.

Meetings of the Board of Directors are held monthly. In an effort to increase the camaraderie of volunteers and provide current information, interns and veteran Master Gardeners are encouraged to attend and participate in the meetings. Only Board Members may vote on business before the Board. Meeting notice e:mails will be sent to all interns and active Master Gardeners about one week in advance. The agenda and appropriate supporting documents for each BOD meeting will be available on the website a few days before a scheduled meeting.