

# Email Helpline Quarterly Orientation

**Welcome**

# Email Helpline: Policies and Procedures

**Outreach** is the **single most important volunteer function** we provide. Outreach is communication between a master gardener and member of the public.

**Purpose:** The primary purpose of Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners Email Helpline is to assist NMSU Extension by educating the public.

# Email Helpline

Teams of two (the exception will be intern/mentor teams in the summer) including veterans and new graduates.

Each team member receives 10 hours outreach credit for a 2-week shift.

Working in teams serves the public well by bringing a variety of strengths to answering questions.

Each team should decide:

- Who will be responsible for checking for emails each day
- Who will be responding to emails (to avoid confusion for the public, one person should be responsible for corresponding to a specific questioner)

# Responding to the public: Some Basics

Always thank sender for contacting us.

If you will not be able to answer their question(s) within 24 hours, email the sender and tell them more time is needed.

Encourage the sender to visit our website to learn about available classes and other valuable gardening information.

Encourage the sender to contact us in the future with their questions.

Do not use your personal email.

# Answering Questions

You may need more information from the sender. You can contact them and request photos or additional information (remind them that the photos need light and should show close ups of the issues). You may email or call them if they have provided a number.

Each team is responsible for answering questions received during their shift and documenting the responses in the quarterly log.

NEVER guess at answers. Our job is to provide scientifically accurate information to the public.

If you “google” to search for answers put “.edu” into your search terms to limit your information sources to members of the extension service.

**Your Attachment - Each file must be a jpg, jpeg, png, docx or pdf file and must not exceed 5MB.**

**Up to 4 files can be attached.**

Choose File no file selected

Choose File no file selected

Choose File no file selected

Choose File no file selected

Send

# Important: WE DO NOT

Recommend specific vendor services (landscapers, pest control, etc.).

Recommend pest control remedies (including home remedies). We do not make any chemical recommendation, but you may refer them to NMSU circulars or Fact Sheets.

Answer questions from commercial growers or farmers. Please reply with the Standardized Language and forward the email to [Outreach@SandovalMasterGardener.org](mailto:Outreach@SandovalMasterGardener.org).

Give out contact information (phone numbers or email of members or staff)

Offer Home Visits at this time (that may change in the future)

# Starting your Shift

You will receive a welcome email before your shift begins. This email will contain numerous items including:

- Dates of your shift
- How to access emails
- Dealing with soil, pathology and insect samples
- A link to the *Quarterly Email Log* you will use to log each email received during your shift



# Getting to Emails

The public sends their emails to:

[emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org](mailto:emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org)

To access the emails go to: <https://exchange2019.ionos.com/owa/>

**Put in the email address (above)**

**The password will be provided in your welcome email**

# Helpful Resources

On our website you will find the forms and resources you need. Including:

- Email helpline policies and procedures.
- Standard responses (for commercial growers, etc).
- Diagnostic forms.
- Expert List.

You will find these documents at

<http://sandovalmastergardeners.org/sheet/2021-email-helpline/>

Or by selecting 2021 Email Helpline on the Volunteer Sign in page

## Email Helpline Log

Use this log to record gardening questions you receive from the public via email. It is vital that you record how you have resolved or are resolving the question (e.g., researching at home and will resolve) so that the next person working the helpline knows that the question was either resolved or you are still working on the question.

Web Address - <https://exchange2019.ionos.com/owa/>

Email address - emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org

Password - Semgweb.1912

Questions? Contact: Gilbert Galvan 616-510-4838 [gilbertgalvan@yahoo.com](mailto:gilbertgalvan@yahoo.com) or Sam Thompson 505-610-5530 [samandjohnthompson@gmail.com](mailto:samandjohnthompson@gmail.com)

**Date: January - February - March 2021**

Log #	Date	MG Name	Name & Contact	Question	Resolution/Next Steps
2100					
2101					
2102					
2103					
2104					
2105					
2106					
2107					
2108					
2109					
2110					
2111					
2112					
2113					
2114					
2115					
2116					
2117					
2118					

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Web Address - <https://exchange2019.ionos.com/owa/>  
 Email address - emailhelpline@sandovalmastergardeners.org  
 Password - Semgweb.2020

Questions? Call/email Jan Henfling 505-350-9444 jkh128@live.com or Gilbert Galvan 616-510-4838 gilbertgalvan@yahoo.com

**Date: May 2020**

<b>Log #</b>	<b>MG Name</b>	<b>Name &amp; Contact</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Resolution/Next Steps</b>
<b>100</b>	<b>Sharon Walsh</b>	<b>Joe Henderson</b>	<b>How to deal with critters eating plants</b>	<b>Build cages with covers</b>
<b>101</b>	<b>Sharon Walsh</b>	<b>Kimberly Andrus</b>	<b>Problems with rose buds and failure to thrive for newly planted lavender plants</b>	<b>Referred email to Kate Shaddock SCMG and who is knowledgeable about roses; lavender issue needs research; asked for more info about both issues</b>
<b>102</b>	<b>Sharon Walsh</b>	<b>Cyndie Tidwell</b>	<b>Wisteria has brown blossoms from cold weather last month; wanted to know if and when to prune</b>	<b>Advised to wait until July and then cut out any long, leggy growth, leaving any branches that are needed for climbing; then, cut the shoots 1/3 to 1/2 their length, which will result in areas from which next year's flowers will</b>
<b>103</b>	<b>Sharon Walsh</b>	<b>Cathy Lea</b>	<b>What animal is making large mounds of dirt near tree; worried that the animal may damage tree</b>	<b>Advised that it might be pocket gophers, but indicated that more research was need and that</b>

# Email Protocol

Use the Diagnostic Procedure to understand the email's problem. There is a diagnostic form for most questions and a specific form for tree questions available in the helpline resources on the website.

Questions – Call/text/email **Gilbert Galvan or Sam Thompson**

# Follow these Guidelines:

1. Read carefully the questions asked of you and make sure you understand the questions.

Ask questions to better understand the problem(s).

Be prepared to provide answers (not just resources).

Take responsibility for resolving the questions asked of you (may require multiple emails.).

2. Provide scientifically based answers that are relevant to our unique climate and conditions.

3. If you do not know the answer to a question, say so and offer to research the question and follow up with the individual later. Do not guess!

# Approved Resources for Answering Questions

- NMSU/County Extension Services Publication ([aces.nmsu.edu](http://aces.nmsu.edu)).
- Educational institutions in the Southwest including publications from Colorado State University, University of Arizona, Texas A & M, Utah State University.
- Books by recognized local experts in SW plants such as Judith Phillips, Baker Morrow, George Miller, and the Native Plant Society of NM (especially the ABQ Chapter).
- SEMG members listed by specialty on the expert list.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture website and publications.