



## COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE

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# Sandoval Extension Master Gardener Membership Policies

## Code of Conduct and Volunteer Agreement

The Code of Conduct and Volunteer Agreement requirements are covered in the New Mexico State University (**NMSU**) Extension Master Gardener Program (**EMG**) State Bylaws. Both of these documents are available on the Sandoval Extension Master Gardeners (**SEMG**) [website](#). All SEMG members are required to sign these two documents and abide by them. A copy of the signed documents will be maintained by the County Agent.

## Use of the Title Sandoval County Master Gardener

The titles "New Mexico State University Master Gardener," "Sandoval Extension Master Gardener," and "SEMG" are to be used only and exclusively in the New Mexico State University Extension Master Gardener Program. New Mexico Master Gardeners (MGs) are expected to identify themselves as such only when doing volunteer public service work under the auspices of the NMSU EMG. 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. NMSU 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.

## Dismissal of a Master Gardener Volunteer

Repeated and consistent disregard for the Bylaws, Policies, Code of Conduct, Volunteer Agreement, and/or guidelines established by the NMSU EMG and the SEMG Programs are grounds for dismissal as a MG Volunteer. When the Agent and the SEMG Advisory Council, jointly, find a MG should be dismissed, the MG shall be informed in writing of the proposed termination of his/her MG status and the reasons for the proposed action. The MG will be afforded an opportunity to address the proposed action and reasons, in writing, to the Agent. If it is determined the MG should still be dismissed, the Agent will forward the recommendation to



NMSU EMG Program Coordinator for final decision. Dismissal actions will become part of the volunteer's file maintained by the Agent.

## Acquiring and Maintaining Master Gardener Status

### SEMG 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 MG who has successfully completed the basic training course, the service internship, maintains the annual education and volunteer service requirements for certification, and is current in payment of yearly dues.

An **Associate Master Gardener** is a MG on an approved leave of absence (LOA) for up to two years. The MG must notify the Agent, the Advisory Council Chair, or the Membership Committee Chair in writing or via e-mail, to be approved for LOA.

An **Honorary Master Gardener** is a MG who is no longer able to meet the volunteer service requirement for yearly certification due to hardship or disability. Honorary status can only be granted by the Agent. The MG seeking Honorary status must notify the Agent in writing, including via e-mail. 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 SEMG program

A **Lifetime Member** (Emeritus) 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. Life Members are also no longer required to pay annual dues, but may do so as a donation.

An **Inactive Master Gardener** is a MG who has exceeded three years on leave of absence (LOA), or who has failed to submit annual dues by the required due dates. A MG may remain in Inactive status for a maximum 3 years. After 3 years, the membership will be terminated.

## Master Gardener Intern Training Course

A Master Gardener Intern Training Course shall be provided by the SEMG under the direction of the Agent and the Advisory Council. 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 Advisory Council. All fees shall be collected by the SEMG



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Treasurer. The training fees for those who successfully complete the course shall include the first-year dues as a veteran, generally the year following the intern training course.

Interns are required to attend all training course sessions as scheduled.

### **Volunteer and Education Hours**

All members of the SEMG, 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 approved volunteer work, but all such activities must be approved by the Agent and performed in Sandoval County unless approved by the Agent. Community Outreach volunteer activities must be specifically approved by the Agent as such to meet the requirement below.

The Agent will approve all education hours.

- Minimum 10 hours of education earned either by attending the SEMG 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 shall be submitted by the 15 October, or other date specified by the Advisory Council (and include planned hours for the rest of October, November, and December) so the total volunteer hours may be rolled up by 15 November 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. MGs who have not submitted their hours by December 31 will be automatically placed in Leave of Absence status. MGs who have not paid their annual dues by December 31 will be designated as Inactive.

### **Additional policies regarding credit for time spent on SEMG 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 SEMG Training classes. Veterans are not required to take the SEMG Training class tests. Fees may be waived by the Advisory Council for other, specific classes.
- Continuing education classes will be approved by the Agent.



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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 Agent. MGs are encouraged to participate in a variety of volunteer activities.

Approved SEMG activities are covered for liability, as they are part of an off-campus educational program of NMSU. Unless expressly approved, young children and pets (except service animals) are not allowed at volunteer activities. SEMG 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.

### **Withdrawal or Leave of Absence**

#### **Withdrawal from the SEMG Program: (Inactive Members)**

To withdraw from the program, volunteers should notify the Chair of the Membership Committee or Chair of the Advisory Committee in writing, including via e-mail. After withdrawal, volunteers may not represent themselves as SEMGs.

#### **Leave of Absence**

A MG who is unable to fulfill the service and continuing education requirement may request a LOA from the SEMG program for up to two years. The MG should notify the Agent, the Advisory Council Chair, or the Membership Committee Chair in writing or via e-mail, to be approved for LOA. MGs who are on an approved LOA, will continue to pay dues and are eligible to vote on SEMG issues. Typical reasons for requesting a LOA include, but are not restricted to, education, family care, treatment for a medical condition, or military service obligation. After the approved LOA, these members, designated Associate Members, may be reinstated to the program by meeting the annual volunteer hours requirements. Reinstatement after approved LOA will include the transfer of all service years earned prior to the leave of absence. Effective November 1, 2022, time spent on LOA will not count towards Life Member status. Effective November 1, 2022, time spent in LOA will also not count towards 5 and 10-year pin awards. If the leave of absence extends beyond 2 years, the member will be considered Inactive.

#### **Reinstatement (Inactive Member)**

An inactive MG who has withdrawn from the program or is absent from the program after 3 years, not including the approved LOA time, and who wants to be reinstated in the SEMG program must complete the following requirements:



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- Successfully retake the Master Gardener Intern Training Course, or test out of the course, at the discretion of the Agent
- Pay relevant training fees and/or membership fees
- Complete the minimum required annual volunteer service and education hours.

Upon successful completion of the training requirements, the member will be considered an Intern until all volunteer hours have also been completed. Reinstatement will include the transfer of service years earned prior to the absence after all of the above is met. Effective November 1, 2022, time spent in Inactive Status will not count towards Life Member status. Effective November 1, 2022, time spent in LOA will also not count towards 5 and 10-year pin awards. A new SEMG 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 who wishes to transfer from another Master Gardening organization and who wants to continue in the SEMG 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, stating the applicant was a “member in good standing” with that program
- Attend select or all training classes depending on how different the climate and conditions in New Mexico are from the previous place of residence and length of time since the last training. The Agent shall make the final determination regarding education requirements for transferees. Relevant class training fees may apply.
- Upon receipt of the member in good standing letter and successful completion of any required education, the Chair of the Advisory Council will recommend to the Agent that the MG be transferred in the SEMG Program.
- The MG will receive a SEMG 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 SEMG 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.