

A Guide to

The Basic Training Program

of the

Master Gardeners Association

of BC

Standards and Requirements

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(Appendices yet to be completed and attached.)

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Glossary of Terms

Community Outreach

- Public education activities done by Master Gardeners on gardening, including, but not limited to advice clinics, writing articles for newsletters and newspapers, speaking engagements, research for speaking and writing, children's programs, plant information line

Course

- The Basic Training Course or classroom portion of the program

Course Facilitator/ Basic Program Coordinator/ Education Coordinator

- the person managing the Basic Training Program

Master Planner/Clinic Planner/Overall Clinic Coordinator

- A member of the local association Executive who oversees the development of clinics and activities, the sign-up process, develops the Clinics Master List and receives the summary of volunteer hours at the end of the year

Program

- includes all aspects of the Basic Training Program including orientation, screening, classroom component and volunteer hours

Program Management Committee

- The committee comprised of members of the local association and the delivering institution who oversee delivery of all aspects of the program

The Basic Training Program of the Master Gardeners Association of BC: Standards and Requirements

A. What is the Basic Training Program?

The Basic Training Program consists of at least 78 hours of classroom instruction that addresses a wide range of gardening topics. Course materials include:

- Sustainable Gardening, the Oregon-Washington Master Gardener Handbook
- The BC Supplement, modified for local gardening conditions
- The Home and Garden Pest Management Guide for BC or
- Natural Insect, Weed and Disease Control (2006) by Linda A. Gilkeson

Lecturers are experts in their fields, with a solid understanding of local and regional soils, plant materials and growing conditions.

As part of the classroom instruction, students are required to complete weekly assignments. All assignments must be completed before students write the final exam. A passing mark of at least 80% is required before students commence their volunteer hours.

Following completion of the classroom portion of the program and a passing mark on the final exam, students are required to complete 70 volunteer hours over the next two years prior to becoming a qualified Master Gardener.

B. Guiding Principles and Practices

The Master Gardener Basic Training Program exists to train quality volunteers for the provision of advice to the public on environmentally responsible gardening practices.

This can only be achieved through

- adherence to high standards for orientation, screening, education and volunteer activities
- a commitment to external and internal evaluation of the program, instructors and visiting lecturers
- a classroom component based on the approved course material
- attendance by potential students at an orientation session
- a screening process to ensure potential students have the necessary pre-requisites of attitude, experience, commitment and basic gardening knowledge
- incorporation of a Mentorship Program
- admission to the program of only those students who are qualified and intend to become Master Gardeners
- the guidance of a program management committee

In addition to the items above, if the course is provided by a community college, university or botanical garden, there should be a Service Agreement that includes:

- a commitment to a collaborative partnership between the Association and the institution delivering the course,
- the program to be overseen by a Program Management Committee with the local association and course provider sitting as equal partners
- restrictions on the use of the term “Master Gardener”

C. Pre-requisites for Being Accepted into the Program

- Basic gardening knowledge
- Experience in gardening
- An understanding of and commitment to the volunteer aspect of the Master Gardeners movement
- Attendance at the Orientation/Screening session

D. Orientation and Screening of Potential Students

The Goals for Orientation and Screening

Attendance at the orientation session is mandatory for all potential students to ensure that they understand the purpose of the program and the commitment that they are being asked to make, and to determine their suitability to enrol in the program. It is anticipated that unsuitable candidates will decide for themselves to withdraw after hearing the information provided.

Orientation

Orientation to the Basic Training Program consists of a number of elements:

- Information from the local MG association about what it means to be a Master Gardener, emphasizing the volunteer nature of the organization, the need to have gardening knowledge and experience prior to entering into the program, the time to meet the volunteer requirements and the ability to approach the public in a confident and respectful manner
- Administrative information about the course schedule, homework, costs, attendance requirements, etc.

Screening Process

- Completion of an information sheet that summarizes each student’s personal information, volunteer history, membership in garden clubs, garden journals and books read, etc.
- A quiz consisting of at least 25 multiple choice questions to determine basic gardening knowledge
- An informal interview in a small group with a qualified Master Gardener to hear from the potential students about their knowledge and experience, and ensure a clear understanding of the volunteer commitment required

Determination of Suitability to Enrol in the Program

- All elements of the orientation and screening session are taken into consideration in determining which of the potential students should be permitted to register in the program.
- No registrations are taken until this determination is made.
- All three components are taken into consideration – the mark on the quiz, stated experience and knowledge, and the understanding and commitment to the volunteer requirements of Master Gardeners.
- Unsuitable candidates may be referred to other general gardening courses.

E. The Basic Training Program

Classroom Instruction

- At least 78 hours of instruction based on the approved course materials
- Instruction is provided by qualified experts in various fields who are guided by the course assignments and the sections of the manual that pertain to their topic

Attendance

- Students may miss only one session (6 hours out of the 78 total hours of the BTP). In the event that a student is absent for more than one class, strong consideration should be given to requiring the student to audit missed classes when the BTP is next offered.

Homework

- Weekly homework assignments based on approved course material – including homework for classes missed - must be completed prior to writing the final exam and graduating from the course.

Mentorship Program

- Qualified MGs who are members of the local Association provide mentoring during the 12-week course.
- Mentors may provide additional homework which is due the following week and based entirely on Sustainable Gardening to ensure that the students are reading the manual.

Plant Identification Component (optional but desirable)

- Prior to becoming qualified as a Master Gardener, each student must complete information sheets on each of 50 plants. This may be done over the two years as an MG in Training.

Final Exam

- The passing mark for the multiple choice final examination for the course should be at least 80%.

F. The Next Step: Master Gardeners in Training

MGs in Training must complete the following requirements prior to becoming qualified as a Master Gardener:

- 65 volunteer Community Outreach hours over two years
- 5 Continuing Education hours in the second year
- Documentation of all questions, answers and references used, reviewed by the Clinic Coordinator, and returned with the Record of a Master Gardener Event.
- Documentation and submission of the Record of Volunteer Hours by October 31 in each year.
- Completion of the Plant Identification Project if required by the local Chapter.

Specifically, in the First Year, students must complete between 20 and 50 volunteer Community Outreach hours as determined by the local chapter. The balance of the 65 hours must be completed in the second year prior to becoming qualified as a Master Gardener.

G. On-going Membership in the Local MG Association

On becoming a qualified Master Gardener, the following requirements must be met every year for all MGs:

- 15 volunteer Community Outreach hours at an approved activity
- 5 Continuing Education hours related to gardening
- Documentation and submission of questions dealt with at advice clinics
- Documentation and submission of all community outreach and administration hours on the Record of Volunteer Hours by October 31; as determined by the local chapter, attach copies of garden articles written, speaking notes, etc. for hours claimed