

Five years ago to the date, I began my article with the childhood joke, *If Pete and Repeat were sitting on a fence, and Pete fell off, who would be left?* Of course, the answer to that foolish question is Repeat. As a child, I asked that joke of my friends, and each time they responded, “Repeat.” I’d then repeat the question, and they’d repeat the answer. Such ludicrous rhetoric continued until my friends stopped answering and walked away in defeat. Although nonsensical as that joke may be, life has taught me that many things, and especially good things, warrant repeating. Today, I repeat a topic close to my heart.

Eighteen years ago I became a certified Nebraska Master Gardener. It is time again for Master Gardener Training. Before we discuss the **when** and the **where** of this wonderful program, let’s first examine the **what**.

The first Master Gardener program began forty-one years ago at Washington State University. Extension educators in the horticulture department recruited enthusiastic local gardeners to help with their horticulture programs. First, they provided these local enthusiasts with a wide range of research-based, horticultural training and knowledge for little or no expense; and, in return, they asked these individuals to volunteer, helping with extension projects and programs. The idea worked so well that today the Master Gardener Program thrives in every state.



The Nebraska Master Gardener program has been part of UNL Extension since 1976. Master Gardener trainees are educated by UNL Extension faculty and staff. In return, participants contribute time as volunteers,

working through their local extension office, to provide horticulture-related information to their communities. More specifically, they provide education about sustainable horticultural practices. Participants are required to complete 40 hours of training and 40 hours of volunteer service during the

initial year of their involvement in the program. Returning Master Gardeners are required to pick up 10 hours of training and volunteer 10 hours.

For those interested in becoming a certified Nebraska Master Gardener, training for South Central Nebraska residents begins on March 11, 2013, in Grand Island, NE. The two week program is presented on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Participants will be exposed to a wide range of horticulture subjects including turf care, tree and shrub care, fruits, flowers, vegetables, disease and insect control, and pesticide and chemical use.

Participating in this wonderful program requires two commitments:

- Fulfill the training requirements.
- Perform the volunteer service.

If you have a passion for gardening and enjoy sharing your gardening knowledge with others, you, too, can earn the official title of Nebraska Master Gardener. I urge you to take a serious look at the program.

For additional information, log onto the web site <http://hall.unl.edu/> . This site includes the training schedule, an application form and links to National Master Gardener web sites. You could also contact Hall County Extension Educator, Elizabeth Killinger at 308-385-5088 or [ekillinger2@unl.edu](mailto:ekillinger2@unl.edu) .

In closing, since you so graciously indulged me earlier, allow me to share one more childhood joke. Can you use the words *defense*, *defeat*, *detail* and *deduct* all in the same sentence? .....Give up? The answer is, “*De-feet of de-duck went over de-fence before de-tail.*”

Relax, that’s one I won’t repeat. I think we can agree— Master Gardener, perhaps — Master Comedian, no way.