



Do you enjoy plants and gardening? Are you looking to learn more and hone your skills but don't know where to go? The Extension Master Gardener program will educate you on many aspects of horticulture, allow you to test your knowledge and skills, all while serving your local community.

The Nebraska Extension Master Gardener program is a horticulture related volunteer training program based in many counties throughout the state. It has been part of Nebraska Extension since 1976. Master Gardener volunteers are trained by Nebraska Extension faculty and staff. In return, they contribute time as volunteers working with their local Extension offices and communities to provide horticulture-related information and volunteer service. 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. Master Gardener volunteers retain their certification through annual training and volunteering.

Educational topics cover a wide range of horticultural issues. Topics that have been covered in previous training sessions include: native plants for water conservation, an in-depth look at fertilizers, turfgrass and related insects, beneficial pollinating insects and vegetable garden pests, tree and shrub pruning, pesticide safety and non-chemical pest control techniques, soils, and small fruits and tree fruit basics. The content of the topics is geared towards the home gardener, but those employed in the green industry are also welcome. No prior horticulture knowledge or training required.

Volunteer hours can be completed through various activities. These activities could include: planting and maintaining demonstration gardens, collecting data on research projects, helping with county and state fair activities, speaking to community groups, leading garden tours, collecting plant samples, answering phone questions, teaching youth programs, or whatever sparks your interest and utilizes your talents.

The Central Nebraska Master Gardener Program is active in many communities across the region. In 2021 there were Extension Master Gardener volunteers from 9 different counties that participated in the online training. The 60 active EMG volunteers that contacted 1,025 area clientele. The EMG volunteers logged over 1,257 educational hours and over 1,170 volunteer hours in the local communities.

If you are interested in becoming an Extension Master Gardener contact Elizabeth Exstrom at the Nebraska Extension in Hall County Office, 308-385-5088, prior to January 10th, 2022. In 2022, the Central Nebraska Master Gardener Program will be offering both in-person classes at the Hall County Extension office located in Grand Island and an online class through Google Classroom.

More information, updated schedules, an application, and a brochure can be found at <http://hall.unl.edu>. If you have questions about the program, contact Elizabeth Exstrom at eexstrom2@unl.edu or 308-385-5088.

Elizabeth Exstrom is the Horticulture Extension Educator with Nebraska Extension in Hall County. For more information contact Elizabeth at elizabeth.exstrom@unl.edu, her blog at <http://huskerhort.com/>, or HuskerHort on Facebook and Twitter.