

Are you someone who has a passion for gardening? Do you wish to expand your horticultural knowledge and skill? Do you have a desire and willingness to share this talent with others? Answering yes to any of these questions might be reason enough to become a Nebraska Master Gardener volunteer.

UNL Extension faculty and staff train Nebraska Master Gardener volunteers. In turn, Nebraska Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers working with their local Extension office to provide horticulture-related information to their communities.

To achieve the official title of Nebraska Master Gardener, first time participants are required to complete 40 hours of training and 40 hours of volunteer service during the first year of their involvement in the program. To retain the Master Gardener title, volunteers annually attend 10 hours of continuing education classes and voluntarily give back to their communities 20 hours of time.

This year, Central Nebraska Master Gardener training will be offering training in two different formats. The first format is a series of seven evening sessions via the internet. The first session begins Tuesday, February 07, 2017, from 6:00 to 9:00 p.m. at the Buffalo County Extension Building, Room B, Kearney, Nebraska. The following six Tuesday evenings, all starting at the same time and same place will complete the internet sessions. The second format of training is during the days of March 13, 15, 17, 20, 22, and 24 from 9:00-12:00 a.m. and from 1:00-4:00 p.m. at the Hall County Extension Office in Grand Island, NE.

For **first time** Master Gardeners, there is a fee of \$170 to attend these sessions. With that fee, the Master Gardener interns will receive a large resource notebook, an integrated turfgrass management book, a short-sleeved Nebraska Master Gardener T-shirt and a Master Gardener nametag.

If interested in becoming a Nebraska Master Gardener, I urge you to contact Extension Educator, Elizabeth Killinger, at the Grand Island office, (308-385-5088) by **January 30, 2017**. For more information, updated schedules, and a brochure, log onto Hall County's Extension website at, <http://hall.unl.edu>.

Having a passion for gardening and a willingness to share one's horticulture knowledge and talent with others is a quality of all Master Gardeners. One does not

need to have prior knowledge about horticulture. The only requirement is a desire to learn and to share one's love of gardening with others. Achieving the official title, Nebraska Master Gardener, is not difficult; however, one needs to make a commitment— both to the instructional training and to becoming a volunteer.

Volunteers hours can be achieved through various activities such as helping with county and state fair activities, speaking to community groups, leading garden tours, planting and maintaining demonstration gardens, collecting plant samples, answering phone questions, teaching youth programs, or whatever can be done to help others with their gardening concerns.

Ask yourself the following questions.

- 1) Will I be available to attend the training programs?
- 2) Will I be available to assist with volunteer service?

Answering yes to both questions is a great start to becoming an official Nebraska Master Gardener for 2017.

Don't forget the first satellite *Breeze Training* session begins Tuesday, February 07, 2017, from 6:30 to 9:00 p.m. at the Buffalo County Extension Building, Room B, Kearney, Nebraska. There is still space available. I encourage pre-registration by contacting me directly at tgriess2@unl.edu or calling me at 308-236-1235 at the Buffalo County Extension office on Mondays, Wednesdays, or Fridays between the hours of 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.