The mission of the Extension Master Gardener (EMG) Program is to improve the lives of Alabamians through research-based horticulture education delivered by a dedicated, trained, and involved Extension volunteer team. This is a volunteer program for adults (age 19 and older).

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) indicates the significance of the Alabama Cooperative Extension System's (ACES) relationship with all EMG volunteers. In it, we outline our commitment to the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Program, and our expectations for all participants. By signing this MOU, you indicate your commitment to this program and its participants.

We greatly appreciate your service.

As an Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer, I understand my responsibilities and agree:

- To promote through my volunteer activities the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Program's mission and its full community – the national land grant system, Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES), its personnel and volunteers, and Master Gardener associations.
- To serve as an active Extension Master Gardener volunteer member of the Extension Home Grounds team, my local County Extension Office, and Master Gardener associations (where possible).
- To cooperate with and support all Extension employees and fellow EMG volunteers and consistently exhibit a professional and respectful manner to all staff, volunteers, and the public.
- To provide programs and research-based information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. (*nondiscrimination policy weblink*)
- To use research-based, Extension or analogous, approved information in all my EMG Volunteer activities.
- To refer all questions involving commercial horticulture/agriculture to an Extension agent or specialist.
- To make all noncommercial client recommendations for pesticides and fertilizers (organic- or synthetic-sourced) consistent with the product label. Alabama Extension has published information about these.
- To decline any personal payment for speaking or any other volunteer service activity as an EMG volunteer. At the discretion of the hosting organization, out-of-pocket expenses may be reimbursed when acting as an invited speaker.
- To adhere to the conflict-of-interest policy. EMGs will only use the title of EMG Volunteer as it is intended.
    - Extension Master Gardener volunteers are individuals who have received Extension training and certification and are actively volunteering with the EMG volunteer Program.
    - EMG volunteers are prohibited from using this title for personal, organizational, monetary, or professional gain, and from singly endorsing any product or place of business.
- (Intern volunteers) To the requirements for Extension Master Gardener Volunteer certification.
    - Interns achieve certification by passing a background check, signing this MOU, completing all Intern training class requirements, and reporting a minimum of 50 assigned volunteer hours. (p. 3)
    - All Intern hours are defined by Extension Home Grounds, with consideration to input from a local Master Gardener Association (where possible).

  - Intern certification requirements should be completed within 12 months of starting the Intern training course.
  - Requests for delayed certification must be approved within 12 months of starting the Intern course, by the supervising Extension Home Grounds agent and when present, the local EMG who assists in training. Delayed certification is not accepted beyond 24 months after the first-class day.

- (Certified volunteers) To the annual expectations for Certified Extension Master Gardener volunteers.
  - Review their signed EMG Memorandum of Understanding.
  - Participate in and report a minimum of 25 volunteer hours and 10 continuing education hours.
  - Support the EMG Program's mission by volunteering in a variety of activities (see page 3).
  - EMG volunteers who do not fulfill these expectations will be designated with the status of "Alum" in the Directory. Volunteers can return to "Certified Active" status after signing this MOU and participating in and reporting 25 volunteer hours and 10 CEU hours in a calendar year. Alums must pay local and/or AMGA dues.
  - Membership dues are due no later than December 31 each year in order to maintain membership in a local EMG association and/or the state, Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA).

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System agrees to:

- Uphold this Memorandum of Understanding. All perceived concerns on the part of an Extension employee or EMG volunteer will be fully reviewed by a representative from Extension Home Grounds and the local Extension Master Gardener association. When a county association is not available, then a representative from AMGA will serve as a reviewer.
- Provide programs and research-based information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider (weblink).
- Support the Alabama EMG Program, its personnel, volunteers, county associations, and projects.
- Provide training, supervision, and direction to create a safe volunteer experience and maintain high program standards.
- Uphold and cultivate respect and trust among Extension employees and volunteers.

Grounds for immediate withdrawal: The following behaviors will immediately withdraw authorization to represent The Alabama Cooperative Extension System or use the title Extension Master Gardener Volunteer.

- Drinking intoxicants or using illegal drugs while performing employee or volunteer duties.
- Performing employee or volunteer duties while intoxicated or under the influence of illegal drugs.
- Engaging in highly offensive, obscene, or otherwise inappropriate conduct while working or volunteering.
- Stealing or vandalizing Extension or an association's property, or property belonging to its members.
- Possessing firearms while engaged in work or volunteer duties, except for a firearm properly maintained in a personal vehicle in a manner consistent with Alabama law.

[signature lines – Agent and Intern EMG] …. [signature lines – Kerry, Emily, Director]

My signature signifies that I have read this Memorandum of Understanding and further agree to abide by its conditions until it is revoked or revised (11/08/2023).

…….

Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Responsibilities –

All Alabama Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers represent the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. They also represent one or more Extension Master Gardener associations, when one is available and membership dues are current. Membership in an EMG association is not mandatory, but when available is recommended due to greater access to social and educational activities.

Extension Master Gardeners and Agents will use the following four guidelines for validating volunteer work.

- Is it related to gardening, the environment, or an Extension program?
- Will it benefit the community?
- Is it associated with a noncommercial group or project?
- Are you helping people learn?

All volunteer activities should be approved by the local, supervising Extension agent or specialist. The activities below represent our responsibilities to the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Program's mission.

- Collaborate with Extension Home Grounds to identify and implement projects that address local community needs.
- Assist and collaborate with a County Extension Office. (e.g., any Extension program, answering phones, assisting a walk-in client, preparing brochures and packets, and other County Office needs)
- Collaborate with Extension Home Grounds in designated projects. (e.g., GMGM gardens, school gardens or other community partners, ASY or GMGM workshops, grant-funded projects, community events, community gardens, connect Extension with EMG association projects)
- Collaborate with Alabama Extension in preparing and delivering educational resources. (e.g., Lunch & Learn, media materials, publications, grab & go kits, a speaker's bureau, presentations for civic clubs, connect across social media, teach EMG Intern classes, presentations to other EMGs)
- Collaborate with or assist non-Home Grounds Extension projects and programs. (e.g., 4-H *Chick Chain, Classroom in the Forest, Your Money-Your Life, Food Preservation Camp*, a Research Center event or project, judging 4-H competitions, Extension event registration)
- Provide educational assistance to a community or a community group. This includes mentoring.
- Use civic events to connect the public with Alabama Extension, the EMG program, and EMG association. (e.g., home & garden show, county fair, farmers market, info. booth, plant/soil test clinic)
- Create newsletters or other educational media for noncommercial gardeners. All recommendations must be from research-based information generated by an Extension, or other analogous entity.
- Participate in applied research. (e.g., work on research projects, data collection, or reports; develop educational materials related to research; collaborate with an Extension agent/specialist to seek grant funding)
- Support demonstration and teaching gardens. (e.g., a public teaching garden at an Alabama Agricultural Experiment Station, botanical garden, park, school, or library; for therapeutic horticulture)
- Visit with your Extension Office and agents/specialists. Offer your skills, knowledge, and support wherever you can volunteer. Help everyone make connections!

Important Note: EMGs are cautioned if applying chemicals (organic- and synthetic-sourced). Using a pesticide (herbicide, bactericide, fungicide, etc.) in a manner inconsistent with the labeled directions is a violation of federal law: Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA). EMGs conducting demonstrations using home or garden chemicals do so only under the required applicator permit from the Alabama Department of Agriculture and Industries.