Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Memorandum of Understanding

The mission of the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer 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 Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteers. In it, we outline our commitment to the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer 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 the following:

- Promote through my volunteer activities the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program's mission and its full community—the national land grant system, ACES program personnel and volunteers, and Master Gardener associations (MGA).
- Serve as an active volunteer member of the Extension Home Grounds team, the county Extension office, and local and state MGAs (where possible).
- Cooperate with and support Extension employees and EMG volunteers and consistently exhibit a professional and respectful manner to all staff, volunteers, and the public.
- Provide programs and information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. See the nondiscrimination statements on the Alabama Extension website at https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/nondiscrimination/nondiscrimination/.
- Use research-based, Extension or analogous, approved information in all my EMG volunteer activities.
- Refer all questions involving commercial horticulture/agriculture to an Extension agent or specialist.
- 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.
- 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.
- Adhere to the conflict-of-interest policy, only using the title of Extension Master Gardener as it is intended.
    - EMG 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.

As an Intern Extension Master Gardener volunteer, I understand the requirements for certification:

- Pass a background check, sign this MOU, complete all Intern training class requirements, and report a minimum of 50 assigned volunteer hours. (page 3)
- Volunteer in projects defined by an Extension Home Grounds agent. Input from a local MGA is considered where possible.
- Complete the certification requirements within 12 months of starting the Intern training course.
- If necessary, request and receive approval for delayed certification within 12 months of starting the Intern course. Ask 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.

As a certified Extension Master Gardener volunteer, I understand the annual expectations to be designated as certified active:

- ☐ Initially sign and thereafter review my signed copy of this Memorandum of Understanding.
- ☐ Participate in and report a minimum of 25 volunteer hours and 10 continuing education units (CEU). One hour = one unit.
- ☐ Support the EMG Volunteer Program's mission by volunteering in a variety of activities (page 3).
- ☐ When these expectations are not met, EMGs will be designated with the status "Alum" in the Extension Service Report 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 membership dues in the local MGA and Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA). These are due no later than December 31 each year.

The Alabama Cooperative Extension System agrees to the following:

- Uphold this Memorandum of Understanding. All perceived concerns will be fully reviewed by a representative from Extension Home Grounds and the local MGA. When any party is not available or has a conflict of interest in the concern, a representative from AMGA will serve as a reviewer.
- Provide programs and information to everyone! The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer, and provider. See the nondiscrimination statements on the Alabama Extension website at https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/nondiscrimination/nondiscrimination/.
- Support the Alabama EMG Volunteer Program, its personnel, volunteers, projects, and local MGAs.
- Provide training, supervision, and direction to create a safe volunteer experience and maintain high program standards.
- Uphold and cultivate respect and trust among employees and volunteers or Master Gardener.

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 or Master Gardener.

- Drinking intoxicants or using drugs particularly when it may lead to adverse effects or endangerment to others.
- Engaging in harassing, obscene, or otherwise disruptive conduct while working or volunteering.
- Stealing or vandalizing property belonging to Extension or any members of this program's community.
- Conviction of a felony violation could lead to withdrawal. Specific action will be determined by the nature of the offense and the employee's or volunteer's job performance.

Signature of Intern/Certified EMG Volunteer*

Date

Signature of Home Grounds Extension Agent*

Date

Kerry P. Smith

Signature of Kerry Smith, State Coordinator, EMG

J. Mike Phillips

Signature of Mike Phillips, Director, Alabama Extension

Emily Burchfield

Signature of Emily Burchfield, Outreach Programs

Signature of Alabama Master Gardeners Association President

*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.

Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Responsibilities

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

Extension Master Gardener volunteers 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 Volunteer 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 and connect them with local MGA projects (e.g., Grow More Give More [GMGM] gardens, school gardens or other community partners, Alabama Smart Yards [ASY] or GMGM workshops, grant-funded projects, community events, community gardens).
- Collaborate with ACES 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 ACES, the EMG Volunteer Program, and local MGAs (e.g., home and garden show, county fair, farmers market, information booth, plant/soil test clinic).
- Create newsletters or other educational media for noncommercial gardeners. All recommendations must be from research-based information generated by Extension or other analogous entity.
- Participate in applied research (e.g., work on research projects, data collection, or reports; develop related educational materials; collaborate with an Extension agent or specialist to seek grant funding).
- Support demonstration and teaching gardens (e.g., a public teaching garden at a research center, botanical garden, park, school, or library; 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.



For more information, contact your county Extension office. Visit www.aces.edu/directory.

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