



FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

Fall 2021 Class Application Packet



This year we will return to in-person classes, while being prepared to adjust for anything COVID related as needed. While we will be together in a classroom environment, instructors will be teaching you remotely, coming into our classroom online as part of the exceptional state-coordinated Master Gardener training program. You'll be learning "alongside" other counties' future Master Gardeners receiving instruction from Texas A&M AgriLife Extension's Program Area Specialists.

Instructions – Complete the following documents:

- "Master Gardener Application"
- "Volunteer Application Form" (aka Youth Protection Standards Background Check)
- "Video, Film, and Photographic Image Release Form"

All information requested must be provided for your application to be favorably considered.

Return these documents with your payment by August 16, 2021:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Attention: Margo "Mac" McDowell
Program Coordinator – Fort Bend County Master Gardeners
& Coastal Prairie Chapter, Texas Master Naturalists
1402 Band Road – Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471



1402 Band Road □ Suite 100
Rosenberg, Texas 77471
Phone: (281)342-3034

July 2021

Dear Master Gardener Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the award-winning Fort Bend County Master Gardener program. We are a 501(c)(3), Tax Exempt Texas Corporation with 195 members.

Please read this letter carefully and complete and sign the enclosed Master Gardener Application, Photo Release, and the Volunteer Application form, which is for your background check. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Youth Protection Standards (YPS) – Qualifications of Volunteers Program was implemented to provide a safe and positive environment for youth and adult volunteers. The YPS program involves national criminal background checks of all adult volunteers 18 years of age or older who are involved in teacher roles, which includes Master Gardeners. Please be sure to read the instructions on the second page of the Volunteer Application form.

Please return all applications forms and payment on before Monday, August 16, 2021, by USPS or you are welcome to drop it off at our offices. Completed applications accompanied by payment are chosen on a first come, first-served basis. We will review the applications and notify you by Tuesday, August 17, 2021, regarding your status in the program. Space in class is limited, and preference is given to Fort Bend County residents, however, there are exceptions. If in doubt, please call 281-633-7033.

We will also request that all accepted applicants attend an in-person orientation on Thursday, August 19, from 10:00 am – noon.

The following information will help you better understand the functions and requirements of the Texas Master Gardener program. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to extend the ability of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to provide education programs to the public in areas of horticulture and gardening through the use of certified volunteer Master Gardeners.

Becoming a Master Gardener requires training in horticulture. Classes will be held on 10 consecutive Thursday mornings at the Fort Bend County Extension facilities on Band Road in Rosenberg beginning on September 2, 2021, and concluding before Thanksgiving. We will give you more guidance before September. The majority of the classes will last four hours from 9am to 1pm. You are expected to attend all classes. Cost of the training is \$250 (check or cash only). You will receive the *Texas Master Gardener Handbook*, in full color. Classes are taught remotely by Professors and Extension Specialists from all over the State of Texas.

After Thanksgiving there will be three additional classes focusing on the Fort Bend County Master Gardener Program: our projects, gardens. You will receive in-person instruction and have opportunities to get to know our leadership team. When those classes are concluded, there will be a written test and more instruction on next steps in your Master Gardener journey. Just know that this is not the end of your learning!

In addition to the class days, and with the hope of COVID remaining at bay, there is a requirement that you complete 50 hours of approved volunteer service. All class members will have gardening opportunities, learn about the greenhouse, propagation, the Master Gardener hotline for public queries, outreach, Junior Master Gardener program, plant sales, to name a few. You'll have 10 months from the first day of class to complete the volunteer hour requirements.

After completion of all the class and volunteer requirements, graduation happens, and you become a Certified Master Gardener. However, you don't always remain a Certified Master Gardener unless you maintain your Certification through annual volunteer hours of 24, and annual continuing education of 12 hours. We help you through our own educational programming and volunteer opportunities and approving other outside educational events.

So, what kind of people are we looking for? People with a strong desire to learn and to share their knowledge with the public in a variety of ways, including speaker's bureau, writing articles, maintaining demonstration gardens and much more.

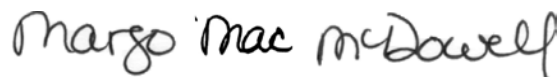
We believe we will have a class like no other with the online Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Specialists and having the delightful experience of being all together as a class. We thank you very much for your interest in this exciting volunteer program to expand research-based gardening knowledge and proficiency for the Fort Bend community.

If you have further questions, please give Mac a call at 281-633-7033, and you are welcome to bring your questions to Orientation on August 19. There is no registration for Orientation needed, since we require all acceptance applicants to please attend.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Boone Holladay".

James "Boone" Holladay
County Extension Agent – Horticulture

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Margo Mac McDowell".

Margo "Mac" McDowell
Program Coordinator – Fort Bend County Master Gardeners



Fort Bend County
MASTER GARDENER APPLICATION

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, 1402 Band Road, Suite 100, Rosenberg, TX 77471

Please complete all Sections of this Application thoroughly!

Fall 2021 Class begins Thursday, September 2, 2021 at 9am.

Section I - Who are you & how do we contact you?

Please print:

DATE: _____ NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY/STATE/ZIP: _____

PHONE (DAY:) _____ (NIGHT:) _____

CELL PHONE: _____

EMAIL: (IMPORTANT) _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT NAME & NUMBER: _____ No. _____

Section I - Getting Acquainted!

Please initial your agreement to the following:

_____ I understand that I am expected to attend Orientation Part I as a prerequisite for taking the Master Gardener Class. Orientation Part I is scheduled for **August 19, 2021**, from 10:00 am to Noon. The purpose of Orientation Part I is to acquaint you with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the role of Texas Master Gardener volunteers in support of Extension.

Section II - Your Experience

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS. Deadline for submitting completed application: August 16, 2021

1. Years of gardening experience:

2. Type of gardening experience and related training:

3. Are you presently employed, if so, when can you volunteer:

4. Times available for volunteering:

Monday – Friday: Morning Afternoon Evening

Saturday: Morning Afternoon Evening

5. Professional/Personal experience: If retired, what was your former profession:

6. Do you have formal training in Horticulture or Agriculture: Yes No
If yes, please explain:

7. **Why** do you want to become a volunteer in Extension’s Master Gardener program? Useful training, increase skills/knowledge, give back to the community, personal accomplishment, creative use of time, etc.

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

8. Number of years living in Fort Bend County:

9. Where did you garden before living here:

10. How did you learn about the Master Gardener Program:

11. List group affiliations (garden clubs, community gardens, plant societies, etc.):

11. List other volunteer organizations you are or have been involved in:

12. Will your current schedule allow you adequate time to complete the class and volunteer service:

13. Why do you want to become a Master Gardener and what does being a volunteer in your community mean to you: (You may use an additional sheet if necessary)



To become a Master Gardener is important to me because:

0-Not Important

5-Most Important

1.	I will be able to increase my knowledge of gardening.	0 1 2 3 4 5
2.	I will be able to gain new skills as a gardener.	0 1 2 3 4 5
3.	I will have the opportunity to receive useful training.	0 1 2 3 4 5
4.	I will be able to provide give back to my community.	0 1 2 3 4 5
5.	I will have the opportunity to share my knowledge with other gardeners.	0 1 2 3 4 5
6.	I will gain a great deal of personal satisfaction.	0 1 2 3 4 5
7.	I will be able to creatively use my free time.	0 1 2 3 4 5
8.	I will be certified by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.	0 1 2 3 4 5
9.	I will receive free instruction and materials.	0 1 2 3 4 5
10.	I will gain gardening experience that can help me get a job.	0 1 2 3 4 5
11.	I will be recognized by people in my community.	0 1 2 3 4 5

Application:

The Fort Bend County Master Gardener training program duration is ten (10) months. Upon completion of all requirements within 10 months, participants can be certified as Texas Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners then re-certify annually through volunteer service and continuing education.

1. I desire to be a Master Gardener volunteer in Fort Bend County. I understand that Master Gardeners are trained volunteers - community educators, who share their horticultural knowledge and gardening experience with their fellow citizens. If accepted in the Master Gardener training program, to complete certification:

- I will volunteer a minimum of 50 hours in Extension initiated education programs in 2021/2022.
- I will complete the classroom training course, including a final exam.
- I understand to re-certify annually, a minimum of 24 volunteer hours and 12 hours of continuing education is required in Extension sanctioned programs.
- I agree to a background check - Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service volunteer requirement

2. **Why** do you want to become a volunteer in Extension's Master Gardener program? Useful training, increase skills/knowledge, give back to the community, personal accomplishment, creative use of time, etc. What is your gardening story? (can use a second page here or use a second sheet)

Section III - Statements of Agreement

Please **read, sign / initial and date** where indicated:

- I understand that the Master Gardener program is a program sponsored by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension- Fort Bend County office and The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc.
- I understand that as an Intern/Associate in class, I represent – Fort Bend County, Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Fort Bend County, The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc., and The Texas A&M System and will adhere to their policies and guidelines.

Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Please **read, sign/ initial and date** where indicated:

_____ Participants are required to complete 50 hours of class training, and 50 hours of volunteer service prior to graduation, which is approximately 10 months after the first class date. Thereafter, in order to maintain certification, Certified Master Gardeners in Fort Bend County must complete 12 hours of continuing education (CE) and 24 hours of volunteer service every year.

Liability Release:

_____ I understand that as a participant in the Texas Master Gardener – Fort Bend County volunteer program (“program”) I hereby **release, discharge, and agree to hold harmless** the following: the program and its sponsoring state agencies, their agents, employees, officers and successors from and against the program and sponsoring state agencies, their successors, employees, or officers for all personal injuries (including death), known and unknown or damage to property caused by or arising out of activities performed under the Texas Master Gardener Program.

Volunteer Standards and Commitment:

_____ I wish to become a Master Gardener in Fort Bend County. I want to be accepted in the Master Gardener training program offered by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. ***I understand that, in exchange for the Master Gardener class training made possible through Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, I will complete all of the required classes and complete the required minimum of 50 hours of my time to The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Program one (1) week prior to my graduation.*** I understand that I will become a Certified Texas Master Gardener when I have completed all of the requirements for Master Gardener classes and the 50 hours of volunteer service prior to the graduation date. I also understand that in order to maintain my Certification, I must complete 12 hours of Continuing Education and 24 hours of volunteer service every year.

Youth Protection Standards Background Check:

_____ In order to protect everyone, all Applicants must agree to submit to a background check as a condition of membership in The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc., the cost of which is included in the fee for the Fall 2021 Master Gardener Class. The Volunteer Application Form/Youth Protection Standards Background Check is attached, and must be completed and forwarded with the completed Master Gardener Application and your check. All completed forms are confidential.

Photograph & Contact Information: (name, address, phone/cell, email)

I hereby grant to The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc., its sponsors, advisors and volunteers, the right to utilize my photograph and my contact information in connection with the Class Roster and Volunteer Management System (VMS) Roster. I authorize The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc., to copyright, use and publish the same in print and/or electronically for the intended purpose of sharing with The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc. membership. The Class Roster and VMS Roster are not for political or commercial use, but for the exclusive and sole use of the organization and its members.

I understand that through good-faith efforts, my information will be used as intended.

_____ **I hereby agree** to have my photograph and contact information in stated Rosters.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Return this completed application with your \$250.00 (\$420.00 per couple who share the Manual) payment before August 16, 2021.

Please make check payable to *The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners (FBMG)*, and send your application, Photo Release and Volunteer Application Form (background check) and payment to:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service
Attention: Margo "Mac" McDowell
Program Coordinator – Fort Bend County Master Gardeners &
Coastal Prairie Chapter, Texas Master Naturalist
1402 Band Road - Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471
Phone - 281-633-7033

Note: All applications are subject to review by the County Extension Agent and/or Program Coordinator.

ENROLLMENT IS LIMITED

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension provides equal opportunities in its programs and employment to all persons, regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, disability, age, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Persons with disabilities who require auxiliary aids or services are required to contact Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at 281.342.3034 five working days prior to the event. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating.

Volunteer Application Form

And consent for criminal background history check authorization/waiver

To be completed by Extension program volunteers (EFNEP, BLT, etc.) and Master Volunteers only.
4-H volunteers must register online via 4-H CONNECT or by completing the 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (4-H 2-1.056)

Please print:

_____	_____ <u>Fort Bend County</u> _____
1. APPLICANT'S FULL, LEGAL NAME	2. COUNTY
_____	_____
3. ADDRESS	4. CITY ZIP
_____ - _____ - <u>XXXX</u>	_____
5. FIRST 5 DIGITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER	6. DATE OF BIRTH
_____	_____
7. DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER (optional)	8. GENDER (circle one) Male / Female
_____	_____ <u>Texas Master Gardeners – Fort Bend County</u> _____
9. Are you of Hispanic ethnicity? Yes / No	10. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AREA
_____	_____
RACE (circle one) White / Black / Asian / American Indian Alaskan Native / Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander	

Previously Screened

11. I verify that I have been previously screened including a criminal background check and PASSED. Yes No

If yes, by who? _____ When (Year): _____

For what purpose? _____

Did you pass? If not, what restrictions were imposed? _____

If you have been screened and passed a criminal background check through an Extension-approved entity, a letter/proof must be submitted.

Please sign at the bottom of the form.

12. I hereby authorize veriFYI and/or its Service Provider and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service to request and receive any and all background information about or concerning me, including, but not limited to, my Criminal History, Driving Record, Employment History, Military Background, Civil Listings, Educational Background, Professional License from any Individual, Corporation, Partnership, Law Enforcement Agency, and other entities including my Present and Past Employers. I authorize the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service or any of its components to make reference checks relating to my volunteer service. I understand that this information will be used to determine my eligibility as a volunteer/employee with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

The criminal history, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data, as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications and delinquent conduct committed as a juvenile. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history as received by client/agency and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received. I also understand that the criminal history could contain information presumed to be expunged.

I further release and discharge veriFYI and their Service Provider and all of their Subsidiaries, Affiliates, Officers, Employees, Contract Personnel, or Associates, from any and all claims and liability arising out of any request for information or records pursuant to this authorization and/or procurement of an investigative consumer report and understand that it may contain information about my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and mode of living, whichever are applicable.

I understand that I have the right to make written request within a reasonable period of time to veriFYI for additional information concerning the nature and scope of the investigation. I acknowledge that I have voluntarily provided the above information for employment/volunteer purposes, and I have carefully read and understand this authorization.

13. Applicant's Signature _____ 14. Date _____

Volunteer Application Form Instructions

1. Applicant's Printed Name – Complete with first name, middle name and last name.
2. County – Complete with the county name in which you are applying to be a volunteer.
- 3/4. Address – Complete with your current mailing address, city and zip code.
5. Social Security Number – Complete with at least the **first five** digits of the social security number. The social security number is an individual descriptor that enables the system to complete a national criminal search of 47 jurisdictions.
6. Date of Birth – Complete with the month, day and year of birth.
7. Driver's License Number – Complete with current driver's license number and state. Although optional, this helps affirm your identity during a background check.
8. Gender – Complete by circling one of the options.
9. Race – Complete the race and ethnicity section by circling the answers that apply. This field is optional; however, it is very important in confirming accurate identity.
10. Volunteer Program Area – Complete with the program area you are volunteering for (e.g., Better Living for Texans, Expanded Nutrition Program, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Wellness Volunteer). **4-H volunteers should complete the Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (4-H 2-1.056)*
11. **Previously Screened** – Texas A&M Agrilife Extension will accept prior screenings conducted within the past three years from other entities. The approved list of prior screenings either as an employee or volunteer include: school districts, churches, youth groups/associations (Little League, sports associations, etc.), youth agencies/organizations (Big Brother/Big Sister, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, after school/extended care programs), law enforcement (county, state or federal/prison system), Texas Youth Commission, Department of Defense – Child and Youth Services, Department of Defense – Family Programs, concealed handgun license; and/or licensed childcare workers.
** The minimum requirement is a criminal background check conducted through DPS or a National Criminal Search entity.**
*** Other sources may be considered based on documentation provided with screening criteria and specifics.***
***** Documentation is required for screenings from other entities. This could include a letter of acceptance from the employer or volunteer group, or a letter written from the screening entity to the Texas A&M Agrilife Extension stating you have been screened and tested.**
12. Authorization Statement – State agencies screening volunteers are required by legislation to use the Volunteer Center of North Texas. The Volunteer Center contracts with VeriFYI. VeriFYI is a background verification software system that accesses multi-jurisdiction checks utilizing one of the largest private-sector criminal history databases in the nation (180 million records). All information received is held in confidence and not shared at the county level. Criminal record results are shredded when a volunteer's status is determined.
13. Your signature
14. Date signed / completed



Video, Film, and Photographic Image Release Form

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____

I authorize Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc. to record and photograph my image and/or voice, for use by the Fort Bend County Master Gardener program or its assignees, in research, education, and promotional programs. I understand and agree that these audio, visual, digital, film, and/or print images may be edited, duplicated, distributed with or without charge, reproduced, broadcast, and/or reformatted in any form and manner without the payment of fees, in perpetuity.

Signature _____

Date _____