



FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, INC.

Fall 2023 Class Application Packet



This year we will again have in-person classes, while being prepared to adjust for any reason as needed. While we will be together in a classroom environment, most instructors will be teaching you remotely, coming into our classroom online as part of the exceptional state-coordinated Texas 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"
- "Video, Film, and Photographic Image Release Form"
- "Volunteer Agreement"

All information requested must be provided for your application to be favorably considered. We have a limit of 25 applicants that will be accepted.

Return all documents with your payment by 2:00 pm on July 21, 2023 to:

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension
Attention: Brandy Rader
1402 Band Road – Suite 100
Rosenberg, TX 77471



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

June 2023

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 174 members.

Please read this letter carefully and complete and sign the enclosed Master Gardener Application, Video, Film, and Photographic Image Release Form, and the Volunteer Application Form. Once we receive all of your paperwork, you will be sent information from Sterling Volunteer, background check platform. 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 return your completed Master Gardener Application, Video, Film, and Photographic Image Release Form, and the Volunteer Application Form with payment on or before 2:00 pm Friday, July 21, 2023, by either email, USPS or you are welcome to drop it off at our office during business hours.

Payment by check or exact cash will be accepted. Cost of the training is \$250 per individual, or \$420 for two people, if a handbook is shared. You will receive the Texas Master Gardener Handbook, in full color at the orientation. Completed applications accompanied by payment are considered on a first come, first-served basis. We will review the applications and notify you by Monday, August 21, 2023, regarding your status in the program. Space in class is limited, and preference is given to Fort Bend County residents, however, there are exceptions. We will also require that all accepted applicants attend an in-person orientation on Thursday, August 31, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. If in doubt, please call 281-633-7029.

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 Master Gardener volunteers.

Becoming a Master Gardener requires training in horticulture. Classes will be held on 12 consecutive Thursdays at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension - Fort Bend County facilities on Band Road in Rosenberg beginning on September 7, and concluding before Thanksgiving. The majority of the instruction will take place from 9:00 am to 1:00 pm with additional hands-on activities from 1:30 pm to 3:00 pm. You will need to bring a sack lunch to class. You are expected to **attend all classes**. Please arrive by 8:45, and be prepared to stay fifteen (15) minutes after class for Q&A and announcements. Most classes are taught remotely by Professors and Extension Specialists from all over the State of Texas, while others are taught by Master Gardeners. Each week, there will be a reading assignment with tests and continuing instruction on next steps in your Master Gardener journey.

In addition to the training class days, there is also a requirement that you complete 50 hours of **approved** volunteer service. All class members will have demonstration gardening opportunities, learn about the greenhouse, propagation, the Master Gardener helpdesk for public queries, outreach, Junior Master Gardener program, plant sales, to name a few. You'll have 8 months from the first day of class to complete the volunteer hour requirements (May 7, 2024) and you are welcome to begin volunteering once the classes are underway.

After completion of all the class and volunteer requirements, you become a Certified Texas Master Gardener. However, you don't always remain a Certified Master Gardener unless you maintain your Certification through annual volunteer service of 24 hours, 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. If you are looking for educational classes for other reasons, we have many to offer and encourage you to check out our Grow Your Own Gardening Series and Landscape Success Lecture Series.

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 County communities.

If you have further questions, please email Brandy at brandy.rader@ag.tamu.edu, and you are welcome to bring your questions to Orientation on August 31.

Sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brandy Rader".

Brandy Rader
Program Coordinator – Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Boone Holladay".

James "Boone" Holladay
County Extension Agent – Horticulture

FORT BEND COUNTY MASTER GARDENER APPLICATION

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

Please complete all Sections of this Application thoroughly!

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

Date of Birth (month and day only): _____ Name: _____

Nickname: _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip: _____

Phone (Day): _____ (Night): _____

Cell Phone: _____

Email: (IMPORTANT) _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____ Number: _____

Section I - Getting Acquainted!

Please initial your agreement to the following:

☐ I understand that I am expected to attend Orientation as a prerequisite for taking the Master Gardener Class. Orientation is scheduled for **August 31, 2023**, from 9:00 am to 3:00 pm. The purpose of Orientation is to acquaint you with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the role of Texas Master Gardener volunteers in support of Extension and also the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc.

Section II - Your Experience

PLEASE ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS.

1. Number of years living in Fort Bend County: _____

2. Where did you garden before living here: _____

3. Are you presently employed, and if so, where at, and what is your title?

If you are retired, how long have you been retired, where are you retired from, and what was your title? _____

4. Please describe your horticulture and gardening experience: (any personal, volunteer, or work experience): _____

5. How did you learn about the Master Gardener Program? _____

6. List group affiliations or volunteer organizations you are or have been involved in (garden clubs, community gardens, plant societies, etc.): _____

7. List your volunteer experience; be specific about length of service and about your roles and responsibilities:

8. Other skills, interests or experience: (please check all that apply)

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <input type="radio"/> Computers | <input type="radio"/> Drawing/Illustrating | <input type="radio"/> Research/data collection |
| <input type="radio"/> Website development | <input type="radio"/> Writing/Publishing | <input type="radio"/> Public speaking/teaching |
| <input type="radio"/> Artwork/displays | <input type="radio"/> Proofreading | <input type="radio"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Photography | <input type="radio"/> Marketing/Fundraising | <input type="radio"/> Other _____ |
| <input type="radio"/> Accounting | <input type="radio"/> Bookkeeping | |

9. Please provide specific information for the above checked categories:

10. If you are able to speak, read, or write a language(s) other than English, please list: (including American Sign Language)

11. Why do you wish to become a Master Gardener and what does being a volunteer in your community mean to you?

12. Any other information about your skills and abilities you would like us to know?

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

The Fort Bend County Master Gardener training program duration is eight (8) months. Upon completion of all requirements, on May 7, 2024, participants will be certified as Texas Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners then re-certify annually through volunteer service and continuing education. Please place your initials in the boxes below, if you agree.

☐ 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.

☐ I will volunteer a minimum of 50 hours in Extension initiated education programs during the period September 2023 through May 2024.

- ☐ 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 through Sterling Volunteers.

Section III - Statements of Agreement

Please read, sign / initial and date where indicated:

- ☐ I understand that the Texas 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, The Fort Bend County Master Gardeners, Inc., and The Texas A&M System and will adhere to their policies and guidelines.
- ☐ I understand that the title of Texas Master Gardener is valid only when participating in a Master Gardener program being conducted by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. When an individual ceases active participation in the Master Gardener program and/or does not meet recertification requirements, the individual's certification as a Texas Master Gardener becomes void.
- ☐ I understand that graduates of the Texas Master Gardener Program should not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Texas Master Gardener at a place of business unless that location is designated as a Master Gardener educational activity location by the local Extension office. Texas Master Gardeners must not use the title, Texas Master Gardener, in any form of advertisement. Implying Texas A&M AgriLife Extension endorsement of any product or place of business is improper. The Texas Master Gardener program is a public service program operated by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension to provide unbiased information, and the Texas Master Gardener title is to be used only when doing **unpaid volunteer work** in this program.

Applicant Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

- ☐ Participants are required to complete a minimum of 50 hours of class training, and a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service prior to graduation, which is approximately 8 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 volunteer service to The Fort Bend County Master Gardener Program.*** 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 certification 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. The first partial year's requirements will be prorated.

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 2023 Master Gardener Class. All completed forms are confidential. You will receive an email from Sterling Volunteers with instructions.

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

☐ I hereby grant 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: _____

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.



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 _____

Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement

We appreciate your commitment to the Texas Master Gardener program. Your satisfaction and progress in this volunteer position are important to us. Please read the following expectations and indicate your willingness to cooperate by signing at the end of this form. This form must be signed and filed with the county Extension office and will need to be updated every three years. Volunteers not adhering to all items in this agreement may forfeit their certification as a Master Gardener volunteer.

I understand that I am trained by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in the field of Horticulture, and I am expected to extend research-based information to the public on behalf of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension. In exchange for the minimum of 50 hours of Master Gardener Training provided by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, I will:

- Commit to a minimum of 50 hours of volunteer service to the horticultural programming efforts in Fort Bend County within one year to become a certified Master Gardener.
- I understand that to maintain active status as a Master Gardener Volunteer, I must volunteer 12 hours annually after my intern year and gain 6 continuing education hours annually.
- Provide a record of this service as directed by the Master Gardener Program Coordinator.
- Comply with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Background Check policy. The background check is to be renewed every three years.

Please read the Texas Master Gardener Management guide found at <https://txmq.org/administration/management-guide> for further details on the Master Gardener program, volunteerism, and Texas A&M AgriLife Extension.

When acting as a Texas Master Gardener volunteer, I agree to:

- Consistently exhibit a positive professional manner toward and about Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, the Master Gardener Program, the Master Gardener Coordinator, other Master Gardener volunteers, other Texas A&M AgriLife employees, and clients.
- Carry out and discharge all duties in a responsible and timely manner.
- Avoid any conflict of interest
 - Not use my Master Gardener status to promote any commercial activity or private business.
 - Volunteer's efforts at their place of employment will not be considered volunteer service to Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.
- Recommend and use (when functioning as a Master Gardener) Texas A&M AgriLife approved information for any public pesticide, herbicides, fertilizer, or cultural practices.
- Provide my own transportation and pay my own expenses incurred as part of official volunteer activities. (Expenses may be tax deductible with proper documentation.) Some County Master Gardener Associations may assist volunteers with expenses for certain types of events. Check with your local Master Gardener Program Coordinator for more information on specific association policies and procedures.

- Act in accordance with the highest standard of ethics:
 - Not physically, verbally, or sexually harass/abuse anyone
 - Refrain from illegal or unsafe behavior
 - Dress appropriately and not use harsh language
- All work by a Master Gardener - text, written, spoken, images, photos, illustrations - is expected to result from the Master Gardener's thought, research, or self-expression. All outside work sources (text, written, spoken, images, photos, and illustrations) must incorporate appropriate attribution. Failure to comply is plagiarism and puts the Texas Master Gardener program and the Master Gardener at risk of copyright infringement.

In regard to Master Gardener Coordinators, Master Gardener volunteers will:

- Recognize the responsibilities of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service staff/ Master Gardener Coordinator in setting program priorities, standards, and direction. Specific projects for the performance of the volunteer work are determined locally and should reflect local needs.
- Refer all commercial horticulture inquiries to the Master Gardener Coordinator or other Extension staff.

In regard to Master Gardener Colleagues, Master Gardener volunteers will:

- Welcome volunteers from all backgrounds
- Respect and safeguard the individual rights, competencies, safety, and property

In regard to Clients, Master Gardener volunteers will:

- Provide quality service to the public without regard to socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

I further understand that Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employees are held to the highest standard of respect and ethical behavior toward all. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service will hold employees accountable for providing the following:

- Provide training, supervision, and direction to Master Gardeners through the local county Extension office.
- Communicate expectations and responsibilities of the program to volunteers.
- Match volunteer skills and interests with volunteer opportunities within the county.
- Support Master Gardener volunteers and the local Master Gardener Association.
- Provide continuing education opportunities.
- Provide access to Extension horticulture reference materials and reasonable access to Extension professionals.
- Uphold and cultivate a trustful relationship between staff and volunteers.
- Reassign and/or terminate, if necessary, any volunteer who does not uphold Texas Master Gardener policies, procedures, guidelines, and/or values.

Grievance Policy

In the event of a disturbance in the program or between individuals, it is expected that you will visit with your agent to communicate the facts of the events. Your agent will consider all positions and determine what is best for the program. Further, if you have a conflict with your agent, it is expected that you will visit with the agent first about your perspective and try to resolve the situation with them. If a resolution is not found, please contact Jayla Fry, Texas Master Gardener Coordinator, who will determine the best course of action. You will be contacted within two weeks of the initial communication.

I understand that, as a volunteer, I will not be acting as a Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service employee and will not receive pay or employee benefits. I also understand that I am not covered by workers' compensation laws in connection with my volunteer affiliation. I understand and agree that Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and I both have the right to end my volunteer relationship with Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service at any time, for any reason, and without advance notice.

Signature

Date

Printed Name

Agents Signature

Date

Agents Printed Name

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.

Information taken from: Purdue, Rutgers, Georgia, Wisconsin, Missouri, Illinois, California, & Texas (Montgomery Co. and Denton Co.) Master Gardener Programs.

9/2022