



# Missouri Master Gardener Program

## *Statewide Operational Guidelines*



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## Forward

The Missouri Master Gardener program continues to be one of the most successful and widely distributed University of Missouri Extension programs in our state. For many people, Master Gardeners are the face and voice of Extension in our local communities as they share their knowledge with their neighbors and fellow residents of our state.

The Master Gardener motto is “helping others learn to grow”. This is accomplished by providing consumers with up-to-date, research-based information about gardening, environmental stewardship, and horticulture to individuals and communities throughout Missouri. Additionally, the Master Gardener program has become a popular volunteer activity, giving its participants a sense of community pride, accomplishment and personal satisfaction.

This document was developed to outline clearly the formal operational guidelines of the Missouri Master Gardener program. Its purpose is to elucidate the relationship between University of Missouri Extension, County Extension Councils and local Master Gardener groups in the day-to-day operation of a Master Gardener program.

We value our Master Gardener volunteers as partners in taking University of Missouri Extension to our communities, as well as in supporting the University of Missouri in its land-grant mission. The Master Gardener Leadership Team feels privileged to work with the dedicated faculty, staff and volunteers who are a part of this exemplary program.

*Master Gardener Leadership Team*

## Program Background

The Master Gardener Extension Program was created in 1972 by Washington State University in response to an increase in requests from home gardeners for horticultural information. The Missouri Master Gardener program was initiated in 1984 and is patterned after the Washington State model. It is a volunteer-development program offered by University of Missouri Extension and is designed to educate the public on best management practice in horticulture and environmental stewardship.

Program objectives are implemented through the training and service of local Master Gardener volunteers. The latter aid University of Missouri Extension Regional Specialists in a number of ways. These include, but are not limited to, answering telephone requests for horticultural information; staffing information booths at local events; giving presentations on subjects related to horticulture and environmental preservation; establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens; conducting youth gardening projects; and designing and implementing community improvement projects.

## Program Objectives

The objectives of the Missouri Master Gardener program include:

- supporting University of Missouri Extension by providing volunteers trained in horticulture to educate the public with research based information on the best practices in consumer horticulture and environmental stewardship;
- developing and enhancing local communities through projects related to horticulture, including community gardens and demonstration gardens;
- enhancing youth education concerning horticulture and the environment through the establishment of Garden 'N Grow and other youth-related gardening programs.

Program objectives are implemented through the training and volunteer service of local Master Gardeners.

## Oversight of the Master Gardener Program

The Missouri Master Gardener program is administered by University of Missouri Extension with input from University of Missouri Extension County Councils\*.

Responsibilities of Extension include:

- to establish and maintain standards for the Master Gardener program;
- to recruit, select and train participants in the Master Gardener program;
- to develop and identify volunteer activities for Master Gardeners which support University of Missouri Extension's educational mission;
- to provide an environment for Master Gardener volunteers that is friendly and supportive so their training will produce maximum benefits to their communities;
- to certify and recertify Master Gardeners using Missouri Master Gardener guidelines established by the Master Gardener Leadership Team;
- to approve and assist in reporting volunteer service hours of Master Gardeners;
- to facilitate communication between University of Missouri Extension personnel, County Extension Councils and Master Gardener groups, both local and statewide.

\*St. Louis Master Gardeners also receive program oversight from Missouri Botanical Garden personnel as defined by an MOU between University of Missouri Extension and the Missouri Botanic Garden.

## Role of Master Gardeners in Extension

The mission of University of Missouri Extension is to improve lives, communities and economies

by producing relevant, reliable and responsive educational strategies that enhance access to the resources and research of the University of Missouri. While much of this mission is accomplished by Extension professionals who initiate programs, volunteers are a key component to the success of Extension programs.

Master Gardeners are aligned closely with Extension's mission, goals and function. Because of their training and volunteer service, they represent a valuable resource to Extension as it seeks to fulfil its mission to Missouri citizens. As volunteers for their county Extension Office, all Master Gardeners are responsible to their local Extension Specialist/Master Gardener Coordinator and to their County Extension Council.

## **Local Master Gardener Chapters**

A strong desire often exists among local Master Gardeners to meet on a regular basis for purposes of education, fellowship and service. For this reason, many local groups or chapters of Master Gardeners have been formed. Chapters provide a social network for certified Master Gardeners and an organizational framework that assists the Extension Specialist with Master Gardener responsibilities to manage Master Gardener volunteers.

While Master Gardener chapters may assist local Extension Specialists in managing the Master Gardener program, University of Missouri Extension requires that volunteer activities (such as those performed by Master Gardeners) comply with standards set by the local Extension Office and County Extension Council.

University of Missouri Extension will recognize local Master Gardener chapters which adhere to the following guidelines:

- The chapter shall consist of certified Master Gardeners who serve as representatives of University of Missouri Extension, thus affiliating them with their

local county Extension Office and County Extension Council.

- A staff member of the local Extension Office (e.g., local Master Gardener coordinator) must serve as advisor to the chapter and be actively involved in its oversight.
- Chapters submit an annual report summarizing activities of the previous year and plans for the coming year to their county Extension Office.

## **Relationship between Master Gardener Chapters and Extension Councils**

Sections 262:563 to 262:620 of the Revised Statutes of Missouri (August 2015) authorize the University of Missouri to establish an Extension council in each of the 114 counties of the state. Additionally, these laws delegate the elected Extension Council as the official body within a county responsible for carrying out the provisions of the Smith-Lever Act of Congress, and any other acts affecting Extension programs. Thus, County Extension Councils are integral parts of local government and not a local Extension program service.

County Extension Councils are partners with University of Missouri Extension in the entire educational process, from needs assessment through program implementation and evaluation of program outcomes. Since the County Extension Council is the governing body responsible for Extension at the local level, the relationship between Master Gardener chapters and University of Missouri Extension begins with the County Extension Council.

While assisting in the identification, planning and delivery of educational programs to meet local needs, County Extension Councils must maintain close contact with those responsible for delivering Extension education. This includes all Master Gardener volunteers. Thus, the need to function under the supervision of County Extension Councils with the support of Extension Specialists is paramount.

Appendix A contains an organizational model of the Missouri Master Gardener Program. It depicts the relation between County Extension Councils, University of Missouri Extension and Master Gardener volunteers.

## Establishing Ties with Local Extension

In today's world, accountability is important for every county/state agency, as well as for volunteer groups that support them. The Master Gardener program must establish a framework for cooperation and coordination between Master Gardener volunteers and those responsible for Extension programming at the local level.

The establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between a local Master Gardener chapter and its County Extension Council represents a mechanism for cooperation and accountability. In essence, a MOU outlines the conditions under which a local Master Gardener chapter becomes a part of county Extension programming. The latter is necessary if Master Gardeners are to be considered approved volunteers for University of Missouri Extension.

## The Memorandum of Understanding Process

A MOU between a Master Gardener chapter and its County Extension Council is initiated at the local level with assistance from the Extension Specialist with Master Gardener responsibilities for that area. In cases where Master Gardener chapters have members from more than one county, the MOU will be established with the Extension Council of the county in which the chapter is headquartered.

Through the establishment of a MOU, County Extension Councils and University of Missouri Extension will recognize Master Gardener chapters and their members as Extension volunteers of the Missouri Master Gardener program.

Steps in establishing an MOU:

- Identify an Extension Specialist from the County Extension Office in which the chapter is headquartered to serve as adviser to the organization. Most often this would be the Extension Specialist responsible for the Master Gardener program (i.e., local Master Gardener coordinator).
- Create a set of bylaws (should none exist) to be approved by the Master Gardener chapter and the local Master Gardener coordinator for the county in question.
- Outline the fiscal relationship between the Master Gardener chapter and the County Extension Council. In most cases, chapters should allow oversight or management of their finances by the County Extension Office.
- Present a draft of the MOU to the County Extension Council for their input.
- Secure all necessary signatures once the document has been approved by both the Master Gardener chapter, and local Master Gardener coordinator.

A copy of the signed MOU should be retained by the Master Gardener group. Additional copies should be filed with its County Extension Council, County Program Director, local Master Gardener coordinator and the State Master Gardener Office.

Appendix B contains a sample Memorandum of Understanding template. It also can be found on the Missouri Master Gardener web site: ([mg.missouri.edu](http://mg.missouri.edu)). The template is general and can be amended to suit local needs.

## Revoking a Chapter's MOU

Master Gardener chapter actions or activities which may result in MOU revocation include but are not limited to:

- Practices which do not adhere to University of Missouri Extension’s non-discriminatory, equal opportunity policies.
- Practices that do not promote the objectives of the Missouri Master Gardener program.
- Failure to carry out the responsibilities of the Master Gardener chapter as outlined in the memorandum of understanding.

Revoking a chapter’s MOU is equivalent to separating the group and its members from county Extension programming and University of Missouri Extension.

## **Fundraising**

The primary role of Master Gardeners is to provide horticulture education to the citizens of Missouri through a variety of classes, projects and activities. However, it is recognized that local Master Gardener chapters often need to generate financial resources to supplement and support local projects and program needs. An annual budget prepared for the fiscal year and approved by the local Master Gardener program coordinator is a sound practice.

As part of the local Extension office, Master Gardener chapters are subject to the policies and procedures of University of Missouri Extension. Money raised by Master Gardeners should be handled in one of two ways as outlined in the Financial Management section below.

## **Missouri Master Gardener Financial Policies**

University of Missouri Extension’s fiscal policies and procedures for county councils ([http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/fiscal/documents/policy/Fiscal\\_Policies\\_and\\_Procedures.pdf](http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/fiscal/documents/policy/Fiscal_Policies_and_Procedures.pdf)) provide the basis for Missouri Master Gardener program financial stewardship guidelines. As a public program of University of Missouri Extension, it is important that money raised to support local county Extension Master Gardener

programs is handled with the greatest stewardship. Procedures for handling Master Gardener funds should be transparent and follow sound financial management practices.

The following policy was created to help Master Gardener chapters make informed decisions about their financial operations. It was developed in accordance with University of Missouri Extension financial and money-handling policies.

It is recommended that each Master Gardener chapter designate individuals who have read and understand the following guidelines (this may include the treasurer as well as other officers) to assist in account-management operations. If any questions arise regarding these guidelines, chapter members should contact their local Master Gardener coordinator.

## **Financial Management Options**

Master Gardener groups have the option of two types of basic operating accounts:

- A) Line item in the county Extension account (separate line from training monies, which are part of Extension county program services), and
- B) Independent checking account (non-Extension account).

### **A. Line Item Extension Account Option**

Master Gardener chapters may keep their funds in the county Extension account. Revenue generated by chapters will be given to the County Extension Office for deposit. Master Gardener money will be kept in a separate line item from Master Gardener training funds.

The county Extension fiscal officer will manage Master Gardener funds following University of Missouri Extension best management practices. Only Extension personnel will issue checks (as directed by the County Extension Council); also Extension personnel will file any necessary tax forms.

## **B. Independent Account Option**

Alternatively, Master Gardener chapters may choose to manage their own finances by establishing a checking account in an outside financial institution. The account will be managed by the Master Gardener chapter's treasurer and will be subject to a yearly outside (third party) audit that is the financial responsibility of the Master Gardener chapter. Documents to be submitted for the annual audit include:

- The EIN of the chapter.
- All receipts for money deposited, and bills for chapter expenditures from throughout the year.
- Cancelled checks. Many banks no longer return cancelled checks, but often include them in printed digital form with the monthly bank statement. If not provided automatically, images of cancelled checks are always available upon request from the bank.
- All monthly bank statements.

Master Gardener chapters having a separate account use of the County Extension Council's tax exempt status must be negotiated with the council.

With either financial management option, Master Gardener chapters seeking to offer donor benefits for charitable donations must deposit funds into University of Missouri Extension accounts, or incorporate as their own 501(c)(3) entity.

## **Federal Tax Information**

Master Gardener chapters derive tax exemption status from the appropriate County Extension Council. Since the early 1970's, local Extension Councils have been ruled as being part of the University of Missouri. This means that local Extension Councils and programs under their direction are considered to be departments of a political subdivision and not subject to Federal Income Tax under IRS Code Section 115(1).

Master Gardener chapters, therefore, do not pay federal income tax and do not need to complete IRS Form 990. Additionally, charitable

contributions to political subdivisions tax exempt under Section 115(1) are tax-deductible by the donor for their federal income tax under section 170(c)(1).

However, if a Master Gardener chapter establishes an outside bank account, they must obtain an EIN (employer identification number) by filing out Form SS-4 from the Internal Revenue Service (<https://www.irs.gov/pub/irs-pdf/fss4.pdf>). When completing the form, under section line 9a, check box "State/local government" (far right on the form). Do not check "Other non-profit organization." If you do, the IRS will expect your Master Gardener chapter to complete an e-file of form 990N annually.

Master Gardener chapters should never use a member's Social Security number when opening an account and no funds should be kept in an individual's personal account.

## **State Sales Tax Information**

A discussion concerning state sales tax must be approached from the standpoint of (1) the payment of sales tax on items purchased by Master Gardener chapters, and (2) the collection of sales tax on items sold by Master Gardeners at fund-raising events.

Exemption from federal income tax does not automatically exempt a group from paying state sales tax. Again, Master Gardener chapters derive their (sales) tax-exempt status through their County Extension Council and its University sales tax exemption number. Master Gardener chapters that wish to purchase items for use in the Master Gardener program would use the certificate of sales tax exemption letter issued to the University. The certificate of tax exemption is available in the local Extension Office.

On the other hand, tax-exempt status on sales tax payment does not excuse Master Gardener chapters from collecting sales tax at fund-raising events. Unless a Master Gardener chapter has established 501(c)(3) status, according to Missouri law, it must collect sales tax on items sold at fund-raising events if yearly revenue

exceeds \$3000. State sales tax rates differ according to location; the following web site lists sales tax rates in Missouri  
<https://dors.mo.gov/tax/strgis/input.jsp>.

Master Gardener chapters that use their County Extension Council's tax I.D. number, collected sales tax should be turned over to the local Extension Office for remittance to the state.

Master Gardener chapters that establish their own tax I.D. numbers must obtain a Missouri sales tax registration form (form 2643) at  
<http://dor.mo.gov/forms/2643.pdf> and remit collected sales tax directly to the state.

## Defense and Protection

The University of Missouri provides defense and protection against loss, damage or expense for its employees, students and volunteers. Master Gardeners fall into the latter category. The terms and conditions of coverage are stated in section 490.010 of the University's Collected Rules and Regulations, a summary of which can be found in Appendix C. The University's Director of Risk Management will supply a letter stating the terms of liability coverage should one be needed for a particular event.

Additionally, University of Missouri Extension volunteers are afforded a modicum of protection under the Federal Volunteer Protection Act of 1997. The latter was enacted to provide immunity from tort claims that might be filed against the volunteers of nonprofit organizations and governmental entities in lawsuits based on the activities of volunteers. An overview of the protection offered by the act can be found at:  
<http://www.npccny.org/info/gti2.htm>.

## Volunteer Conduct Policy

Master Gardener volunteers are representatives of University of Missouri Extension as well as their County Extension Council. It is important that volunteers are aware that it is a privilege, not a right, to represent University of Missouri Extension. Along with that privilege comes the expectation that volunteers will conduct

themselves in a professional manner, and take responsibility for their actions, words and deeds. All Extension volunteers must read and agree to the University of Missouri Extension volunteer conduct policy stated in Appendix D and online at:  
<http://extension.missouri.edu/staff/stakeholders/documents/Volunteer%20Conduct.pdf>.

Should the need exist to pursue action against a Master Gardener for improper conduct, an orderly sequence of events should be followed. Appendix E describes disciplinary action procedures.

## Background Checks

Master Gardener volunteers working with youth under the age of 18 must undergo a background check. The latter is required by the Missouri Division of Social Services as well as University of Missouri Extension. This rule applies to situations where youth are the main focus of the program (e.g., Garden 'n Grow). In cases where programs are attended by both youth and adults (e.g., garden tours) background checks usually are not required.

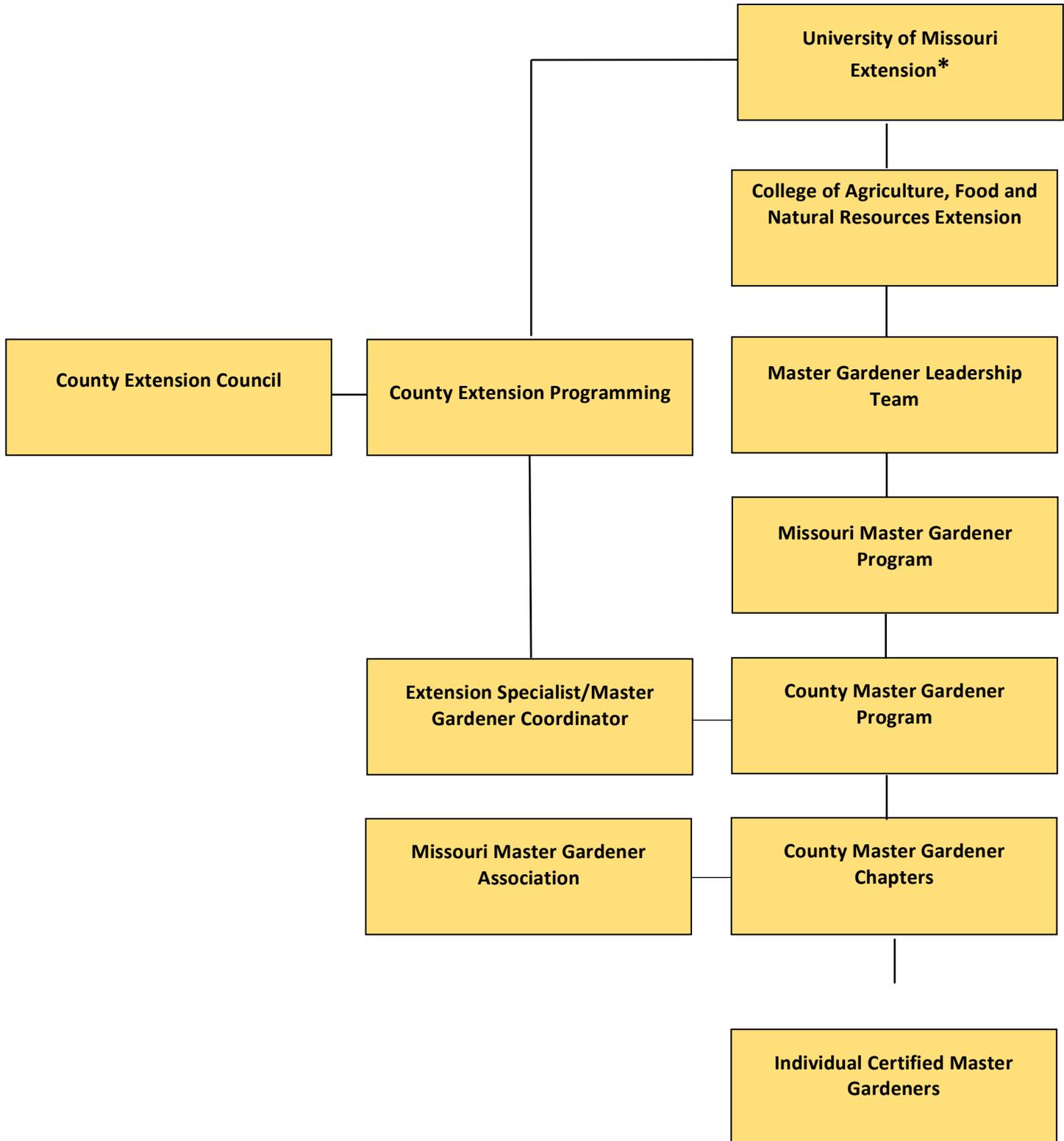
Appendix F shows the form used for Master Gardener background checks. Individuals who have undergone a background check in conjunction with their work with another youth-oriented program (e.g., 4-H), may use that screening for their Master Gardener volunteer work.

## Amending Statewide Operational Guidelines

University of Missouri Extension has final authority in setting statewide Master Gardener operational guidelines. In addition, local Master Gardener coordinators are responsible for implementing these guidelines, and have final authority over programmatic initiatives and activities at the county level. Recommendations for guideline changes are welcome and encouraged, and are accepted from coordinating faculty and staff, current volunteers, and from local and statewide advisory groups.

## Appendix A

### Missouri Master Gardener Program Organizational Chart



\*= plus the Missouri Botanical Garden in St. Louis County only

## Appendix B



### Memorandum of Understanding

This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) is made between the \_\_\_\_\_ County Extension Council (hereinafter referred to as “The Council”), on behalf of University of Missouri Extension, and the \_\_\_\_\_ Master Gardener chapter (hereinafter referred to as “The Chapter”), dated \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_.

**Purpose:** To clarify the relationship between The Council, University of Missouri Extension and The Chapter, this MOU has been established.

**Background:** Missouri Master Gardeners operate in many counties of Missouri and serve to extend the educational resources of University of Missouri Extension through horticulture education and community service projects related to horticulture. While assisting in the identification, planning and delivery of educational programs to meet local needs, County Extension Councils must maintain close contact with those responsible for delivering Extension education. This includes all Master Gardener volunteers. This MOU establishes a framework for cooperation and coordination between Master Gardener volunteers and those responsible for Extension programming at the local level.

**University of Missouri Extension Obligations:** University of Missouri Extension agrees to:

1. Conduct its program in such a way to maintain public trust and safeguard the positive image of the organization.
2. Provide training opportunities in horticultural knowledge and skills and leadership development for Missouri Master Gardener volunteers, and Extension Master Gardener county coordinators.
3. Accept certain fiduciary oversight responsibilities for these volunteer groups, including reviewing audit reports and providing a place where certain financial records can be kept.
4. **Additional obligations of The Council may be entered here.**

**Master Gardener Obligations:** Extension Master Gardener chapters agree to:

1. Conduct the organization in a professional manner consistent with the educational mission of University of Missouri Extension and in coordination with county, regional, and state Extension personnel.
2. Accept responsibility for all federal and state laws and regulations pertaining to volunteer organizations set forth by University of Missouri Extension.
3. Adhere to all civil rights laws, including open access to membership and programs.
4. **Additional obligations of The Chapter may be entered here.**

Financial Guidelines: As part of the local Extension program, Master Gardener chapters are subject to the policies and procedures of University of Missouri Extension. Money raised by Master Gardeners should be handled in one of two ways: 1) As a designated line-item by their local Extension office where it will be managed according to University accounting and audit policies (similar to other Extension programs), or 2) In a checking (or savings) account established in an outside financial institution and managed by the Master Gardener chapter’s treasurer.

Master Gardener chapters with accounts outside of the University of Missouri Extension system will be responsible for following all local, state, and federal regulations, filing the appropriate tax documents, record keeping and account management. Outside accounts will be subject to a yearly audit that is the financial responsibility of the Master Gardener chapter. Greater detail concerning financial management including tax information can be found in the Missouri Master Gardener Statewide Operational Guidelines.

Master Gardener chapters seeking to offer donor benefits for charitable donations must deposit funds into University of Missouri Extension accounts, or incorporate as their own 501(c)(3) entity. All Missouri Master Gardener chapters must adhere to the guidelines stated in this document, and the Missouri Master Gardener Extension Program Guide for Volunteers. Chapters that fail to follow University of Missouri Extension guidelines, and local, state, or federal regulations can have this affiliation with University of Missouri Extension and the use of the Master Gardener name revoked.

Intellectual Property: The University of Missouri retains all ownership rights to its intellectual property, including all copyright and trademark rights. By means of this agreement, the University grants a limited, non-exclusive, revocable license for use of the University’s intellectual property related to the Missouri Master Gardener Extension program to The Chapter.

Term: This agreement is effective as of the date listed in the introductory clause and will remain in effect until terminated by either party.

Modification of Agreement: No amendment of this agreement will be effective unless it is in writing and signed by authorized officials of both parties.

Agreement by signature:

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Chairperson, The Council Date

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President, The Chapter Date

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County Master Gardener Coordinator Date

## Appendix C

### Defense and Protection for Master Gardener Volunteers

The subject has arisen of liability coverage for Master Gardener volunteers while participating in approved service activities. The University of Missouri provides defense and protection against loss, damage or expense for its employees, students and volunteers. The terms and conditions of coverage are outlined in the University's Collected Rules and Regulations 490.010 which can be read below.

#### 490.010 Defense and Protection of Employees

1. **Defense and Protection**--Defense and protection against loss, damage or expense will be provided to:

1. **Employees**--An officer, faculty member, or other employee of the University of Missouri in connection with any claim or suit allegedly arising out of the performance of Duties for, or employment with, or by the Curators of the University of Missouri, a public corporation; and
2. **Students**--A duly enrolled student at the University of Missouri in connection with any claim or suit allegedly arising out of the performance of duties as a member of a University of Missouri committee to which the student has been appointed by a duly authorized University of Missouri administrative officer, subject to the following conditions.
3. **Volunteer**--A duly authorized volunteer of the University of Missouri in connection with any claim or suit allegedly arising out of the performance of duties of volunteer service for the University of Missouri or the performance of duties as a member of a University of Missouri committee to which the volunteer has been appointed by or requested to provide the services by a duly authorized University of Missouri administrative officer, subject to the following conditions.
4. Such an officer, faculty member, employee, authorized volunteer, or student who, individually or with others, is named a defendant in legal actions or proceedings submits a request for such defense and protection to the President.
  1. Such a request shall include:
    - (1) A brief description of the circumstances surrounding the incident giving rise to the legal action;
    - (2) Documentation to verify that the named individual was acting within the scope of his or her official duties at the time of the incident; and
    - (3) A copy of the summons or petition served on the named individual.
  2. The President determines that the named individual was acting in good faith and within the scope of his/her employment or authority.
  3. Such defense or protection is legally permissible.
  4. No protection will be provided if a court determines that the action arose out of malfeasance in office or willful or wanton action or neglect of duty.

2. While such defense and protection normally will be provided by insurance maintained by the University, this policy applies without regard to the availability of insurance coverage. If the initial determination is made by the

President that the named individual is entitled to defense, it shall be provided either by insurance or by the General Counsel or by an outside counsel appointed by the General Counsel on behalf of the individual.

## Appendix D

### MU Extension Volunteer Conduct

Volunteers are fundamental in partnering with MU Extension to guide and deliver programs relevant to the citizens of Missouri. Extension depends on volunteers to operate with a high standard of ethical conduct.

All Extension volunteers must understand and observe these basic standards:

- Treat all youth and adults with respect and without discrimination. This standard includes providing equal access to participation for all, regardless of their race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, genetic information, disability or protected veteran status.
- Avoid harming youth or adults, whether through neglect, sexual harassment, physical force, verbal or emotional abuse.
- Obey the laws of the locality, state and nation.
- Display mutual respect to one another.
- Practice personal and intellectual integrity.
- Demonstrate responsible decision-making.
- Display tolerance and respect for diverse opinions and perspectives.
- Avoid situations where a conflict of interest may occur, regarding their role as a MU Extension volunteer and their business interests.

As a volunteer for University of Missouri Extension and by completing this agreement, you agree that if you, while acting as a volunteer for the University of Missouri Extension, become aware of sex discrimination—including sexual harassment, sexual misconduct, stalking on the basis of sex, dating or intimate partner violence, or sexual exploitation involving a student, employee, volunteer or visitor of the University—you will report such behaviors. This action applies regardless of whether the recipient of the behavior is a student, employee, volunteer or visitor of the University of Missouri. You will report the incident to Mizzou's Title IX Coordinator via phone, 573-882-3880, or report via an online form (available on Title IX website). For more information, visit Mizzou's Title IX office website at <http://title9.missouri.edu/>.

In addition, programs that engage youth as learners or as planning partners must annually complete background checks on volunteers that work with youth, and ensure that screened and oriented volunteers are present whenever youth are present.

- As an MU Extension volunteer, volunteers must fulfill their obligation as a mandated reporter as prescribed by Missouri State Law (Section 210.115.1). If a volunteer believes there is or has been child abuse or neglect, that volunteer must make a report to the appropriate Missouri Child and Abuse Hotline, in addition to the MU Extension staff person who directly supervises the volunteer service.
- Abstain from using alcohol or any illegal substance while working with, or responsible for, youth.
- Be proactive in following best practices for age-appropriate youth supervision:
  1. Make and follow appropriate plans for emergency responsiveness and disaster response.
  2. Obtain and manage health and medical information for emergency response in appropriate situations.

Procedures, requirements and any additional rules will be developed and administered by the appropriate program director, continuing education director or as needed by the vice provost for MU Extension.

Procedures for appeal will be developed and administered at the program level. Each program may also implement processes for review, remediation and appeal that are unique to program circumstances and context.

Volunteers are expected to observe the standards detailed on page 1. Any of the following conduct may be grounds for removal from the program at the discretion of MU Extension administration. The list includes, but may not be limited to:

- Falsification of information, including forgery, omission or providing misleading information regarding an individual's role as an Extension volunteer.
- Representation as an MU Extension volunteer in an unauthorized role, or attempting to implement management or policy decisions that are inconsistent or in direct violation of MU Extension program policies.
- Breach of confidentiality, unauthorized possession, use, copying, or reading of any confidential information to unauthorized persons.
- Theft, unauthorized possession, use or transfer of assets or property of MU Extension, or of another person's property who is participating, volunteering or working for an MU Extension program; or in any manner defrauding the organization of its assets for any reason or by any means, regardless of value.
- Possession, use, being under the influence, sale, distribution or unlawful manufacture of illicit drugs or alcohol; or misuse or abuse of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs while performing volunteer duties.
- Conviction of a felony violation during the period in which they are serving as an MU Extension volunteer.
- Violation of anti-discrimination policies. Volunteers will not discriminate on the basis of their race, color, national origin, ancestry, religion, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, age, genetic information, disability or protected veteran status. Non-discrimination policies may apply to instances occurring in other settings, including off-campus if there are effects of the conduct that interfere with or limit a person's ability to participate in or benefit from Extension's educational programs or activities.
- Disorderly conduct including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, creating a disturbance or fighting with or striking a fellow volunteer or program participant.
- Destruction or defacement of property.

In cases where accusations are made against a volunteer, awaiting further information or final determination, a volunteer may be temporarily removed from his or her volunteer role or may be allowed to continue in their volunteer role with certain restrictions.

These policies are in effect for all MU Extension programs that use the participation of volunteers in program guidance and program delivery. Examples include, but are not limited to, Master Gardeners, EXCEL, Youth

Development programs, Community Arts, Master Naturalists, Osher LLI, various continuing education programs and any program in which volunteers are engaged to assist in MU Extension program delivery.

## **Appendix E**

### **Disciplinary Action Procedures**

#### **PURPOSE**

This document provides guidelines for a positive disciplinary action program. It is based on the assumption that, if our expectations and standards of conduct are clearly communicated to Master Gardeners, most will align their performance and conduct to ensure a mutually successful relationship.

The goals of the policy are:

- To provide a framework for clear communications between Master Gardeners and Master Gardener coordinators in order to best ensure the chances for a successful relationship.
- To ensure that Master Gardeners have opportunities to understand and correct problems whenever appropriate.
- To ensure compliance with policies and procedures relative to personal conduct.

#### **I. ELIGIBILITY**

These procedures apply to all Master Gardeners and Master Gardener trainees.

#### **II. PRODEDURE**

This progressive disciplinary action approach considers the severity of each situation, recognizing that problems of a more severe nature may be addressed at a more advanced level, including termination.

Other factors that should be considered when determining the level of the action include:

- The specific facts of the situation;
- The impact of the behavior on the organization and consumers;
- The Master Gardener's length of service with the program; and
- The Master Gardener's overall work record with the program, including the relevance and any recent corrective action.

#### **III. LEVELS OF ACTION**

Master Gardener coordinators are expected to provide a comprehensive orientation covering the policies and procedures of the Master Gardener program, including standards of conduct. During this orientation, clear expectations of personal behavior and performance should be included with an emphasis placed on why such conduct is important to support and advance the vision and values of University of Missouri Extension and the Master Gardener program.

Many problems can be resolved informally when a coordinator gives constructive feedback to the Master Gardener that clearly identifies the behavior which needs to be improved in order to meet the standards of the program.

Master Gardener's should be clearly informed about all issues and concerns and be given the opportunity to correct the problem (where appropriate) before moving to other steps.

When formal disciplinary action is necessary, the following steps are to be taken by the Master Gardener coordinator after consulting with the Extension Regional Director:

- A. First Written Notice - A first written disciplinary notice is normally issued for minor violations of Master Gardener program standards of conduct. In this letter, the violation should be explained clearly and why

conduct which led to the violation is detrimental to the Master Gardener program and/or University of Missouri Extension.

B. Final Warning - A final disciplinary warning is normally issued for:

- 1) A second minor violation within a twelve month period;
- 2) Chronic minor violations, regardless of time frame; or
- 3) First-time occurrences of more serious violations.

Depending on the circumstances of the violation and the coordinator's assessment of what may be most effective in changing behavior, one of the following forms of disciplinary action may be taken:

A. Warning of Pending Dismissal. A written statement clearly indicating that the next step is dismissal from the Master Gardener program if behavior is not rectified, or

B. Development of Action Plan. Under this option, the member must:

1) Meet with the Master Gardener coordinator for his/her area. When a Master Gardener coordinator meets with a Master Gardener to discuss disciplinary action for other than a termination offense, the coordinator should:

(a) Concentrate on identifying discrepancies between actual and expected performance, as well as the impact of the member's behavior on the Master Gardener program;

(b) Explain the importance of meeting the performance expectations and standards to the Master Gardener; and,

(c) Obtain the member's commitment to making the behavioral changes necessary to perform properly in the future.

2) Complete (and sign) a written action plan which outlines the steps the Master Gardener will take in order to achieve the expected standards of performance.

C. Dismissal. – Master Gardeners may be dismissed from the program if they:

1) Do not correct their behavior within a twelve month period following a warning of pending dismissal; or

2) Refuse to commit to Master Gardener program personal conduct standards or to develop an action plan for performance improvement; or

3) Commit a first time violation of an intolerable nature such as those listed under Section IV, part A (below).

Dismissal from the Master Gardener program must be a joint decision made by the Master Gardener coordinator and the Extension Regional Director

D. Appeal. – Individuals who wish to appeal dismissal from the program may do so to the Master Gardener State Leadership Team. The appeal must be submitted in writing and explain why the decision to dismiss should be overturned. After reviewing the appeal, the Leadership Team will make a recommendation to the College of Agriculture, Food and Natural Resources Extension Program Director whose decision will be final.

#### **IV. SPECIAL SITUATIONS**

A. Serious Violations of Standards of Conduct. Some situations are so serious that they may warrant discharge without prior corrective action. These include, but are not limited to:

- 1) Falsification of information, including forgery, omission, or providing misleading information on the member application.
- 2) Presenting oneself as a Master Gardener in an unauthorized role or attempting to implement management/policy decisions that are inconsistent or in direct violation of Master Gardener program policies.
- 3) Breach of confidentiality, unauthorized possession, use, copying, or reading of any confidential information to unauthorized persons.
- 4) Theft, unauthorized possession, use or transfer of assets, property, or another person's property; or in any manner defrauding the organization of its assets for any reason or by any means, regardless of value.
- 5) Possession, use, being under the influence, sale, distribution, or unlawful manufacture of illicit drugs or alcohol, or misuse or abuse of prescribed or over-the-counter drugs while performing Master Gardener duties.
- 6) Conviction of a felony violation.
- 7) Disorderly conduct including, but not limited to, sexual harassment, creating a disturbance or fighting with or striking another Master Gardener.
- 8) Indecent or immoral conduct.
- 9) Destruction or defacement of property.
- 10) Any other offense which reason, morals, or common sense indicates to be of major consequence to the program.

## Appendix F



FOR STAFF USE: PLEASE CIRCLE THE RESPONSIBLE PROGRAM: 4-H GG MN EFG MG OTHER _____		
_____ County Faculty/Staff Review	Faculty/staff signature	Date Reviewed
State 4-H Office Review _____	State staff signature	Date Reviewed

### An equal opportunity/ADA Institution

#### ANNUAL BACKGROUND CHECK CONSENT FORM

**Directions:** PRINT legibly in black ink, completing all sections, including physical signature and date form is signed. Give form to county Extension office for their review and submission to the MU Extension 4-H Ctr. for Youth Development.

Applicant's full legal name \_\_\_\_\_  
First name
Full middle name
Last name, including Jr., Sr., III

List **ALL** other names ever used, including maiden name, previously married name(s), all nicknames and any aliases.

\_\_\_\_\_

List **CURRENT** address first, including PO Box if used. List other addresses used in past 5 years, using pg 2 if needed.

#### CURRENT:

Street address/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_ City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Previous street address/PO Box \_\_\_\_\_ City, State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip code \_\_\_\_\_

Applicant's date of birth: MM/DD/YYYY) 

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Gender: Male \_\_\_ Female \_\_\_ Hispanic/ Latino: No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_

Race: White/Caucasian \_\_\_ Black or African-American \_\_\_ Asian \_\_\_ American Indian or Alaskan \_\_\_  
 Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander \_\_\_ Two or more races \_\_\_

Home ph. \_\_\_\_\_ Cell ph. \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Veteran Status: Unknown \_\_\_ None \_\_\_ Veteran \_\_\_ Vietnam Veteran \_\_\_ Do you have a disability: No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_

Have you ever been found guilty to or convicted of any criminal act in any state? No \_\_\_ Yes \_\_\_ *\*Describe below.*  
*\*Identify charges, including: Date City State County Circumstance*

Have you ever been substantiated as a perpetrator in any child abuse or neglect report in any state? No \_\_\_ \*Yes \_\_\_  
*\*Identify charges, including: Date City State County Circumstance*

The information provided is complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge. I understand it is unlawful to withhold or falsify information required on this form. I grant permission to MU Extension 4-H Center for Youth Development to request Missouri Department of Social Services Children's Division Child Abuse and Neglect search and national criminal records checks, including sexual offenses. The information on this form, and responses generated as a result of this form, are confidential. Any person disclosing the information is in violation of 43.540, 589.400, RSMo. and/or 210.150 RSMo. is guilty of a class A misdemeanor.

**CHECK YOUR STATUS AND FILL IN REQUIRED SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBERS. NOTE: NO SCRATCH THRU'S OR WHITE OUT ALLOWED!**

\_\_\_ I'm a **NEW** volunteer applicant. My **FULL** social security (SS) # is:  
\_\_\_ I'm a **RETURNING** volunteer applicant; the last 4 digits of my SS # are:


\_\_\_\_\_  
Applicant's legal signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date applicant signed form

\_\_\_\_\_  
Legal guardian's signature (if applicant under 18 at time form filled in)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date applicant's legal guardian signed form, if needed



