

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ABOUT THE 2008 GALVESTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENER COURSE

William M. Johnson, Ph.D.
Galveston County Extension Horticulturist
& Master Gardener Program Coordinator

Following is some important information about the Texas Master Gardener Course offered through the Galveston County Extension Office. Please read each item thoroughly.

Q. Who benefits from the Master Gardener program?

A. THE TEXAS MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM IS A PARTNERSHIP AND ITS PURPOSE IS TWOFOLD. First, it is designed to provide an intensive training in the many diverse aspects of horticulture for local citizens as a direct benefit to the citizens themselves. Secondly, the program is also designed to train participants so that they can cooperate with the staff of the Extension Office in carrying out educational programs and activities that address horticultural issues of concern to county clientele. Participants must provide 50 hours of volunteer service in the area of horticulture within 9 months after completing the course.

Q. Where will Master Gardener classes be held?

A. Classes will be conducted at the Galveston County Extension Office located at 5115 Highway 3 in Dickinson. Persons accepted for enrollment in the course should arrange to attend all class sessions.

Q. When will the 2008 Master Gardener Course be offered?

A. The 2008 Master Gardener Course will consist of 14 class periods and one field trip to be conducted beginning Thursday, February 7, from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m. and on each Tuesday and Thursday thereafter from 1:00 to 5:00 p.m., through April 1, 2008. However, the Tuesday, March 25, class period on Landscaping will be conducted from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Also, there will be a class field trip to Mercer Arboretum on Thursday, March 27, in the morning. (NOTE: Dates are subject to change.)

Q. What is the deadline for receiving applications?

A. The deadline for receiving applications is Friday, January 25, 2008. Course enrollment is limited to 22 participants. We have received numerous requests for application materials on the 2008 Master Gardener Course. Therefore, if you plan to apply, it is important that you submit your application as soon as possible.

Q. What is the registration fee? What does it cover?

- A. The registration fee for the course is \$150. This registration fee includes \$100 per person for the course itself and a \$50 "earnest money" deposit that will be refunded upon completion of the 50-hour volunteer commitment. **NOTE: In instances where an applicant is sponsored by a university, nursery, garden center, etc., the \$50 "earnest money" is not refundable.**

Participants will be provided the **Texas Master Gardener Handbook** published by the Texas Agricultural Extension Service. This is an excellent reference and study guide. It is quite comprehensive in scope, containing over 450 pages. The cost of the handbook itself to the general public is \$75. (Note: Should a couple(s) be enrolled in the course, the total registration fee may be reduced by \$75 if a couple elects to share use of one Handbook.) An engraved **MASTER GARDENER name badge** will also be provided in addition to paid membership for the 2008 calendar year in the State and the County Master Gardener Association which includes a monthly newsletter. Participants completing the program will also receive a Certificate of Completion identifying them as Texas Master Gardeners. Coffee and soft drinks will also be provided during class sessions. Registration fees are also utilized to defray speakers' travel expenses.

Q. How are applicants selected for the course?

- A. Several factors are considered in the selection of applicants. Obviously, a serious interest in one or several types of horticultural activities including—but not limited to—gardening is required. While interests may include gardening, applicants are not required, however, to be actively engaged in gardening. Master Gardener classes are intended to also reflect the geographical diversity of the county. Therefore, within the limits imposed by the applicant pool, the 2008 Master Gardener class may be composed of participants from Bolivar Island to Friendswood. Applications are also welcome from the southern portion of Harris County (Clear Lake, Webster, etc.) and the eastern portion of Brazoria County (Alvin, Pearland, etc.).

Availability to attend all training classes is required. In addition, availability to complete volunteer hours during weekdays (Monday - Friday) during normal office hours (8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.) is an important factor.

A college education is not required. The educational backgrounds of Master Gardener participants will likely be quite diverse based on past Master Gardener class participants. Remember, we provide the training, but you must have a serious interest in horticulture and the commitment to provide some volunteer effort in return.

Q. How will I be contacted in regard to the status of my application?

A. You will be contacted initially by telephone or by e-mail to schedule an informal interview; therefore, be sure to provide a daytime telephone number (and an evening number, if different) on the application form and your e-mail address if available. You will be contacted either by William M. Johnson (Galveston County Extension Agent) or by a member of the Master Gardener Program Advisory Committee. Follow-up instructions will also be provided at that time.

Q. What are some of the major topics to be covered?

A. Topics to be covered include the following: Soils & Plant Nutrition; Vegetable Culture; Fruit, Nut & Berry Culture; Disease ID & Control; Insect Pest ID & Control; Weed ID & Control; Organic Gardening; Selection & Use of Pesticides; Proper Fertilization; Lawn Selection & Maintenance; Integrated Pest Management; Pruning & Training Ornamentals; Landscape Perennials & Annuals; Grafting Techniques; and Landscape Trees.

Q. What types of examinations are given?

A. Quizzes are given at the conclusion of each class on the subject matter taught. However, the quizzes are "take home and open book."

Q. Who will teach the course?

A. William M. Johnson will coordinate course activities and teach several of the sessions. Several Extension Specialists from College Station will serve as guest lecturers. They include Dr. William C. Welch, Extension Horticulturist and author of "Perennial Gardens" and "Antique Roses for the South"; Dr. Garland McIlveen, Extension Entomologist (Retired); Dr. Don Rennie, Extension Pesticide Specialist; Alan Dreesen, Associate Department Head for Extension Forestry (Retired); David Chalmers, Extension Turfgrass Specialist; Dr. Mary L. Ketchersid, Extension Weed Specialist; and Dr. Sam Feagley, Extension Soil Fertility Specialist.

Q. What other class requirements are involved?

A. Participants must agree to provide assistance in conducting the Annual Perennial Seminar & Sale to be held at the Wayne Johnson Community Center at Carbide Park on Saturday, October 4, 2008. (NOTE: Participation in this activity counts toward your volunteer service hours accrued.) A tour of Mercer Arboretum (located North of Houston) will also be conducted as part of the training course (date to be announced).

Q. What types of volunteer activities qualify toward the fifty hours of volunteer service?

A. As one of the requirements for acceptance into the course, participants must agree to donate fifty hours of volunteer service within 9 months (i.e., by December 31,

2008) after completing the course. All 2008 Master Gardener Course graduates are expected to provide a portion of their volunteer effort toward answering clientele telephone calls to the County Extension Office on gardening questions. Master Gardener volunteers will be provided training and support answering telephone calls. Master Gardener volunteers can also provide volunteer service in a variety of other ways. The specific type of volunteer service to be provided will depend upon the interest, talents, and period of availability of each participant. Examples of types of volunteer hours include, but are not limited to, providing assistance to Extension staff in conducting educational programs such as field days, shows, short courses and youth gardening programs; and providing horticulture-related assistance to youth groups and to community improvement projects.

Q. When will participants graduate?

A. A Class Graduation Program for 2008 course participants will be held on Tuesday, June 10, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. on Galveston Island. In addition, Texas Master Gardener Certificates of Completion will be awarded to members of the 2007 Master Gardener Class who have completed all program requirements.

APPLICATION DEADLINE: Applications must be received by **Friday, January 25, 2008**. Application forms can be picked up at the Galveston County Extension Office, located at 5115 Highway 3, in Dickinson or will be mailed upon request. Application material will be mailed to those individuals already on the notification list.

REGISTRATION: The registration fee for the course is \$150. This registration fee includes \$100 per person for the course itself and a \$50 "earnest money" deposit that will be refunded upon completion of the 50-hour volunteer commitment. The course registration fee is payable after acceptance into the program. (NOTE: IN INSTANCES WHERE AN APPLICANT IS SPONSORED BY A NURSERY, UNIVERSITY, GARDEN CENTER, ETC., THE \$50 "EARNEST MONEY" IS NOT REFUNDABLE.)

REFERENCE BOOK: "The Texas Master Gardener Handbook, 3rd Edition" will be provided to each participant. The cost of the Handbook is included in the registration fee.