



Rutgers Master Gardener Program of Burlington County

Rutgers Master Gardener Program of Burlington County Policies and Procedures

The Rutgers Master Gardener Program of Burlington County (MGBC) was established to answer garden related questions from the residents of Burlington County. The main focus of the MGBC is the volunteer helpline and the volunteer training held each year. County Agriculture Agents and the Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator will implement the state policies and procedures in the local program and have final authority over programmatic initiatives and activities at the county level. Decisions regarding the county program budgets and program fees are made by the Master Gardener Coordinator and the Agriculture Agents. Supplemental agreements for volunteers may be required for specific volunteer activities. This Policies and Procedures manual outlines the programmatic initiatives and activities for the MGBC as well as the requirements for obtaining and maintaining certification as a Rutgers Master Gardener in Burlington County.

RMGBC Certification Requirements

Certified Master Gardener initial requirements

Complete Master Gardener training in Burlington County with a **Grade of 80%** or higher on final examination.

Complete **60 hours** of volunteer service **by April 1** following the final exam with a **Minimum** of 30 hours required on the helpline at the RCE office.

Must have the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Must have the Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Certified Master Gardener recertification requirements

Program graduate or approved transfer from another Master Gardener program.

Complete **35 hours** of volunteer service during the April 1 to March 31 year with a **Minimum** of 10 hours required on the helpline at the RCE office and a **Minimum** of 10 hours required of approved continuing education.

*Continuing education hours beyond the 10 required do not count toward the volunteer service requirement, but they are recorded and count toward your cumulative volunteer hours total.

Must have the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Must have the Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Complete Volunteer Re-commitment Survey annually.



Certified Master Gardener Educator initial requirements

Program graduate or approved transfer from another Master Gardener program.

Complete **40 hours** of volunteer service during the April 1 to March 31 year with a **Minimum** of 10 hours required on the helpline at the RCE office and a **Minimum** of 10 hours required of approved continuing education.

Additional 10 hours of specialized training annually, 5 of which must be in their approved specialty or field of expertise.

*Continuing education hours beyond the 20 required do not count toward the volunteer service requirement, but they are recorded and count toward your cumulative volunteer hours total.

Additional 10 approved volunteer hours as a teacher annually.

Must have the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Must have the Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Complete Volunteer Re-commitment Survey annually.

Certified Master Gardener Educator recertification requirements

Program graduate or approved transfer from another Master Gardener program.

Complete **35 hours** of volunteer service during the April 1 to March 31 year with a **Minimum** of 10 hours required on the helpline at the RCE office and a **Minimum** of 10 hours required of approved continuing education, 5 of which must be in their approved specialty or field of expertise.

*Continuing education hours beyond the 10 required do not count toward the volunteer service requirement, but they are recorded and count toward your cumulative volunteer hours total.

Minimum of 10 approved volunteer hours as a teacher annually.

Must have the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Must have the Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Complete Volunteer Re-commitment Survey annually.

Rutgers Master Gardener Alumnus

A previously Certified Rutgers Master Gardener who no longer maintains his/her annual active volunteer status, including service and/or education update requirements.

Not eligible to chair projects or committees or receive active Master Gardener benefits.

After two years of inactivity additional training may be required to achieve active status again.



Rutgers Certified Master Gardener *Aurum insigne*

Program graduate or approved transfer from another Master Gardener program.

Accumulate **1000 hours** of volunteer service during their time as a Master Gardener.

Complete **35 hours** of volunteer service during the April 1 to March 31 year with a **Minimum** of 10 hours required on the helpline at the RCE office and a **Minimum** of 10 hours required of approved continuing education

*Continuing education hours beyond the 20 required do not count toward the volunteer service requirement, but they are recorded and count toward your cumulative volunteer hours total.

Must have the Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Must have the Master Gardener Pest Management Recommendation Agreement signed and on file in the office.

Complete Volunteer Re-commitment Survey Annually.

Rutgers Master Gardener Alumnus *Aurum Insigne Emeritus*

A previously Certified Rutgers Master Gardener who, after attaining a minimum of 1,000 hours of volunteer service, no longer maintains his/her annual active volunteer status, including service and/or education update requirements.

Not eligible to chair projects or committees or receive active Master Gardener benefits.

After two years of inactivity additional training may be required to achieve active status again.

Honorary Master Gardener Status

Administered by County Agriculture Agents and / or Burlington County Master

Gardener Coordinator to an individual displaying exemplary support for the success and expansion of the Rutgers Master Gardener program

Inactive Status / Leave of Absence

A Master Gardener who is temporarily unable to fulfill MGBC requirements.

Participants may remain on an inactive status for up to two years before going into alumnus status.

A return to active status is available.

The volunteer commitment survey should be filled out to indicate the change to alumni status.



RMGBC Recognition

Burlington County Annual Master Gardener Recognition Dinner

Intern - Certificate of Accomplishment (Initial Training), Rutgers MG Intern name tag

Certified Master Gardener – Rutgers Certified MG certificate, name tag & MG lanyard

100 Volunteer hours completed - Certificate of Accomplishment (Service Hours)

250 Volunteer hours completed - Certificate of Accomplishment (Service Hours)

500 Volunteer hours completed - Certificate of Accomplishment (Service Hours)

750 Volunteer hours completed - Certificate of Accomplishment (Service Hours)

1000 Volunteer hours completed - Certificate of Accomplishment (Service Hours),

Aurum insigne status, name added to 1000+ Volunteer Hours Served plaque

Awards of Excellence, Rutgers Master Gardener Association of NJ Annual State Conference

Presented annually at the MGANJ State Conference in October, at Rutgers University.

Two volunteers / volunteer groups from each county are chosen each year by the county Master Gardener Coordinator and Agricultural Agents.

Recipients receive Rutgers Master Gardener Award of Excellence pins and certificates.

MG's may nominate a fellow volunteers for the award by submitting that nomination in writing to the MG Coordinator by April 30th of each year.

Recording Volunteer Time

Volunteer hours are to be submitted to the MG Coordinator quarterly each year by the following deadlines:

- First week of January
- First week of April
- First week of July
- First week of October

Volunteer hours are logged to record your personal accomplishments with the program and to justify support for the program with the county and the Rutgers system. Annual reports for our county program are submitted to Rutgers University and to the Board of Chosen Freeholders of Burlington County.

Volunteer hour log sheets are provided by Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Burlington County and are available at the helpline desk. Log sheets are available in both hard copy and email format for your ease of use. A volunteer log book is kept at the Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Burlington County office. Hours not recorded in the log book need to be submitted to the coordinator in writing by the quarterly deadlines listed above.



What qualifies as volunteer time as a RMGBC?

Helpline hours

Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension of Burlington County office helpline shifts

Community hours

'Ask a Master Gardener' table at community events
Approved RMGBC community projects
Approved RMGBC committees
Approved Rutgers Master Gardener event planning and preparation
Meeting snacks (1 hour/meeting)
Rutgers Master Gardener Speakers bureau (preparation and/or presentation)
Other approved Rutgers Master Gardener activities

Continuing education hours

Rutgers Master Gardener training classes
Rutgers provided courses and seminars
Approved educational events
* Approval of education hours is to be received from the coordinator prior to the educational event.

RMGBC Projects

RMGBC projects are program based activities that educate the public on sound horticulture practices and offer MG's the opportunity to participate in hands on volunteer activities. A listing of active projects can be found in the appendix of this volunteer handbook, though they may change frequently. Projects can be ongoing or a one-time event. A project application must be filed for each project. All projects must be approved by the County Agriculture Agents and Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator prior to their start. Application forms are available from the Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator and may be found in the appendix of this volunteer handbook. Once a project is approved it is the responsibility of the project lead to coordinate all parts of the project. Annual project reports are required by December of each year and are to be given to the Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator.

RMGBC Committees

Committees are formed by the Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator. A listing of active committees can be found in the appendix of this volunteer manual. Committees are formed to assist in coordinating events and activities within the county. Committees can be formed and dissolved on an as needed basis. Monthly activity reports are to be given to the Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator.



RMGBC Speakers Bureau

The Speakers Bureau has been created to offer the public speakers who are educated in sound horticulture practices. Members of the Speakers Bureau must be approved by the Master Gardener Coordinator. Approved talks are available through the Master Gardener Coordinator on set topics as hard copies and PowerPoint presentations. Members of the Speakers Bureau may also create their own presentations with the approval and guidance of the MG Coordinator. Preparation time for these talks and the presentation time count as community volunteer hours. Community organizations within Burlington County wishing to request a speaker must submit all requests to the MG Coordinator. Members of the Speakers Bureau will be contacted as requests come into the office. Once a volunteer speaker has been identified for the speaking event it is their responsibility to follow up with the community organization and to submit fact sheet or other hand out requests to the MG Coordinator in a timely manner. Material requests for these talks should be made at least ten days prior to the speaking engagement.

Volunteer Activities as a Tax Deduction

Volunteers may deduct the following unreimbursed expenses for their volunteer work.

- Fares going to and from Master Gardener activities, phone calls, postage stamps, stationary and other out-of-pocket expenses count as charitable donations.
- A volunteer may deduct 14 cents per mile while using a vehicle to conduct volunteer work. A volunteer may instead decide to deduct actual expenses for gas and oil, tolls and parking providing receipts are kept. Insurance and depreciation on the volunteers car are not deductible.
- Reasonable expenses for overnight travel as a volunteer (meals, lodging, and transportation costs) may be deducted if the volunteer has been chosen to represent the organization or if the volunteer is fulfilling volunteer requirements.
- The volunteer may deduct unreimbursed expenses while operating personal property as a volunteer, such as camera film. The volunteer may not deduct the value of his or her services.
- To deduct unreimbursed expenses of \$250 or more the volunteer must prove the deductions with written receipts.
- It is up to the volunteer to prove their deductions if the IRS questions them. The volunteer should be prepared to prove costs with canceled checks, receipts, etc. The volunteer should also be ready to show the connection between the costs and the volunteers work.



RMGBC Policies and Procedures Changes

The Burlington County Program Policies and Procedures may be reviewed, added to or edited by the Burlington County Agriculture Agents and the Rutgers Burlington County Master Gardener Coordinator at a regular basis. Master Gardeners will be notified in a timely matter of any changes made to the Policies and Procedures via email and / or regular mail. An updated copy of these Policies and Procedures will be available at the Rutgers Cooperative Extension of Burlington County office.

Rutgers NJAES Cooperative Extension Equal Opportunity Statement

It is the policy of the New Jersey Agricultural Research Station, Cooperative Extension, Rutgers University, and the USDA to ensure that all equal opportunity, civil rights and affirmative action rules, regulations, and orders are complied with in conducting the program outreach and participation in the Rutgers NJAES Master Gardener Program.