



Baker County Extension Service
1025 W Macclenny Avenue
Macclenny, FL 32063
904-259-3520
904-259-9034 Fax

May 29, 2025

Dear Master Gardener Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Baker County Master Gardener Program. The enclosed program guide contains information that will be useful to you in understanding the Master Gardener Volunteer Program, as well as the role and responsibilities of a volunteer Master Gardener. It will also give you insight into University of Florida / Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) Extension Service, how it functions, and how Master Gardener Volunteers operate as part of the Extension Service. The Baker County Master Gardener Program is intended as training for extension volunteers to assist the Horticulture Agent in carrying out the Baker County Horticulture Program.

Please read the enclosed materials and complete the volunteer application and background screening form. **Return these pages to our office before 5 pm, no later than July 7th.**

Once we receive these application materials, we will review your application, begin calling your references (at least 2 positive references are required), and conduct a background check. Only those applicants that pass this initial screening will be considered for the Master Gardener Program. A short phone interview may be conducted to review your application and answer any questions you may have about the program.

If you have questions at any time during this process, please contact Alicia Lamborn, Master Gardener Coordinator, by calling 904-259-3520 or e-mail alamborn@ufl.edu.

Thank you for your interest in the Master Gardener Program.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Alicia Lamborn'.

Alicia R. Lamborn
Environmental Horticulture Agent
Master Gardener Program Coordinator
UF/IFAS Extension Baker County

2025 BAKER COUNTY MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM GUIDE

The Master Gardener Program

The rapid urban growth in many areas of the United States coupled with increased interest in the environment and home gardening, have prompted ever-increasing numbers of homeowner questions to County Extension Service Agents. Many of these questions are seasonal in nature and relatively easy to answer assuming that one has horticultural training.

In 1972, an innovative Extension Service Agent in the state of Washington reasoned that a well-trained volunteer could respond to many of the everyday homeowner questions, freeing him and his colleagues for more technical and difficult problems. Volunteers, such as Extension Homemakers and 4-H Leaders, had always been a part of the Extension Service but never in the area of homeowner horticulture. So, the Extension Agent decided to select, train, and certify volunteers as Master Gardeners. They soon succeeded in meeting his desired objectives - in fact, they exceeded his expectations. And so it was, the Master Gardener Program began.

Since that time, the Master Gardener Program has grown and is now active in more than 30 states. Florida's program began in 1979. The program has been a tremendous success and is now active in 52 of Florida's counties. The Master Gardener Program in Florida is sponsored by the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) of which the Cooperative Extension Service is a part.

What is UF/IFAS Extension?

For a more complete understanding of this unique organization, we must go back to 1862 when the U. S. Congress passed the Morrill Act, which established colleges in each state to be financed through grants of land from the federal government. They became known as "land grant colleges," a name which persists today. These colleges would emphasize teaching practical subjects, such as agriculture and home economics. The 1887 Hatch Act provided for experimental stations at land grant colleges to conduct agricultural research.

Then in 1914, the Smith-Lever Act created the Extension Service as a part of these colleges as a means of disseminating the practical knowledge gained through agricultural research. The University of Florida at Gainesville is Florida's land grant college; The Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences (IFAS) is that part of the University, which has responsibility for the Cooperative Extension Service.

The term "cooperative" refers to the method by which extension services are funded. In Florida, three cooperating tax sources provide funds: The U.S. Department of Agriculture, the State through legislative appropriations and the counties through

appropriations by county governments. The word "cooperative" also implies a sharing of information generated through sound research programs at the federal and state levels.

The term "extension" defines this organization's purpose - to extend the information generated at the state and federal level to people at the county level in the form of a "service." The Cooperative Extension Service is an informal educational organization, which provides information in three (3) main areas: Agriculture, Family and Consumer Sciences, and 4-H Youth Development. Community Development, Marine Biology and Energy are associated programs.

The motto and goal of the Cooperative Extension Service is "Helping People Help Themselves." Thus, you can see how well the volunteer Master Gardener concept fits into the ultimate objectives and goals of the Extension Service.

Baker County Master Gardener Program

In Baker County, the Master Gardener Program began in the 1980's and provides annual or biennial training to qualify candidates as Master Gardeners. Currently 10 individuals are active in the program, having committed themselves to giving a minimum of thirty-five (35) hours of volunteer service each year to remain active in the program.

Monthly Master Gardener meetings are held to plan educational programs and volunteer activities. Continuing education is also offered during monthly meetings, which are currently scheduled for the first Monday of each month.

Selection to become a candidate for the Master Gardener Program is not based on prior training, education, knowledge, or experience. All candidates will be considered regardless of race, gender, age, or national origin.

A sincere desire to help others, a desire to learn, and a personal commitment to volunteer service are the major selection criteria involved. Basic computer knowledge and skills are also required for email communication and reporting of volunteer hours. Gardening experience and knowledge are always helpful, but they are by no means a requirement for selection for the Master Gardener Program.

2025 Master Gardener Training

The Master Gardener Volunteer Training Program is traditionally demanding and intensive. However, we have adopted a new hybrid training style that includes both online and in-person learning. This style of training gives participants more flexibility in their schedule and eases the demands of the training course.

The training course will include pre-recorded online lectures and homework activities, with designated in-person class days to include topic reviews, Q&A sessions, quizzes, and hands-on activities.

Training dates for all coursework are scheduled for August 5 to September 23. A schedule of topics will be provided at the time of acceptance to the program. In-person sessions are planned for Tuesdays: Aug 12, Aug 19, Sept 2, Sept 9. However, applicants should reserve the following Thursdays as potential in-person training days should the need to change the schedule arise: Aug 14, Aug 21, Sept 4, Sept 11.

All in-person classes will be held at the Baker County Extension Office from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm on the designated training dates. Because of the quantity of information covered in each session, trainees are permitted to miss only one in-person class but may be required to make up the session depending on the topics covered.

A **\$120.00** fee is required once you are accepted into the training program. This fee will be used to purchase your Florida Master Gardener Program training manual, reference books, and other supplies.

At the conclusion of the training, all trainees are required to take a comprehensive, open book examination on the materials covered and receive a **passing grade of 75%**. Only then will the candidate be considered a Master Gardener Intern. As an intern, you will be required to complete 75 service hours and stay active with the program for one year in order to be considered a Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV). MGVs are required to obtain 35 volunteer hours and 10 CEUs, annually, to retain their MGV title.

Baker County Master Gardener Activities

The main purpose of the Master Gardener Program is to increase or extend the service and output of information offered by the Cooperative Extension Service. As such, MGVs provide advice and recommendations that have been well documented through experimentation and testing and are approved by UF/IFAS.

All MGV activities must provide help to Baker County Extension and therefore, must be pre-approved by the MGV coordinator. MGVs serve the Extension Office in many ways, including working in the office answering gardening questions, writing newsletter columns and fact sheets, growing crops in the greenhouse, planting and maintaining the demonstration gardens at the Extension Office, working with youth through the 4-H program, speaking to local community groups, and staffing educational exhibits.

Learning is on-going for Master Gardeners. Regular on-going training sessions give Master Gardeners the opportunity to gain additional timely gardening information. Training is often coupled with the monthly Master Gardener meetings. There are also field trips led by the MGV coordinator to various functions around the state. In past years, we attended the UF Floriculture Trials, UF Poinsettia Field Day, visited wholesale and retail nurseries in north Florida, manned the Master Gardener booth at EPCOT Theme Park's International Flower & Garden Festival, and toured specialty farms such as the Greathouse Butterfly Farm. Additionally, once a year, UF/IFAS conducts Advanced Master Gardener training. This voluntary session provides in-depth training by State Extension specialists and other authorities. It is an excellent opportunity for Master Gardeners to sneak a look into the future of horticultural research at IFAS.

FLORIDA MASTER GARDENER POLICIES

The title "Florida Master Gardener" is to be used only and exclusively in the Florida Cooperative Extension Service Master Gardener program in which the trained and certified Master Gardeners answer gardening questions. Thus, Master Gardeners are expected to identify themselves only when doing unpaid volunteer educational work in this program. Florida Master Gardeners are advised not to advertise their names or their places of business, nor be listed on the advertisements of business places as Master Gardeners. This is a University of Florida-Florida Cooperative Extension Service public service program providing unbiased information.

Appearing as a commercial activity, having association with commercial products, or giving implied University or Extension Service endorsement of any product or place of business is improper. In making recommendations, which include the use of chemicals (e.g., insecticides, herbicides, and fungicides), Florida Master Gardeners are to follow published Florida Cooperative Extension Service recommendations. Use of other pesticide recommendations is not approved. Cultural problems, which are not specifically covered by Cooperative Extension Service recommendations, may be handled by suggesting treatments, which an experienced Master Gardener considers appropriate. Questions concerning commercial production of crops and pest control on such crops are to be referred to the local County Extension Agent. Master Gardeners deal only with homeowner questions. Extension Agents must respond to all commercial or professional grower questions or problems.

Your certification as a Florida Master Gardener Intern/Volunteer is restrictive in nature in that it is valid only after attending the prescribed hours of instruction, passing the final examination, and only during one-year increments while participating in the Florida Master Gardener Program. If an individual ceases active participation or does not follow the code of conduct, then the certification as Master Gardener becomes void. New certifications will be issued each year only to those individuals who make a commitment for participation in the program for the coming year. Those not continuing in the program will not be recertified and should be aware that if they represent themselves as Master Gardeners, they are violating their original commitment to the Florida Cooperative Extension Service.

BAKER COUNTY PROGRAM GUIDELINES

RECERTIFICATION as an Active Master Gardener- a Master Gardener may recertify for participation in the program for another year by:

- (1) Committing to thirty-five (35) hours of volunteer work to be completed in one year, and
- (2) By completing or having completed ten (10) hours additional horticulture training. Examples of this are: Master Gardener training for new trainees, Master Gardener Advanced Training, horticulture classes held at the extension office, horticulture seminars, educational field trips, etc. Check with Horticulture Agent to see if the training is acceptable.

INACTIVE STATUS - an *inactive* Master Gardener is one who is unable to commit to an additional thirty-five (35) hours at present but would like the opportunity to possibly recertify him/herself in the future. The following policies apply:

- (1) An inactive Master Gardener is one who is in good standing, having completed his/her original commitment of seventy-five (75) hours volunteer service the first year and can recertify at any time.
- (2) Inactive Master Gardeners are *not* eligible to attend advanced trainings, monthly meetings, or volunteer activities.
- (3) For inactive Master Gardeners to become reinstated, they must complete ten (10) hours of horticulture training and receive a ***passing grade of 75%*** on a comprehensive examination on the materials covered in basic Master Gardener training.

Pre-Approval

Master Gardeners will be required to have all projects pre-approved. The MGV Coordinator will decide which projects are assigned to volunteers and will provide approval.

Required Attendance at Monthly Meetings

Master Gardeners are expected to attend at least 4 monthly meetings per year. Attendance during monthly meetings may count as volunteer hours if working on a group project or may include CEUs if there is an educational portion during the meeting. Meetings are currently scheduled for the first Monday of the month at 9:00 am.

Reporting of Hours

Master Gardeners are required to report volunteer hours at least monthly via an online system called Better Impact. This online system requires all volunteers to have an active email address, although a computer at the Extension Office may be used to report hours. New Master Gardener Interns will have exactly one year from graduation to complete their 75 hours.

Requirements of Baker County Master Gardeners

- ✓ Must be outgoing and work well with Extension faculty, staff, and clientele.
- ✓ Must have a desire to learn and help others.
- ✓ Must follow directions and be flexible (we often get requests on short notice).
- ✓ Must have time to volunteer (many volunteers that work full time are unable to complete the required hours).
- ✓ Must have a computer and email: this is the only way to complete the training, disseminate information in a timely manner, and report volunteer hours.
- ✓ MG Interns are assigned a volunteer mentor to help interns acclimate to the program.
- ✓ MG Interns may be asked to work a minimum of 25 hours in the office answering homeowner questions and working on educational projects, based on the needs of the office and needs of the volunteer if getting behind on logging volunteer hours.
- ✓ MG Volunteers working with youth may be subject to FBI Level 2 background screening, depending on the nature of the volunteer assignment.



**MASTER
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PO Box 110675
Gainesville, FL 32611-0675
Phone: (352) 273-4521
Fax: (352) 392-1413
<http://mastergardener.ifas.ufl.edu>

Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Application

Citizens interested in volunteering for the UF/IFAS Extension Florida Master Gardener program must complete this application. Acceptance is contingent on return of this form to your county Extension office for submission and clearance through appropriate screening processes. These processes are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of all Extension program participants.

General Information

Name: _____ Male ☐ Female ☐

Mailing Address: _____

City: _____ County: _____ Zip: _____

How long have you lived at this address? _____ years _____ months

(If less than five years, attach a sheet listing all previous addresses for the past five years.)

Day phone: _____ Evening phone: _____

E-mail address: _____

List **work** experience during the past 5 years, with most recent experiences first. Add a page if needed.

Employer	Position/Title	City/State	Years



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List *volunteer* experience during the past five years, with current or most recent experiences first. Identify work with youth and community groups. Add a page if needed.

Organization/Group	Role/Title	City/State	Years

Personal Interest

Why are you interested in volunteering?

References

List three references who have knowledge of your qualifications but who are not related to you.

Name	Mailing Address	Phone



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Additional Information

Education: High School College Degree & Major Other advanced training/degree

Have you applied for Master Gardener training before? YES NO

If so, when & where? _____

Please list any gardening interests or hobbies you have (such as vegetables, houseplants, ornamentals, lawn care, landscaping, bonsai, wildlife gardening, etc.)

Please list any specialized skills you have that can be used in the Master Gardener program e.g., publicity, construction, grant research, writing, irrigation systems, etc.

What gardening affiliations do you have (garden clubs, horticultural societies, etc.)?

What ideas do you have of the type of volunteer work you can do toward completion of your commitment? (e.g., answering calls, preparing news releases, teaching/giving talks, maintaining the demonstration gardens, etc.) _____

Computer Knowledge

Do you own a personal computer: YES NO

Do you check email: daily weekly several times daily rarely

How comfortable are you on a computer?

Ok with the basics - Moderately comfortable - Extremely Proficient - Other:



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Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense within the past seven years? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, explain:

Have you ever pled no contest or guilty to a criminal offense or have you been convicted and/or had adjudication withheld for a criminal offense involving a minor (including a deferred imposition of sentence?) Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, explain:

Note: A criminal record will not necessarily disqualify an applicant. A criminal record will be considered as it relates to specific responsibilities of the volunteer role.

I certify that the above information is correct. I authorize the University of Florida IFAS Extension Service to request information for conducting a background check and to contact references. I authorize a check of my driver's license record as needed. I understand that misrepresentation or omission of the facts requested is just cause for non-appointment as an Extension program volunteer. My signature and information below are necessary to process this application.

Signature

Date

Date of Birth

Driver's License Number (State)

Thank you for your application. Return the application to the county Extension office at your earliest convenience.



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UF/IFAS Extension
Background Screening Form

Volunteers who want to work with youth or in some cases all volunteers of a county University of Florida IFAS Extension Master Gardener program must complete this background screening form. Acceptance as a volunteer or the ability to work with youth on a regular basis is contingent on return of this form to the County Extension Office for submission and clearance through the appropriate screening process. These processes are in place to help ensure the safety and well-being of all Extension program participants.

This document will be destroyed upon completion of the volunteer background screening

Date: _____

County: _____

Print Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Driver's License #: _____ State: _____

Signature: _____