The University of California Master Gardener Program of San Luis Obispo County is looking for a few good volunteers!

- ❑ Do you love to garden?
- ❑ Do you want to learn more about plants and gardening?
- ❑ Would you like to participate in a practical and intensive training program?
- ❑ Do you want to share your knowledge with others in our community?
- ❑ Do you have any special skills that you might contribute?
- ❑ Do you have enough time to attend the training and complete the volunteer work?

If you answered yes to these questions, the Master Gardener Program could be for you.

The University of California Cooperative Extension is now recruiting members of the local community for the Master Gardener Program. Master Gardeners are people like you who are trained by Cooperative Extension experts in different aspects of horticulture and plant science. In exchange for instruction, persons who become Master Gardeners spend some time as volunteers working through their local Cooperative Extension office to extend information to their community. Volunteers are supervised and guided by local Cooperative Extension horticulture advisors.

About the Master Gardener Program: Master Gardener volunteers are recruited and trained by land-grant universities throughout the United States and Canada. Local programs are coordinated by horticulture advisors at county University of California Cooperative Extension offices with a primary goal to answer the myriad of questions from home gardeners. Master Gardeners extend to their communities the benefits of horticulture research developed at the University level. Master Gardeners have become an important connection for the University of California to the public sector.

Purpose: The University of California Cooperative Extension Master Gardener Program is a voluntary educational program. The purpose is to teach people more about home horticulture and to effectively extend the research-based information produced by the University to the public. The Master Gardener role is primarily that of "educator".

History: Master Gardeners were organized to help answer questions from home gardeners that, as the populations grew, could not be handled by the County Extension Advisor alone. As the volume of horticulture calls coming in from the communities increased, the obvious need for this type of program emerged. The program was first introduced in California in 1979. The San Luis Obispo chapter was organized in 1996.

Who becomes a Master Gardener: Master Gardeners share a number of qualities – they are enthusiastic, willing to learn and help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people. Experience and a background in gardening are also important. Every effort will be made to accommodate everyone who applies; however, there may not be enough slots for all applicants as training classes are limited in size.

Training: Courses are taught by Cooperative Extension farm advisors and other horticulture specialists. The program offers a basic, practical course in plant science and horticulture. Classes include: introduction to horticulture, soil and plant nutrition, pests and diseases and their control, plant management, and diagnosis of plant problems. Training takes place over several months and is adapted to local needs and the local environment. Each class member completes a brief presentation (either oral or written) on a topic of their choice.

Your commitment: In exchange for training, you will be asked to volunteer some of your time to your county Cooperative Extension program and your community. You will be supported and coached by a local advisor.

Certification: Certified Master Gardeners have participated in the training program, passed an exam based on the material presented, and completed their volunteer work. Master Gardener volunteers must successfully complete 50 hours of training through classes administered annually by the county Horticulture Advisor. After completing the classes, the Master Gardener candidate must volunteer 50 hours of their time plus 12 hours additional educational credits in the following year to become a certified Master Gardener. Certified Master Gardeners maintain their status by volunteering 25 hours of volunteer service and completing 12 hours of educational credits annually. Ongoing educational programs, such as seminars, training sessions, field trips, and garden tours, are offered on a regular basis to help Master Gardeners fulfill their required educational credits.

What Master Gardeners do: Under the supervision of the UCCE Horticulture Advisor, the UC Master Gardeners of SLO County serve the community through their telephone "helpline", weekly newspaper columns, community garden projects, children's gardening programs, seminars and educational programs, informational booths at Farmers Markets and SLO Botanical Garden events, and various other community projects. Master Gardeners receive volunteer credit for time spent participating in approved activities. Through their involvement in these programs, Master Gardeners are providing service to the community and continuing horticulture enrichment for members**.**

Some Program Facts: Master Gardeners are agents of the University of California Cooperative Extension and as such are covered by University liability insurance. Candidates selected for Master Gardener training are required to successfully complete a background screening process that includes fingerprinting at their own cost (approximately $15). Master Gardeners must follow the recommendations of the University of California Cooperative Extension. The title Master Gardener can only be used by those who are serving as agents of the University of California. However, the title and certification may be used on applications for employment.

For more information: Application forms and further information is available from your local Cooperative Extension. We accept applications in the Fall, please contact us before November 20:

UCCE Master Gardener Program
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