VOLUNTEER MANAGEMENT SYSTEM
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS
Reporting your Volunteer and Continuing Education Hours

Update 5/30/2018

USING VMS TO LOG HOURS

To report all UC Master Gardener volunteer and continuing education hours, log in to the ANR Portal at https://ucanr.edu/portal. From there, click on *Master Gardener VMS – Los Angeles County* in the right column to continue to the **Volunteer Management System** (**VMS**).

Or, log in directly to the **VMS** at https://vms-mg.ucanr.edu/.

WHEN TO REPORT YOUR HOURS, AND WHAT QUALIFIES

Q: Why do I need to report my hours?
A: Your hours totals provide essential information:
- For first-year Master Gardeners, reporting your hours ensures that you've completed the required hours to become a fully certified Master Gardener.
- For certified Master Gardeners, reporting your hours ensures that you've completed the required hours to maintain active status for the next year.
- Reporting your hours documents the total number of hours our Master Gardeners serve Los Angeles County residents per reporting period. This information is required by the Statewide Master Gardener Program office, as well as our funding agencies.

Q: Who has to report hours?
A: Every first-year and certified Master Gardener (MG) must complete and report a minimum number of hours annually to achieve and maintain active status in the MG Program (MGP). "Annually" means the MG fiscal year of July 1 through June 30, not the calendar year.
- Trainees can earn and report both Volunteer (Vol) and Continuing Education (CE) hours earned on or after the first day of their training session in February. They may:
  - Earn Vol hours at their existing APPROVED projects (if any) or on APPROVED new projects.
  - Post hours on the VMS system (if for projects not already listed, trainees must first complete the online New VMS Project Request Form. Find it online at http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=20646.
  - Earning and posting hours during the training class session gives first-year MGs the advantage of having 16 1/2 months, rather than 12, in which to earn MG certification.
- Trainees become first-year MGs upon graduation from their training class session.
- To become certified MGs, first-year MGs must complete and post a minimum of 50 Vol hours by June 30 of the year following training. **Beginning with the Class of 2018, First Year MGs are required to complete 25 of their 50 mandatory hours on specific projects. A list of these projects can be found in the *Collaborative Tools* under *Documents* in the *Policies* group. The name of the file is** `MG First Years Required Projects`**.**
- Trainees and first-year MGs are encouraged, but not required, to earn CE hours to expand their knowledge base.
- All certified MGs are required to earn and post a minimum of 25 Vol and 12 CE hours by June 30 of every fiscal year following certification.

Q: When do I have to report my hours?
A: Reporting is subject to multi-agency requirements as follows:
- **Post your hours at least once a month!** Quarterly totals of all volunteer hours are required by our funding agencies; we can't include hours not posted in the month that they occurred.

- The June 30 deadline totals will determine whether an MG has met the minimum annual hours requirements to continue as an active MG in the program for the following year.
- You can access the online system anytime at your convenience. For more information, see FAQ tips on adding new hours, below.

Q: What qualifies as volunteer hours?
A: Your time qualifies as volunteer hours if you are teaching a PUBLIC audience for an APPROVED project. Some examples include:

- Instructing and demonstrating to gardeners at community or school gardens or workshops.
- Planning and preparing presentations to community or school gardeners or workshop participants.
- Responding to gardening questions and promoting our program at fairs and farmers' markets.
- Answering questions that come in to the MG Phone or Email Helplines.
- Performing administrative work or other special assignments as directed by Valerie or Rachel.
- Volunteering at MG training classes or monthly meetings. If unsure, ask Rachel (ramabie@ucanr.edu) or Valerie (vtborel@ucanr.edu).

Q: How do I get my project APPROVED?
A: Complete the online MG New Project Request form at http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=20646. You'll receive approval or be asked to revise your project within approximately five business days.

- New projects aren't added to the VMS list until an MG New Project Request form has been completed and approved.
- **Volunteer Opportunities from Collaborative Tools are not posted in the VMS UNTIL you and the client agree on a plan and you complete an online MG New Project Request form. Vol Ops are just that – Opportunities – you must get approval on how you're going to carry out the project before a Vol Op becomes a New Project.**

Q: What doesn't qualify as volunteer hours?
A: Whatever doesn't fulfill the criteria above. Some examples include:

- Labor, unless it demonstrates your instruction. The only exception to this rule is working in the garden at Muir Ranch at John Muir High School in Pasadena.
- Serving as docent at fundraising garden tours or helping at plant sales (unless you are teaching gardening).
- If unsure, ask Rachel or Valerie.

Q: Does driving time to and from the volunteer location count as volunteer hours?
A: No, unless approved by Rachel or Valerie.

Q: How do I choose which project category to use?
A: Familiarize yourself with the dozens of existing Los Angeles County programs already listed under each of these categories.

- CG: Community gardens, Grow L.A. Victory Gardens (GLAVG), etc. Basically, any public garden where you provide instruction or demonstrations.
- FMF: Farmers and selected other markets, fairs, pow-wows, one-day events, etc.
- MG Monthly Continuing Education Meetings: Enter attendance at MG Monthly CE Meetings here, not under locations where meetings are held.
- MG Continuing Education (not MG monthly meetings): Enter attendance at all other CE events, including MG Statewide Committees and MG training classes (Only first-year and certified MGs earn CE hours for attending training classes; trainees do not).
- OFFICE Class Help: Assisting with set up, clean up, etc. during training class sessions or at MG Monthly meetings.

- OFFICE Help: Any other projects done at Valerie's or Rachel's request.
- OFFICE MG Helpline: Researching answers to helpline questions and emailing from home.
- OFFICE Statewide VMS Helpline: Researching and answering questions posted by other California MGs in the "Master Gardener FAQs" section of VMS.
- SCH: Schools, boys' and girls' clubs and children's gardens. Note that some schools named after people are alphabetized by first name; others by surname. Check both possibilities. Also, there may be more than one school with the same name but in another city.
- SE: Senior centers, retirement and convalescent homes.
- SH: Shelters (including at-risk or similar clientele, such as the Veteran's Garden and Earthworks), healing and meditation gardens.
- WS: Any workshop or presentation on gardening or horticulture for a group of people, for example, at a library or club.

Q: What if I don't see my project listed?
A: Complete the online MG New Project Request form at http://ucanr.edu/survey/survey.cfm?surveynumber=20646. You'll receive approval or be asked to revise your project within approximately five business days. See above under "*How do I get my project approved?*" for further information.

Q: How can I scroll more quickly through the projects list?
A: Click on the "Projects" line, left side menu. Then at the search window (upper right-hand corner) type in the beginning of the project name (e.g., "MG"), and matching entries will automatically appear. Then scroll to the exact project you want.

Q: How do I complete the "Population Served" category?
A: Fill out demographic information for in-person contacts:
- If you work multiple times with a group, use the average attendance for every entry.
- Estimate ages, using "Youth" for contacts up to age 18.
- If more than one MG helps the same people at a project location (such as a farmers' market or fair), then each MG should count those individuals.
- Be sure that your audience contacts are posted when you enter your Vol hours – don't post your contacts as a separate entry by themselves, or they won't count in our funding reports.

Q: What qualifies as Continuing Education hours?
A: There are five categories:
- Attending MG Monthly Meetings: post 3 hours for each meeting.
- Attending MG training class lectures: Certified MGs are encouraged to attend and post 2 hours for each morning or afternoon lecture, and ½ hour for the shorter presentations.
- Additional UCCE or UC ANR training classes, workshops, seminars, and conferences.
- Various classes, workshops, trainings, seminars, or conferences about horticulture or outreach techniques. If you're not sure if something qualifies as Continuing Education, ask Rachel or Valerie.
- Viewing UC TV California Master Gardener Lecture Series videos at http://www.uctv.tv/series/?seriesnumber=11. There is also a list of additional online videos that count as continuing education in the *Collaborative* Tools *Documents* under the *VMS* group. At this time, cable and/or network TV shows on gardening do not qualify as continuing education.

Q: How do I enter CE hours?
A: All CE hours are entered into one of two projects on the "*Apply to* Project" drop-down list:
- *MG Monthly Continuing Education Meetings*, for all MG Monthly Meetings.
  Under "Description," enter the location, speaker and/or subject.

- *MG Continuing Education (not MG monthly meetings)* for all other CE opportunities, including 2-hour lectures at the annual training sessions.

Post the location name and topic under "Description."

Q: What happens if I earn more than the required minimum number of hours?
A: They accrue towards your total lifetime hours, so post all the volunteer hours you earn. You're awarded new badges in recognition of reaching 1000, 2500 and 5000 volunteer hours.

Q: What happens if unforeseen circumstances prevent me from earning enough hours to become certified or to retain my certification within any July 1 - June 30 fiscal year?
A: Your status can be changed to "inactive/resigned" until such time as you may be able to rejoin the program; contact Valerie or Rachel regarding details of your situation.

Q: Can I still use the title "Master Gardener" even though I have not completed my recertification and my status has been changed to inactive?
A: Unfortunately, no. You are no longer able to use the title "Master Gardener" or represent the University of California as a Master Gardener. If you decide you'd like to rejoin the program at a later date, please contact Valerie or Rachel to find out what steps are necessary to become an active Master Gardener again.

Q: What do I need to know about the "Hours" section?
A: "**Hours**" allows you to view your hours records, edit or delete hours, and/or save the history of your hours as Excel files. You can sort any category by clicking on column headers (such as Date, Activity or Project Name). To view entries for a specific time range (such as a fiscal year), type in a "Start Date" and/or "End Date".

Q: How do I make a change to hours I already entered?
A: Click on "Hours". Find the entry that you want to change, and click on it. That will open it up for editing so you can then change what's in any box, such as adding more hours to an existing entry. After making the changes you want, be sure to "save hours" by clicking on the blue button at lower left.

Q: What if my email address changes?
A: Please change your email address on your VMS profile by clicking on "My profile" drop-down under your name on the upper right-hand side of the VMS Homepage. Be sure to click the "save profile" button at the bottom of the page.

Q. When I log in, I see a message that my MG "volunteer agreement is no longer valid" – what's that about?
A: Beginning around June 1, a box will appear on your profile stating that your "volunteer agreement is no longer valid". To be appointed or reappointed through the next fiscal year, active MGs must complete three online agreement forms by the June 30 deadline. Both new MGs concluding their first year and previously certified MGs complete the agreements as "MGs who've completed their hours and are requesting reappointment."

- Click on the link to "Complete Agreement Now." At https://ucanr.org/mg/users/termsform.cfm you'll be able to electronically sign the forms:
  o Annual Volunteer Agreement and Request for Reappointment
  o Code of Conduct /Responsibilities & Rights
  o Proof of California Driver's License and Automotive Liability Insurance -- Answer "false" since our volunteer duties generally do not include driving.
- Once you've completed these agreements, the "Complete Agreement Now" link won't reappear until the following year.

Q: Where do I find contact information for other Los Angeles County MGs?
A:, Under **Volunteer Management System – Los Angeles County>Roster**, you'll find the city, email and preferred phone # for most MGs (The VMS will <u>NEVER</u> provide your street address to other MGs). If you prefer, you can opt out of providing your contact information to other MGs under **VMS**>**My Profile** by checking

the box in the **Private** section to the left of "**Hide this information from other Master Gardeners**". IF YOU CHOOSE TO OPT OUT of having your contact information available to other MGs, however, *you may miss out on volunteer activities or connecting with other MGs on various projects!*

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Q: Help! I still have VMS questions/problems/issues.
A: If you still need help:
- Contact Valerie at vtborel@ucanr.edu.or Deborah at dahartnett@ucanr.edu.
- Please ***DO NOT*** email the Statewide MG Coordinator; your query will be forwarded back to Valerie.

Thanks!