

Q & A's about the Fort Bend County Master Gardeners

Questions that you may have and answers that we can provide!

1. Who are the Texas Master Gardeners and what is the basis of this program?

First and foremost, the Master Gardener program is sponsored solely by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service ("Extension") which is part of the Texas A & M University System. Additionally, Extension works cooperatively with the County Commissioners' Court.

Master Gardeners are volunteers who assist Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in carrying out educational programs and activities that address horticultural issues of concern with county residents.

The Texas Master Gardener program is a "certification" course. Applicants must attend all classes, and complete 50 hours of volunteer time. Once a Master Gardener, not always a Master Gardener. Fort Bend County Master Gardeners must maintain their certification by completing 12 hours of Recertification Training, and 24 hours of volunteer time each year.

2. When are the Master Gardener classes held?

We currently have one session, which is a daytime class on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 9 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. It is approx.. 6-7 weeks in duration with classes being twice a week. Currently, the classes begin in October.

3. Where are classes held?

Classes are at the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office, 1402 Band Road, Suite 100, Rosenberg, TX 77471. Our campus consists of three buildings with the fall class held in our Agriculture Center (or main office). Each class session participant is given a map of the grounds with the location of class.

4. What is the registration fee, and what does it cover?

The fee for the course is \$250 per individual, or \$420 for two people if a handbook is shared. Every paid participant or couple receives the Texas Master Gardener Handbook published by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. This is an excellent reference and study guide. Registration fees also cover graduation dinner, engraved name badge, class refreshments, and helps defray speakers' fees and travel expenses.

5. What is the deadline for submitting applications?

Friday, September 20, 2019, is the deadline for submitting applications for the Fall 2019 Class. Class size is limited to 25 participants. We have been receiving numerous queries about the Fall class; therefore, if you plan to apply, it is very important that you **submit your application, with payment, as soon as possible.**

You may call the Master Gardener Program Coordinator (281-633-7033) or email (mmcdowell@ag.tamu.edu) for an application packet, or you can download the application packet from either website: <https://fortbend.agrilife.org/> or www.fbm.org.

All Fort Bend County residents are eligible to apply. Applicants are also welcome along the borders of Waller & Fort Bend Counties, Harris & Fort Bend Counties, and Brazoria & Fort Bend Counties. All residents in Wharton County are also welcome to apply.

6. How are applicants selected for the course?

There are several factors considered in the selection of applicants. One obvious feature is a serious interest in horticultural activities including, but not limited to, gardening – a definite requirement. A college education is not required. You will find, however, that Fort Bend County Master Gardener participants and members have very diverse backgrounds.

Another factor is the availability to attend all training classes – actually, it is a strong request. Furthermore, you must be able to complete all of the volunteer hours (50 hours) within 7-8 months prior to graduation.

The most important factor, however, is your willingness to share your knowledge with others. That knowledge is gained through practice and volunteerism. Moreover, we do expect **the application to be completed in its entirety with all questions answered!**

We will have Part I Orientation on September 11, 2019 from 10:00am – Noon. It is highly recommended that you attend. Meeting a few members of the organization, the Horticulture Agent and Program Coordinator are on the agenda along with us sharing important aspects of the Master Gardener program, what it entails, how the program works. We will also be able to answer any questions you may have. Location will be the in the Fort Bend Agriculture Center, 1402 Band Road, Conference Room 120, but participants will receive more information. Part II Orientation will take place on the first day of class.

It must be noted that all volunteer hours are completed in Fort Bend County.

7. How will I be contacted regarding the status of my application?

The Master Gardener Program Coordinator or the Horticulture Agent will contact you via email provided on your application. This email will give you further details about class.

8. What are some of the class topics and who teaches the class?

The classes cover Soils, Botany, Vegetables, Pathology (Diseases), Entomology (Insects), Water Conservation/Rainwater Harvesting, Landscape Design, Propagation, Turf Grass, Fruit & Nuts, Trees, and Earth-Kind Practices, and why Outreach is so important.

Many of the classes are taught by Extension Specialists with Texas A& M University System. Other training classes are taught by Master Gardeners who are Advanced Trained Master Gardeners in various topics, or local experts.

9. Are there tests?

There will be tests based on content in the Master Gardener Handbook and some will be open-book.

10. After graduation, then what?

Remember, being a Master Gardener is a constant learning process, and you are not expected to know everything. With that said, you will be able to assist the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension office with these skills as a Master Gardener:

- Answer client's telephone inquiries and assist office visitors with plant/insect samples for identification or diagnosis;
- Get excited about Extension educational programming; join the Master Gardener Speakers Bureau, such as talks for garden clubs, Master Gardener workshops, etc.
- Create educational research-based publications, PowerPoint programs, news articles, brochures, etc.
- Be part of establishing and maintaining demonstration gardens at the Extension office;
- Learn about Junior Master Gardener/Youth projects and assist with school or club gardening education projects;
- Be a member of the Entomology Team researching insects, writing, and participating in public events with Entomology group.
- Interpret information from Extension publications for general public;
- Distribute Extension information to the public at Home & Garden Shows, County Fair, and various community events throughout the county;