

Policies Regarding Pinellas County Master Gardeners Rules

Most states and many countries have Master Gardener Programs. Each is different according to their needs. In Pinellas County, our needs lie mainly at the Pinellas County Extension Service facility and the Florida Botanical Gardens. There are large demonstration gardens to maintain. On Mondays, Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays different staff horticulturists work with groups of Master Gardeners in project areas. Because of the development of the Florida Botanical Gardens, there is an even greater need for Master Gardener assistance on-site.

The Pinellas County Extension Service is well aware of community needs and gardening projects off-site. It would be impossible for us to supply all the help that is needed by these groups. However, if there are special projects that we feel meet our criteria for educational outreach, or that are directly related to the mission and goals of the Pinellas County Extension Service, then you may use these opportunities to fulfill all or part of your volunteer hours after the first year. The first 40 hours must be spent on existing approved projects before you will be allowed to start on new community based projects. ***All community projects must have prior approval by the Master Gardener Coordinator/ Urban Horticulture Agent before you will be allowed to allocate time spent doing them to your required hours.*** Current community projects that qualify include Florida Yard & Neighborhood yard certifiers, Speaker's Bureau participants, and School-yard Advisors.

New Master Gardener trainees must give 75 hours of volunteer time to the Pinellas County Extension Service before receiving a certificate of completion and being given the title of Master Gardener. You will be asked to start volunteering during your training by spending a few hours in each of several selected areas to give you an idea of the activities available. All 75 volunteer hours should be completed by one year after the training ends. To continue your certification in the future as a Pinellas County Master Gardener you must complete 35 hours annually and attend at least 10 hours of approved educational programs each year.