

*Jodi Larison, UVM Extension Master Gardener, November 2023*

A few years ago, I took the time to pursue certification as a Master Gardener, something I had contemplated doing for many years. Since becoming certified as a University of Vermont (UVM) Extension Master Gardener (EMG), I have learned that many people do not know what a Master Gardener is.

A Master Gardener is a person who has participated in comprehensive training provided by university professors, cooperative Extension employees and horticulture industry professionals on a wide range of horticultural topics. These include vegetable gardening, annuals and perennials, sustainable landscaping, soil health, gardening design and integrated pest management, among other topics.

Do you love gardening? Do you want to learn more about gardening? Do you possibly want to share that love and knowledge with others in your community?

If you answered “yes” to any or all of these questions, then consider becoming a Master Gardener.

UVM offers two tracks for this course. The volunteer track is for anyone seeking certification to become a Master Gardener Volunteer and entails weekly readings, lectures, live Q & A sessions, assignments, quizzes and a final exam. You will need to fulfill 40 hours of volunteer work in the two years following successful completion of the course to be certified as an EMG, then 20 hours each year thereafter to maintain certification.

As an EMG, there are many ways to provide research-based information on horticulture topics to the public to earn volunteer hours. Some opportunities include staffing the UVM Extension Master Gardener Helpline or booths at local events, writing press releases, presenting workshops or planting and maintaining community or public gardens. Participating in many of these volunteer opportunities also provides a chance to connect with, and learn from, others who share your gardening interests.

Another way to earn your hours and learn about volunteer opportunities in your area is by joining a local EMG chapter and participating in planning and events. As a Master Gardener you also will receive emails about volunteer opportunities, as well as various gardening topics. For example, a recent email was an alert about the “mile-a-minute” plant, an invasive species that is new to Vermont.

Since taking the Master Gardener course, I have earned volunteer hours by writing press releases and staffing “Ask a Master Gardener” tables at local events. Additionally, I helped harvest vegetables for Willing Hands, a hunger relief and food recovery organization in southern Vermont, and created a seminar, “Container Gardening of Vegetables and Herbs,” which I presented to a women’s church group and at a local library.

To learn more about the UVM Extension Master Gardener program, visit <http://go.uvm.edu/mastergardener>.



*Jodi Larison (on right) and EMG intern Pamm Powers answer gardening questions at an “Ask-an-EMG” info table.*