

Impacts of promoting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) in home gardens and landscapes through the Vermont Extension Master Gardener Helpline

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To become a University of Vermont (UVM) Extension Master Gardener (EMG), students take a 16 week online course with topics that include IPM, entomology, plant pathology, healthy lawn care, soil health, weed biology and management of invasive plants. A year end survey of students in the course showed:

- 46% had not heard of IPM BEFORE the course
- 89% adopted a new practice as a result of the course
- 50% chose a biological control instead of a pesticide
- 54% gained a more thorough understanding of the pesticide label



After contributing 40 hours to the program, certified EMGs can volunteer on a state wide, toll-free "Helpline" by answering Vermonter's questions on home gardening and landscape care. Volunteers also answer emails through the Ask an Expert system plus an email platform where gardeners can post questions along with pictures.



Over 270 volunteers logged 11,201 hours making 30,589 contacts with the public at Farmer's Markets, fairs, workshops and plant sales about IPM, home gardening pests and diseases, pesticide reduction and sustainable landscapes.

- 21 Master Gardener Helpline volunteers answered 1,029 gardening questions from April through October through calls and emails.
- 90% of the questions received were related to insect and disease identification and management
- 88% of the Helpline clients indicated the information they received helped them use IPM practices to manage their pest problem
- 68% were able to reduce the use of pesticides



"The Master Gardener Helpline provided answers, solutions and reassurance for many garden issues."

— Vermont Home Grower

