

## RESPONSIBILITIES

Extension Master Gardeners:

- represent and do volunteer work for Iowa State University Polk County Extension.
- are expected to give ISU recommendations, especially for pesticide use, and not rely on your own personal experience, that of others, or common garden folklore.
- need to stay up-to-date on gardening information and recommendations through continuing education.
- need to keep in touch with the Polk County Extension Office regarding horticulture program needs.

## REWARDS

Extension Master Gardeners will:

- have lots of fun working with other people interested in gardening.
- learn a lot about gardening for their own use.
- feel proud they have taught someone about gardening.
- be covered under Iowa's Tort Liability law when working as a Master Gardener volunteer.

## PURPOSE

The purpose of the Iowa Master Gardener Program is to provide current, research-based home horticulture information and education to the citizens of Iowa through approved ISU Extension programs and projects.

Through their participation in educational activities, Master Gardeners also increase their own personal knowledge in horticulture.

## DEFINITION

- Master Gardeners are residents of a community who take an active interest in horticulture.
- They have received training in horticulture through the ISU Extension Service and serve as Extension volunteers.
- In return for their training, Master Gardeners volunteer in extension horticulture programs and projects which enhance the community.

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## IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY POLK COUNTY EXTENSION

### **MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM INFORMATION**



**IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY**  
University Extension

***Helping you become your best.***

## HISTORY OF THE PROGRAM

**NATIONALLY:** The first program was initiated in Washington State in 1972. The Extension agent for horticulture was overwhelmed by the volume of requests for horticulture information coming into the his office.

He came up with the idea of trading specialized training in horticulture for a commitment to spend a specified number of hours doing volunteer outreach work for extension.

**LOCALLY:** The Iowa Master Gardener program was piloted in Scott County in 1977. The first Master Gardener class was held in Polk County in the early 1980s.

In Polk County the Master Gardener training classes are held beginning in January and ending in April.

Classes are given in the evening beginning at 6:30 p.m. and run for three hours. Approximately half of the classes are taught via the Iowa Communications Network, a fully interactive system that broadcasts classes from Iowa State University to local area offices. Other classes are taught locally by instructors from ISU or certified Master Gardeners.

One Saturday is devoted to on-campus training at Iowa State University in Ames.

## HOW THE PROGRAM WORKS

In exchange for 40 hours of Extension horticulture volunteer service and a fee to cover the cost of educational materials, individuals receive an intense training program in advanced topics of horticulture.

Individuals who complete the 40+ hours of class work receive the title “Master Gardener Intern.”

The Master Gardener Intern works under the direction of an ISU Extension staff member or a Certified Master Gardener while completing 40- hour service commitment.

Master Gardener Interns who complete the 40-hour service commitment within the year following training are awarded the title of “Certified Master Gardener” for the next calendar year.

## MASTER GARDENER CERTIFICATION

To maintain certification, Master Gardeners must annually complete six hours of continuing education and six hours of volunteer service on approved projects.

If a Master Gardener’s certification lapses for one or more years, 12 hours of continuing education and 12 hours of volunteer service are required to re-certify for the next year.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

Telephone: 515-957-5761 or 515-957-5762

Email: mfarlow@iastate.edu or  
vhunnell@iastate.edu

## EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER VOLUNTEER PROJECTS

There are many opportunities for Polk County Extension Master Gardeners to earn their volunteer service credits:

- Answering questions that come in through the Polk County Extension Horticulture Helpline regarding cultural practices, plant diseases, and damage caused by insects and other environmental factors. This work is done at the Extension office or at public events such as the Iowa State Fair or local farmers markets.
- Making presentations for community groups such as garden clubs, retirement groups, service clubs, church groups, children’s groups, and other groups who contact us.
- Making displays, teaching kits and other educational materials for use by Extension Master Gardeners, teachers, community leaders, and 4- H leaders.
- Serving as teachers or advisors in specific programs with cooperating agencies: Iowa State Fair, Des Moines Public Schools, Polk County 4-H, and the community gardening program.
- Implementing a customized program of work which is designed by the Master Gardener Intern and approved by the local Extension office.