



## Creating & Maintaining Master Gardener Facebook Pages/Groups

### Facebook Closed Group Guidelines

When a volunteer expresses interest in beginning a Facebook group, ask them these questions:

1. Why do I think I should have a Facebook group?
  - a. Is there a communication problem?
  - b. Has this group been requested by others?
2. What is my goal with this group?
  - a. Improve communication?
  - b. Having a place to easily share images?
3. Who is the audience?
  - a. If the goal is recruiting new volunteers, a closed group will not reach this goal.
4. Is this form of communication the best way to reach my audience?
5. Who will maintain this Facebook group?
  - a. Is there one volunteer that is taking this on?
6. How often will they/I post to it?
  - a. Does this volunteer have time to consistently engage in this closed group?
7. How will they/I monitor private messages and comments?
  - a. If people post questions on this group, they will expect a response.
    - i. Discuss if the county staff can comment with answers when able or if the group admin should tag staff when an answer is needed.

### Guidelines for Setting Up a Facebook Closed Group:

1. Closed groups are recommended instead of public pages for the reasons below:
  - a. Safety: Members will be safer in what they can post.
    - i. For example, they could post a photos from an activity or a family outing in the garden.
  - b. Engagement: Closed groups nearly always have more engagement (likes and comments) than public pages.
    - i. One reason is that those that may comment don't have to overthink about people outside of their club seeing what they'll write. Groups create an atmosphere like a group text thread where you know who is seeing what you're saying.
2. It's required that at least one Master Gardener and one county staff will be an admin of the closed group.



3. County staff should help guide the naming of the closed group.
  - a. A suggested format is “[County name] [Master Gardeners] [Project or Group Name]”
    - i. Example:
      1. Hamilton County Master Gardeners – Enchanted Garden
4. Brand Adherence: Use a profile picture that represents the project or group and the same for the banner.
  - a. County staff can access branded [profile pictures and banners from MyExtension](#).
    - i. Contact [Advancement’s Brand Manager or Social Media Specialist](#) if you are not finding a profile picture that meets your needs.
  - b. Avoid using photos of individuals or seasonal items as they are timestamped and need to be changed often.

### **Guidelines for County Master Gardener Facebook Page:**

1. Facebook pages are to be approved and created by county staff.
2. County staff will be administrators and can work with Master Gardener volunteers who may also be admins or editors.
3. County staff should guide the naming of all Facebook pages.
  - a. The suggested format is “[County name] [Master Gardeners]”
    - i. Example:
      1. Hamilton County Master Gardeners
4. Brand Adherence: Use the [branded profile image and banner templates](#) available on MyExtension.
5. Information added to a Master Gardener County page should have the phone number, address, website, and email, if applicable, for the county office/staff as reflected on the county website.
6. The [ISU Extension and Outreach short Justice Statement](#) should be added within the bio.
7. All admins will review the [Managing Social Media Pages](#) on behalf of ISU Extension and Outreach document to ensure the organizational guidance is applied.

### **Closed Group Guidelines for Admins:**

1. Ensure admins understand ownership of the Facebook group.
  - a. In acting as an admin on any Master Gardener closed group/page, volunteers understand that the closed group/page and content shared is **fully** under the umbrella of ISU Extension and Outreach and their county extension office/staff.



2. The information posted in a closed group should also be shared in another form, preferably an email or text.
  - a. This ensures that those who don't use Facebook will not miss out on reminders or updates.
3. Monitor frequently — check in on the group activity regularly.
4. Use “Group Rules from Admins” to ensure safe standards are shared.
  - a. If posts are obscene, harassing, threatening, or contain personal information volunteer admins should not respond and immediately contact the county staff they work with.
  - b. Volunteers must be aware that they cannot sensor posts/comments.
5. Encourage conversation — if appropriate, chime in and ask questions, create polls, respond to comments.
  - a. Post with purpose!
    - i. If you post content that has low value to your group, the page followers are less likely to see your content over time as it will fall lower in their newsfeed.
6. When relevant, share content from the main Iowa Master Gardeners Facebook page or your local county ISU Extension and Outreach affiliated pages with your group.