



IOWA MASTER GARDENER SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE 2024 AWARD GUIDELINES

The application and supporting images must be submitted by email to mgardener@iastate.edu by **5:00 pm CDT February 9, 2024**. Search for Excellence (SFE) is the annual recognition award of the Iowa Master Gardener program. Applications are judged by the Master Gardener Advisory Committee; one winner will be chosen per category.

The objective of the SFE is to recognize outstanding group projects by Iowa Master Gardeners. Impacts on the target audience can be recorded as changes in behavior, attitude, practices, or knowledge. All volunteer projects led by Master Gardeners are significant to their communities, but not all are SFE projects.

REQUIREMENTS

Project submissions must meet the following guidelines to qualify for SFE awards:

- **Project Duration:** Projects entered must have completed at least one full year at the time of application. If the project has existed for less than one year, it will not be eligible for judging.
- **Group Project:** SFE is designed to recognize outstanding Master Gardener group projects, not an individual Master Gardener who does outstanding work.
- **E-mail of support from ISU Extension & Outreach county staff:** An e-mail in support of the application is due to mgardener@iastate.edu by February 9, 2024.
- **Previous Winners:** Previous winners of the SFE Award may re-apply. Additional questions in the application include: Year SFE was awarded and describe significant changes in project since that award.

SCORING

Winners will be notified after the spring Master Gardener Advisory Committee meeting. Individual Master Gardeners involved in the winning projects will receive a certificate of recognition and each winning project will be awarded a plaque to display in the county ISU Extension & Outreach office. Winning applications must score over 80 out of 100 points. Points are categorized here:

- **Compatibility:** Alignment with ISU Extension & Outreach and Master Gardener program is very important. This category amounts to 60% of the total points, broken down in the following five sub-categories:
 - Were the significant impacts of the project measured and described well (**25 points**)?
 - How clear was the horticulture education component of the project (**15 points**)?
 - Were the results worth the volunteer efforts put forth in the project (**10 points**)?
 - Did the project extend the resources of ISU Extension and Outreach (**5 points**)?
 - How clear and complete was the entry (**5 points**)?
- **Replication (15 points):** A goal of SFE is to share excellent ideas and programs so that other Master Gardener groups can replicate them. For example, a 20-acre botanic garden would be difficult to replicate exactly, but the gardening ideas put to work there could be tailored to create programming somewhere else.
- **Practicality (15 points):** A SFE project is one that is easy to use and fits well for the situation for which it is intended. How well did the educational goals meet the needs of the target audience? How were the needs determined?
- **Originality (10 points):** What are the added touches that make this program unique or innovative, or that reflect the personalities of the Master Gardeners?

APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

Master Gardeners involved in the project, not Extension staff, must write the Search for Excellence project application. The online application form includes the following:

COVER PAGE:

- Master Gardener contact information: Name, E-Mail, Phone
- ISU Extension & Outreach Staff approving the application: Name, Title, E-Mail
- Category for submission (choose one):
 - Youth program
 - Demonstration garden
 - Innovative project
 - Workshops/presentation
 - Special needs audience
 - Community service project
- Name of Project
- Project Start Date: (mm/dd/yyyy)
- County/Counties Involved
- Number of Master Gardeners involved in project

NARRATIVE:

1. Who was the target audience for this project? How were they identified?
2. What were the goals of this project? (Maximum of five goals)
3. Describe the project results.
4. What are the impacts and significant learning for the target audience? (Maximum of 5 outcomes. Share quantitative measures of outcomes and impacts rather than anecdotal evidence)
5. What was the total budget for the project and how was it funded? (If applicable, list funding sources.)
6. List any partnerships associated with the project and partners' role.
7. Names of active Master Gardeners directly involved in the project. If the project is selected as an award winner, this list will be used to generate the award certificates.
8. Images: Select up to six high resolution images to upload and submit with the application. Please make sure that Iowa State University Extension and Outreach photo releases are on file at the county office for each person photographed. Do not upload handouts or other large files with this application.

APPLICATION SUPPORT:

In support of this application, ISU Extension & Outreach county staff supporting this application must provide a verification e-mail to mgardener@iastate.edu; the staff e-mail must verify that:

1. Master Gardeners involved are currently in good standing (active status)
2. Iowa State University Extension & Outreach photo releases are on file for all individuals in the shared images
3. All application documents have been reviewed by the ISU Extension & Outreach staff person
4. The deadline for this verification is the same date as the application deadline, February 9. Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.