



Smith County Office 1517 W. Front St., #116, Tyler, TX 75702
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Internet: <http://EastTexasGardening.tamu.edu>

October 8, 2009

Dear Master Gardener Applicant:

Thank you for your interest in the Smith County Master Gardener program. *Please read this letter carefully, complete and sign the enclosed Application, and Background Screening Consent Form, and return to the above address by December 14, 2009.* No applications will be accepted after December 14. We will review the applications and notify you regarding your status in the program by December 22, 2009. ***We also ask all applicants to attend an orientation meeting on December 2.*** Please see the final paragraph of this letter for details.

The following information will help you better understand the functions and requirements of the Texas Master Gardener program. ***The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to extend the ability of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to provide educational programs to the public in the areas of horticulture and gardening through use of certified volunteer Master Gardeners.***

A Master Gardener is required to participate in a 10 week training period in plant and horticultural science. You are expected to attend all sessions. Cost of the training is \$150. Lectures will begin Tuesday, January 12, 2010 and continue every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon through Thursday, March 18. Most classes will begin at 1:00 p.m. and end at 5:00 p.m. Attendance at all classes is required. At the end of the training, a take-home, open-book exam will be given.

Following the training and exam, interns must provide a minimum of seventy-two (72) hours of Master Gardener volunteer services in Smith County during the next 12 months. All interns are required: to give 32 hours (over a one year period) in the Smith County Extension office assisting phone and walk-in gardening inquiries. Other required activities include 10 workdays in the Heritage Rose Garden and IDEA Garden projects, both at the Tyler Rose Garden. Remaining hours can be fulfilled only in Extension-approved educational program areas.

After training and initial intern volunteer service have been completed, participants become "Certified Texas Master Gardeners" for 1 year only, after which time you maintain certification as a Master Gardener through annual volunteer service (12 hours minimum) and continuing education (8 hours).

We are seeking persons who have some basic experience, skills and/or knowledge in gardening, ornamental horticulture, vegetable gardening and/or related areas. We are also seeking volunteers who would be able to communicate with the public by telephone, personal contact, and group programs or through written correspondence. Master Gardeners are supervised by the Extension Horticulturist who provides support to the volunteer Master Gardener program and assigns, reviews and assists the Master Gardener work.

The 2010 class of Smith County Master Gardeners is limited to thirty-five (35) persons. *Preference is given to qualified residents of Smith County.* The \$150.00 fee (due first day of class) covers the Master Gardener Handbook, other reference materials, 'lab' and other miscellaneous costs.

In its 16th consecutive year in Smith County, Master Gardeners have been involved in many community projects including the following:

- * Publication of annual *Northeast Texas Gardening Guide and Calendar*
- * School garden projects; Jr. Master Gardener program
- * Assisting horticulture research at Texas A&M - Overton
- * Writing weekly gardening tips for area newspapers and the internet
- * Fall Garden Conference & Bulb Sale
- * Spring Home Garden Tours program
- * Creating and maintaining demonstration gardens (e.g. IDEA Garden, Heritage Rose Garden)
- * Creating and staffing exhibits at the E. Tx State Fair and other community events
- * Speaker's Bureau; 1st Tuesday in the Garden workshops
- * Service at the Extension office, answering homeowner gardening questions
- * Helping in the administration of the Master Gardener Association and its programs
- * Testing of plants, new materials, techniques, etc. (e.g. EarthKind Rose Trial)
- * Habitat For Humanity landscaping assistance

Smith County Master Gardeners Association meets monthly for educational programs, informal exchange of information and plants, program and project planning, and fellowship. And, Master Gardeners from across the State meet annually for more of the same. There are currently 146 certified and interning Master Gardeners active in Smith County.

Along with the enclosed application, please complete and return the Volunteer Background Check Consent Form. Texas AgriLife Extension Youth Protection Standards (YPS) – Qualifications of Volunteers program was implemented to provide a safe and positive environment for youth and adult volunteers. The YPS program involves national criminal background checks of all adult volunteers 18 years of age or older who are involved in teaching roles, which includes Master Gardeners. Volunteers who have been screened by another entity, such as their employer, school district or other youth organization, may indicate this on their enrollment form. Prior screenings with similar criteria to YPS are accepted by AgriLife Extension.

Thank you for your interest in this exciting volunteer program to expand gardening knowledge and proficiency for the residents of Smith County. If you have further questions regarding this program, please give me a call (903-590-2980). **We will hold an orientation meeting December 2, from 2:00 to 3:30 p.m. at the Extension meeting room in the Smith County Cotton Belt Building for you to learn more about and ask questions regarding the Master Gardener program. No pre-registration is required. All applicants are required to attend this orientation meeting.**

Sincerely,



Keith C. Hansen
County Extension Agent - Horticulture
Enclosures

Texas AgriLife Extension Service, Smith County

2010 MASTER GARDENER APPLICATION

Please read and sign the following agreement & return no later than Dec. 14, 2009.

"I wish to be accepted in the Master Gardener Training Program offered by Texas AgriLife Extension Service. I understand and agree that in exchange for the training I receive I will volunteer at least 72 hours of my time to the Smith County Master Gardener program within one year, including the required projects as noted in the cover letter and in the application below. I understand that I will become a certified Master Gardener only upon completion of the training and volunteer work. I also agree, as part of the application process, to complete the enclosed Volunteer Background Check consent form."

Name (Signature) _____ Date _____

(Print) _____

Address: _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (night) _____

Email: _____

PLEASE COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING

Place of current employment _____

If retired, what was your profession? _____

Can you attend a 10 week training session every Tuesday and Thursday afternoon January 12 through March 18? _____

Times available for volunteer work (please check all that apply):

	Mornin	Afternoon
Monday		
Tuesday		
Wednesday		
Thursday		
Friday		
Saturday		

NOTE: 10 workdays are required over the next 12 month period to work Tuesday mornings in the IDEA/Heritage garden projects. (This is a requirement to be accepted into the program). Can you commit, over the next 12 month period, to work 10 days in the garden projects (workdays typically last 2 to 4 hours)? YES _____ NO _____

Can you commit, over the next 12 month period, to work 8 1/2-day periods during mornings or afternoons in the Smith County Extension office to answer homeowner telephone requests for information? (This is a requirement to be accepted into the program).

Yes _____ No _____

YOUR GARDENING EXPERIENCE

Years gardening experience: _____

Number of years living in Smith County/East Texas: _____

Type of informal or formal gardening experience and related training (if any): _____

List areas of gardening interest/specialization or hobbies (e.g. flowers, vegetables, ornamentals, house plants, fruits, youth, etc.)

List any garden clubs or plant societies with which you are currently or have been affiliated.

List any present or previous volunteer involvements of any type and length of service.

Some activities may involve public speaking. Do you feel comfortable speaking before a group?

What special talents or skills do you have (computer, photography, typing, art, public speaking, teaching, working with youth, crafts, carpentry, etc., other)?

Please write a short paragraph explaining why you want to become a Master Gardener.

You will be notified by December 22 whether you have been accepted into the program. The \$150 fee will be collected on the first day of lecture.

If you have any questions or wish to contact us, please feel free to call the Extension office at (903) 590-2980.

Please mail the completed forms to be received by December 14 to:

Master Gardener Program
Smith County Extension Office
1517 W. Front St., Suite 116
Tyler, Texas 75702



Volunteer Application Form

And consent for criminal background history check authorization/waiver

To be completed by Extension program volunteers (ENP, BLT, etc.) and Master Volunteers only.

Please print:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <p>1. APPLICANT'S FULL, LEGAL NAME _____</p> <p>3. ADDRESS _____</p> <p>5. FIRST 5 DIGITS OF SOCIAL SECURITY NUMBER _____</p> <p>7. DRIVER'S LICENSE NUMBER (optional) _____</p> <p>9. Are you of Hispanic ethnicity? Yes / No
RACE (circle one) White / Black / Asian / American Indian
Alaskan Native / Native Hawaiian / Pacific Islander</p> | <p>2. COUNTY _____</p> <p>4. CITY _____ ZIP _____</p> <p>6. DATE OF BIRTH _____ / _____ / _____</p> <p>8. GENDER (circle one) Male / Female</p> <p>10. VOLUNTEER PROGRAM AREA _____</p> |
|--|---|

Previously Screened

11. I verify that I have been previously screened including a criminal background check and PASSED. Yes No
- If yes, by who? _____ When (Year): _____
- For what purpose? _____
- Did you pass? If not, what restrictions were imposed? _____
- If you have been screened and passed a criminal background check through an Extension-approved entity, a letter/proof must be submitted.

Please sign at the bottom of the form.

12. I hereby authorize VERIFY1 and/or its Service Provider and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to request and receive any and all background information about or concerning me, including, but not limited to, my Criminal History, Driving Record, Employment History, Military Background, Civil Listings, Educational Background, Professional License from any Individual, Corporation, Partnership, Law Enforcement Agency, and other entities including my Present and Past Employers. I authorize the Texas AgriLife Extension Service or any of its components to make reference checks relating to my volunteer service. I understand that this information will be used to determine my eligibility as a volunteer/employee with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service.
- The criminal history, as received from the reporting agencies, may include arrest and conviction data, as well as plea bargains and deferred adjudications and delinquent conduct committed as a juvenile. I understand that this information will be used, in part, to determine my eligibility for an employment/volunteer position with this organization. I also understand that as long as I remain an employee or volunteer here, the criminal history check may be repeated at any time. I understand that I will have an opportunity to review the criminal history as received by client/agency and a procedure is available for clarification, if I dispute the record as received. I also understand that the criminal history could contain information presumed to be expunged.
- I further release and discharge VERIFY1 and their Service Provider and all of their Subsidiaries, Affiliates, Officers, Employees, Contract Personnel, or Associates, from any and all claims and liability arising out of any request for information or records pursuant to this authorization and/or procurement of an investigative consumer report and understand that it may contain information about my character, general reputation, personal characteristics, and mode of living, whichever are applicable.
- I understand that I have the right to make written request within a reasonable period of time to VERIFY1 for additional information concerning the nature and scope of the investigation. I acknowledge that I have voluntarily provided the above information for employment/volunteer purposes, and I have carefully read and understand this authorization.

13. Date _____

14. Applicant's Signature _____

Volunteer Application Form Instructions

1. Applicant's Printed Name – Complete with first name, middle name and last name.
2. County – Complete with the county name in which you are applying to be a volunteer.
- 3/4. Address – Complete with your current mailing address, city and zip code.
5. Social Security Number – Complete with at least the **first five** digits of the social security number. The social security number is an individual descriptor that enables the system to complete a national criminal search of 47 jurisdictions.
6. Date of Birth – Complete with the month, day and year of birth.
7. Driver's License Number – Complete with current driver's license number and state. Although optional, this helps affirm your identity during a background check.
8. Gender – Complete by circling one of the options.
9. Race – Complete the race and ethnicity section by circling the answers that apply. This field is optional; however, it is very important in confirming accurate identity.
10. Volunteer Program Area – Complete with the program area you are volunteering for (e.g., Better Living for Texans, Expanded Nutrition Program, Master Gardener, Master Naturalist, Master Wellness Volunteer).
**4-H volunteers should complete the Texas 4-H Adult Volunteer Application (4-H 2-1.056)*
11. Previously Screened – Texas AgriLife Extension Service will accept prior screenings conducted within the past three years from other entities. The approved list of prior screenings either as an employee or volunteer include: school districts, churches, youth groups/associations (Little League, sports associations, etc.), youth agencies/organizations (Big Brother/Big Sister, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, after school/extended care programs), law enforcement (county, state or federal/prison system), Texas Youth Commission, Department of Defense – Child and Youth Services, Department of Defense – Family Programs, concealed handgun license; and/or licensed childcare workers.
** The minimum requirement is a criminal background check conducted through DPS or a National Criminal Search entity.**
*** Other sources may be considered based on documentation provided with screening criteria and specifics.***
**** Documentation is required for screenings from other entities. This could include a letter of acceptance from the employer or volunteer group, or a letter written from the screening entity to the Texas AgriLife Extension Service stating you have been screened and tested.*
12. Authorization Statement – State agencies screening volunteers are required by legislation to use the Volunteer Center of North Texas. The Volunteer Center contracts with VeriFYI. VeriFYI is a background verification software system that accesses multi-jurisdiction checks utilizing one of the largest private-sector criminal history databases in the nation (180 million records). All information received is held in confidence and not shared at the county level. Criminal record results are shredded when a volunteer's status is determined.
13. Date Completed
14. Applicant's Signature