

The Alaska Master Gardener Program



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What is the Master Gardener program and what can it do for you?

This is a program that utilizes trained volunteers to assist home gardeners by providing information and technical data to answer their questions. The program is operating in many states and has established itself as a valuable asset in multiplying the gardening educational efforts of the Cooperative Extension Service in each state.

The First Alaska Master Gardener training was initiated in the fall of 1978. The training course involves forty hours of instruction and provides a broad background of horticultural subjects to the experienced gardener taking the course. Class subjects include plant botany and physiology, soils, plant taxonomy, outdoor and greenhouse gardening, lawns, house plants, pests and pest control, and ornamentals.

The prerequisites for becoming a Master Gardener include a familiarity with Alaska gardening conditions and a commitment to return forty hours of volunteer time by providing gardening information to others. After the course of instruction is completed

and the student has passed the final exam, then he or she is ready to become a garden educator.

The district Extension agent together with the Master Gardener determine those activities that the Master Gardeners participate in. These may include garden clinics, home garden visits, teaching basic gardening classes, working with youth and adult groups interested in gardening, writing newspaper articles, and answering phone inquiries at the district office during the absence of the agent. The community needs and facilities will help to determine the most effective teaching methods.

Master Gardeners have also contributed time as fair judges and superintendents and have worked with horticulture therapy projects and with youth and adult groups.

All of these educational services are provided to the Alaska home gardener at no cost. It is a free service provided by the Cooperative Extension Service and the

Master Gardener. The home gardener receives individual assistance for his or her gardening questions or problems and this service is available to everyone.

The course has been developed into correspondence option for those individuals unable to attend a scheduled course. A revised course for village agriculture or gardening technicians has also been developed and presented with the cooperation of BIA and several native associations.

If you are interested in becoming an Alaska Master Gardener and have the desire to help others you should contact the nearest Cooperative Extension Service office that has an ongoing program.

At this time there are Master Gardener programs in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Palmer, Soldotna, and Juneau. Many Master Gardeners have been trained by attending a course in another community or by taking the course through correspondence.

The Master Gardeners have assisted tens of thousands of Alaska gardeners since the program started. It has spread rapidly to many parts of the state and will continue to grow and expand to meet the educational needs of the Alaska gardener.

For additional information contact your local Cooperative Extension Service.

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