



Pulaski County Master Gardeners Volunteer Manual

Revised October 2025



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**PULASKI COUNTY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SERVICE
2901 W Roosevelt Road
Little Rock AR 72204
(501)340-6650**

Timeline of Important Dates

January 1	Annual Dues of \$20 due
April 30	Deadline for annual dues (\$20)
May 1	Annual Dues are past due and increase to \$30
3rd Thursday of June	Pulaski County Master Gardener Appreciation Day
October 15	Deadline for award nominations to be submitted to The County Extension office for November vote
November 15	If dues not paid, member is automatically dropped Deadline for all changes in status (project changes, leave of absence request, transfers to sustainer, lifetime or lifetime plus status) Deadline for requests for reimbursement Turn-in who is Chair and Co-chairs for the next year
December 15	Deadline to record all project work hours, education hours, and other hours

A SHORT OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

The statewide Master Gardener program is a part of the University of Arkansas System, Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service. The funding that provides for the County Extension Service's offices, agents and specialists that make the Master Gardener program possible is public funding, from federal, state and county sources.

Arkansas first adopted the Master Gardener program in 1988, in four counties. The program has since expanded to more than 65 of the state's 75 counties, with more than 3200 volunteer members. It's also popular elsewhere. The very first Master Gardener program evolved in 1972, in Snohomish County, Washington, and now there are Master Gardener programs in all 50 states and in six provinces in Canada.

Beyond the input of the Pulaski County Extension Service, the Pulaski County Master Gardeners organization is run by its volunteers. The board president, first vice president, second vice president, past president, secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, and board members-at-large, are elected by the membership. The garden project committees maintain direct contact with their project hosts as well as provide work hours. More than a dozen standing committees take care of planning social events, training opportunities, social media, and group travel opportunities.

HOW TO ENTER THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

The best source for information is the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Office (501)340-6650. Another source of information is the state website: www.uaex.uada.edu. Under Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service in the left column, click on Master Gardener Program. In the left column under Master Gardeners, click on "How to Become a Master Gardener."

THE THREE TYPES OF HOURS

Work (volunteer) hours: Work hours are earned while participating in a PCMG sanctioned project or a PCMG committee. They can also be earned through Community Outreach, discussed below.

A "PCMG sanctioned project" is one that has gone through a specific proposal procedure, been accepted by the Master Gardener membership as one of the group's official projects and been approved by the County Extension Agent. All PCMGs have an assigned project, but they can also earn volunteer hours working on other projects, on committees, and by serving as a mentor. Mentoring hours are posted under sanctioned project hours. Detailed guidelines for the project based mentoring program can be found at armgs.org.

All work hours are counted, including planning time and organizational time, except ***you do not count travel time.***

Community Outreach hours: They consist of hours spent using the Master Gardener training and knowledge to help non-profit organizations with tasks that have a horticultural emphasis. For example, a Master Gardener may provide gardening training or work at their children's school, church, neighborhood association, etc. The online system for reporting hours, discussed below, has two categories: "Program Speaker" for time preparing and speaking to non-profit groups and "Community Outreach" for gardening work hours at non-profit organizations.

Continuing Education (learning) hours: Continuing education hours can be earned in many ways, and time spent is credit earned. For example, if a Master Gardener walks in a garden for 1 hour, they earn 1 hour of education credit; if they walk in the garden for 3 hours, they earn 3 hours of credit. If they research plants on the internet for 30 minutes, they earn 30 minutes of education credit. If they watch a TV show segment on gardening for 15 minutes, they earn 15 minutes of education credit.

There is one exception to the system: Pulaski County Master Gardener Monthly meetings always count as 2 hours of education.

There are many other ways to earn education hours. There are no restrictions on how many hours may be earned doing any of these things:

Attending garden related seminars presentations, and workshops as well as visiting Flower and Garden shows, local nurseries, MG events in other counties, garden clubs, etc.

- Research, including magazines, books and TV shows about gardening, the internet, plant and garden supply catalogs, inventories at local nurseries, the Cooperative Extension blog
- Preparation of gardening-related presentations and newsletter articles
- Tours and visits to public and private gardens, including those offered at conferences
- Visiting a Master Gardener Project other than your own
- Visiting another Master Gardener's Garden

Hours Required in Your First Year: New MGs must provide at least 40 work hours and obtain at least 20 education hours in their first year. Regarding the work hours, at least 20 must be served on the Master Gardener's assigned sanctioned project. Of the remaining 20 hours, 5 hours must be served on Pulaski County Extension Office Project, with the remaining 15 hours served, in any combination, in any of the following areas: the same assigned project, another sanctioned project, a committee, or Community Outreach.

Hours Required after Your First Year: To remain members in good standing, MGs must provide at least 20 work hours and obtain 20 education hours per year. Regarding the work hours, at least 10 must be served on the Master Gardener's assigned sanctioned project. The remaining 10 hours may be served, in any combination, in any of the following areas: the same assigned project, another sanctioned project, a committee, or Community Outreach.

A member who pays their dues but does not work the required 20/40 (20 for members and 40 for new members) hours will be placed on probation for the following year.

Probationary Requirements (effective 1/1/2026)

- a. Regular MG must work 30 total hours, at least 20 on assigned project.
- b. New MG must work 50 total hours, at least 30 on assigned project.

They must complete requirements during the probation year. Failing to do so will result in immediate termination from Master Gardeners. Effective 01/01/2025, volunteers may only be placed on probation once. If you do not meet your required hours a second time, you will be removed from the program

How to Report Your Hours – Two Ways: The preferred way is to use the Master Gardener Online Reporting System. Members access this by the website armgs.org or go to uaex.uada.edu. The alternative is to use the paper form, *The Pulaski County Master Gardener Time Record*. This form can be requested from the County Extension Office.

Why You Need to Report All of Your Hours: There's a good chance that in some years your involvement in Master Gardener activities will exceed the hour requirements. It's important to continue to report your hours even after you've met the minimums. Here's why: The Master Gardener program is accountable to federal, state and county funders. The volunteer hours, community outreach hours and continuing education hours are reported to document the impact of the Master Gardener Program. ***These figures are crucial to justify programs and procure funding on many levels.***

The more hours we collectively serve, the more value we provide to the community. But when hours are not reported, our organization's value cannot be fully recognized.

PCMG ANNUAL DUES

All PCMG members are required to pay dues, except those who have achieved Lifetime Status. The PCMG board recommends the amount to the general membership for approval. As of January 2015, annual dues are \$20 if paid by April 30, and \$30 beginning May 1. If by November 15 the member has not paid, the member is automatically

dropped from membership.

PCMG MONTHLY MEETINGS

When: 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m., 3rd Tuesday of the month, except July, August, and December.

Where: St. James United Methodist Church, 321 Pleasant Valley Drive, Little Rock, 72212

Driving directions: From I-430 (north or south): Take Exit 9 onto Cantrell Road heading east (toward downtown). It is a very short distance until you turn right onto Pleasant Valley Drive (there is a stoplight). St. James is approximately half a mile ahead, on the left. There are several ways to get into the church's parking lots, but the easiest is to make the left turn at the sign for Fulbright Elementary School, which is on the right. **Once there:** The meetings are held in the Worship Center Hall, which is accessed through the Kirkpatrick Welcome Center, the part of the complex that is the farthest south.

Important detail #1: When members attend meetings sign-in sheets are in the lobby of the main entrance.

Important detail #2: In addition to signing in at the meeting, MGs need to report attendance using the Online Reporting System or the paper reporting system.

PCMG INFORMATION SOURCES

Internal Communication: The Pulaski County Master Gardeners' Weekly Digest and armgs.org website furnish a wide variety of information. The WEEKLY DIGEST contains education, program information and upcoming events. ARMGS.ORG features project and committee information, member directory, meeting videos, minutes, bylaws, archive of Magnolia Chronicle, project photos, and forms for reporting hours, leave of absence, sustainer status, reinstatement, and reimbursement. The MAGNOLIA CHRONICLE contains education, gardening news and ideas.

Facebook: www.facebook.com/PCMasterGardeners

Facebook provides a way to keep up with PCMG activities and view pictures of various gardening events.

The County Cooperative Extension Service website: www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/pulaski

This website provides general information about the Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Service. Click on **Yard & Garden** in the menu bar across the top, and then click on **Master Gardeners**, or another topic of interest, in the dropdown menu. In most cases, this leads to the statewide U of A Cooperative Extension Service website, described below.

The state Cooperative Extension Service website: www.uaex.uada.edu

To get to the Master Gardener section, click on **Yard & Garden** in the menu bar across the top, and then click on **Master Gardeners**, the first item on the dropdown menu. This shows a list of topics in the column on the left.

One of the items in that list is the **Master Gardeners Only** section. This is the location for program specific information for all statewide Master Gardener County programs, including upcoming MG conferences, the Advanced Master Gardener Program, and county MG contacts. To get into the **MG Only Section**, first click on it, then follow the prompts to enter the user ID, **mgonly**, and the password, **Compost2**. Both the user ID and the password are case sensitive.

A lot of useful information is available via **Yard & Garden** in the menu bar across the top. Look at all the entries on the menu dropdown bar. The Resource Library, for example, provides access to the extension service's databases, with photos and information for plant ID, plant disease ID, weed ID, and more.

Annual Membership Directory: A Directory of the PCMG membership is located at armgs.org. Please contact the Directory/Web Site Chair for detailed information.

MASTER GARDENER ACTIVITIES

LOCAL

Events— The Pulaski County Master Gardeners have events and programs throughout the year. Check the Weekly Digest and the website armgs.org for information about upcoming events. Constant Contact keeps members informed. The Magnolia Chronicle is published every other month.

Travel— PCMG sponsors periodic tours of local private and public gardens and nurseries, and trips (some overnight) to more distant garden areas of interest.

Plant sales —The PCMGs have plant sales that are open to the public. The Little Rock Greenhouse in Little Rock and the Pathfinder Greenhouse in Jacksonville organize the sales. Additional fundraisers may be organized as needed.

STATEWIDE

Statewide Master Gardener Conference: This conference is held every year, at varying locations around the state. It is hosted by the local Master Gardener group, that offers an opportunity to participate in workshops and seminars, tour local private and public gardens, and visit with other Master Gardeners. Information can be found in the **MG Only** section of the state cooperative extension service website (uaex.uada.edu).

The Arkansas Advanced Master Gardener Program: Advanced Master Gardener training is offered by different Master Gardener groups around the state. To be eligible, a member must be an active MG in good standing in the county program and must have completed the first 40 hours of work. For more information, see the “Advanced MG Program” entry in the **MG Only** section of the state cooperative extension service website (uaex.uada.edu).

County 76: This is the statewide advisory group. Programs offered statewide, such as the Advanced Master Gardener Program, are among the County 76 activities. County 76 members also help set policy and provide guidance to county programs. For more information, please see the “County 76” entry in the **MG Only** section of the state cooperative extension service website (uaex.uada.edu).

INTERNATIONAL

International Conferences: The Master Gardener International organization hosts a North American continent conference every other year in odd years. It is open to all MG members. Keep up with the conferences in the **MG Only** section of the state cooperative extension service website (uaex.uada.edu).

PCMG PROJECT COMMITTEES AND STANDING COMMITTEES

There are three types of PCMG committees: project, standing and *ad hoc* committees. Project committees manage ongoing PCMG sanctioned gardening projects. Standing committees are other permanent committees necessary for the benefit of PCMG members. The descriptions can be found at armgs.org under the projects/committees tab. *Ad hoc* committees include the nominating, budget and audit, and fundraising committees. Members receive one hour of credit for each hour of work on all three committee types. Every PCMG must be assigned to one specified project. Members may also serve on additional projects and standing committees, if they choose, but must be sure they have the time needed for all their commitments.

The Website/Directory Committee has an email address pcmg.update@gmail.com for updates and changes in the membership. Examples are announcements or submitting photos. Other uses are personal information updates, project or committee member changes, or termination in membership.

PULASKI COUNTY MASTER GARDENER AWARDS

FOR INDIVIDUAL MASTER GARDENERS

Years of Service Awards: Members in good standing earn five- and ten-year pins in recognition of years of service. The full year of service must be completed.

Busy Bee Awards: Requirements for earning a bee are as follows: Regular members in good standing are required to work 40 hours on their Assigned Sanctioned Project for a bee award. New members, probationary members and reinstated members are required to work 60 hours on their Assigned Sanctioned Project for the award. This award was created so that members will have the incentive to work more hours on their individually sanctioned projects.

The Busy Bee Award is given to PCMG members in recognition of outstanding work on an individual garden project. It usually signifies working more than double the required hours on an individual project in a calendar year. Hours are not combined from various projects or committees but signify dedication to a single garden project. If formally assigned to more than one garden project, members may earn bees in each project. Work hours cannot be combined. A pewter bee is awarded to represent one year of such service and may be attached to the membership badge. A gold bee signifies 5 years of service and replaces the previous four pewter bees on the badge. The previous four pewter bees may be returned to the committee or retained by the member but should be removed and replaced by the gold bee on the badge. Bees are awarded free of charge but lost or replacement bees must be purchased. Pewter bees are \$5, and gold are \$10.

Rose Awards: Beginning with hours worked in 2024, MGs who work 40 hours on a single assigned committee are awarded a pewter rose lapel pin to recognize this achievement. Similar to the Busy Bee award, after receiving four Rose Awards, the fifth award is a bouquet lapel pin.

PROJECT-RELATED AWARDS (A complete listing of awards can be found on uaex.uada.edu)

Outstanding Project of the Year Award: The members may nominate an outstanding PCMG project for this award. The nominations are normally presented to the membership at the November meeting, and the winner is determined by membership vote. It is important to make sure that the project chair agrees to the nomination in advance, because members of the winning project will be required to assemble information and complete a document to submit their project to the **statewide** Outstanding Project of the Year competition.

Friend of Master Gardeners Award: This award was created to recognize and thank a person, business or organization that is **not** affiliated with the PCMG program or the Extension Service but has provided some form of outstanding support to the program. The nominations are normally presented to the membership at the November meeting, and the winner is determined by membership vote. The MG whose nominee is chosen must agree to next complete a final nomination document to submit to the **statewide** Friend of Master Gardeners Award competition.

Several other awards are possible and are listed on the uaex.uada.edu website. The information is in the Master Gardener Section under Award Nomination Forms. Examples are Master Gardener of the Year for an outstanding member and Rookie of the Year for an outstanding first year member.

CHANGES IN STATUS

All Change of Status revisions including Leaves of Absence, Sustainer requests and project changes have a submission request deadline of November 15th. Sustainer and Leave of Absence Status still require payment of dues.

Lifetime Status: Master Gardeners who have remained active for 15 years will be recognized and granted Lifetime Status at the annual statewide MG meeting. Master Gardener years accrue by the calendar; for example, if an MG trained at any time in 2000, he or she would be eligible for Lifetime Status in 2015.

Lifetime membership entitles a PCMG to all the benefits of an active member, but work and education hours are no longer required, and dues will be waived.

Lifetime members who wish to continue working on projects are encouraged to do so. Lifetime members are also encouraged to report their hours, since county record keeping includes all volunteer hours. Furthermore, hours/years of service can continue to accrue to Lifetime Plus Status, as discussed below.

Lifetime Plus Status: To continue to accrue years of service in the program and to participate in all active MG

events, you must accrue and report a minimum of 10 hours of project work per year, for 5 years per level. There are three levels of Lifetime Plus status: The Azalea Level, given at 20 years of service, the Rose Level, given at 25 years of service, and the Orchid Level, given at 30 years of service.

Sustainer Status: A Master Gardener who has been a member in good standing for a minimum of seven years may apply to be a Master Gardener Sustainer.

Sustainers do not have to meet any work or education hour requirements. However, they may continue to be active on projects or committees if they choose. Sustainers who do serve hours are strongly encouraged to report them.

Sustainers are still required to pay annual dues. A Sustainer may not hold office or have any voting rights. Time spent as a Sustainer will not count towards the 10- and 15-year pins, towards Lifetime Membership status, or

towards Advanced Master Gardener status. Sustainers may attend county, regional and state MG events, but programs with limited registrations will give priority to active members. Sustainers who attend Master Gardener events will be required to pay the same registration costs, materials fees, etc., as active Master Gardeners.

If Sustainer status requirements are met, MGs will remain a Sustainer of the PCMG program until deciding to revert to active status or until choosing to no longer pay dues.

Requests to either apply for Sustainer Status or to return to active status must be submitted by November 15.

Leave of Absence: Occasionally, a Master Gardener in good standing may need to apply for a leave of absence because of illness, a family emergency, or other unique circumstances. A Leave of Absence form should be submitted to the county extension office for review by the county agent and/or the MG executive committee. If the Master Gardener is unable to fill out the Leave of Absence request personally, someone who is aware of the circumstances may complete the form on his or her behalf. Leave of absence status will be good for one MG calendar year and will be reviewed annually. LOAs are granted for the current calendar year and end December 31. Master Gardeners on a leave of absence must still pay annual dues.

Please note that there are many Master Gardeners who work and complete their Master Gardener commitment. Normal work circumstances do not constitute a valid reason for a leave of absence.

While on leave, the Master Gardener will not be responsible for any work or learning hours but may retain the option to participate in events as conditions permit. Master Gardeners on leave of absence forego voting rights but will remain on the county roster. If these members wish to register for Master Gardener events that have limited space, priority will be given to active Master Gardeners, and those on leave will be accepted as space allows.

Time spent on leave of absence will not accrue towards active years of MG service, and therefore will not count for 5-, 10-, or 15-year pins/certificates.

RETURNING TO THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM

If a former Pulaski County Master Gardener wants to rejoin the county program, he or she should fill out the ***Request to Return to the Master Gardener Program***. Special consideration will be given to the level of participation in the program prior to absence, the reasons for leaving, and the reasons for desiring to return.

Former members will be granted re-instatement only once. Time spent out of the program will not accrue towards active years of MG service.

When the MG Executive Board and the County Agent approve a Request to Return, the applicant shall complete the following within the calendar year to be considered a member in good standing:

- Pay dues for the current year.
- Complete both working hours and education hours on a pro-rated basis, depending on the date of reinstatement. In all subsequent years, the reinstated MG will fulfill requirements as a regular MG member. The prorated hours required for the year of reinstatement are as follows:
 - 1st quarter (Jan – Mar) – 20/20 (work/education hours)
 - 2nd quarter (Apr– Jun) – 15/15 (work/education hours)
 - 3rd quarter (Jul – Sep) – 10/10 (work/education hours)

- 4th quarter (Oct – Dec) – 5/5 (work/education hours)

If possible, and if space is available, the returning Master Gardener should attend at least one day of the training course for new Master Gardeners during the next available training cycle.

TRANSFERS INTO PULASKI COUNTY

Transfers from Master Gardener programs in other states: These Master Gardeners may begin participation immediately in the PCMG program, but they must take the training classes for new PCMGs as soon as they are available.

Transfers from Master Gardener programs within Arkansas: These Master Gardeners can request a transfer and become active in the PCMG program immediately.

TRANSFERS OUT OF PULASKI COUNTY

Whether you move to another county within Arkansas or move out of state, if you are interested in becoming an active MG in your new hometown, contact that County Extension Office to find out their criteria for accepting transfers. If they need verification that you have been an active Master Gardener in Pulaski County, ask them to contact the Pulaski County Extension Agent.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on work hours, PCMG forms, and guidelines, please contact your Project Chair or a member of the PCMG Board. All forms can be found on the **mgonly** link on the Extension website uaex.uada.edu. An important site for information is armgs.org, which is updated and easily navigated. The Facebook page is www.facebook.com/PCMasterGardeners.

Revised 10-12-18

Revised 11-09-22,

Revised 10-17-24

Revised 10-10-25 – ADDENDUM ADDED - RETENTION RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESS

Addendum

RETENTION RESPONSIBILITIES AND PROCESS

The following six areas of responsibilities, activities and processes were approved by voice vote of the Board during the Board Meeting on September 16, 2025.

1. **Member retention activities were transferred from the Project Chair to the Record Committee. Effective 9/16/25.** The County Agent will advise/make decisions on special situations as needed.
For background many years ago (11-15-16) the Board transferred the responsibilities for retention to the Project Chairs. Today's action recognizes this responsibility is better managed by the Record Committee because of their access to reported hours.
2. **Probation Requirements were revised. Effective 1/1/2026.**
When a MG member is short on hours at year end and elects to go on probation, the following year, the **MG member must work an additional 10 hours (not 20 additional hours) on their assigned project.** This change is a reduction of 10 probation hours and the addition of requirement of additional hours must be worked on the assigned project.
3. **Members are short on work hours at year end. Effective 1/1/2026.**
Procedures and dates to be followed.
 - a) **January 10** – Record Committee will analyze Year-End reported hours and prepare letters for County Agent's review and signature for MG short on work hours.
 - b) **January 15** – County Agent will review, approve and sign letters to be sent from PCMG.
 - 2) Probationary Requirements:
 - a. Regular MG must work 30 total hours, at least 20 on assigned project.
 - b. New MG must work 50 total hours, at least 30 on assigned project.
 - 3) Letter will state MG short on hours and advising probationary status. **MG will be requested to sign and return letter accepting probation by March 1st or they will be dropped from MG program.** MG can also contact County Agent with questions or issues. A stamped return envelope will be included.
 - c) **March 1** – County Agent and Record Committee confirm status of MGs who were sent letters and accepted probation or failed to return agreement and will be dropped from MG program.
 - d) **March 10** – Record Committee drops MG who failed to return agreement from roll. Record Committee will email notification to Chairs of projects with assigned MGs accepting probation and those who were dropped from MG program.
 - e) **March 15** – State Database updated annually dropping MG from program.
4. **Members are short on work or education hours during the year. Effective 9/16/25.**
Suggested procedures and dates to be followed. This is designed to help MGs to successfully meet their annual requirements and minimize dropping MGs unnecessarily.
 - a) **Routinely** – Record Committee routinely sends Project Chairs record of members' project hours reported, as well as individual MGs (on probation) showing progress towards successfully completing their probation.
 - b) **August 15** – Email from Record Committee to individual MG short on "reported" education or work hours offering assistance to report hours including a reminder if MG is eligible for LOA or Sustainer requests **for current year** submissions must be received by November 15th for Board consideration.
 - c) **November 15** – Email from Record Committee to individual MG notifying them of potential shortfall in hours and offering assistance to report hours.
5. **LOA and Sustainer.** Suggested procedures and dates to be followed.
 - a) **November 15** – Consistent with current bylaws this is the deadline to receive LOA and Sustainer requests for current year for Board consideration. Also consistent with current bylaws all LOAs approved between January 1st and November 30th expire 12/31.
 - b) **January 1** – Email from Record Committee sent to MGs on LOA advising their current LOA expired 12/31 of previous year and if LOA is still needed, they will need to resubmit a new LOA form for new year.

- c) **January 1** – Email from Record Committee to Board with current list of Sustainer MGs.
- d) **January 1** – Email from Record Committee to current Sustainer MGs reminding them of their need to pay dues and asking for confirmation they still want to be a Sustainer.

6. **When MG has not paid dues:** Suggested procedures and dates to be followed.

January 1 - \$20 May 1 - \$30

- a) **April 1 and May 1** – Email from Treasurer sent to MGs who have not paid dues to advise of May 1st increase. This will include Sustainers and MG on LOA who have not paid their dues.
- b) **October 15** – Letter from County Agent reminding if \$30 dues are not paid by November 15, MG will be dropped from MG program. This will include Sustainers and MG on LOA who have not paid their dues.
- c) **November 15** – Letter from County Agent advising MG is dropped from foll due to nonpayment of dues. This will include Sustainers and MG n LOA who have not paid their dues.