

PULASKI COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

PROJECT BASED MENTORING PROGRAM

Guidelines for Project Chairs and Mentors

Goals:

The goals of Project Based Mentoring are to facilitate the integration of the new Master Gardener into the assigned project and to increase the likelihood that we will retain the new volunteer in the PCMG program over the long term.

Why Project Based Mentoring?

This mentoring format provides the new MG with a partner who shares the same general garden interest and project work schedule. A mentor from within the project is most likely to be able to answer questions and offer support and guidance in a timely manner.

Assignment of new MGs to sanctioned projects:

If a request for new project members has been submitted then the Project Chair should provide the name(s) of available mentor(s) when the new MG class is about to begin. **Please note that if no mentors are available then no new MGs will be assigned to the project.**

The selection of mentors from within a project is up to the Project Chair and team members. Some groups may prefer to rotate the responsibility while others may prefer to have team members volunteer for the mentor role. The only requirement to serve as a mentor is to be a PCMG Master Gardener in good standing - extensive gardening experience is not required!

Responsibilities of the Project Chair:

1. The Project Chair will be notified by the President or 1VP when a new MG has been assigned to the project. The Chair should notify the mentor and share the new MG's name and contact information.
2. A welcome phone call to the new MG from both the Chair and the mentor is highly recommended. **Please ensure that the new MG has the name and contact information for both the Chair and the mentor.**
3. **Make sure that the new MG is added to the project email and telephone lists immediately!** Remind the new MG to check email frequently as they will start to receive regular correspondence from PCMG, PCEX and UAEX. Advise him/her to check spam folder if they aren't receiving mail and let you know if there is a problem.

4. The Chair and mentor should discuss beforehand when the first workday for the new MG will be and what the orientation process will include. A written orientation list for each project is highly recommended to ensure all new members receive a consistent orientation to project procedures.

5. Check with the mentor at regular intervals to assess the progress of the new MG team member so that problems can be identified and solved in a timely manner. Don't hesitate to consult with the 1VP further advice and guidance.

Responsibilities of the Mentor:

1. Contact the new MG via phone or email as soon as possible to welcome him/her to your project and PCMG. Decide what method of communication works best for you and the new MG (phone, email, text) and make sure the new MG has your contact information.

2. Be positive and welcoming and maintain a positive attitude with regard to the PCMG program, Pulaski County Extension Service, County 76 and the University of Arkansas Department of Agriculture.

3. Arrange to meet the new MG on his/her first project workday. Make sure he/she knows what the procedure is in case of inclement weather and double check to ensure the new MG is included in all project communications.

4. Be a good listener and encourage questions. Teach the new MG where to find answers on their own on the PCMG and UADA websites and in the Arkansas MG Handbook and the PCMG Volunteer Manual.

5. Show the new MG how to log their project work hours as well as their education hours. Encourage him/her to do this after each workday and, if possible, enter your hours together after the first few workdays to make sure they are doing it correctly.

6. Accompany the new MG to their first monthly meeting or ensure another project member is available to meet the new MG there. Show him/her where to sign in and where your team usually sits. Remember that it takes multiple meetings before the new MG learns all the team members so be patient and remind teammates to help integrate the new MG.

7. Coordinate with the Project Chair to make sure one of you can accompany the new MG to the first New MG Welcome Social event. This is a time to celebrate the accomplishment of the new MG and welcome them to the PCMG organization. Attendance by both Mentor and the new MG at the yearly statewide Annual to Perennial education program is highly recommended.

8. **Record your hours!** You may enter your time spent in the mentoring role in your sanctioned project **OR** education hours line **but you may only count the hours once.**

9. Some new MGs need more guidance and support than others so please be flexible and understanding as they develop confidence in their new role. If you sense the new MG is experiencing difficulties make sure you keep the Project Chair aware of this so an appropriate plan of action can be developed.

10. There is no specified timeline for the mentor relationship but a general guideline would be one year or until the new MG has met their 40 hour requirement to achieve full MG status.

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