

# 1998 Master Gardener Program Summary Report

North Carolina Cooperative Extension

Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) continue to provide valuable educational assistance and leadership to Cooperative Extension's consumer horticultural programs. Their efforts enhance Extension agents ability to provide unbiased, research-based information on cultural and pest management practices that maximize plant growth and productivity while minimize inputs (dollars, time, pesticides, fertilizer, water) while protecting our natural resources and enhancing our community appearance.

Growth is the word that best describes the Master Gardener program in 1998. Sixty seven counties now offer the Master Gardener program. Almost half of these programs were started in the last five years. Seven hundred and thirty five new volunteers were trained; many counties increased their recertification training for their veteran MGVs. Extension's 2,200 Master Gardener Volunteers provided 117,541 hours of education assistance to over 445,000 home gardeners. This is an all time high for volunteer hours — a 38% increase from 1997. The volunteer efforts is equivalent to 61 full-time employees.

Answering telephone inquires has been a mainstay of Master Gardener Volunteer work. Highly trained Master Gardener Volunteers now respond to the vast majority of home landscape and garden telephone calls in our urban counties. In 1998, Master Gardener Volunteers reported answered 47,526 telephone calls.

Speakers bureaus are conducted by many county Master Gardener programs. A vital component of outreach by Extension, these public presentations deliver research-based information to garden clubs, civic groups, and other community organizations. In 1998, Master Gardener Volunteers made 593 presentations to over 19,700 people (39% increase), utilizing Extension information and materials.

MGVs have plowed new ground in youth development using the garden as a classroom to prepare youth for the future. Teaching life skills via gardening, Master Gardener Volunteers provided their expertise to 75 school gardens in 1998. Over 28,000 students (49% increase) were exposed to the wonders of gardening and the environment through the 1998 school garden program (demonstration gardens, presentations).

Master Gardener Volunteers can be found: collecting water quality samples, pick up trash with the Adopt-A-Highway program; designing and manning an exhibit at the fair; teaching youth offenders new life skills; pulling weeds in a demonstration garden; diagnosing a sick plant at a library; assisting a school with a landscape project; building raised beds for an inner city housing project; identifying a possible poisonous plant; writing a weekly news article; answering questions on a call-in radio program; or providing valuable office support by stuffing envelopes and organizing publications.

*Helping gardeners put  
knowledge to work*

Master Gardener Volunteers assist in program administration and leadership. Sixty four percent of the county programs utilize volunteers in middle management roles. Over half of the counties have a Master Gardener advisory committee. This

suggests the NC State University Master Gardener program is maturing, with Master Gardener Volunteers helping administrate the program and further sharing the work load with Extension agents.

### Value added to Extension

Using the conservative figure of \$10 per hour, the value for volunteer hours comes to \$1,175,410. MGVs contributed \$66,513 out-of-pocket funds; raised \$117,920 to enhance the program, and drove over 292,677 miles at their own expense. The combined total is **\$1,453,499** — a 74% increase over 1997.

### Savings by consumers

If each phone caller saved \$25 from information received, the combined total savings would be \$1,188,150. If each person receiving information from the Master Gardener Volunteers saved an average of just \$10 each, the combined savings would exceed \$4,450,000.

Activities	1998 Totals	Activities	1998 Totals
New MG Volunteers	735	Television/radio Programs	294
Veteran MG Volunteers	1,498	Programs to Groups	593
		Audience Reached	19,728
Total Client Contacts	445,312*	Manned Exhibits	155
		Audience	177,974
Volunteer Hours	117,541	Demonstration Gardens	109
		Audience	143,131
Phone Calls	50,452	School Programs	197
		Youth participating	25,055
Diagnosed Plant Samples	13,898	School Gardens	60
		Youth Participating	3,267
News Articles Written	561	Assisted Friends and	11,807
		Neighbors	

\* Does not include citizens assisted through mass media (radio, television, news articles)

MG Activities	% of Counties Utilizing MGVs	MG Activities	% of Counties Utilizing MGVs
Clerical Work	69	Earth Day/Arbor Day Celebrations	17
Conducted Surveys	25	Speakers for Civic Groups	64
Fund Raising	40	Helped Teach MGV Class	53
Community Beautification Projects	58	Demonstration Gardens	55
4-H Programs	60	Radio Programs	13
Environmental Field Days	32	News Articles	43
Computer Training	25	Television Programs	19
Landscape Consultations	35	MG Advisory Committee	52
Home Visits	58	Conducted School Programs	53
Judged Contest/events	64	School Demonstration Garden	36
Community Gardens	51	MGVs in Middle Management	69