



Getting Started: Volunteering 101

Whether you are a new MG Intern, a returning Master Gardener, or a Master Gardener transfer to Baltimore City, there are a couple of things you need to do first to be successful in volunteering with the UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Program.

- 1) You will need to gain access to our Volunteer Management System (VMS). This is the online platform that you will use to log your volunteer and education hours each year. Remember MG Interns log 40 hrs of volunteer time, and Certified Active MGs log 20 hrs of volunteer time plus 10 hours of continuing education. The following section will tell you how to gain access to the system.
- 2) You will need to gain access to signupgenius.com. It is not obligatory that you create a Sign Up Genius account, but we recommend that you do. Having an account makes it easier to find volunteer opportunities as a BCMG. The instructions on how to do this will follow after the VMS access instructions.
- 3) Read this document. It is comprehensive and will answer a lot of the questions you may have about how to introduce a new Project Proposal, how to volunteer as a MG with other organizations, how to gain access to Educational Materials, what your Responsibilities are as a UME MG Volunteer, How to use the Master Gardener Title and more.
- 4) Do not forget you can always ask your mentor, or the Master Gardener Coordinator for help if you cannot find an answer to your question here.

Accessing the Volunteer Management System (VMS)

The VMS, launched January of 2019, serves multiple functions. First and foremost, it is the platform where volunteers log their volunteer and continuing education hours. New to many Master Gardeners, it also allows MGs and Interns to access a directory of Baltimore City MGs and MG Intern Volunteers. This means you can look up another volunteer and their contact info from the VMS. You can also upload a picture of yourself which is helpful! And finally, the VMS helps the administrators of the MG Program both locally and statewide, access information about our projects, and use that data to help us remain funded!

The first time sign on to the system will be a little different than every other time you will log on.

Please read and follow the directions for first time log-on here:

<https://myemail.constantcontact.com/UME-Master-Gardener-Program---Learn-About-Our-New-Volunteer-Management-System--VMS-.html?soid=1127069117597&aid=RPN6sNwNgw8>

After you've signed on for the first time, please update all the information in the system and set a new password that you will remember. Double check and enter:

- Cell #
- Mailing Address
- Email address
- Upload a photo
- Etc.

There are a bunch of tutorial videos that show you how to log data and information and navigate through the system. There is also a "Help" form should you need to fill that out and ask the system administrator for special help.

This State MG Page also will help you find answers about how to log information, which Activity Codes to use, and how to report demographic information (if you are the one in charge of doing so for any given event): <https://extension.umd.edu/mg/program-management/tracking-volunteer-hours>

After you've followed the special instructions for the first-time log-in, use this link to access the normal sign in page, which you'll regularly use: <https://vms.umd.edu/>

We recommend you enter your hours on a monthly basis and not wait until the deadline in early December. This helps us with our quarterly reporting of numbers as well as helps you not scramble as the last minute!

Sign Up Genius Access

Using the same username and password as your VMS account (if you want), sign up for Sign Up Genius. (SUG) <https://www.signupgenius.com/index.cfm?go=w.Welcome>

Again you do not absolutely have to make a SUG account, but it will be helpful!

Here are some SUG best practices:

- 1) **Always include your cell number** in the comments when you sign up for an event. This allows the event organizer to get ahold of you quickly and easily.

- 2) **If you sign up, show up.** If you have to cancel, contact the event organizer or the Master Gardener Coordinator as soon as you know. Then after letting the organizer know, please take your name off of the SUG so someone else has a chance to sign up.
- 3) **Sharing is caring.** It's very tempting to sign up for 5 slots when you see an opportunity come out that you really are excited about. Best practice is to sign up for no more than 3 slots, give it some time, and if there are still slots open a week later, sign up for a few more after others have had a chance to sign up too!

Finding UME Master Gardener Volunteer Opportunities

There are a few places you can look to find current or upcoming volunteer opportunities, continuing education events, forms to propose new UME BCMG Projects, and other information.

AGNR UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Groups Page: this is our “Internal Page for MGs Only” and has a calendar of volunteer and education opportunities, and helpful tips and documents, including the UME BCMG Project Proposal Form.

Link to AGNR Groups BCMG Main Page: <https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/bcitymastergardeners>

Link to AGNR Groups BCMG Calendar: <https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/calendar-list-volunteer-education-opportunities>

Link to AGNR Groups BCMG Helpful Documents Page with a downloadable Project Proposal Form: <https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/helpful-tips-documents>

Sign Up Genius (SUG): Online platform to sign up for volunteer events. If you've created a SUG account (recommended), you will be able to pull up a calendar of all Baltimore City Master Gardener Volunteer opportunities that are active.

UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Website: this is our Public page, but has a link to the AGNR Groups page. <https://extension.umd.edu/baltimore-city/master-gardeners/internal-links-mgs>

UME Baltimore City Clippings and Email Listserv: All SUGs get sent out via email, and then logged on the AGNR Groups Volunteer and Education Calendar. We also send out a monthly newsletter called Clippings.

Home Garden Information Center (HGIC) and State MG Listservs: Get the latest info on Statewide MG meetings (attend for volunteer or continuing education hours), and HGIC alerts on emerging Invasive Species, Statewide Extension events, and general horticulture news!

Responsibilities of Volunteers

- Follow the guidelines and procedures set forth by UME.
- Be considerate, respect others' competencies and work as a member of a team with all professional and volunteer staff.
- Accept assignments of your choice that you feel comfortable with and that are compatible with your interests and skills.
- For volunteer activities, fulfill your commitment or notify your mentor, volunteer activity leader, or Extension professional early enough that a substitute can be found.
- Assist UME professionals in soliciting and collecting survey and evaluation data to measure program impact.
- Attend regularly scheduled meetings and actively participate whenever possible.
- Provide feedback and suggestions to your mentor and Extension professional to increase program effectiveness.
- Help new volunteers feel accepted.
- Take on leadership roles.

In addition to the above responsibilities volunteers are asked to track their hours and demographic contacts in the following ways:

- Keep an accurate record of your volunteer service hours and continuing education hours and record them online using the Volunteer Management System (VMS) on a regular basis. Hours must be submitted and approved by the annual deadlines set by both the state office and your MG Coordinator. Link to VMS log-in: https://vms.umd.edu/vms/sec_Login/ and Link to UME State MG Page with info and tutorials on the new VMS System: <https://extension.umd.edu/mg/program-management/tracking-volunteer-hours>
- University of Maryland employees and volunteers are required by federal and state law and institutional policy to ensure that all programs and services are available to all people. Therefore, it is very important that you complete your volunteer log forms on a regular basis, including gender, race, and ethnicity information for clientele with whom you have contact. Participant contact data is to be collected in a discrete manner. In activities with large attendance, make the best estimate you can. Identify participants as "Unknown" when you are in doubt as to race or ethnicity. When more than one Master Gardener is involved in an event, please take care that all contacts are accounted for, and that the contact numbers are not duplicated by individual Master Gardeners.
 - In Baltimore City we ask the Day of Coordinator, MG Event Organizer, or the Committee Chair be responsible for collecting this information from the Volunteers present. The Day of Coordinator/Event Organizer/Committee Chair is then responsible for actually entering this information into the VMS.
 - As an individual MG, you should be keeping track of demographics and getting them to the correct volunteer who will ultimately enter the stats into the system. This helps us avoid duplication. When in doubt, please ask!

Responsibilities of Extension

- Provide you with the necessary training (a minimum of 40 hours) and materials to carry out your assignments.
- Familiarize you with UME programs and University of Maryland policies and procedures and help you become an integral part of the UME team.
- Provide adequate orientation, training, and supervision for the assignments you accept.
- Offer opportunity to advance to positions with increased responsibilities and higher levels of management/skill.
- Keep you informed about program activities and events through state and county newsletters and websites.
- Provide you with feedback to help improve your job performance.
- Recognize your contribution to University of Maryland Extension.

What Constitutes a Master Gardener Activity?

Maryland Master Gardeners are involved in a wide range of activities such as Ask a MG plant clinics, teaching classes, and demonstration gardens.

In Baltimore City there are around 60 volunteer opportunities each year that will be sent out via our email list. You sign up for those events using Sign Up Genius. If you are volunteering with a Baltimore City Master Gardener Committee, or signed up for an event from a SUG, then you know that already qualifies as a MG Activity. If you have another project in mind, read on.

One of the great things about being a Master Gardener volunteer, is that you have the ability to create your own volunteer opportunities. The following broad guidelines can be used to determine the suitability of a particular activity or project:

1. Consistent with the Master Gardener mission.
2. Submitted UME Baltimore City Project Proposal Form
 - a. UME BCMG PP Form found here: <https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/helpful-tips-documents>
3. Accessible and open to the public.
4. Provides the general public with accurate and useful information regarding horticulture and integrated pest management.
5. Educational and does not result in financial gain for the Master Gardener.
6. Conducted by the Master Gardener as a representative of the University of Maryland.

Education is the mission and principal goal of the Master Gardener program.

Garden maintenance activities should be kept to a minimum. Site visits to the private properties of individual clients are strongly discouraged unless they are part of an approved activity, like the Bay-Wise Landscaping program.

Discuss your ideas for appropriate activities with other Master Gardeners and Extension professionals.

All volunteer hours should be entered online. This includes planning meetings and events, committee and administrative work, and time spent preparing for activities. Volunteer service includes travel time for volunteer activities and MG meetings, but does not include continuing education (class room hours or travel time).

All MG activities/projects must be approved by an Extension professional

The State Coordinator may be consulted where questions or issues arise over a proposed activity. (See above for “How to Submit a new Volunteer Opportunity or Project”)

Guidelines for Working with the Public

1. Identify yourself as a UME Master Gardener Volunteer or UME Master Gardener Intern when participating in events sanctioned by the University of Maryland. Always wear your name badge. Remember that the public has respect for you and confidence in your abilities because of your association with the University of Maryland. They expect impartial, objective information. Your job is to help clients make informed decisions.
2. Do not attempt to answer questions outside of the home horticulture area (e.g. food preservation, nutrition, commercial production). Be prepared to refer clients to appropriate resources, UME professionals or other agencies and organizations.
3. If you're unsure of the answer to a client question you can take down the pertinent information, research the question, talk to other Master Gardeners or Extension professionals, and then call the client back with an answer, or refer the client to the appropriate Extension professional.
4. Do not endorse brand name products, recommend a particular company or criticize the work of a lawn care, pest management or other horticulture-related company. Do not become involved in disputes between individuals (e.g. “my neighbor sprayed my rose bushes with something”) or between an individual and a company (e.g. “do you think I should sue my lawn care service”?)
5. Many volunteers make a big difference in people's lives when working in the therapeutic horticulture arena. Volunteers should always work under the supervision of a health care professional and closely adhere to the facility's institutional policies and guidelines.
6. Accepting invitations to conduct plant clinics, workshops, information booths, etc. at private businesses: On occasion, retail nurseries, greenhouses, and garden centers have asked MGs to make presentations, conduct plant clinics, distribute fact sheets, etc. for special events, fairs and festivals conducted by the individual business. In some cases, businesses have given honoraria to the MG programs for these services. This type of activity is permitted as long as the following criteria are met:
 - a. Limited to a single event, or well defined series of special events.
 - b. Does not overwhelm MG volunteer resources or reduce effectiveness of other MG activities.

- c. Will further the educational goals of the MG program and the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources.
- d. Made available to other similar businesses to avoid the appearance of partiality.
- e. The MG presence is advertised and promoted prior to the event.
- f. Does not enrich or aggrandize individual MGs.
- g. The identity and affiliation of the MGs is clear and unmistakable. MGs are given a separate designated area to educate customers to help maintain our reputation for impartiality and objectivity.

Using the Master Gardener Title and Personal Conduct

1. Only Active, certified Master Gardeners can use the title “Maryland Master Gardener” which carries a State of Maryland Service Mark (SM). The terms University of Maryland Master Gardener and Maryland Master Gardener are to be used only and exclusively in conjunction with activities associated with the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener Program.
2. You will identify yourself as a Master Gardener and wear the Master Gardener badge only when engaged in unpaid public service in an approved University of Maryland Extension sponsored program and/or any UME Master Gardener approved program in or out of the State of Maryland.
3. A Master Gardener cannot lend her name and title to promote or advertise a private business (e.g. wearing a Master Gardener name tag while working for a business as a paid employee). An implied association with or endorsement of a commercial product or business is improper and grounds for dismissal from the program.
4. You cannot use the title of the University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener for financial gain in a business you own, operate or associate with. You cannot keep money or gifts you receive as a donation, payment, or gratuity for services performed as a Master Gardener for financial gain. Such monies and gifts should be turned in to the County/City MG Coordinator.
5. While serving as a UME Master Gardener Volunteer you will use and disseminate only UME recommendations and information or science-based information from other land-grant universities. Practices that are not science-based should not be mentioned.
6. You can use the title University of Maryland Extension Master Gardener on a resume or job application to signify that you have received, and continue to receive, training from UME.
7. You can display your Master Gardener Certificate at your place of business or in your office to signify that you have received training in horticulture from UME.

Educational Materials

1. Ask for permission and give proper credit to information sources used in articles for Master Gardener newsletters, print media, presentations and websites.

2. Classroom outlines, articles for media, MG newsletters, web content, and other materials developed by volunteers must be reviewed and approved by an Extension professional prior to distribution or release.
3. Only distribute approved, updated Extension fact sheets.
4. All educational materials purchased with program funds or developed for training or projects, or use by Master Gardeners (e.g. slides, photography, PowerPoint Presentations, tools, insect and herbarium mounts, and books) are the property of UME.

Tip: You can check out a laptop and projector for presentation by contacting the UME MG Coordinator!

Frequently we have potting soil and seeds for demonstrations! Contact UME MG Coordinator.

Pesticides and Pest Control Recommendations

1. It is the client's responsibility to use pesticides safely and legally. ALWAYS insist that clients READ and FOLLOW pesticide label directions and remind them that it is a federal offense to use any pesticide in contradiction to the label information. The label is the law.
2. When clients have questions about specific materials refer them to the manufacturers' telephone number or the National Pesticide Information Center (<http://npic.orst.edu/>; 1-800-858-7378). Do not speak for pesticide companies.
3. It is important to be up-to-date on the labeling information for commonly used pesticides and knowledgeable about non-chemical pest control methods.
4. UME Master Gardeners may not apply any pesticides (e.g., glyphosate, insecticidal soap) on public land (including demonstration gardens). Pesticides can only be applied on public land by individuals with current Pesticide Applicator Certification issued by the Maryland Dept. of Agriculture, or a trained individual working under the Certified Applicators' supervision.

Volunteering as a Master Gardener with Other Agencies and Organizations

Educational efforts are often enhanced through cooperative programs with other groups. Based on the other information given in this Volunteer Guidelines document, when partnering with other groups, please make sure that you are appropriately identifying yourself as a UME Baltimore City Master Gardener, or Master Gardener Intern and adhering to the UME Master Gardener Mission of education.

Many times our BCMG Committees have standing relationships with other City Organizations, so it's good to reach out to a Committee first before trying to reinvent the wheel. Find our current committee chairs and Board of Advisors here: <https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/board-committees>

There are so many wonderful greening and gardening organizations in Baltimore City who also are in need of volunteers. As an individual citizen you can and should volunteer wherever your heart desires. When trying to decide if one volunteer activity might also count as Master Gardener Hours, our general rule of thumb is “no double dipping hours”.

This means that if you are volunteering with another organization in the City where you are not identifying as a Master Gardener and not providing that educational element per our mission, than you probably cannot count that event towards your Master Gardener volunteer hours. Just wearing your Master Gardener Badge and t-shirt, doesn't make it a Master Gardener event.

It is absolutely possible to partner with organizations and groups to provide technical support/advise, teach classes, or lead workshops as a UME Master Gardener. These would count as MG Hours! We can even help advertise and market those opportunities on our Facebook page and newsletters. Make sure to fill out a Project Proposal form for any new projects (see “What Constitutes a Master Gardener Activity?”)

Now to make things confusing, there are a few organizations where Master Gardeners can regularly volunteer and know that these volunteer hours can count as MG Hours. These are formalized partnerships.

Blue Water Baltimore's Herring Run Nursery: There are 2 roles you can volunteer here as a UME Master Gardener, by identifying yourself as such, wearing your t-shirt and/or badge, and of course providing good educational information and technical advice. Those 2 roles are as the Greeter and the Plant Expert roles. You can find out how to sign up for those volunteer spots on the Blue Water Baltimore's volunteer calendar. They probably will not be posted until spring when the Nursery is open and selling plants. Unfortunately the Workdays do not count as MG Hours.

Cylburn Arboretum's Demonstration Gardens: Cylburn Arboretum and the UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Program have a special relationship. Since the UME office doesn't have enough space to regularly host all the MG Basic Training Class, nor have a Demo Garden, Cylburn has allowed us to step into their space. Many Master Gardeners come to love Cylburn since they spend so many hours there in Basic Training. Many Master Gardeners volunteer with Cylburn Arboretum Association in a variety of ways to both help with the upkeep of the Cylburn grounds, and teach! Volunteering here is a good way to learn a lot of things about plants. In volunteering here, it is important that we make sure to engage passersby, wear your badge and consciously do outreach while volunteering. Please make your best judgements when putting these hours into the MG Hours recording system. If you spent 5 hours weeding and not engaging with anyone, it might be best not to list this activity at all. If you spent 5 hours weeding, and engaged with 15 different visitors about the work you're doing and why it's important, that could be recorded. After all our UME MG Program mission is education.

Rawlings Conservatory: Some BCMGs also volunteer at the Rawlings Blake Conservatory. Similarly to Cylburn this relationship spans many years and Master Gardeners are allowed to volunteer here and record some of those hours as MG Hours. In volunteering here, it is

important that we make sure to engage passersby, wear your badge and consciously do outreach while volunteering. Please make your best judgements when putting these hours into the MG Hours recording system. If you spent 5 hours weeding and not engaging with anyone, it might be best not to list this activity at all. If you spent 5 hours weeding, and engaged with 15 different visitors about the work you're doing and why it's important, that could be recorded. After all our UME MG Program mission is education.

IF there is a requests or proposals for formal partnerships or agreements must be submitted to a UME faculty member.

Reimbursement Policies UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Program: “Are there funds available?”

The answer is “maybe.”

Thanks for understanding that as a Train the Trainer Program the UME BCMG Program has very limited funds! The funds we do have are structured under an Annual Budget that funnels money to UME Baltimore City Master Gardener Projects in part through our UME BCMG Board of Advisers (BoA) which is made up of elected officers, committee chairs, and the UME Master Gardener Coordinator. This means if you have an idea for a project, propose it early and get involved!!! The committees have new and ongoing projects each year and we encourage new MGs and Interns to get involved with these established groups.

<https://agnrgroups.umd.edu/board-committees>

Come join us at a BoA meeting every 2nd Wednesday of the month from 7-9pm at the UME Baltimore City Extension office. This counts as volunteer hours! Please RSVP to the UME MG Coordinator or BoA President before showing up in case of a cancellation. All are welcome!

The only way to potentially qualify for any sort of reimbursement for project materials is to work with a Committee of the UME BCMG Program Board of Advisers.

Any project that you would want to purchase materials for and get reimbursed, would have to be pre-approved by a Committee Chair. We do not purchase in kind goods. All purchases would have to be for demonstration or educational purposes. Committees have very small budgets, but if your proposed project fits within their scope of work they may be able to help you buy seeds or potting soil, etc. This is not a guarantee, but is a possible way to get access to things. If a committee cannot help you, always feel free to reach out to the UME MG Coordinator for more clarification.

You should be able to fulfill the Mission of the MG Program without spending any money out of pocket. We already have a lot of demo supplies, just reach out and ask!

Tip: Join a Committee!

A Word on Grants

As Master Gardeners we should be aware of opportunities in the City that allow community gardens, or organizations to apply for grants. The UME BCMG Community Gardens Committee is working on a document that has all the Baltimore City and Regional Grants listed with links, and application deadlines. Please send more opportunities to that committee to augment the list, and then give it out to your partners!

As an individual Master Gardener, you can make plans to support an organization after they've received a grant by teaching classes, or providing technical assistance, it is appropriate for them to state that “____,” a UME Baltimore City Master Gardener will provide “_____”x” MG Assistance or Education ____”. However, we cannot hold the grant funds. If there is a larger project you wish to seek out, please talk to the UME BCMG Coordinator and the volunteer leadership of the BoA.

However, Master Gardener volunteers should never be the grant writer or applicant unless they are working on a grant application with a UME employee. Contact the UME Master Gardener Coordinator with any questions.