

ORANGE COUNTY  
*INDEPENDENT*

MASTER  
GARDENERS  
HANDBOOK



## TABLE OF CONTENTS

OCI Master Gardeners' Mission Statement	3
The Master Gardener Program	4
Training Class	5
Volunteer Commitment	5
Meetings	5
Field Trips	5
Newsletter	6
Master Gardener Training Program	6
Membership Classifications	7
Master Gardener Badges	7
Reimbursement of Expenses	8
Conflict Resolution and Grievance	8
Plant Clinics	9
Volunteer Activities	9
Activities That Count Towards Volunteer Hours	9
Activities That Do Not Count Towards Volunteer Hours	10
How to Submit or Propose a Volunteer Venue	10
Enrichment or Continuing Education	10
Record Keeping	11
Liability Insurance	11
Guidelines for Working with People with Special Needs	11
Working with Children	11
Working with People who have Mobility Problems	12
Working with People who are Blind or Visually Impaired	12

### **Website**

Orange County Master Gardeners maintains a website as an information resource for current and prospective members. Previous newsletters, forms, approved volunteer venues, and links to other websites are available. Suggestions for materials or links to be added to the website should be directed to the President, who will then authorize the webmaster. <http://www.ocmastergardeners.org>

## ORANGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT MASTER GARDENERS MISSION STATEMENT

The Orange County Independent Master Gardeners is an organization of trained gardeners devoted to sharing scientifically based horticultural knowledge for the purpose of educating the communities of Orange County. The organization will fulfill its mission by volunteering skills, time and talents in community-based horticulture projects.

### ORANGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT MASTER GARDENERS' HANDBOOK

The Handbook of the Orange County Independent Master Gardeners (OCIMG) is a tool for members. It describes the program goals, organization and volunteer community work. The handbook is useful to new and experienced members and helps implement the program..

#### Editors

1997	MarjoriePuckett©1997
1998	Jerry Young
2002	Jackie Brooks and Jean Rice
2003	Jackie Brooks, Jill Patterson, and Jean Rice
2009	Sharon Neely
2014	Gerald S. Dankner



## **THE MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM - NATIONALLY WHO ARE MASTER GARDENERS?**

Master Gardeners are gardeners who have attended a rigorous training class, passed competency examinations and who are committed to sharing their knowledge and the joy of horticulture. There are over 45,000 Master Gardeners in 45 states and four Canadian provinces. Master Gardening students include a range of ages and backgrounds. They increase their knowledge of horticulture through lifelong learning and training, and share their skills and knowledge with the community.

## **HOW DID MASTER GARDENERS START?**

In 1972, David Bibby, an extension agent in Snohomish County, Washington, received an overabundance of gardening questions coming into his office. He started the first Master Gardeners Program with local gardeners given special horticultural training, and then sharing the knowledge as volunteers. Because the original program started under the Cooperative Extension, many of the programs continue under the Extension service. A few states will not allow government funding to go toward the program; therefore in some places Master Gardeners work outside the sponsorship of the state. A few states have no Cooperative Extensions and Master Gardeners organize independently. All groups are committed to the concept that training should be accurate and specific for the local area. This knowledge is shared with the public at no cost.

## **HISTORY OF MASTER GARDENERS IN CALIFORNIA**

The program was introduced in California in 1979 with pilot programs in Riverside and Sacramento counties. Today there are active programs in 29 counties. It is estimated that there are over 6,000 Master Gardeners in California.

## **THE ORANGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM\***

Members manage the Master Gardener program and carry out day-to-day activities. The adopted By-Laws and Standing Rules are included in [www.OCmastergardens.org](http://www.OCmastergardens.org), our website. The budget is submitted and approved by members. The Board recommends policy changes to the general membership. If approved, new policy is implemented.

The program is dedicated to "learn and share." The "learn" is the training class and the continuing education/enrichment about horticulture. The "share" is volunteering to help others learn to love gardening and to teaching others about horticulture.

**\*THE ORANGE COUNTY INDEPENDENT MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM IS NOT AFFILIATED WITH THE UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM.**



## **TRAINING CLASS**

Members, as well as horticultural professionals and college teachers, are instructors for the training program. The goal is to have one training class per year. The 18-week program is scheduled to be available to both working and non-working people.



## **VOLUNTEER COMMITMENT**

When acting as an OCIMG volunteer, the service provided is free. An OCIMG member may accept an honorarium if offered as a donation to the organization. If offered payment for mileage or for out-of-pocket expenses, the member may accept or donate to the OCIMG program.

The OCIMG title cannot be used for commercial purposes. If the member is charging for a service, the member cannot use the OCIMG title when doing so.

The intent of the program is to provide unbiased accurate horticultural information to the public. The list of approved venues is varied and continues to expand, as the program becomes known.

OCIMG as an organization maintains its independence by not endorsing specific businesses or concerns.



## **ORANGE COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MONTHLY MEETINGS**

General membership meetings are held the first Saturday of each month. Attendance at monthly meetings and field trips is not mandatory, but highly encouraged. The monthly newsletter "*Garden Clippings*" provides timely information on the meeting place and speaker.

The meeting includes a business meeting, a drawing for plants (Plants 'n Things) and miscellaneous items, as well as the enrichment speaker.

## **FIELD TRIPS**

Field trips are scheduled to places of horticultural interest. The newsletter will announce location and time. Some members may wish to carpool.

## **NEWSLETTER - GARDEN CLIPPINGS**

The newsletter is published and mailed one week prior to the monthly meeting. Announcements and articles of horticultural interest are emphasized. Members are encouraged to write concise articles for submission to the editor and Inclusion in the newsletter. The deadline for articles to be received by the editor is the 10th of the month preceding publication.

## **MASTER GARDENER TRAINING PROGRAM**

A Master Gardener is a trained volunteer who offers to home gardeners his or her time and expertise to provide current, accurate, research-based horticultural information specific to the local area.

Trainees are expected to:

- Attend all of the training classes
- Contribute 10 hours at approved venues within the six-month training period. Note: the 10 hours are counted in the 50 first year volunteer hours.
- Pass the examination

The training program includes a series of classes and practicums organized by OCIMG. Class content is based on current scientific horticultural practices to complement and extend the trainees' personal gardening experiences. The classes cover basic botany, soils, irrigation, pest management, plant pathology, native plants, trees, propagation, vegetables and fruits. Knowledge of the local area climate, soils and plant communities is emphasized.

The class fee covers:

- The training program including all manuals and printed materials
- The OCIMG newsletter Gardening Clippings
- Training identification badge during training and membership badge upon completion of requirements.

To be a Certified Master Gardener you must:

- Complete the training classes
- Pass a final examination
- Complete 50 hours volunteer work (internship) within the 12 months following the training period
- Complete 25 hours volunteer work in each subsequent year
- Complete 15 hours of enrichment or continuing education in each subsequent year
- Be current on payment of membership dues.
- Hours for approved volunteer activities and continuing education enrichment should be submitted monthly to the Volunteer Hour Coordinator. See roster.

## **MEMBERSHIP CLASSIFICATION**

### **TRAINEE**

Trainees must complete all requirements as listed. Trainees have all rights and privileges of Active members except voting or holding office. Trainees have 12 months from the completion of the class to complete the 50 hours of volunteer service.

### **ACTIVE**

An Active Master Gardener is certified and recertified annually to retain OCIMG membership. OCIMG members must complete a minimum of 25 hours volunteer service and 15 hours of enrichment each year. Active members are expected to pay annual dues. They are entitled to vote and hold office.

### **ASSOCIATE**

Members who are not active in the program during the current year (illness, temporary moves from the area, etc.) may become Associate members with the approval of the Board.

Associate members are expected to pay yearly dues. They may not incur any debts to the organization. Associate members are granted all rights and privileges of Active members except voting or holding office.

### **LIFETIME**

Lifetime membership is conferred upon active members who have completed and submitted 750 hours of volunteer service in the program. A distinctive Master Gardener badge is awarded. Lifetime members are not required to pay annual dues. Active lifetime members may vote and hold office.

### **HONORARY**

Persons who enrich the objectives of the program may be granted honorary membership with the approval of the Board. Honorary members are not expected to pay dues and may not vote or hold office. An honorary member may not incur any debts to the organization.

## **OC INDEPENDENT MASTER GARDENER BADGES**



### **TRAINEES**

Trainees are to wear a trainee name badge when attending classes; when attending OCIMG meetings; and when engaged in an OCIMG activity involving the public.

Upon completing certification requirements, trainees will receive an Active Membership badge. OCIMG will provide the badge. Replacements are at member's cost.

### **CERTIFIED MEMBERS**

OCIMG members must wear their name badge when engaged in an OCIMG activity involving the public, at monthly meetings and on field trips.

## REIMBURSEMENT OF EXPENSES

If you make a purchase using your own money, the procedure for reimbursement is:

- All bills must be submitted within 45 days of the expenditure
- Fill out check request form
- Mail the treasurer form with the original receipt, invoice, and packing slip, if applicable
- Highlight the amounts on the receipt
- Do not buy personal items on the same receipt
- Keep a photocopy of the receipt.

The President may authorize expenditure not to exceed \$100.00. The Board of Directors may authorize expenditures of up to \$250.00 for a non-budgeted item. Any greater amount for a non-budgeted item must be presented to the general membership for approval. If you have questions, please call the Treasurer.

## CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND GRIEVANCE

The goal is to resolve conflicts as quickly and prudently as possible at the lowest level. Conflicts can occur between individuals or groups on any aspect of the Master Gardener program including specific volunteer venues, policy or persons. All matters will be treated with complete confidentiality, and in a manner to reach resolution in a prompt and courteous way.

**Step 1:** If you believe there is a conflict, discuss it with the President and try together to resolve the problem.

**Step 2:** If the conflict resolution has not been accomplished, request in writing that a Committee consisting of the President, 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President and Treasurer meet to hear both parties and groups. The Committee will hear the problem in an unbiased, amicable and courteous manner. Resolution will be attempted to solve the problem to all parties' satisfaction.

**Step 3:** If the conflict is unresolved, the parties should file a written grievance with the Board. It should document the facts, state the problem, and state what solution/resolution is sought.

The written grievance should be forwarded to the President with a request to have a meeting scheduled with the Board. The Board will hear the problem in an unbiased, amicable and courteous manner with both parties and group representatives present. Resolution will be attempted to solve the problem. The majority vote by the Board will be final. The minutes of a grievance meeting will be completed and retained, but are confidential.





## PLANT CLINICS

Plant clinics have been held at various venues such as the Fullerton Arboretum and cooperating nurseries. Gardeners bring questions, sometimes with sample plant materials, to the clinic. Usually at least two members help answer the questions. There is a resource box available with information including source books, Plant Problem handouts, and answers to the most frequently asked questions.

All OCIMG members are encouraged to participate in Plant Clinics. The most frequent response by a first time Clinic participant is, "I knew more than I thought I knew. I could answer questions, and I knew how to find answers if I didn't. It was fun."

## VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES

Master Gardeners share their knowledge and enthusiasm about horticulture through volunteering. All volunteer hours should have an educational aspect. Many venues have been reviewed and approved by the Board. New venues are recommended to the Board on a regular basis. See Handbook Appendix for a listing of the current volunteer venues. If you have a venue you would like to be considered please submit to the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President for Board approval.

The actual requirement for volunteer hours is 50 hours for the first year and 25 hours for additional years.

## ACTIVITIES THAT COUNT TOWARD VOLUNTEER HOURS

- Any educational activity where you provide information on horticulture and gardening to the public.
- A volunteer activity that has been approved by the OCIMG Board.
- Plant clinics, talks, demonstrations or tours.
- Consulting or organizing a community or school garden, but not the physical work required maintaining the garden once it is organized.
- Writing newspaper articles, newsletters, preparing brochures.
- Time spent in organization, research, planning and preparation of a talk, clinic, leaflet or other OCIMG volunteer venue or event.
- Artwork, posters, flyers, displays that benefit the program.
- Time spent on committees or as a coordinator for an OCIMG purpose.
- Typing, clerical work or other administrative duties for the program.
- Picking up and delivering supplies for a talk, clinic or other program function.



If you have questions about a volunteer activity or eligible hours, call the President or 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President. The Board may grant exceptions to the rules for volunteer hours.

## **VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES THAT DO NOT COUNT TOWARD VOLUNTEER HOURS**

- Monthly Master Gardener meetings.
- Consulting with neighbors, co-workers, fellow community gardeners, etc.
- Serving as an officer in another horticulture organization.
- Any activity for which you charge a fee.
- Physical labor for a community garden, home garden or community group may not be counted unless it is being done to teach special events such as an Arbor Day planting or to help get a project started. Remember that the key is an educational component.

## **HOW TO SUBMIT OR PROPOSE A VENUE**

Send the proposed venue information in writing the 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President. It will be placed on the next agenda of the Board meeting for review. If approved, the requester will be informed. The newly approved venue will be announced at the next general meeting and the information will also be published in the newsletter.

The request to approve a venue should include:

- Time frame such as one-time event, or several months, or continuing venue
- Contact's name, title, phone number and address
- Name of the organization, facility, park, school, etc.
- Phone numbers, address, etc
- Name of OCIMG member submitting the venue
- Description of the activities requested.

## **ENRICHMENT OR CONTINUING EDUCATION**

Continuing horticultural education is a commitment of OCIMG. There is always something new to learn. We increase our knowledge, and are able to share the knowledge through volunteerism.

## **ACTIVITIES THAT COUNT TOWARD ENRICHMENT/CONTINUING EDUCATION**

- Participating in field trips.
- Attending horticultural lectures or classes.
- Reading books, magazines or other materials relating to horticulture.
- Watching television programs on horticulture.

## **RECORDING KEEPING**

OCMG members keep record of volunteer hours and continuing education hours on a Volunteer Activities form. Forms are available at the monthly meetings.

The volunteer hours are important. They are part of the certification and re-certifications of Master Gardeners. The hours are also important for use in grant applications, publicity and fund-raising. The volunteer hours are the affirmation of our Mission Statement of learning and sharing.

## **OCIMG LIABILITY INSURANCE**

The liability insurance is secured through the California Garden Clubs, Inc., a non-profit association of garden clubs. The liability insurance plan is available to clubs and associate plant societies. The coverage is for investigation, legal defense, bodily injury, and property damage due to the negligence of the club or any of its members during any meeting under the control of the group. There is a limit of \$1 million per accident, with an aggregate of \$2 million for all clubs. The cost for OCIMG members is included in the annual dues.

## **GUIDELINES FOR WORKING WITH PEOPLE WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

In fulfilling our mission, we often work with children and with people who have special needs. Here are suggestions for making the teaching/learning experience successful and fun for people with special needs people.

## **WORKING WITH CHILDREN**

- "HOOK" THE CHILDREN INTO LEARNING. Begin with something especially interesting. Capture their attention.
- Provide lots of hands-on-activities. Children of all ages learn best when they can DO, instead of just listening and watching.
- Watch the complexity of your vocabulary. Be sure you use words young listeners will understand. Check out their understanding regularly by asking them to explain in their own words something you have told them.
- Define words often in simple terms. For example, "This tree root has fungus on it. A fungus is a living thing that is not green, and does not make its own food. It gets food from the plant it sits on."
- Use short, to-the-point sentences. Avoid long, complex sentences, or many sentences joined by "and." Pause between sentence groups to give the kids time to digest what you have said, and perhaps ask questions.

## WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO HAVE MOBILITY PROBLEMS

- If you are talking to a person in a wheelchair on a one-to-one basis for more than a few minutes, sit down. It is uncomfortable to look up for a long time.
- Do not be sensitive about using words like “walking” and “running” with people who have mobility problems. They use the same words,
- Ask the person in a wheelchair if he/she wants you to move them or push them.

## WORKING WITH PEOPLE WHO ARE BLIND OR VISUALLY IMPAIRED

- Describe the size of objects as they relate to body parts instead of relating them to units of measure (e.g., a thumb long, not two inches).
- Do not be afraid to use colors when describing an object. People blind from birth have their own impressions of color. Many blind have lost vision due to an accident or illness. You can bring back the memories of color.
- Work to develop clear descriptive language, look for details with interesting visual elements that you can describe.
- Never pet a guide dog when it is working.
- Provide the opportunity to touch objects whenever possible. When it is impossible to touch the object, try to provide a miniature replica.
- Warn a person with visual problems if there is an overhanging branch or other obstacle that would not be found when using a cane. Objects that start at a height of over 32 inches will not be detected with a cane.
- Never take the arm of a blind person without asking first. Most blind people will prefer to hold on to you at the elbow rather than have you hold on to them.
- Never leave a blind person you have been guiding without providing him/her with an orientation as to where he or she is.

