

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Stephen Dubik, Master Gardener Coordinator
301-590-2836

Master Gardener Training Program Seeks Volunteers; Improve Your Gardening Skills and Knowledge

Montgomery County residents interested in learning environmentally sound gardening practices and sharing the information with others can apply to join the 2008 Montgomery County, Master Gardener training program.

The five-week course begins on January 22, 2008, and continues through the first week in March 2008. Classes meet Tuesday, Wednesdays and Fridays from 10 a.m. – 3 p.m. at the Montgomery County Extension Office located at the Agricultural History Farm Park, 18410 Muncaster Rd., Derwood, MD. The training program's fee is \$260 and includes textbooks. Faculty and staff of the Maryland Cooperative Extension, University of Maryland present lectures and demonstrations about horticulture, including cultivating trees, ornamentals plants, fruits, vegetables and herbs; pest and disease management; turf and turf disease; and soil and land management.

“The class provides a great opportunity for home gardeners, landscape workers, and nursery salespeople to build upon their gardening knowledge and interests by learning from local experts,” said Steve Dubik, Horticulture Consultant and Master Gardener Coordinator.

The requirements to become a Master Gardener include class attendance, successful completion of course work that includes a final examination, and 45 hours of volunteer service during the first year. Once qualified, Master Gardeners maintain their status by volunteering at least 25 hours annually and completing 10 hours of additional training each year. Volunteers may participate in a variety of service opportunities such as maintaining demonstration gardens, offering specific advice by answering telephone queries or assisting at plant clinics, speaking to community groups, and providing therapeutic horticulture to residents of nursing homes and special education classes.

There are more than 250 Master Gardeners in Montgomery County who have completed the course, and each volunteers an average of about 50 hours of service annually. The non-profit program falls under the auspices of Montgomery County government and the University of Maryland College of Agriculture and Natural Resources. It is open to all regardless of race, color, gender, disability, religion, age or national origin.

To request an application, or for more enrollment information, call: 301-590-2836. Registration deadline is Friday, Dec. 28, 2007. www.extension.umd.edu/local/Montgomery/

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