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## **MASTER GARDENERS ACCEPTING NEW APPLICANTS!!!**

It's that time of year again, time to dust off the Master Gardener applications and spreading the word about the next class.

**WHAT** is a Master Gardener? Do I have to be a gardening expert to take the Master Gardener course? Why would I want to be a Master Gardener? What does a Master Gardener do? These and many other questions come to mind when Master Gardener training is mentioned. Let me try to clarify a few of these points.

A Master Gardener is a person who has a thirst for knowledge about home horticulture, you know, all that stuff growing around your house - the lawn, the shade trees, the shrubs, the garden, the fruit trees, and even your houseplants. It is a person who wants to know things like; which tomato does best in Kansas, what are the best shade trees to plant in a small yard, what kind of fertilizer is best for my fescue, when should I prune my lilac, and how do I get rid of moles that are tunneling throughout my yard.

And things like; how many apple trees do I need for good fruit production, how about peaches and pears, will raspberries do any good here, what can I do to improve the soil in my garden/flower beds/yard, do I need to add lime to my soil, what can I do to control ticks, fleas, and chiggers in my yard. Let's not forget about bagworms. What about herbs, and did I mention crabgrass, or dandelions. How many hours of sunshine should you have on your water garden? How much sun does your vegetable garden need?

This is just a small sample of some of the questions that commonly come up in the everyday world of home horticulture. A Master Gardener is not a person who knows all the answers to these questions, but someone who wants to know these answers and wants to learn where to go to find out the answers to other questions just like these.

**WHY** would anyone want to become a Master Gardener? Well, first to gain the aforementioned knowledge, and second, to share this information with friends, neighbors, and other people in the community. Past classes of Master Gardeners have participated in such projects as the landscaping and planting of the courthouse grounds, conducting a tomato taste test at the Butler County Fair, volunteering to assist at the compost site, routing traffic and taking surveys during the Household Hazardous Waste Collection day, and provided assistance during the county fair with the horticulture judging contests and judging of the horticulture exhibits, downtown planting of the planter boxes and

establishment and planting of the Extension Demonstration Garden. Most recently the Butler County Master Gardeners have installed a water garden at the demonstration garden, and are currently working on the landscaping of that new feature. There's also the Numana community garden that Butler County Master Gardeners are involved with.

**HOW** do I become a Master Gardener? By simply filling out an application form at the Extension office (we will even mail it to you) and being available to attend twelve training sessions between 9:00 AM and 4:00 PM on Thursdays from September 13<sup>th</sup> to December 13<sup>th</sup>. Thanksgiving is excluded along with the week of October 18<sup>th</sup>.

**IN EXCHANGE** for over 40 hours of comprehensive training in home horticulture you will be asked to give back 40 hours of volunteer service to the horticulture programming efforts of the Butler County Extension office. There is a fee of \$110.00 to cover the cost of the program and educational materials, but what a small price to pay for what you receive. Sessions on landscaping, gardening, fruit and nut production, lawn care, insect and disease control, organic methods, soil management, annuals and perennials, nuisance animals, plant propagation, houseplants and more are all part of the program.

**ANYONE** that thinks they might be interested in taking the Master Gardener training should call 321-9660 or come down to the Extension office at the 206 N. Griffith(the fairgrounds) and pick-up an application. And if you can't do either of those then you can access our website and print one off at:

<http://www.butler.k-state.edu/horticulture/master-gardener.html>

### ***Time to Treat Bagworms***

Most bagworms have hatched and have come out of the mother's bag. The latter half of June is a good target to treat for these insects. However, make sure you have living bagworms as sometimes natural predators and parasites provide good levels of control. Look for a miniature version of the mature bagworm. They are still tiny and are about the size of the lead point on a pencil. Insecticides commonly used for controlling bagworms include spinosad (Conserve; Fertilome Borer, Bagworm, Leafminer & Tent Caterpillar Spray; Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew, Bonide Caterpillar Killer), *Bacillus thuringiensis* (Dipel, Thuricide), acephate (Acephate, Orthene, Bonide Systemic Insect Control), cyfluthrin (Tempo, Bayer Vegetable & Garden Insect Spray) and permethrin (numerous trade names). Products containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* (BT) are only effective when used against bagworm larvae while they are still small. Note that spinosad and BT are both organic but spinosad is a more effective product, especially on larger larvae. Thorough coverage is vital for good control. Most failures are due to the spray not penetrating deep enough in the tree rather than the insecticide not working.

### ***Vegetables Produce Flowers But No Fruit***

If you have vegetables that are blooming but not setting fruit, you may have a problem with flower pollination. There are several possible reasons for this that usually vary by species. One condition that can affect several species at the same time is over-fertilization. Too much nitrogen causes the plant to emphasize vegetative growth, often to the detriment of fruit production. Over-fertilization can lead to a delay in flower production and a decrease in fruit set among the flowers produced. Squash, cucumbers, watermelon, and muskmelon can have a couple of other problems. First, the early flowers on these plants are usually all male. The production of both male and female flowers becomes more balanced as time passes. You can easily tell the difference between the two because only the female flower has a tiny fruit behind the blossom. If you have both, have not over-fertilized, and still have a problem, make sure you have pollinators.

Look for the presence of bees visiting the plants. If you don't see any, try hand-pollinating several flowers. Use a painter's brush to transfer pollen from the anther of the male flower to the stigma of the female flower. If you get fruit on only those flowers you pollinated, you need more pollinators. Make sure you aren't killing them with overuse of insecticides. If you must use an insecticide, spray near dusk when the flowers have closed. Tomatoes are wind pollinated and therefore not dependent on pollinators. But they have another possible problem which is temperature. Tomatoes normally won't set if the night temperature is below 50 due to sparse pollen production. They also won't set when nighttime temperatures are above 75 degrees F and daytime temperatures are above 95 degrees F with dry, hot winds. Under such conditions, fertilization is not completed and no fruit develops.

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