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THE GRAPEVINE

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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. There's also the Numana community garden that Butler County Master Gardeners are involved with along with the Augusta Community Garden which both help local communities with donations to those in need.

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 12th to December 12th. Thanksgiving is excluded along with the week of October 24th.

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>

Harvesting Garlic

While related to onions, garlic needs to be harvested much differently. Garlic is best harvested when it still has five to six green leaves left. Garlic is sensitive to heat and excess sunlight so leaving garlic in the ground until all the leaves have died down allows potentially hot weather to start "cooking" the bulbs. The more leaves that die the more likely you are to have some of the outer bulb wrappers split which lets dirt, moisture and disease organisms in to the bulb. Garlic has an aggressive root system that makes pulling them difficult if not impossible. Use a shovel or preferably a potato/digging fork to lift the bulbs out of the ground. Carefully knock the loose dirt off the roots. Don't leave in the bulbs in direct sunlight for very long (more than fifteen minutes.) Tie up to ten plants together with twine and hang in a dry and warm location to dry out. Tying more than about ten plants together can result in longer drying periods and more chance for storage molds to start developing. You want the tops to finish drying down so there is no moisture left in the neck when you cut it. Depending on the year and location this may take two to six weeks. Once the necks are dry, trim the tops back to about one inch. "Hard-necked" cultivars will require pruning clippers to do this, "soft-necked" cultivars can be trimmed with heavy scissors. Brush the remaining dirt out of the roots and trim them back to about a quarter of an inch. If outer bulb wrappers are dirty carefully remove them but don't remove any more than necessary. Bulb wrappers help protect the cloves. Carefully check each bulb for soundness by gently squeezing the bulb to check firmness. If any bulbs seem excessively soft, set them apart to be used first. Like onions they are best stored in mesh bags and should never be stored in sealed plastic bags. Paper sacks can be used but pack them lightly. Ideal storage conditions are 32 to 35 degrees and 65 to 70% humidity. For most gardeners you are better to just leave them at cool room temperature. Refrigerator storage conditions very closely replicate fall soil conditions when planting and will stimulate cloves to start bud swelling and germinating. Not all garlic types have the same storage life. Some will only store for 4 to 6 months, while others can store for 10 to 12 months.

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