

# Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program

Search for Excellence Awards Program

Handbook

2016/2017

Sponsored by

The Tennessee Extension Master Gardener WorkGroup

in cooperation with



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## A. GENERAL OVERVIEW

The Tennessee Search for Excellence Awards Program is sponsored by the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Workgroup with guidance from the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Coordinator from the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of each award is to recognize outstanding Master Gardener projects and programs throughout Tennessee for their outstanding service and educational contributions within the state.

All projects receiving Search for Excellence awards must demonstrate overall excellence, high levels of education and community outreach that embody the values of the Extension Master Gardener Program and Tennessee Extension. In addition, projects:

- Must have an educational component.
- Must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientations, national origin, and marital or family status.
- Must contain information that is research-based from the University of Tennessee or another accredited university.
- Should extend the resources of the University of Tennessee or another accredited university to the public wherever they live, helping them use knowledge to solve problems at work, at home, and in their communities.
- Should provide home horticulture education in a responsive and timely manner.
- Should foster a learning environment for volunteers.
- Should encourage continued education and the recruitment and training of new Master Gardener volunteers.
- Should offer information and education to Tennessee citizens through innovative programs with creative and new approaches.
- May collaborate with local nonprofit and municipal groups to offer education leadership for better gardening practices in area communities.

## B. AWARDS CATEGORIES

There are seven categories of Tennessee Search for Excellence awards. The highest scoring project in each category will receive a Search for Excellence award.

The categories for Tennessee Search for Excellence awards are as follows:

Youth Programs. Recognizes a Master Gardener program that coordinates youth groups, activities, and service learning projects.

Demonstration Gardens. Recognizes an outreach or educational garden project which is at a physical location. The garden site should display best horticultural practices for educational purposes. Examples of eligible garden projects are a demonstration garden, a school garden, or a community garden.

Workshop or Presentation. Recognizes an educational program which is a teaching opportunity presented by Master Gardeners to a group to provide educational information about a horticultural topic. The educational program may include workshops or presentations.

Innovative Projects. Recognizes any project that delivers horticultural education in a way not covered by any of the other categories.

Special Needs Audiences. Recognizes projects that serve groups with physical or other limitations.

Written Education. Recognizes any form of printed material created and written by Master Gardeners as a tool for education. This category includes newsletters, pamphlets, calendars, and mass media.

Research. Recognizes a project with applied scientific methodology conducted by Master Gardeners with oversight provided by a University of Tennessee Extension employee. This application must be written by the Master Gardeners involved, not by Extension staff.

Outstanding Individual Master Gardener. The Outstanding Individual category recognizes a Master Gardener who is a certified member in good standing within a Master Gardener Association, and whose involvement and contributions during the award year are of primary importance, although prior year contributions or involvement may also be considered.

Outstanding Master Gardener Partner. The Outstanding Partner category recognizes a person or an organization that has provided exceptional assistance to an association or to a project.

#### **Eligibility for Tennessee Search for Excellence Awards:**

- Only those Tennessee Extension Master Gardeners who are members in good standing are qualified to submit applications. *There are no exceptions.*
- All projects that have won Tennessee Extension Master Gardener or International Master Gardener Search for Excellence awards **in the previous five (5) years** are not eligible for submission. **Winners from more than five years ago will be eligible this year.**
- The project must have taken place during the period of January 1, 2016 through December 31, 2017. The actual start date of the activity or event could be earlier than January 1, 2016. The activity or event could be an ongoing one that extends into the year of 2018.
- Joint submissions by two or more associations of joint achievements are permitted. The association submitting the application should note the joint nature of the application on the application form, including identification of all of the submitting associations. No separate submissions in the same category may be made by the joint submitters. Associations involved in a joint activity but choosing not to enter into a joint application may make a separate application in the same category as the joint application.

**Due Date: Award submissions are due on or before 12PM January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2018.**

## C. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

### How to Obtain the Application Form

Application forms are posted on the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Association website, <https://extension.tennessee.edu/mastergardener/Pages/default.aspx>. Download the form that is needed and save it on your computer. Then, using Word, complete the application form on your computer. *Application forms must be in Word.* If downloading the needed forms from the state website is not possible, then please contact the awards committee at [sallen0126@gmail.com](mailto:sallen0126@gmail.com) for further assistance. *Do not change the application form in any way, including its format. This will cause your application to be returned.*

### How to Name the Application File

Name your downloaded file using this format:

{County Name} {Category Name}

Examples:

Shelby Youth  
Hamilton Project  
Tipton Educational Program  
Wilson Written Education  
Sevier Research  
Knox Outstanding Individual  
Warren Outstanding Partner

### How to Submit Your Award Application

Email your completed application to [sallen0126@gmail.com](mailto:sallen0126@gmail.com) no later than 12PM January 20, 2018. The subject line of your email application should be {County} {Category} as above.

### The Award Application

The application must be a Word document. It cannot exceed 3 pages. *The application must be completed using Arial font 10 points or larger.* The format must be the same as the application form. The font color must be black. Also, the titles, headings, and margins are to remain in the same position and size as on the application form. Italics or bold should not be used. *The section describing the person, association, project or program being entered for an award must not exceed 150 words.*

### Supplemental Documentation

While each application must stand on its own merit, supplemental documentation may be submitted to enhance its understanding. Providing supplemental documentation is not required, nor will any points be given for these submissions. Examples of supplemental documentation are photos, sketches, written materials, or diagrams. If photos are included, photo releases must be on file with the submitting association in accordance with state and local laws.

Supplemental documents:

- Cannot exceed three pages.
- Must be in Word or PDF format.
- Written materials are limited to previously published information, such as excerpts from newspaper articles, newspaper advertisements, a calendar, pamphlet, or book.
- A written phrase or sentence may be used as a caption to describe a photo, sketch, diagram, or other extra documentation.
- Narrative phrases or sentences used as an expansion of the application ARE NOT permitted.

Submitting supplemental documentation may be done in either of two ways:

- Included in the same file as the application itself, thus becoming pages 4, 5, and 6 of the file.
- Submitted apart from the application, but attached within the same email. When choosing this option, title the pages as:
  - Warren Youth Sup 1
  - Warren Youth Sup 2
  - Warren Youth Sup 3

### **Additional Criteria**

Files that are zipped or compressed are not allowed.

Do not send multiple applications in a single email. Send one application per email. When submitting more than one application, use a different email for each one, giving each email a subject line as described above.

An association may enter more than one category, but may submit only one application per category.

### **Processing the Application**

The Awards Committee will acknowledge by email the receipt of each application. This acknowledgment will go to the submitter of the application, the association president, and the county coordinator as listed on the application form. If the submitter does not receive an acknowledgment within a few days, please send an email to [sallen0126@gmail.com](mailto:sallen0126@gmail.com) to inquire about the application. Included in the acknowledgement will be a link to where the application is posted in Google Drive. If individuals listed on the application believe their application in Google Drive has been posted in error or if there are any discrepancies whatsoever, it is their responsibility to notify the TEMGA Awards Committee of the problem by January 31, 2018.

The TEMGA Awards Committee will review each application to ensure that it is complete, that word limits are followed, that all requirements for the application are met. Submissions that fail this review will not be forwarded to the judges and the submitter will be informed. Submitters should then correct the problem and resubmit their application. There will be no opportunity for

resubmission after the deadline, so early submission of applications is encouraged. The time stamp in the Awards Committee email is the official time.

Resolution of questions regarding disputed or missing applications will be at the sole discretion of the TEMGA Awards Committee.

All applications become the property of University of Tennessee Agricultural Extension.

## **D. THE SCORING AND EVALUATION PROCESS**

Applications are rated using a 100 point scale. All applications will be evaluated by at least three judges selected by the SFE committee and the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Coordinator. Applications will be evaluated based on the criteria listed below. Although writing skill is not a criteria, each submission should be carefully proof-read to ensure that it is easy to read, understandable, and conveys the components of the intended application as thoroughly and accurately as possible.

Scoring criteria for the Outstanding Individual and Outstanding Partner awards follow their respective application form questions. The scoring criteria for the other seven award categories- Youth, Demonstration Garden, Workshop or Presentation, Innovative, Special Need Audiences, Written Education, and Research-are as follows:

### **Simple to Replicate                      15 points**

The goal of the Search for Excellence Awards Program is to share excellent ideas and programs that can be replicated by other Master Gardener groups. The exact project need not be duplicated, but the gardening ideas described about the project should be easy to create somewhere else.

### **Practicality                                      15 points**

A Search for Excellence project must appropriately support the needs of the target group.

### **Innovative and Creative                  10 points**

The project must reflect the creativity and/or individuality of the Master Gardeners who are working with it. This does not mean that you have to reinvent the wheel, just put your own touch on the project.

### **Compatibility                                  15 points**

The project must be compatible with University of Tennessee Extension Service and Tennessee Extension Master Gardener missions. The application must include an educational component.

### **Availability                                      5 points**

The project must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, marital, or family status.

### **UT Extension                                      5 points**

The project must extend the outreach capacity of University of Tennessee Extension resources to assist participants to solve problems at home or within the community.

**Educational Impact                    20 points**

The project must have a significant educational impact. The submitter should organize his or her thoughts into a cohesive narrative that will include the following:

- how the subject of the award application was planned
- how it was executed, including any obstacles that had to be overcome
- how the subject of the award application contributed to increased gardening knowledge
- how the increase in gardening knowledge was determined

**Worthwhile Results                    10 points**

Were the results of the subject of the project worth the volunteer effort that was given?

Significant learning, and change in attitude and practices are outcomes that University of Tennessee Extension uses to evaluate services and programs. Search for Excellence Master Gardener projects, people, and written materials improve people's lives, and this impact must be identified. Quantitative, objective measurements to demonstrate impact, such as user surveys or interviews will be preferred over anecdotal or qualitative reports of outcome. If the applicants use anecdotal evidence, provide specific examples, not general statements.

**Clarity    5 points**

How clear and complete was the application?

**Total: 100 points**

**Scoring Information for Tennessee Search for Excellence Awards**

- Scores will be totaled and then divided by the number of judges for an average score. All scoring by the judges and decisions by the TEMGA Awards Committee are final.
- In the case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.
- Score sheets will be provided to the applicants after the winners are announced at the State Master Gardener Conference. If a county is not represented at the conference, the score sheets will be mailed to the submitter after the conference.
- The judges are encouraged to provide constructive comments, noting reasons why points were not awarded in each evaluation component.
- A list of award winners with links to the winning applications will be posted on the TEMGA website at <https://extension.tennessee.edu/mastergardener> after the State Master Gardener Conference.

**E.    TEMG AWARDS COMMITTEE FOR 2016/2017 AWARDS YEAR**

Suzanne Allen, Chair  
Nancy Christopherson

The Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Association Coordinator is Dr. Natalie Bumgarner.

The email address for the Awards Committee is [sallen0126@gmail.com](mailto:sallen0126@gmail.com).