

Application Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
(committee use only)

**Tennessee Master Gardener Search For Excellence  
2012 Application**

**APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 30, 2012**

NAME OF MG GROUP: Blount County Master Gardener Association

COUNTY(IES): Blount

**MASTER GARDENER CONTACT:**

NAME Joan Worley

EMAIL jhworley@att.net

**MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR/EXTENSION STAFF:**

NAME John A. Wilson

TITLE Agent and County Director

EMAIL jawilson@utk.edu

PHONE 865-982-2027

**CATEGORY---MUST SELECT AND SUBMIT IN ONLY ONE CATEGORY**

- Youth
- Demonstration Garden
- Workshop or Presentation
- Community Service
- Innovative Project
- Research
- Special Needs Audience

COMMENCEMENT DATE OF PROJECT: January 2011

**LIST THE NAMES OF MASTER GARDENERS DIRECTLY INVOLVED IN THIS PROJECT.** Do not include their roles or any other individuals in this listing. *(Place the cursor in the box to type a name.)* You may attach an additional page if necessary.

**Project Leaders' Names:**

|  |
|--|
| Donna Bacon, Larry Bolt, Wilma Buczek, Jackie Dean, Donna Dixon, Glenda Edmondson, Judy Ferguson, Martha Frink, Christine Glazer, Frances Hoffman, Brenda Gregory, James Hutchison, Elin Johnson, Bruce Koopika, Judy Kopp, Dudley Leath, Patria Leath, Reena Lieber, Meredith Liemohn, Willa Reister, Nancy Robinson, Nancy Sentell, Anna Shugart, Laurie Smalley, Kitty Strawbridge, Cindy Stuart, Wanda Taylor, Sandy Vandenberg, Joan Worley |
|  |
|  |
|  |
|  |

**Number of Master Gardeners participating: 28**

**DESCRIPTION OF PROJECT (Include name, location, target audience, goals, and partnerships) 500 words or less.**

Our project was a book. We published *Right Here! Plants That Thrive in East Tennessee*, a 77-page book with color photographs. It covers 60 plants, from *Abelia* to *Vitex Agnus*, and Blount County Master Gardeners wrote every word, took every photo. The project had no specific **location**, just East Tennessee, primarily Blount and Knox Counties. The **target audience** was gardeners and would-be gardeners in our region, especially newcomers to the area who are unfamiliar with extreme heat, humidity, drought, and red clay.

Initially, there were **three goals**: To provide horticultural information for the general public; to continue our own horticultural education through research on our topics; and to build community within the Blount County Master Gardener Association (BCMGA) through

a project that many or all of us could work on together. Once the book was published, we realized additional benefits in name recognition and public relations for the Master Gardener program, which was relatively new to Blount County (2006), and in funds received from donations for the book (at \$10.00 per book).

The project had three major parts: (1) writing, editing, and producing the book; (2) publicizing and marketing the book; and (3) presenting programs of readings and discussion about the plants featured in the book--and others. Presentations were made for the general public, Master Gardeners, garden clubs, and other groups. Through these programs we've met many people with gardening interests and made them aware of the Master Gardener program.

**Partners:** We contacted and worked with many organizations and commercial establishments in a six-county area. These included 10 merchants who underwrote the project, 10 markets and garden centers (in five counties) that display the book, area media, the University of Tennessee Gardens, three county libraries, the Blount County board of realtors, and four Knox County garden clubs. The books have also been accessible for short periods at the UT farmers market, three plant sales, and other special events. [320 words]

### **DESCRIBE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT.**

Our project was unusual in that the BCMGA had never undertaken anything quite so ambitious and with substantial up-front costs. What's more, none of us had written or published a book from scratch. After the project was approved by the membership in February 2011, we formed a committee, then asked interested Master Gardeners to write about favorite plants. The only guidelines were a word limit of 250-300 words, the suggestion that the plant be easy to grow "right here," and the requirement that information be based on research from university extension service sources. The resulting variety of writing styles, article length, and personalities on the page has a vitality and charm we could never have anticipated, and we discovered unknown writing talents and interests among our members. None of the submitted manuscripts were rejected.

Editing was done in late spring and summer, consisting chiefly in standardizing format, punctuation, and plant taxonomy, albeit the latter was onerous. (We had wonderful help from Dr. Sue Hamilton, Director of the UT Gardens, who volunteered to edit the botanical terms.) Production involved drawing up specifications, selecting paper, font, type size, etc., and requesting bids from printers. We were fortunate in having a committee member who could edit and prepare copy for reproduction, and the artist son of another committee member did the cover designs. We did not have to outsource anything, and we think the book rivals many commercially produced books in design and appearance.

In addition to the four committee members, the 24 writers, and the five photographers, other Master Gardeners went out into the community to request contributions from sponsors and to ask businesses if they would display books and take donations for us. After the book was published in November of 2011, we arranged a program of readings at the county library, with three guest readers and seven Master Gardener writers as readers. We continue to present similar programs, which educate, inform, and promote BCMGA. In essence, the book is used as a vehicle for general horticultural education. [337 words]

**DESCRIBE THE OUTCOMES OF THIS PROJECT. How has it augmented learning, increased knowledge or changed practices to enhance quality of life? Include the methods you used to measure the impact of the project.**

One important outcome is greater name recognition for Blount County Master Gardeners in Blount and surrounding counties as a direct result of *Right Here!* People know who we are and what we do through our programs. In addition, publicity about the book included two above-the-fold feature articles with color photographs in the *Maryville Daily Times*; announcements of the book in “Taking Root” (vol. I, issue 3, December 2011), in UT Gardens’ electronic newsletter, in *UT Gardens* magazine (Spring/Summer 2012); and favorable coverage in two *Knoxville News Sentinel* columns.

Writing for publication requires precision! Not only did we need to verify Latin names, we needed to know about cultivars and hybrids, italics and capitalization to write correctly

according to botanical rules. **We augmented our own learning, as well as that of others, and increased horticultural knowledge for a general audience.**

Master Gardeners also taught. Writers have introduced the book to 366 people of diverse races, genders, and backgrounds at eight programs of readings and discussion to date, and another is scheduled for 2013; the largest audience was an overflow 145 at the Blount County Public Library in March, our first such program. All our programs included ample time for questions. The educational programs made friends for Blount County Master Gardeners — more people heard about BCMGA and the extension service, too. **Methods** used to measure success of the programs included brief evaluation forms for some of the programs, and responses were uniformly positive. As unobtrusive measures of success, four of our eight invitations to make presentations came from friends of attendees at previous programs as news spread by word-of-mouth, and at the Eastern Regional Master Gardeners meeting we were asked to repeat our morning program in the afternoon session, as the first one had been SRO and received outstanding reports.

**Feedback** on the book itself has been very gratifying: the only suggestion has been a wish for more photographs (a wish we share), and we have had raves from as far away as Texas. People giving *Right Here!* as gifts have returned for more to give to other friends. The comments we heard often were, “It came at just the right time, when I was getting ready to plant,” and “I liked the way the writing was so informal and so personal. It felt like the real thing.” The comment that pleased us most came from an intern who said she signed up for the Master Gardener class because of the book, a gift from a friend. A brand-new retiree said she signed up for the upcoming 2013 class because of the *Right Here!* program she attended at the library.

The ultimate outcome measure is some 650+ copies of an excellent book about plants that do well in East Tennessee. They are on coffee tables and bookshelves in homes and libraries in Sweetwater and Oak Ridge, from Townsend to Johnson City and beyond, and they weren't there before we undertook this project. [490 words]

## **HOW HAS THE PROJECT BEEN FUNDED AND HOW HAVE THOSE FUNDS BEEN SPENT?**

The project was funded with \$1,000.00 seed money from the BCMGA treasury and \$800 from 10 sponsors in Blount, Knox, and Loudon Counties who made contributions ranging from \$25.00 to \$200.00. Almost all of the money (\$1786.00) paid for the initial print run of 300 copies, which were received the Wednesday before Thanksgiving, 2011. Thanks in part to a timely feature article in the local newspaper, by Christmas they were all gone. The seed money was returned to the BCMGA treasury shortly thereafter, and future donations were used and continue to be used for printing additional copies. We have had several print runs to meet demand. Any overage will go back to the treasury to fund other association projects and activities. Our only costs were for printing, plus a small amount for display boxes and foam board.

Copies of *Right Here!* are still available. As it has to date, demand will dictate future print runs. [155 words]