

Application Code: _____
(committee use only)

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

APPLICATION DEADLINE IS NOVEMBER 30, 2012

NAME OF MG GROUP: Memphis Area Master Gardeners Association

COUNTY(IES): Shelby

MASTER GARDENER CONTACT:

NAME Patsy Courtright

EMAIL pcourtri@bellsouth.net

MASTER GARDENER COORDINATOR/EXTENSION STAFF:

NAME Dr. Chris Cooper

TITLE Horticulture Agent & Master Gardener Coordinator

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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 2010

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: LeAnn Byrum / Patsy Courtright

Becky Burns	Joyce Dodds	Pat Patterson
Pam Caruso	Tempia McCowan	Jean Ward-Jones
Kiersten Watkins	Anne Krekelberg	Marjorie Bradford
Phyllis Walker	Donna Stringer	Minetry Apperson-Crowley
Tom Rieman	Ann Zaner	Jim Zaner
Kay McAdams		

Number of Master Gardeners participating: 18 TOGG Committee/Hosts

Tour day: Guides, Admissions, Traffic, Exit Surveyors, etc. = 116
Tour Participants: app. 250 Master Gardeners

If you are using Word, place your cursor in the boxes and click twice. If using PDF, place your cursor in the box and begin typing.

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

3rd annual MAMG "Through Our Garden Gates" public garden tour was held Saturday, June 2, 2012 from 9:00am – 4:00pm. The tour was in Shelby County, but focused in Bartlett and Cordova areas. Our goal was to provide a beautiful, diverse tour of five gardens within a relatively short driving distance, while educating the public and Master Gardeners on a variety of sustainable gardening practices, innovative landscaping designs, environmental stewardship, use of art, water features. 5-6 gardens are a good number to manage. The entire tour cost was \$10 (public) and \$5 (Master Gardeners wearing their MG badges). Pre-sale gift bags (\$10) with tour wristband and tour maps were sold at MG meetings prior to event. Admission wristbands could be purchased at any garden on tour day. Each garden had a special and unique personality, ranging from a 3 acre wooded lot with wildlife to deal with; a pie-shaped corner lot with 85 varieties of hydrangeas; a small, charming residential lot with art, and leaf casted water feature; a Zen retreat garden with infinity gate; to the Davies Plantation PAR (Plant a Row for the Hungry) Master Gardener organic vegetable garden. PAR Davies, along with 2 other PAR locations, has contributed over 8,000 pounds of fresh vegetables to the local food banks of our community.

The target audience was general public and Master Gardeners from Memphis area, as well as west Tennessee, north Mississippi, eastern Arkansas, and southern Kentucky. Anyone with an interest in a variety of gardening facets was welcome.

Partnerships were forged with speakers from near and far and lawn care companies that sponsored gardens. Speakers and topics were: Dr. Sue Hamilton, Director of UT Gardens in Knoxville (9 Rules for Garden Design); Faye Beck, noted Knoxville Master Gardener (on site questions); Suzie Askew, Plant Activities Director at Lichterman Nature Center (Design Elements from Around the World Brought Together in a Bartlett Garden); Kristin Lamberson, Strawberry Plains Audubon Society Center, Holly Springs, MS. (Native Plants); Debbie Bruce, Wild Birds Unlimited (Share and Discover the Nature Refuge in Your Own Backyard) (How to Become a Certified Wildlife Refuge); Mary Iberg, Garden Girl Landscaping and Design (Shade Gardening with Hostas and Hydrangeas). Seating was available for the speaker presentations for those who might need it, but some speakers preferred to walk about the garden as they spoke. Historical Davies Plantation, home of the MAMG PAR garden, was the demonstration site for gardening techniques such as composting, raised bed gardens, edible landscaping, organic pest control, Hugelkultur and gutter gardening. The PAR garden was also the location of an "Ask a Master Gardener" table, with UT Extension research based information for questions.

A breakfast, lunch or afternoon tea at the Davies Plantation site was offered for a minimal charge, catered by Davies Plantation staff. Picnic tables in the shade of big oak trees had beautiful herb centerpieces made by a local Farmers' Market vendor (\$15). Garden photo notecard sets (\$10) and TOGG posters (\$15) were available at admission tables.

DESCRIBE THE PLANNING AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PROJECT.

500 words or less

Three new committee members were recruited, but 9 chose to return. 14 prospective gardens were toured with a criteria list of 22 items that would be a plus for the tour. These ranged from parking issues, variety of sun, shade, native plants, hardscape, garden rooms, water features, structures, art, solutions to problem areas, etc. Five gardens were selected with a wide range of appeals, within a feasible driving route. Hosts were contacted and made a commitment to the tour. Speakers were contacted to match each garden. Once the speakers were secured, the publicity effort went full steam. Each host wrote a brief description of their garden. The PR subcommittee fine-tuned the previous year's "Garden Gate" logo and created event materials and promotional ideas. The committee worked hard to promote the event. Committee members quickly gelled and found subcommittees fitting their interest and abilities. Press releases, radio and television interviews were scheduled. Area garden centers and nurseries displayed our brochures. Our tour was promoted at MAMG meetings, garden clubs, Spring Fling, as well as tri-state area Master Gardener associations. The Commercial Appeal had great articles about our upcoming tour, especially a week ahead of tour date.

A Host breakfast was conducted at the Agri-Center to introduce the committee and hosts to each other. Hosts were given a list of volunteer opportunities that were available to them. Master Gardener Interns and members could sign up as Garden Preppers (cleaning beds, mulching, pruning), Garden Guides (identifying plants, plant labels with botanical and common names, create a plant list, and be available on tour day to answer questions).

Bi-weekly/weekly planning meetings were held until tour day. New ideas, like having a Preview Tour for the Garden Hosts and TOGG Committee to view all of the gardens, took place on Thursday, May 31st. This was a fun experience, even though torrential rains came down that evening. We had a potluck dinner together at the last tour home. Dr. Hamilton and Faye Beck arrived from Knoxville just in time for the Preview tour. Each person paid \$5 for the preview tour.

Another idea that was formulated was securing a \$200 sponsorship from a garden business to have a sign in one of the gardens, business cards, and name recognition on the flyers. Two sponsors were secured.

Tour day was a scurry of setting up admissions areas with wristbands, brochures, maps, cash boxes, ice water containers, cups, etc. Two Committee Reps handled all situations at each garden during the day, freeing up the Hosts to enjoy sharing their gardens. Volunteers wore MG badges and job description badges as Garden Guides, Admissions, Traffic Monitor, or Exit Surveyor. Garden Guides worked closely with Hosts and Garden Reps to assist visitors and answer questions. Committee Chair drove from garden to garden collecting cash in excess of \$200 for safety purposes. Long, steady lines of visitors were a delight to all. Collected materials, gathered to count money and numbers, enjoyed being tired for a good cause!

HOW HAS THE PROJECT BEEN FUNDED AND HOW HAVE THOSE FUNDS BEEN SPENT? 500 Words or less.

The MAMG annual budget allocated \$2,400 for the 2012 TOGG tour. The increased cost of printing for flyers, posters, tri-folds, yard signs, etc. (\$1,760) and the Host needs for garden maps and plant

lists, as well as Host stepping stones and speaker gifts (\$628), plus miscellaneous expenses (\$292) sent us over budget by \$280. Recycling of garden maps and plant lists were encouraged if the visitor did not want to keep them. However, with a perfect 70-degree sunny day and an amazing turnout of well over 500 visitors, the overall profits exceeded \$4,375. This is compared to a \$2,500 profit in 2010 and a \$700 profit in 2011 (unpredictable weather forecast). All income profits go back into the MAMG Association general fund to provide financial support for our mission to educate the public with research based horticultural information activities and projects. These projects and activities will enhance the lives of those who participate.

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. These impacts could be economical, educational, environmental, health or community based. 500 words or less.

The Through Our Garden Gates public tour 2012 was a huge success because of several factors. First, was the dedication and commitment of a 12- person TOGG committee that worked tirelessly to plan and execute this tour. The committee members bonded and thoroughly enjoyed working together, and have developed long-term relationships. Several committee members have served on the committee for the 3 years of its inception, making each year easier to plan. The MAMG has a large Scorecard poster that is displayed at all MG meetings and public events. For 2012, TOGG reported 2,010 volunteer service hours, over 500 attendees and 15 garden experts were represented. All gardens had an Admissions table that ticked the number of arrivals in each location. Also, numbered wristbands were used for admissions. Handicapped availability was described in brochures to ensure maximum participation.

Another primary reason for success was the high quality of gardens selected and the knowledge of the Master Gardener Hosts. All gardens had speakers disseminating UT Extension and university research based information. Publicity included the newspaper, the "Family Plot" WKNO TV series, flyers at Master Gardener events, garden centers, and the Memphis Botanic Garden; as well as emails to surrounding Master Gardener Associations. Visitors were given plant lists with botanical and common names to enhance learning.

Approximately 400 people who passed through the "Garden Gates" completed an exit survey: garden specific surveys and/or general tour survey. Questions included: "What did you like about this garden?" "What tips will you apply to your own yard?" "What was the highlight?" "What I liked more/less about the tour?" "How did you hear about the tour?" "Dislikes?" The overwhelming response was very positive, with really only one complaint about needing larger and more detailed maps. Hundreds of responses indicated that they had gotten new ideas and had learned about new gardening techniques and methods. Some environmental aspects addressed were the use of rain barrels, organic practices and pest control, recycled artwork and addressing drainage issues creatively.

In addition to the various speakers on site, many respondents loved the educational aspect of learning new vegetable and herb gardening methods at the PAR garden, such as: "Loved the gutter gardening, can use in my school garden." "New and interesting ways to grow plants." "The straw stacked potato experiment." "Promotes a healthy lifestyle." "Vertical gardening." "Composting-learned new things." "Raised beds and bean arbor." "Learned about vegetable gardening-just planted our first." "Now to work on my garden organically."

Highlights included tranquility and peacefulness of water features and the Zen garden, little garden "rooms", garden structures, plant settings and combinations, succulent roof, terracing and espaliers. "Small enough to do in my suburban garden." "This tour was great and exceeded my expectations! Just to see the creativity was inspiring." "Great. One of the best things I have ever attended." Such comments made us feel that we have accomplished our goals. Visitors were empowered with education and inspired by beauty.