

## Tennessee Extension Master Gardeners- A Quick Update and Plans for 2017

### Quick update: A whirlwind couple of years with a fabulous team

Since arriving in Tennessee nearly two years ago, getting to know the people and the MG program has been one of my primary goals. With these miles and visits, I continue to be impressed by the team of passionate, talented and dedicated volunteers and Extension agent coordinators. You all are truly impressive in your impact in our state, and it is an honor to be able to work together with you to serve the people of Tennessee. Thank you so much for your amazing investment in Extension and Tennessee.

Through personal visits, as well as more formal evaluations and surveys, there has been some excellent feedback on our program to help plan for the future. With this information in hand, the Master Gardener workgroup (a team of agents and volunteers from across the state), has been planning ways to support residents and volunteers even better and we want to share some of these ideas and plans with you.

### What to expect in 2017 and beyond

- (1) Some of the key feedback we have received is related to challenges with the record keeping system for volunteers. I know that for folks who love plants and people, reporting data is not your favorite topic. However, sharing our vast and impressive efforts and impact is a key part of our present and future. Streamlining this process is certainly a long-term task, but we have some short-term changes that we hope will enable you to spend more time doing what you love. Starting in 2017, we are going to combine the A,C, and T categories into one service hour category to simplify the process but continue to record essential information on our program.
- (2) Another important area that came up in discussions was how we recognized and engaged our very valued and experienced Master Gardeners through time. As we mature as an organization, it is clear that we need to do a better job of recognizing and continuing to engage TEMG volunteers at 10 years and beyond. We never want to give the sense that our appreciation or your highly valued contribution ends at the 10 year mark. So, we are going to begin recognition of service at 10 years, but then add recognition at 15, 20, and 25 year levels. However, as a recognition of the time already invested, at 10 years and beyond, 15 hours of service and education time combined (rather than 25 service + 8 education) are required for recertification and continued recognition of service.
- (3) One of the most enjoyable parts of our statewide TEMG program is gathering together in meetings and conferences to network and learn about a range of horticulture and organizational topics. Over the last couple of years, it has become clear that state events are valuable, but there are many folks who are unable to invest the multiple days of travel that may be required to attend. So, to engage a wider range of volunteers and enable you to get to know and network with MGs from nearby counties, we are incorporating more regional events into our TEMG programming. To focus our efforts and provide consistency, we are moving to an every other year state conference (even years) with the odd years focusing on a regional meeting in each of the east, middle and west Tennessee regions. Planning is underway, so stay tuned for all the 2017 details!

Updates are discussed in the revised UT Extension publication W-199, which can be found on the front page of the TEMG website at [mastergardener.tennessee.edu](http://mastergardener.tennessee.edu). (1) is presented on pg. 13, and (2) presented on pg. 15.