

Williamson County Master Gardener Mentor Program:

Goal of the Williamson County Master Gardener (WCMG) Mentor Program:

The goals of the Mentor Program are to

- Provide a welcoming atmosphere for the Master Gardener (MG) Intern during MG classes and until they become well established in the program
- Reiterate program structure and volunteer responsibilities
- Enhance MG experience through support and guidance
- Encourage attendance at monthly educational meetings
- Increase retention in the WCMG

Requirements for the MG Mentor:

The Master Gardener mentor must have completed the training program and maintain active status in the WCMG Program.

Program Outline:

Mentors and interns may be matched based on location, experience, area of horticultural interest and/or area of volunteer interest. Information provided on the intern application and during the interview process will impact this process.

The WCMG Mentor is an active veteran Master Gardener with one or more years of service. A mentor is a volunteer who assists new Master Gardener Interns to obtain answers to technical questions and provides suggestions, recommendations, and operational advice. Mentors maintain monthly contacts (at minimum) with the intern to advise and assist them throughout the training period. Mentors are meant to help new interns smoothly adapt to the MG Program by offering help and support where needed. Each mentor is provided with a "Contact Form" to record contacts with interns. Mentors are not required to settle conflicts or answer legal questions. When these situations arise, they are to be referred to the supervising Extension Agent.

To be a mentor, one must agree to attend a basic training class, the first day of MG training, 1-2 volunteer activities/project work sessions, and graduation. Once the formal training is

complete, mentors act as informal advisors to all new Master Gardeners. This does not require maintaining a record of contact but is a means for the new MG to obtain needed assistance.

The responsibilities of the mentor are divided into two basic time periods: during the training classes and after completion of class. While each phase requires mentors to perform different duties, the overall program objective remains the same. The key role of the mentor is to be a personal contact for the new intern.

The mentor will contact his/her assigned intern as soon as possible and exchange contact information (i.e. email, phone, etc.) and establish the preferred method of contact (i.e. email, text, phone, etc.). Mentor and intern will meet during class, preferably during the 1st or 2nd class, and then periodically as classes progress. Once training is complete, mentors remain in contact on an informal basis.

Mentor Responsibilities:

- Contact assigned intern(s) as soon as possible and exchange contact information (email, phone, etc.)
- Establish preferred method of communication (email, text, phone)
- Discuss and agree on expectations of the mentor/intern relationship
- Meet your intern during 1st or 2nd class
- Contact your intern throughout the training period
- Be available for questions and guidance
- Record contact with the intern on the "Contact Form"
- Work with intern 1-2 times on an approved project or volunteer activity
- Encourage attendance at monthly WCMG educational meetings
- Remain in contact on an informal basis after the training phase has been completed
- Record time spent on mentoring activities as volunteer hours
- Complete an evaluation of the WCMG Mentor Program

Evaluation of the Mentor Program:

Both mentor and intern will be asked to evaluate the Mentor Program prior to the year end. The evaluation may be completed on-line or via hard copy. Evaluation results will be utilized to revise and improve the Mentor Program for the following year.