

## **Wise words from current and former TEMG leaders:**

The President's position requires a very organized and confident person who can deal with many personalities, who will listen to members, and be able to delegate tasks.

It would be extremely helpful to have a Summary notebook of past officers to be used as a reference to new officers. Information to include but not limited to: Specific local officer duties, responsibilities, due dates of TEMG reports and other information with our projects, important names and contact information of those in the community that we work with, ideas that worked, ideas that did not work, ideas that we would like to try.

Nancy Snope, President, Putnam County

As I have spent over 15 hours creating a handbook for the incoming president, I have realized that there is a vast amount of knowledge and detail that are not covered by the handbook or bylaws. It's more like an amazing oral history. Each officer needs to take the transition seriously and provide an outline for their successor. Doing so should increase leader retention, reduce burnout and ensure continuity.

Laurie Smalley, Blount County

The most important thing for new/old officers that I have learned is to "know your people".

Know their names

Know their talents

Know their occupations

Know how to use all they have to offer effectively for them and the organization

Second--Communication--the left hand must know what the right hand is doing, working together, committees, boards, projects. To grow we must know what is going on and why/where each person is needed.

Carol Mathews, Hamilton County

MG volunteer leaders benefit greatly when they receive regular reminders – individually and as a team - of "WHY" what we do matters to ourselves, our fellow Master Gardeners and our communities. Only a compelling personal and community "WHY" will attract and retain volunteer leaders to carry out the mission of UT Extension.

Virginia Casalone, Davidson County

To follow the local association by-laws and TEMG guidelines at all times. Be friendly and fair and always represent Master Gardeners in a positive manner especially when dealing with the public!

Tina Smock, 2016 President Warren County Master Gardeners

First the president, and all board members, should have a good understanding of the basic rules of parliamentary procedure. This will insure a good and organized meeting and program.

Second every monthly meeting should always have a good guest speaker with a broad understanding of their particular field of plants and gardening to pass on to the organizations members.

Jack Smith, Rutherford County

Delegate duties whenever possible. Your function is to lead the parade, not be the parade. If you don't manage your time commitment, your commitments to TMG will manage you. Whenever a member says "somebody really ought to..." the answer is "Will you take the lead in making that happen?" if the answer is "no," then probably nobody really ought to....

You will need to be the one to look ahead a few months, though, to be sure critical deadlines aren't missed, such as audits, committee appointments, and elections.

Lynn Carlson, Knox County

I've only been president one year, but a lesson that I have learned is to designate responsibility to others and not to feel that I have to attend and be a part of every event.  
Deena Trimble, Maury County

It is important we have good communication within the Executive Committee and between our members.

Jan Tollett, Secretary, Putnam County

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The one most important lesson that I learned when taking over the position of treasurer for our Master Gardener group is - don't believe the current, soon to be former, treasurer when they say that the job is easy, nothing to it. Just make deposits, write checks and provide an income and expense statement at each meeting. There is so much more to this job that is best performed by someone who can also do bank reconciliations and prepare basic financial statements, at least for this particular MG group. It's more than just knowing the bank balance. It takes someone who can keep track of the budgets for the different projects and be able to show the membership how much money comes in from all sources, and how it's being spent. This also helps the project managers figure out an appropriate budget for the next year. So, being the treasurer of a very active MG group is not a difficult job but it takes time and attention to detail.

Pat O'Mara, Treasurer, Putnam County

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My biggest thing has been to remember that this is a voluntary commitment. I work full-time & there is a huge difference between what members who are officers & don't work, can accomplish as compared to those of us who do work. I have had to really force myself to schedule time dedicated to Master Gardeners to keep up with the tasks as needed.

Lee Etta Cadotte, Rutherford County

It falls upon the board (and often specifically the president) to listen and learn about issues confronting the MG group and be the problem solvers. Most of the time those are personality related issues. Sure there are standard duties that require leadership. Like the conduct of the meetings, bylaw maintenance, project approvals, annual budget development and things and the like. But these can be more easily proceduralized. All personnel issue responses cannot be known or proceduralized. If in fact the Board or part of the Board cannot solve the issue, always reserve the option of seeking Extension Agent advice. So, solving MG group issues quickly, quietly, tactfully and effectively is a key skill to MG group leadership.

Tom Jeskie, Roane County

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If I were mentoring a new president, I think this is what I would say....

Leading a group of Master Gardeners may be a less daunting or overwhelming challenge if you compare it to managing a garden.

Members are the plants in your garden. They will need nurturing, feeding, maybe a light pruning now & then. Unfortunately there may be one or two that just need to go to the compost pile.

Choose the plants you bring into the garden wisely. Select only the best to go growing out in the nursery called Intern Training. These interns will need extra care, extra feeding, protection from the harsher elements. Eventually, they will be ready for hardening off. Don't transplant them out into the main garden without giving them time to get stronger and to be ready for the influences of the garden. Consider companion planting. Some plants will thrive with another plant close to them sharing or exchanging nutrients to the benefit of both.

The Extension Agents and UT staff are the support of the garden. Use their knowledge, they will stake you up and support your efforts. The knowledge they bring to the association is like compost or fertilizer, providing the nutrients the plants will need to grow to their full potential.

If your garden is unattended, nasty weeds will grow and sooner or later you will have to deal with them. Weeds are easier to handle if you address them early before they can set seed and spread.

You will find some plants will grow quickly and bloom magnificently, adding color and fragrance to the garden. They may disappear almost as quickly. Don't mourn them or spend time trying to revive them. Use the garden space for something more productive.

Other plants may seem stunted and take a long time to bloom. Don't give up! Keep feeding them, supporting them and keep a careful eye on them. They may turn out to be the stars of your garden and you will reap great harvests from them.

Most importantly, don't overlook the constant producers of the garden. These plants aren't showy, often growing in the back of the garden. They don't require a lot of attention. They consistently produce and are always reliable. However if ignored too long, they can be attacked by pests and will wither and die almost overnight leaving a gaping hole in your landscape plan that will be hard to fill.

As president of this lovely garden, realize you can't yell at the plants to bloom, you can't shame them into producing fruit. You can't even guilt them into growing. You can however, provide an environment where growth is possible, seeing that the soil is rich, weeds are controlled, and the harvest is recognized.

As president, you also must realize that you can do everything right and some plants just won't grow. Don't let these make you hang up your trowel. Plant something new in its place and move on to enjoy what you love about gardening in the first place.

Linda Lindquist, Rutherford County