

WI Master Gardener Program Continuing Education Policy

Purpose:

Continuing education keeps Master Gardener Volunteers informed, involved, and learning about research-based horticultural and volunteer topics and advances. It is a critical component to volunteer development and satisfaction and promotes high quality volunteerism.

Requirements:

To fulfill the continuing education requirement of recertification, a Master Gardener Volunteer (MGV) must complete 10 hours of continuing education per year using approved sources. The exception to this is the first year a volunteer certifies. In this case, Level 1 Training fulfills the continuing education requirement. This requirement is doubled (20 hours) if an individual has been away from the program for more than 5 years.

Hours are reported on the honor system in the online reporting system.

To be counted toward recertification requirements, a continuing education experience should:

- 1a. present research-based information on horticulture or gardening in an objective manner
 - or
 - 1b. support or improve an individual's ability to serve as an Extension volunteer,
- and
- 2. align with Master Gardener Program scope and scientific literacy guidance.

Best practices

- Get information from a variety of sources if possible, depending on what you have access to.
- As well as you are able, make sure to focus on the most current information. There are, of course, exceptions to this—some gardening information is as true now as it was 50 years ago! If you are wondering if something older is appropriate, check in with your coordinator.

Time:

MGVs accrue continuing education hours over the reporting year (Oct. 1-Sept. 30). Continuing education hours are non-transferable between reporting years. MGVs can claim the amount of time a continuing education option runs unless otherwise specified. Time spent can be rounded up to the nearest 15 minutes. Travel does not count toward continuing education hours.

Reading: books, online articles, magazines

Everyone reads at different speeds. Because of this, attributing continuing education hours to book, magazine, or article reading is difficult. Books or magazine articles must be on the [Approved Media Resources](#) list or be approved by your educator prior to counting them for continuing education. They must meet criteria for an appropriate continuing education experience (above).

- Books: *Must be on the [Approved Media Resources](#) list or approved by your Master Gardener Coordinator.* Specific examples of types of books that *will not* count are below in “Not Appropriate for Continuing Education”. You may claim 1 hour of continuing education (CE) per 25 pages of text. *You cannot claim more than half of your CE hours using book reading per year (5 total hours).* You do not need to read an entire book cover to cover. It is appropriate to read chapters or sections from approved books (as opposed to a whole book). Pages read from different approved books can accrue. Ex: You read 15 pages from one book and 10 pages from another book = 25 pages of reading.
 - 25 pages = 1 hour CE
 - 50 pages = 2 hours CE
 - 75 pages = 3 hours CE
 - 100 pages = 4 hours CE
 - 125 or more pages = 5 hours CE; you can read books in excess of 125 pages but cannot count more than 5 hours, regardless of the time spent.
- Magazine articles: *Must be on the [Approved Media Resources](#) list or approved by your Master Gardener Coordinator.* Source should provide unbiased, research-based information. If an article is very lengthy, such as a primary research article, consult with your Master Gardener Coordinator to discuss a more appropriate amount of time to claim. (Ex. Horticulture articles written by Susan Mahr)
 - Per 1 article read = .25 hours CE
- Online articles: *Must be from a reputable source and present research-based, unbiased information,* such as University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension or other sources that provide unbiased, research-based information. (Ex. Garden Fact Sheets, publications on the Extension Horticulture website.)
 - Per 1 article read = .25 hours CE
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What Types of Things Count for Continuing Education?

The following includes continuing education sources based on level of appropriateness. Final approval lies with the local Master Gardener Coordinator. If a local coordinator is not present, contact the MG Program state office for approval.

- **“Appropriate for Continuing Education”**: can be counted for continuing education hours.
- **“May Be Appropriate for Continuing Education”**: may count for continuing education hours; you need to be able to provide a justification to your local MG coordinator explaining how this continuing education source helps you develop your skills as a MGV.
- **“Not Appropriate for Continuing Education”**: will not count toward the continuing education requirement.

Appropriate for Continuing Education:

- University research-based horticulture or gardening information, regional to the Midwest
- Larry Meiller radio program “Garden Talk”
- Wisconsin Horticulture Update (WHU)
- Local Extension or UW gardening/horticulture programming
- Extension or UW YouTube videos or webinars on horticulture/gardening, regional to the Midwest
- Horticulture programs at local Master Gardener meetings
- Twilight meetings (ex. seminars or walk and learn events at a field station) or field days
- Horticultural seminars at local colleges
- Lectures at botanical gardens
- Presentations by MGVs
- MG conferences
- [Garden Expo](#) seminars (research-based content)
- [Level 2: Plants Plus Master Gardener online training](#)
- Level 3 Master Gardener online advanced training (through state office)
- Auditing Level 1 training (one time only)
- Online, research-based gardening/horticulture articles from a .edu/.gov site (Ex. Extension Garden Fact Sheets)
- Books, videos/television shows, and magazine articles from the [Approved Media List](#)

May Be Appropriate for Continuing Education:

- [Garden Expo](#) seminars (non research-based content)
- Tours with guided educational component (ex. Local greenhouse tour with greenhouse manager explaining how the controlled environment works)
- Volunteerism-related information (seminars, articles, videos)
- Regional Extension programming or information, non-Midwest (Ex. attending a seminar on drought tolerant plants to grow in Arizona)
- Extension YouTube videos on horticulture/gardening, regions other than Midwest
- Beekeeping in the context of pollinators (not honey production)
- Gardening or horticulture books. If not found on [Approved Media Resources](#), check with your educator for approval.
- Videos/television shows. If not found on [Approved Media Resources](#), check with your educator for approval.

- Appropriate magazine articles. If not found on [Approved Media Resources](#), check with your educator for approval.
- Online gardening articles from a nonprofit website (Ex. <http://www.olbrich.org/>)

Not Appropriate for Continuing Education:

- Fiction/memoir/travel books/personal essays pertaining to gardening, farming, or nature; (Ex. Michael Pollan books such *Omnivore's Dilemma*, *Second Nature*)
 - Book club discussions related to these type of books
- Home improvement/entertainment gardening shows (Ex. HGTV, Big Dreams Small Spaces, Monty Don's French Gardens)
- YouTube videos from individuals, gardening celebrities, or for-profit websites
- Consumer magazine articles (Ex. Better Homes and Gardens)
- Online gardening articles from a .com website
- Gardening/gardening entertainment blogs
- Beekeeping relating to honey production
- Cooking/food preservation/medicinal use information in any form
- Tours without guided educational component (ex. Local self-guided home garden tour)

Guidance for MG Meetings or Seminars with Speakers

Speakers brought in for continuing education purposes to MG meetings or seminars should be vetted by the local Master Gardener coordinator, the Master Gardener Association (if present), MGVs responsible for engaging the speaker, or some combination of the above. The vetting process can include appropriate research into a speaker's past presentations and public profile for purposes of determining qualification.

Vetted and qualified speakers should be:

Qualified instructors on their topic. This means:

- The instructor uses research-based information and presents it in an objective manner

OR

- They have practiced in their particular field and have technical, artistic, or experiential knowledge

Presenting from an educational, neutral viewpoint. This means:

- Speakers should not be selling a good or service, advocating for a political or religious agenda, or using discriminatory language or content.
- Consideration should be given to the general point-of-view of the presenter in relation to the topic and whether it fits with the Master Gardener Continuing Education policy

In general, speakers should behave in line with the general behavioral expectations outlined in the Volunteer Behavior Expectations.

To count as continuing education, the presentation or workshop given by the speaker must meet the requirements outlined in the Continuing Education Policy.

Guidance for MG Field Trips for Continuing Education

All field trips for the purposes of Master Gardener Volunteer continuing education are subject to both the Continuing Education Policy and local and state program rules regarding risk and liability. Discuss with your local MG coordinator or the MGP state office before booking a tour or field trip to see what considerations must be addressed.