

Why We Are Master Gardeners (published 2025-12-27)
By the NETMGA Writing Team

2026 MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM Enroll now for classes at the Sullivan County Extension office beginning January 27, 2026. Go to [2026 Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program/Training | Sullivan County](https://sullivan.tennesseeextension.org/master-gardener-training) for details.

Brenda

I grew up as a "city girl", but both sets of my grandparents had farms and produced and raised not only vegetables, but livestock to provide food for their families. I have wonderful memories of growing up tending to the farm and the delicious meals that came from all the hard work. I remember the wonderful blackberry jam, fresh eggs, and wonderful vegetable that were only a few feet away from the kitchen.

When I learned of the Master Gardener course, I felt that it was something I wanted to do. There are so many things to learn. I remember telling my sister that I was on the way to a MG class to learn about soil. It was one of the most interesting classes I had.

I am part of a group of over 10 Master Gardeners working with a community center to provide over 30 raised beds of vegetables for the residents of Johnson City. We also work with the after-school and summer programs at this center to provide gardening education to children. We provide gardening education to adults who are gardening at the community gardens. We are a community within a community, with shared interests, which is one of the best parts of being a Master Gardener. There are so many ways to use skills learned from previous life experiences to enhance the community of gardeners.

Earl

Upon retirement I moved to Sullivan County from a different gardening zone. I was looking forward to enjoying gardening. I was fully aware that I was not knowledgeable about the differences between the two zones such as the length of the growing season, the temperature during the seasons, native perennial and annual flowering plants, and suitable vegetables. Additionally, by enrolling in and volunteering as a Master Gardener, I was able to become connected with folks with similar interests. Without doing this, it would be more challenging to gain friendships with others who enjoy gardening. I also value supporting others in a variety of ways including sharing knowledge about local gardening, sources of information and goods. Also as a volunteer gardener I work to help grow vegetables that are then donated to support needy people, a way of helping less fortunate fellow residents. I have also gained an understanding that I can learn very reliable gardening information by online researching of university extension departments throughout the country, which are the groups that educate and support master gardeners in other states.

Kate

My Dad could grow anything from anything. We always had a vegetable garden, a strawberry patch, and fruit trees. Growing up, we all enjoyed the freshest produce. I did not inherit his green thumb and was busy working. So, I didn't even try to grow anything. My profession required

continuing education, and I loved attending classes. When I retired, I missed learning new things. A friend told me about the NETMGA Master Gardener course. What an amazing experience! I learned things I didn't even know I needed to know.

Now I have 3 spaces to tend at historic sites in TN, and my home gardens are always expanding. The Master Gardeners I work with are so much fun and they enjoy transforming outdoor spaces, too. Every time we get ready to leave the gardens, we smile and say, "It looks better than when we got here." It feels so good to see our work flourish. And the folks in the communities notice the improvements, too. It is rewarding beyond words to hear how people appreciate our efforts.

Patty

I'm a farm girl, the daughter and granddaughter of farmers who loved and respected the land, the peace that it brings, its harvest, and livelihood. My mother and grandmothers gardened and preserved food for their families and beautified their homes inside and out with flowering plants. It's in my DNA.

As a Master Gardener it is my pleasure to give of my time to share that knowledge and love with others. We encourage people to produce their own food and flowers, even if it's in a small yard or a flowerpot. As Master Gardeners, we share research-based information and encourage choosing native plants that grow best here. It is a blessing to see others learning, growing, sharing, preserving, and passing on the love and peace that comes with working with your hands in the soil. Join us, you'll love it too!

Here are a couple of blurbs from the UT website about Master Gardeners.

"The most important part of the master gardener program is getting outside and making things happen." <https://mastergardener.tennessee.edu/what-is-the-tennessee-extension-master-gardener-program/>

"Extension Master Gardeners make communities happier, healthier places to be."

<https://mastergardener.tennessee.edu/what-is-the-tennessee-extension-master-gardener-program/>

How do I ask a question?

If you have questions for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.