

Definitions | Recording Data for the Volunteer Management System (VMS)

What constitutes as an approved UME Master Gardener activity?

All UME Master Gardener activities/projects must be approved by University of Maryland Extension professional(s) (e.g. the county/city UME Master Gardener Coordinator). The UME Master Gardener State Coordinator can be consulted when questions/issues arise over a proposed activity.

UME Master Gardener volunteers are involved in a wide range of approved UME Master Gardener activities, such as conducting Ask a Master Gardener Plant Clinics, teaching classes/workshops, and providing hands-on educational opportunities at UME Master Gardener Demonstration Gardens. The following guidelines are used to determine the suitability of a particular activity for approval.

Approved UME Master Gardener activities are:

- consistent with the organizational mission of the UME Master Gardener Program.
- conducted by UME Master Gardener volunteer(s). All UME Master Gardener volunteers are representatives of the University of Maryland.
- educational opportunities that provide the public with science-based information regarding horticulture or integrated pest management.
- accessible and open to the public.
- not to result in financial gain for any UME Master Gardener volunteer(s).

What are UME Master Gardener volunteer service hours?

Each *Active* UME Master Gardener volunteer must complete a minimum of 20 hours of UME Master Gardener volunteer service hours, each calendar year, to remain *Active* with the program. Volunteer service hours are the time that an UME Master Gardener volunteer dedicates towards an approved UME Master Gardener activity. Volunteer service hours include approved UME Master Gardener activities such as:

- teaching classes, workshops, presentations, and demonstrations.
- providing guided garden walks/tours and technical gardening assistance to local community groups.
- preparing educational outreach activities, displays, and developing educational materials.
- writing educational articles.
- conducting program evaluation and research to support the program.
- administrative tasks and committee work (e.g. logistical planning).
- travel time to an approved UME Master Gardener volunteer activity or to an UME Master Gardener organizational meeting.

Please note that any garden maintenance activities must be approved by an UME Master Gardener Coordinator. Volunteer time dedicated towards garden maintenance/labor should be kept to a minimum to keep in alignment with our organization's educational outreach mission. In addition, site visits to the private properties of direct contacts are strongly discouraged unless the visit is part of an approved UME Master Gardener activity, such as UME Bay-Wise Certification.

All volunteer service hours should be entered into the UME Master Gardener Volunteer Management System (VMS) by the UME Master Gardener volunteer. If technical (IT) support is required, please contact the appropriate county/city VMS Administrator and UME Master Gardener Coordinator for assistance.

What is a direct contact?

A direct contact is a person who UME Master Gardener volunteers inform, teach, and guide during an approved UME Master Gardener activity. Direct contacts bring gardening questions to Ask a Master Gardener Plant Clinics or attend UME Master Gardener classes, workshops, and special events. To ensure that University of Maryland Extension effectively serves all Maryland residents, the USDA requires that the UME Master Gardener Program reports the demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity, and race) of the people we serve (direct contacts).

How to record and report direct contact data?

At each approved UME Master Gardener activity, the UME Master Gardener volunteers will use the **Direct Contact Demographic Data Worksheet** to record the total number of direct contacts reached during the activity as well as record the demographic data (age, gender, ethnicity, and race) for each person reached.

For each approved UME Master Gardener activity, one UME Master Gardener volunteer will be designated to report the collected data from the **Direct Contact Demographic Data Worksheet** and enter the data into the Volunteer Management System (VMS).

Each UME Master Gardener volunteer is responsible for entering their own volunteer service hours and travel mileage records into the VMS by the annual deadline date.

What is continuing education?

Each *Active* UME Master Gardener volunteer must complete a minimum of 10 hours of continuing education, each calendar year, to remain *Active* with the program.

Continuing education opportunities include, but are not limited to:

- classes, workshops, advanced training, webinars, seminars, conferences, and other educational experiences that are hosted by University of Maryland programs, other colleges/organizations, plant societies, botanical gardens, arboreta, nature centers, etc.
- related subject matter presented at an UME Master Gardener organizational meetings.

What is not considered continuing education?

- Continuing education should not include learning about topics that are outside the mission of the UME Master Gardener Program (e.g. botanical illustration training).
- Travel time to and from continuing education opportunities **cannot** be used towards the annual 10 hour continuing education requirement.
- UME Master Gardener Interns, during their initial internship year, should not report continuing education hours in lieu of fulfilling the required volunteer service hours at an approved UME Master Gardener activity.