A GUIDE FOR COUNTRIES
Revised 1-2011

TO HOST ADVANCED MASTER GARDENER TRAINING

When planning an Advanced Master Gardener Training class, here are some keys for the Host County to consider:

**Class Requisites**

The class must contain a minimum of six hours of intense Extension-research based material that goes beyond the Basic Training document. (You may want to offer a two-day class [example: first day, start in early afternoon and second day, end at noon] since many Master Gardeners travel several hours each way.)

**Content**

The subject should be specific, of general interest and appropriate for the season. Narrow the focus of training to a specific topic such as Propagation, Hydrangeas, Prairie Grass, Organic Gardening or Shade Gardens.

Some topics will be more popular than others. Ideally, you should strive for a minimum of 50 participants; however, a few topics may attract less interest, but you must have a minimum of 20 participants to host a class.

**Facilities**

All classes should accommodate as many eligible Master Gardeners as a facility will allow with a minimum of 50 participants. The facility should have handicap accessible toilet facilities, adequate parking, adequate seating, and video/slide projection facilities, if needed. If outdoor classroom facilities are used, have a backup plan in case of inclement weather. Provide some shade in hot weather.


**County Committee & Assignments**

The County should form an Advanced Training Host Committee with members assigned specific responsibilities in the planning and execution of the class. All committee members should be familiar with this guide. The committee should designate one member to serve as a contact person with the Advanced Training Project Chair. The host committee should also decide how it will limit the number of participants from its county to insure statewide participation. Don’t forget to assign post-training responsibilities (mailing evaluation forms and thank-you letters, etc.). Follow through is as important as the planning.

**Preparing a Budget**

Prepare a cost-estimating plan, which includes food and beverages. Costs to the participants should be based on what it actually costs to put on the training. When estimating costs, include materials, charges for using a facility or room, meals, snacks, postage, duplication of handouts, speakers’ fees and/or expenses if applicable, etc., plus the $5 fee per participant to be sent to County 76. (This fee helps cover the cost of materials such as certificates, name badges, folders, etc.) Meals and refreshments may be incorporated in the cost, but you are not required to provide meals if there are facilities near the training site. If you are on a tight time schedule, you may want to offer a box lunch. If you are providing a meal, remember that many Master Gardeners like to be offered the choice of a vegetarian meal and the choice of bottled water. The Host County is responsible for paying all costs from its collected charges.

Every situation will be different. However, here are some ideas to consider in preparing a budget. There are fixed expenses, such as cost of meeting place, speaker expenses (which cover travel and lodging) honoraria (fees for the speakers). Then there are per person expenses, such as lunch (if provided), copies, snacks, $5 fee to County 76. The number the facility will accommodate or the size of your lunch facility will determine the maximum number you can train.

**Breaking Even**

However, you should arrive at a break-even figure based on expenses, especially your fixed expenses. This figure represents the minimum number of trainees needed to cover the fixed costs of the event. Some topics will be
more popular than others, so have realistic expectations. If you do not have the required minimum number by the registration deadline, the training should be canceled and monies refunded. This break-even number could be 20 for some topics and locations, or it could be 75 for others.

The goal is to make advanced training classes break-even projects and not fund-raisers. However, if attendance is greater than anticipated, there could be extra funds. All profits over $300 will go to County 76.

11 Steps for Hosting an Advanced Training

1. The Application--Part One

County should send preliminary proposal (Part One of application) to the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator (at 2301 South University, Little Rock, AR 72204 or jtreat@uaex.edu) with date, time, location, topic, estimated number of participants, and the name of the contact person at least 90 days prior to the planned class. The earlier you can start the process the better.

From this point on, an Advanced Training Project Team member will be involved in the process of planning the event. The project team member will contact the county contact person. The project team will also assist you in preparing your budget if needed. This joint effort will insure the proposal is approved.

2. The Application--Part Two

At least 60 days prior to the proposed training, Part Two of application should be completed and sent to the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator, who will forward it to the Oversight Committee. Part Two includes topic, basic course outline with speakers and brief description of course material, budget (for fixed expenses and per person expenses), along with the minimum and maximum number of participants. Speakers may be agents, specialists, or Master Gardeners who are experts in the topic, or industry professionals. Out-of-state speakers should be limited as the goal is to educate on gardening in Arkansas and can be done by utilizing talent we possess within the state.

3. Speakers
Once the proposal is approved by the Advanced Training Oversight Committee and the County 76 Executive Committee, the Host County is responsible for confirming speakers. Potential speakers should be provided with an explanation of the advanced nature of the training through an outline of material covered in MG Basic Training on the proposed topic. This will serve to insure that speakers fully understand the audience and subject matter expected.

As soon as you have an approved topic and outline or agenda and have lined up a speaker, send him/her a written confirmation. Ask your speaker to provide you with handout materials before the day of training so copies can be made in advance.

4. Eligibility

Advanced classes must be offered statewide to all Master Gardeners who are in good standing and have fulfilled all requirements for three years. (This program uses the calendar year. For example: if you were trained in 2003, you are eligible for advanced classes in 2006.) Participants should understand they must attend the entire class and personally receive their certificate of completion at the end of the session in order to receive advanced training credit.

5. Advertising

All Advanced classes must be advertised simultaneously statewide so that everyone has an equal chance to apply. Direct e-mail to all County Extension Offices and County MG contacts will be handled by the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator. Other methods of advertising are MG newsletters, Master Gardener web page, State Master Gardener Coordinator, flyers, and County MG organizations.

6. Registration

The Host County should use the Advanced MG Training Registration Form which includes all pertinent information as well as the following:

Participants must
1.) have fulfilled all requirements for three years and,
2.) attend the entire training class to receive certification and credit.
The registration packet should contain the registration form, a course agenda with speakers and a list of hotel/motel accommodations, including addresses, reservation phone numbers, and, if possible, rates.

7. Roster of Registrants

Two weeks prior to the class, the Host County should send a roster of registrants to the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator (2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204 or jtreat@uaex.edu). This roster will be e-mailed to all county agents and county contacts, will be used to prepare the Certificates of completion (which will be issued at the end of the class), and will be sent to the state Extension office.

8. Packets & Handouts

Class packets should be assembled before the day of training. Packet covers and suggestions for inclusion can be provided by the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator. Also consider including a list of gardens and garden shops within the area.

9. Signing In

When the training begins, have sign-in sheets at a registration desk. Distribute class packets with trainee names affixed as a double check of attendance. Also, have participants sign in after lunch.

10. Evaluation & Certificates of Completion

Evaluation forms can be provided upon request or the Host County may develop its own using information on the sample form. The certificates will be provided by the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator. At the end of the class, the certificate should be issued to the participant in exchange for his/her evaluation form. All certificates not issued at the class will be returned to the Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator.

Host committee members should collect and review all evaluation forms at the end of the meeting and add their own comments and suggestions.

11. Follow Up
Within two weeks of the training, the Host County should send:

1.) A list of the persons who completed the class (the list should contain the participant’s name, address, e-mail, county, year participant completed MG basic training and telephone number),
2.) a check made payable to County 76 for the amount of $5 per registrant, and
3.) the evaluation forms or a summary of them, plus the comments from the host committee to:

Master Gardener Advanced Training Coordinator
Julie Treat
2301 South University Avenue
Little Rock AR 72204

Names of participants who received certificates will be entered in the Advanced Master Gardener database. At such time as the participants have concluded five training sessions, an Advanced Master Gardener certification will be generated.

Send thank-you notes to speakers along with honoraria, if applicable. Relax and give yourselves a pat on the back!

For additional information please contact the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service at 501-671-2237.

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