



*Gwinnett County
Master Gardener Association
New Member Handbook*

*10-26-21, First Edition * 1.1*

Welcome! We are delighted you have decided to join us and to grow along with us. As Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association, our mission is to serve as stewards of the environment, working to educate the public of Gwinnett County about horticultural practices that will foster beautiful gardens, a healthy environment and to work in cooperation with the University of Georgia, College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and the Gwinnett County Extension Service. We also donate our time to maintaining a myriad of gardens and parks across our county.

There are many ways you can participate in this: attending our meetings, listening to our speakers, volunteering for committees, and educating yourself. There are lots of choices. This handbook will familiarize you with the options the association has to offer.

Table of Contents

Part 1 The Association

Membership and Meetings p. 1-3

Typical Calendar p. 2

Part 2 Involvement p.3

Committees p. 3-6

Volunteer Projects p.6

Part 3 Other Organizations p. 7

Part 1 – The Association

First, what is our association? Our association is a separate and distinct organization from the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service. However, we do operate in cooperation with the Gwinnett County Extension Service. Gwinnett County Master Gardeners Association is a charitable organization, a 501-3c. As such, donations of goods are tax-deductible and milage to perform philanthropic services as part of our organization, such as going to and from plant digs that help raise money for grants. Receipts for donations for tax purposes are available from the treasurer or ask an association officer.

Who can join? Any adult! Only Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEVs) are voting members and may hold board offices. Non-MGEVs may join as friends, and may attend all meetings, field trips, workshops, social functions and participate in charitable projects.

Typical Calendar – Dates and times are subject to change from year to year. The current president will set each year's calendar.

Month		Date	Time	Event	Content
January		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	New Officers Installed
	15th			"Bit of Dirt" Winter Issue	
		3rd Monday	12Noon	General Meeting - Open	
February		2nd Monday	10AM-12PM	Board Meeting - Open	Approve Budget
		3rd Monday	12Noon	General Meeting - Open	
March		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	
		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
	31st			Deadline for Membership Renewal	Website Password Change
April	15th			"Bit of Dirt" Spring Issue	
		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
		Day Before		Plant Sale Set-up	
		Last Saturday	9AM-2PM	Plant Sale - Public	
May		2nd Monday	10AM-12PM	Board Meeting - Open	
		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	
mid-May		TBA		Awards Lunch - By Extension Office	
		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	Photo Contest
June		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
July		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	
		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
	15th			"Bit of Dirt" Summer Issue	
August		2nd Monday	10AM-12PM	Board Meeting -Open	
		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
September		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	
		3rd Monday	TBD	Member Appreciation Picnic- Open	
October		3rd Monday	7PM	General Meeting - Open	
	15th			"Bit of Dirt" Fall Issue	
November		2nd Monday	10AM-12PM	Board Meeting -Open	
		2nd Monday		Executive Committee Meeting - Closed	Write Proposed Budget
		3rd Monday	7PM	Holiday Dinner	Holiday Party
December				Take the Month OFF!	

What does it cost? The dues are \$15 annually and are delinquent after March 31 of each year. Membership forms are available on our website and at our meetings. Payment should be made to GCMGA and sent with the form to the GCMGA treasurer or paid at the meeting. The current treasurer's address is on the membership registration form.

Why should I come to a meeting? Food! Friends! and Fun! We also learn incredible things from our guest speakers, and you can invite a friend to come with you! If you are an MGEV, you can enter that time into MGLOG in your Continuing Education. We always have fun door prizes to cap off the evening!

Pre-Meeting Socials: Food and Friends! Our pre-meeting social is a wonderful time to have a delicious meal, swap stories, and meet new folks. You will get an email notification of the upcoming meeting. It will list the part of the menu assigned to the segment of the alphabet in which your last name falls. For example, if my last name is "Hall," in a particular month, the assignments might be: A-F brings appetizers, salads, or bread, G-L brings side dishes, M-S brings entrees, and T-Z brings desserts. So, in that month, I would take a side dish of my choosing, enough to serve at least 8+ people. The following month, menu assignments rotate. We provide beverages of a mix of sodas, tea, and coffee. It would be great to bring your own cup to cut down on trash.

When are these meetings? Our general membership meetings are on the third Monday of the month. In January and February, our meetings start at 12noon (social at 11:30). (This is because it is dark by 5:30 PM.) March to November, they are at 7 PM (social at 6:30). The meetings are at Bethesda Senior Center, 225 Bethesda Church Rd., Lawrenceville, GA 30044. There is one exception for location, the September picnic – that location is announced ahead of time. There is no meeting in December.

Communication: Our primary communication is by email. One thing that frustrates everyone is having members say, "I didn't know" or "I didn't get the notice," or being the one left in the dark. The president sends out meeting announcements. Set your email inbox to receive mail from "**GCMGA President**" www.gwinnettgardener@gmail.com so association notices do not go into your junk mail. The president sends out all information that goes to the general membership coming from committees. If you are on a committee, you should place all of the email addresses of the other members in the safe list for your inbox to receive their communication. Periodically check your junk mail to see if anything slips through, particularly if you know that something special is coming up.

Who runs things? Management of the organization is vested in the Board of Directors, referred to as the Board. The Board consists of the officers and the standing committee chairs. We have the typical officers: President, Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Immediate Past President; they are elected for one year and constitute the Executive Committee. Board meetings are open to the membership. Each committee chair is responsible for scheduling the meetings of their committee when necessary.

Part 2 – Involvement

How can I get involved? There are generally two ways. First: emails go out all the time asking for help with a project, respond. Don't think you don't know enough; we are all here to learn! Second: join a committee. Descriptions of our current committees are below, and new committees form all the time. Pick one that interests you and contact the chair. You do not have to be an expert in anything; you need to be willing to help. Remember to place the chair's email address in your contact list.

The email addresses listed are not to be used for any private gain, but are only made available for the intended purpose of contacting the committee chairs to participate in GCMGA activities. Check the edition of this handbook. If it is more than a year old, it is probably out of date and many of the Committee Chairs have changed. Go to the "Members Only" section of the GCMGA to get the latest edition with the current Committee Chairs.

Standing Committees: Some are large, and some are only one or two people, but all are necessary and perform valuable work that allows our organization to function and serve the community.

1) 2022 Garden Tour: Committee members may spend several months helping to prepare for the garden tour or just one day. The tasks are many, and there is plenty of work to go around for whatever time you can share. Tickets, advertisements, and programs must be designed and printed. You can help find garden hosts, help the hosts prepare gardens, identify plants, manage ticket sales, or act as docents the day of the tour. Contact Co-Chairs: Susan Hanson [susanchanson@bellsouth.net](mailto:susan.hanson@bellsouth.net) or Jane Trentin janetrentin@yahoo.com

2) Education: Develops, schedules, and promotes educational opportunities and workshops. Registers participants and makes arrangements for holding the events. Contact Chair: Jessica Miller jessicamiller007@comcast.net

3) Social Media: Currently, the association has a Facebook page and Instagram. Committee members should have a Facebook account and be comfortable using Facebook (FB) and learning new aspects of it as it is an ever-changing platform. Committee members should either write new content or post appropriate content from other sources. Posting requires a half-hour to an hour per week, depending on how many postings you choose to do. The chair writes a brief paragraph for the GCMGA to be included in the bi-monthly membership emails to encourage membership interaction with our posts. Several times a week, take a few minutes to check the FB account to ensure all notifications are addressed. There is a one-hour meeting the last week of each month for training and to discuss plans for the following month. Contact Chair: Ann Langley ann.langley@comcast.net

4) Field Trips: The Field Trip Committee plans three to four opportunities a year for the GCMGA members to visit a variety of gardening events, horticultural gardens, and businesses to both learn about and enjoy the beauty of nature. Our goal is to provide a variety of experiences. We welcome anyone interested in getting involved and providing their thoughts and perspectives on identifying these opportunities. The primary skills needed include being curious, organization, and interacting well with others. Familiarity and knowledge about Atlanta gardens and horticultural businesses would be a bonus but not required. This committee requires limited time commitments, including one meeting to plan out the year and two one-hour organizational meetings before each event. They should also plan on participating in the field trip outing. Chair: currently, the seat is open. Contact the president to volunteer; to qualify, you must be an MG.

5) Grants: Review and update (as needed) established guidelines and determine the yearly grant cycle. Coordinate and review the grant applications with the committee ensuring they meet current criteria and determine awards. Time commitment is mainly in January and early February, when the grants are sent out by email for review. Chair and committee time commitment is 1-2 hours weekly during that period depending on the number of grant applications. The committee typically meets once in early February to determine awards. Chair fields occasional emails throughout the year to address questions. Chair handles expense reimbursement with GCMGA treasurer as submitted. Skills needed are 1) ability to read and write emails thinking about merits of the projects proposed, Word skills to write and publish guidelines, and Excel skills to summarize and track the grants. 2) a willingness to work with other committee members to achieve consensus. Contact Chair: Martha Whitman 1MarthaWhitman@gmail.com

6) Historian: Maintains the history of the association through pictures and articles. Coordinates with the assistant webmaster to post articles and pictures and develops campaigns to promote association events and camaraderie. Creates a year-end PowerPoint presentation to highlight association achievements. Solicits photos and articles from the membership for posting to the website for those events they cannot attend. Contact Chair: Freda Steward fsteward1121@comcast.net

7) Hospitality: Hospitality sets up and decorates all the serving tables for our meeting potlucks. We set up paper goods and drinks and create flower arrangements. The committee is responsible for cleaning up the kitchen area. For special occasions like the holiday meeting and the awards lunch, the committee decorates all the tables, not just the serving tables. For the appreciation picnic, the committee chair orders all the food. The committee arrives early to get everything prepared before members arrive. New committee members are always welcome and appreciated. Contact Chair: Alice Verner aliceverner@aol.com

8) Newsletter/Bit of Dirt: Publishes the association newsletter quarterly. Needed skills: good writing and grammar skills for creating articles and editing material submitted; computer skills required include email, Word, and Mailchimp; tracking trends in gardening and coming events of interest to the members; soliciting articles and photos from members to showcase projects being carried out by Master Gardeners and reminding them of deadlines; putting a report from each standing committee in the newsletter each year to keep members updated on their work.

Time commitment: the newsletter is published four times a year on January 15, April 15, July 15, and October 15. The time involved for each issue is approximately 15 hours spread out over the quarter.

Committee needs: Besides the Editor, there are informal standing committee members, including the president, who does a "Message from the President" for each issue and proofs the newsletter before mailing. Each GCMGA committee chair gives a committee report sometime during the year. Editor: Contact Shirley Bohm shirley_bohm@hotmail.com

9) Parliamentarian: Ensures that the Board and Executive Committee meetings run following Robert's Rules of Order and the GCMGA Constitution and Bylaws. Chair: currently, the seat is open; contact the president to volunteer. To qualify, you must be an MG.

10) Plant Sale: Organizes and holds the event. Highly recommend co-chairs - there is a lot. Susan and I have found sharing tasks – i.e., one does the inventory and price lists, and one organizes digs, site prep (ordering tables and confirming location, etc.), and communication (flyers and answering emails). Co-chairs obviously can divide as they see fit, but it can be a lot. The publicity chair should be on this committee as well. Contact Co-Chairs: Lynda Pollock robert9811@att.net and Susan Kosenka slk120@aol.com

11) Trainee Breakfast/Lunch: a.k.a. "The Breakfast Club" provides breakfast and lunch for the Master Gardener Trainees of Gwinnett and the Metro Atlanta Counties. Each participating county is assigned a three/four-week time period to, once per week, provide breakfast and lunch.

We have three to four planning meetings to organize, prepare, and solicit prepared/unprepared food and monetary donations from our GC master gardener volunteers. We arrive at 8:00 AM to start the coffee and arrange and decorate tables, then serve breakfast. Lunch is around noon. We provide meals for seventy to eighty people. Pack-up and clean-up take about thirty minutes. Contact Chair: Robert Ayer rbrtayer15@gmail.com

12) Photo Contest: This is a one-person committee, but it is helpful to have a co-chair assist or shadow to help with the transition of a new chairperson. Chairperson duties: determine the categories and set

contest rules, find a judge, organize photos received, put together a PowerPoint presentation for the Photo Contest meeting, and acknowledge winners with photo certificates or prizes. The primary time commitment is during the month before the contest. The photo contest is currently held in May. It takes a few hours a week. Everything may be done at home, at your convenience. Organizational and basic computer skills are needed. Chair: currently, the seat is open. Contact the president to volunteer; to qualify, you must be an MG.

13) Public Relations: Promotes GCMGA events through newspapers, magazines, TV, radio. Keeps a log of contact names and other pertinent information; works closely with the Historian, the Secretary, and other committee chairs. Check publications and websites periodically to be sure publicity is posted. Contact Chair: Jessica Miller jessicamiller007@comcast.net

14) Website: Continuously developing and maintaining the public GCMGA Website and the members-only section, containing association history and information. Skills required: computer savvy with knowledge of WordPress or willingness to learn the software. Approximately 1 – 2 hours per month on average, occasionally more. Contact Assistant webmaster: Becky Wolary bwolary@comcast.net

15) Weed and Feed: Identify members needing assistance, recruit volunteers and organize weed and feed events. Publish these events via web or email announcements. Contact Chair: Becky Panetta rpanetta@gmail.com

16) Seed Exchange: Encourage members to save seeds and donate for other members' use. Keep a current inventory of seed packets on hand. Until the Extension office reopens, periodically publish a list of seed packets, and make them available to members. (This is usually done at meetings or via the seed shutters at the Extension office.) Contact Chair: Becky Panetta rpanetta@gmail.com

Volunteer Projects

Master Gardener Extension Volunteers (MGEV): MGlog (www.mglog.org) and the extension office are our two resources for volunteer projects for MGEVs. Go to the 5th pull-down tab on the top bar of MGLOG titled "Projects," then click "Project List." The projects are in the order in which they were submitted. To put them in alphabetical order, click on the up and down arrows in the title field. Use both the "Initiative" classification and the project's title to tell you about the garden. "Project in Charge" is the person who is the project coordinator. You can get their contact information by going to the second pull-down menu on the top bar, "MGEV Profiles, My Group," and they will be listed alphabetically by last name. If you cannot locate the project coordinator on this list, don't hesitate to contact Lisa Klein at the extension office at: lisa.klein@gwinnettcountry.com or 678.377.4026 for more information about volunteering on a project.

The Extension Office periodically sends out requests for help with activities, such as volunteering at the extension office, speaking at garden clubs, giving advice at farmers' markets, or helping at extension booths at events. Set up your email so that notices from Daly, Timothy Timothy.Daly@gwinnettcountry.com, Fritz, Kim kim.fritz@gwinnettcountry.com, and Klein, Lisa lisa.klein@gwinnettcountry.com go into your inbox and NOT your junk mail!

School Gardens: There are ongoing projects at over 30 schools in our county; all school projects start with School – school's name. Only MGEVs who are current with their Risk Management Training may

work at a school. If you are interested in helping at a school, please get in touch with Kim Fritz at the Gwinnett County Extension Office at 678-377-4023 or kim.fritz@gwinnettcountry.com.

Friends of GCMGA: If you are a Friend, you will not be able to access MGLOG, but you can find a list of volunteer projects on our webpage (<https://gwinnettmastergardeners.com>) in the “Members Only” section. This list is somewhat shorter than the list on MGLOG because it excludes those projects that specifically require Master Gardener training and 4H Risk Management Training. However, it is still a long list of projects that are grateful for volunteers.

Community Gardens: There are a variety of community gardens. Some gardens are solely for the production of produce for food pantries; these gardens require many volunteers. There are also community gardens at individual churches and neighborhood groups, each with its own rules. Volunteers are needed at these gardens to help first-time gardeners learn the processes of successful gardening. If this interests you, check out their contact information on MGLOG and our website (<https://gwinnettmastergardeners.com>).

Harvest Gwinnett’s Community Gardens: Reserve a raised plot at one of the nine Harvest Gwinnett Community Gardens listed on our webpage or the Harvest Gwinnett webpage. (<https://www.livehealthygwinnett.com/programs-events/harvest-gwinnett>). To volunteer to help first-time gardeners contact Lisa Klein at the Extension office at: lisa.klein@gwinnettcountry.com or 678.377.4026.

Demonstration Gardens and other Activities: Over thirty demonstration gardens and other activities are located at various sites throughout the county, including our work-intensive Annual GCMGA Plant Sale and Biannual Garden Tour. All of these locations accept and encourage MGEV and friend volunteers and can be found on our webpage in the “Members Only” section.

Part 3 - Other Organizations

Many other organizations share our goals.

Georgia Master Gardeners Association: <https://www.georgiamastergardeners.org> GMGA is a “parent” organization to us. If you choose to join before their March 31 deadline, they will return \$5 of your membership fee to us. Membership in GMGA gives you discounts in registering for the annual state conference and the monthly Clips newsletters, and availability of grant funding for projects.

Georgia Native Plant Society: <https://gnps.org> You can participate in plant rescues before the plant’s destruction at construction sites. You can learn the propagation techniques of native plants at the Stone Mountain propagation site. There is usually an annual conference with great speakers and vendors. You can be a member at large or join a regional group. Any volunteer work with them counts as volunteer hours in MGLOG under “Collaborating with Other Counties.”

Georgia Botanical Society: <https://www.gabotsoc.org> Field Trips, Field Trips, and more Field Trips! All led by incredibly knowledgeable people who know where to go to see native plants blooming. If you want to see a forest floor covered with trout lilies in bloom, this is the group for you!

National Gardening Association: <https://garden.org> An online organization. NO membership fees! NO meetings! NO required service hours! It’s just excellent gardening information and many opportunities

to share interest through an incredible number of online forums and the chance to ask questions about gardening problems and have them answered by people with experience.

*For corrections or edits to this document, please email Margaret Molyson at mmolyson@hotmail.com