

# Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners

## 2023 Statistics



4,900+ Master Gardeners



744,481 direct educational contacts



448,700 Volunteer hours



Value of volunteer time: 14.9 million\*

### Master Gardeners work to build a more resilient community.

#### Mission

Sharing Knowledge.  
Empowering Communities.

#### Vision

To be the Virginia Cooperative Extension volunteer organization extending horticultural and environmental outreach across the commonwealth.

### Core Values

#### Respect

- The environment, each other and those we serve

#### Accountability

- Wise stewardship of resources
- To our organization, our community and each other

#### Collaboration

- Willing to work with a diverse group to reach a common goal
- Actively seeking out partners



\*Based on a value of \$33.38 /hour from Independent Sector 2023 Value of Volunteer Hours by State

Virginia Cooperative Extension is a partnership of Virginia Tech, Virginia State University, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and local governments. Its programs and employment are open to all, regardless of age, color, disability, sex (including pregnancy), gender, gender identity, gender expression, national origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, genetic information, military status, or any other basis protected by law.

**Virginia EMGs are a dedicated team of more than 4,900 volunteers who work in communities throughout Virginia to promote research-based horticulture.**



Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) provide vital public education related to creating and managing home landscapes, vegetable gardening, turf management, and more!

After initial training and internship, EMGs complete 20 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education each year. In 2023 EMGs completed 55,100 hours of CE.

EMGs serve their communities by providing outreach and education related to horticulture. EMGs work on projects like community gardens, demonstration gardens (for example, a pollinator garden at a local library), farmers market help desks, and much more.



## State Office Programs

### Advanced Training

Virginia Cooperative Extension Master Gardeners have options for advanced study through one of our three steward programs: land, tree, and water.



The Advanced Master Gardener identifies resources for the program, recruits and organizes volunteers to assist, administers the program activities, and reports impacts to the agent. Advanced Master Gardeners work with their agent and the community to develop a cohesive program that meets community needs and then implement the program.

After completion of training, advanced EMGs complete at least 5 hours of relevant continuing education and 10 hours of advanced training specific volunteer hours on an annual basis, in addition to the hours requirements to maintain their status as an Extension Master Gardener volunteer.

In 2023, at EMGC, Tree Steward training was offered. Steward trainees attended an extra day of training at EMGC as well as attending specialized concurrent sessions. 30 EMGs began training as a Tree Steward and returned to their units to identify and implement local projects.

### Continuing Education

**EMG College:** Each year, Extension Master Gardeners from around the commonwealth are invited to four days of educational workshops, tours, and speakers. Master Gardener College offers a chance for Master Gardeners from different parts of Virginia to get to know one another and advance their knowledge of horticulture. In June 2023, EMG College was again held on the campus of Virginia Tech. More than 150 EMGs attended the program, which included five keynote speakers and more than 30 concurrent session speakers.

**Monthly Webinar Series:** The state EMG office coordinates a monthly webinar series for CE for EMGs. 2023 webinars covered topics such as trees, compost, forest health, and lawn care.



# Across Virginia

Virginia's 4,900 EMGS volunteered time through their local VCE office in almost every county in Virginia. They contributed 448,700 volunteer hours to a variety of educational programs. Here are examples of some of our volunteer service projects and their combined impact across Virginia in 2023.

## Economic Value of Horticulture

Projects where the economic value or impact of horticulture can be captured in ecosystem services, mitigating heat-island effects, impacts on property values, increase in local tax revenues directly tied to the greening of communities or business districts, money saved due to specific conservation practices, which directly impact heating and cooling costs at a residential level.

**3,065 volunteers - 55,100 hours**  
**9,700 community members engaged.**

## Environmental Stewardship

Projects such as urban nutrient management or other efforts to improve or protect water quality, work with pollinator gardens or gardening for wildlife, cover crops, turf alternatives, gardening for climate change, emphasis on native plants, and how to safely use organic and synthetic pesticides etc.

**1,689 volunteers - 53,890 hours**  
**73,680 community members engaged**

## Food Security

Projects involving local food production through individual gardens or community gardens. Projects center on teaching others how to plant, cultivate, and harvest their own fruits and vegetables to increase personal food sovereignty. Additionally, this could involve local EMG volunteers growing surplus fruits and vegetables specifically to donate to local food banks.

**633 volunteers - 16,000 hours**  
**19,710 community members engaged.**

## General Outreach and Education

Projects such as public information booths, festivals, general promotion of Extension Master Gardener programming, etc.

**2,771 volunteers - 121,490 hours**  
**34,760 community members engaged.**

## Volunteer Management/Administration

Projects such as association meetings, committee meetings, etc.

**2,421 volunteers - 87,162 hours**

## Youth and Horticulture

Projects where the target audience is pre-k through high school. Projects would be partnerships with 4H Youth Development, scout groups or similar, local boys' and girls' clubs, in-school or after-school clubs where gardening or horticulture is central to the activity.

**841 volunteers - 16,803 hours**  
**120,420 community members engaged.**

Find your [local Extension unit](#) to learn about upcoming events, explore Extension resources, and connect with Extension Master Gardener volunteers in your community.

## Join Us!

Join a dedicated team of more than 5,000 volunteers who work in communities throughout Virginia to promote research-based horticulture. Extension Master Gardeners (EMGs) provide vital public education related to creating and managing home landscapes, vegetable gardening, turf management, and more!

To become an Extension Master Gardener, you will receive 50 hours (minimum) of training and complete 50 hours (minimum) of volunteer service. Exact hour requirements vary by county. To remain an active Extension Master Gardener, you must complete 20 hours of volunteer service and 8 hours of continuing education each year.

Training classes and volunteer groups are handled locally by each Virginia county Extension office. Contact your [local Extension office](#) for information on your next upcoming local training.



## Donate!

Support the Virginia State Extension Master Gardener program by making a tax-deductible donation to the Master Gardener Annual Fund.

Your gift to the annual fund will help further the work of Extension Master Gardener volunteers across Virginia today and for years to come!

Donations to the fund received during Virginia Tech's annual Giving Day in February are used to fund our Microgrant program. Each year the state office will award grants to support local EMG projects that focus on that year's focus. In 2023 the focus was on environmental stewardship. We awarded more than \$8,000 to 14 different projects throughout the commonwealth. Read more [here](#).



Fund update: In 2023, the Annual Fund received 68 gifts for a total of \$3,101.

[Give Now](#)

## Contact

Ed Olsen, EMG Program Director

[edolsen@vt.edu](mailto:edolsen@vt.edu)

Devon Johnson, Communications Project Coordinator

[devon35v@vt.edu](mailto:devon35v@vt.edu)

Follow us on these platforms!

