

Guidelines for Counting Master Gardener Volunteer Hours

Every year some Master Gardeners wonder whether the time they spend working on a certain gardening project counts toward their annual volunteer hours. The answers to a few questions will help to clarify what you can count.

Before you volunteer, please fill out an annual Master Gardener Contract and let your County Educator or Program Director know about your plans. Some Educators need to work on certain county projects and count on your participation.

Does the activity involve teaching someone else? You can count any activity that involves spreading research based gardening information to the public. This includes giving talks, staffing information booths, working with youth, handicapped and elderly gardeners. Such projects as gleaning vegetables for food pantries also count because the project as a whole involves teaching harvesting techniques and nutrition facts to the public even when a particular job within the project doesn't. Please check with your county program director. Sometimes gray areas occur and need approval.

What if I take a class? You can't count classes in which you are the student toward your volunteer time.

What about demonstration gardens? As long as you hold classes or demonstrations on the site, the work you do there counts toward your hours. If your County Educator approves, labeling the plants in a landscape project and/or providing a detailed, labeled site plan demonstrates educational content. Involving the people who will be using the landscape would teach them more about how to plan, execute and maintain similar projects.

What about routine maintenance? Unless you have regular information sessions on the site, routine maintenance doesn't count toward Master Gardener hours. You could organize groups of people to help weed under your direction, perhaps as part of a class in techniques for reducing maintenance. When in doubt, please check with your County Educator.

What about planning time? You can add the time you spend planning projects, writing articles and developing talks. You can also count the time you spend at organizational meetings.

What about travel time to the project or event? Travel time doesn't count as volunteer time, except in unique situations. If in doubt, check with your County Educator.

What if I work for the New Hampshire Master Gardener Association? Once you have fulfilled your internship you can join the NHMGA and count time spent serving on NHMGA projects. You must also spend 10 hours per year on county projects for your NHMGA volunteer time to count as Master Gardener volunteer hours.

Please remember to keep your County Educator informed about what you are doing.