

Master Gardener E-Mail Protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to ensure the UNH Cooperative Extension's Master Gardeners can answer e-mails directed to the Education Center and Info Line with consistency and accuracy.

Best practices

UNH Cooperative Extension considers email as an important means of communication and recognizes the importance of proper email content and speedy replies in conveying a professional image and delivering good customer service. Master Gardeners should take the same care in drafting an email as they would for any other communication. Therefore, the Education Center and Info Line wishes volunteers to adhere to the following guidelines:

Writing emails:

- E-mail should be well structured with subject headers or titles that have meaning for the recipient
- Extension's email should be professional: clearly & thoroughly answered and brief. Address email with 'Hi', or 'Dear', and the name of the person. Messages should end with 'Best Regards', 'Sincerely' or 'Have a great day'. The use of Internet abbreviations and characters are not encouraged.
- Signatures must include your first & last name and title (Master Gardener Volunteer or Master Gardener Intern Volunteer). A disclaimer will be added underneath your signature (see Disclaimer)*
- Spell-check all e-mails prior to transmission.
- Do not send unnecessary attachments. Attach the URL in the body of the text when applicable. Directions are below.
- Do not write emails in capitals.
- If you forward e-mails, state clearly what action you expect the recipient to take.

It is strictly prohibited to:

- Send or forward emails containing libelous, defamatory, offensive, racist or obscene remarks. If you receive an email of this nature, please notify your supervisor immediately.
- Send unsolicited email messages or chain mail.
- Forge or attempt to forge email messages, or disguise or attempt to disguise your identity when sending mail.

Duty of care

Users must take the same care in drafting an email as they would for any other communication. Confidential information should not be sent via email.

Disclaimer

The following disclaimer will be added to each outgoing email: 'The information contained herein is provided as a public service performed by Volunteer MGs with the understanding that

the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension makes no warranties, either expressed or implied, concerning the accuracy, completeness, reliability, or suitability of the information. Nor does the University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension warrant the use of this information is free of any claims of copyright infringement.

Replying to emails:

- Emails should be answered as soon as possible, but volunteers should attempt to answer emails that involve the possibilities of human /animal interaction (i.e. bites that are dangerous to humans, insect stings poisonous plants, mushrooms, etc.) within 4 hours.

Including a URL in a Message:

- To include a URL (Uniform Resource Locator) in a message, enclose it with less than and greater than signs to ensure that your recipient's application can identify it as a URL. For example, <<http://www.eudora.com/>>. (Do not put in spaces before or after the <> symbols).

Resources Available for information:

- Phone notebooks
- Reference Library
- Bookmarked Web-sites
- UNH Web-site and other Cooperative Extension Web-sites
- F & Qs
- Education Center and Info Line Administrator and Coordinator

I understand and am willing to abide by the policies and procedures set forth in the Education Center and Info Line Master Gardener E-mail protocol:

Volunteer Signature

Date

Extension Educator Signature

Date

June 2011

*The University of New Hampshire Cooperative Extension is an equal opportunity educator and employer.
University of New Hampshire, U.S. Department of Agriculture and N.H. counties cooperating.*