

Master Gardener Hours: What Counts?

This is not to limit the hours you are allowed to report, but to give a better idea of what to report or not. It will also include how to report hours to help the Extension Educator and Staff to enter your hours quickly.

Since hours work on an honor system, an adjustment is that you will be more responsible for what you count. Since the motto of the Master Gardener Program is “Helping Others Grow” and the stated purpose of the organization is “to teach people more about growing plants,” you must reason with yourself (and the educator if questioned) as to why or how your hours fulfill these statements. Written statements are not required unless you think there is a question of counting or not and only as much as necessary to explain your point.

Volunteer Hours: Their aim is to provide information and technical assistance in the areas of gardening and home horticulture through the use of trained and certified volunteers. Remember, you are to use **research based information, not home remedies**. In general, remember that your **volunteer hours are to not replace hired labor**. They are to be educational to the public or others around you rather than just working. They **must also be volunteered time; you cannot receive payment or compensation for them**.

Office Work: In general, if the work is for the Extension Office, it is approved for volunteer hours.

- Answering Phone lines. If for another organization, it must be for the purposes of answering homeowners’ questions on gardening. Other activities—Ask for prior approval.

Planting/Weeding

- You are **not to replace hired labor** or need to go back year after year to do maintenance.
- This is to be either an educational process for others or should be an education opportunity.
 - You need to have at least 2 non-Master Gardeners people there learning what you are doing or have plant markers or other labels so that those walking around can learn.
- Schools—students, parents, or staff should be involved to learn the process so they will take responsibility for it afterwards.
- Government plantings—See Nikky for prior approval, but again, should be educational in the end to the public. Note: any project already in progress is counted just as before. Such as, the government beds, the fairgrounds and parks currently approved.

Answering Questions—Opportunities for this would be working the Master Gardener Booth at a location, volunteering at garden centers (please talk with Nikky before doing this), or volunteering as a guide at a park. Remember, you cannot be paid to do this (like at a garden center).

Presentations—When giving these, they must be on gardening to count. Time can be given for preparation and the topic and presentation should be approved by Nikky before giving it to the group.

Travel Time

- Travel time is counted for volunteer opportunities only in Porter County. Out of county and out of state travel will not be counted without the approval of Master Gardener Coordinator. Time is to be from your starting location, to the event, and back.
- Travel time will be accepted as volunteer time with the following conditions:
 - When volunteering at the State Master Gardener Conference, Indiana State Fair, and Indiana Flower & Patio Show
 - Reimbursement or compensation was **not** received for the mileage.

Education Hours

Education hours are times when YOU are learning something new from a speaker or presenter. These could be library meetings, conventions, conferences, presenters at garden meetings, speakers at Master Gardener Events, etc. When someone is not presenting during banquets or events (including socials), those hours cannot be counted for education. Remember, mileage is **not** counted for education hours!

Adapting to current educational offerings, education hours for online programs/ webcasts will be accepted. These are programs or presentations, and not just the personal self-study of reading publications/factsheets. To qualify for education hours:

- The program must be from a university or college.
- The program must be relevant to Indiana. This means that it must be useful to the horticulture industry in Indiana.

Here are some examples:

- Recorded presentations from the Porter County Seed and Bulb Exchange.
- Purdue offers a program that is webcast. You may watch this at home and count it for education hours since it's from a university and it's relevant.
- Ohio State offers training on invasive insects. You can watch this and count it, as long as the insect is moving across the state towards Indiana.

*****Hours are to be reported in 15 minutes or quarter (¼) hour increments. It is hard to calculate odd minutes (like 10, 40, 50) and determine what you should be credited with. Therefore, please make a judgment call as to round up or down to the nearest quarter hour. If you do not, we will from now on always round down for you.**