

News Release – For Immediate Release

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Purdue Extension Master Gardener Program Seeking New Crop of Volunteers

If you want to sharpen your gardening skills and are interested in sharing that knowledge with others, Purdue Extension has the ideal program for you.

Beginning in September, a Purdue Extension Master Gardener "Basic Training" course will be offered for residents of Noble and Whitley Counties. The Purdue Extension Master Gardener (EMG) program is a volunteer training program. Through the class, participants increase their knowledge on a wide variety of horticultural subjects. Once someone passes the class, participants provide leadership and service in educational gardening activities within their communities to fulfill the EMG mission, "Helping Others Grow." The group also organizes and promotes opportunities for advanced horticultural education across a wide variety of topics.

The Basic Training course will be held on Monday evenings from 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm from Sept. 13 through Dec. 13. An orientation class will be held Tuesday, September 7. Participants will be exposed to a wide range of subjects including soil and plant science, diagnosis of plant problems, pesticide safety, and culture of vegetable, flower, landscape, and fruit plants.

Classes for the bi-county training will be held alternately at the Noble County Purdue Extension office and the Whitley County Fairgrounds Ag Museum. Purdue Extension Educators John Woodmansee (Whitley County) and Ann Kline (Noble County) will facilitate the class and teach several topics. They state that past participants have indicated the course was a great experience, and the inclusion of hands-on learning helps solidify concepts taught in the class.

Renee Dodson, a recent local graduate, said, "The Master Gardener classes were very interesting and exposed us to so much plant-related information. The guest speakers were great. Prepare to learn a lot!"

Safety precautions with respect to COVID-19 will be taken as prescribed by county health departments and Purdue University, including physical distancing in the class. This may limit the number of participants, so don't wait to submit your application.

Materials and expenses for the series of classes cost \$150.00 per participant; this covers the Master Gardener student handbook, handouts, name badges, and other materials. The teaching resources

become part of the Master Gardener's personal collection. Couples sharing a handbook may attend for a rate of \$230.00 (\$115 each).

A completed application is required for all potential students by Monday, August 16. Applicants must present identification (driver's license) once to Extension office staff. Provided a sufficient number of students enroll, successfully screened applicants will be given a link to complete enrollment and pay online. Those who wish to pay by check may do so in their local Extension office. Once class begins, students may optionally purchase a flash drive (electronic) version of the manual for an additional \$25.

If you'd like an application to join this league of volunteers or if you have questions, call Noble County at 260-636-2111 or Whitley County at 260-244-7615. Leave your name and address to receive detailed information about the class, including the application.

You may also stop by the Purdue Extension office in the Noble County South Complex located south of Albion at 2090 N. State Road 9, or the Whitley County office at 524 Branch Court in Columbia City.

Interested persons may also access local Master Gardener resources (including class information) under the "Garden" tab at the local Purdue Extension website at: www.extension.purdue.edu/noble or www.extension.purdue.edu/whitley.