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## **Master Gardener Training Back in Person for 2021**

With gardening on the rise as a result of the COVID pandemic, there is a need for trained horticulture volunteers – a need filled by the Extension Master Gardener program. Last year, Kansas State University’s Extension Master Gardener training was exclusively online. This year, with vaccinations rolling out, participants have the choice of online or in-person training.

“This online choice is optional and local units are not required to use this training in place of their own programming plans,” Dr. Cheryl Boyer said. “However, because fall travel is limited for K-State Research and Extension educators, face-to-face training cannot be expected or required.” The online training from 2020 saw over 300 participants from across the state join extension agents and specialists to learn Online trainings will take place via Zoom, a teleconferencing platform available on computers, tablets, and phones. For training, a camera and microphone are required.

Converting to online training was a massive shift in a program that was traditionally in-person only. However, thanks to the increased accessibility and decreased costs this format provides, it will now be offered in tandem with in-person trainings for those who cannot travel to the classes. Online sessions are every Thursday from 1-4pm from Sept. 3 through Dec. 17. The in-person schedule is still being determined. The topics include plant growth and development, soils, turfgrass, annual and perennial flowers, landscape maintenance, woody ornamentals, vegetable gardening, insects, pesticide safety, plant diseases, fruit, landscape design and wildlife management.

The K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener program is available to anyone with an interest in horticulture. “If you want to improve your gardening skills and knowledge, and you like to work with people, this program may be for you,” Boyer said.

Once certified as an Extension Master Gardener, participants are asked to donate time in their community to help local parks and businesses with gardening, and teach local residents about gardening and horticulture. Other volunteer opportunities will be coordinated with the facilitation of local horticulture extension agents. In 2019, Extension Master Gardeners donated approximately 99,000 hours for a total value of more than \$2.6 million.

The deadline for 2021 Master Gardener training signup is August 27.

For more information about how to sign up, please contact Jesse Gilmore, Horticulture Extension agent, jr637@ksu.edu or (620) 724-8233.

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