

**Texas Master Gardener Association
ASSOCIATION AWARD**

Association Membership: Medium
(Small, Medium, or Large)

Date: Jan 15, 2005

County: Hood
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Association Name: **Hood County Master Gardeners**

Brief description of Association entry: (150 words or Less)

To commemorate our 10th anniversary we established a goal to take a more active educational role in our county. All projects were carefully reviewed for educational content and value. The projects we identified that would deliver the most benefit to the community and achieve our goal were, The Library Garden with walking tours, Demonstration Garden, Speakers Bureau, Earth Day, Fall Garden Fair, Chamber Gardens, Courthouse Gardens, Annex Garden, Mambrino school Nature trail. Through our Outreach program, we also assisted 2906 individuals with horticulture problems. We hosted an Advanced Training Seminar that was attended by the public and Master Gardeners. Additionally, we published a weekly garden column in the newspaper, a Fall Favorites plant book, an educational website and a plant handbook for Habitat for Humanity homeowners. The county officials recognized our educational value this year by proclaiming Sept 12-18 as the first Master Gardener week in Hood County.

Karen Bitnar, Doug Richards
Name of Person Submitting the nomination

Signature of County Master Gardener Coordinator

Please answer the following questions as they relate to this entry. **Do not exceed the five (5) pages of the questionnaire.**

Note: Please submit a group photo of membership if available.

I. Organization and Leadership (200 points)

1. What is the leadership structure of the Association or Corporation?

Annual elections are held to fill the positions of President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer. The President appoints a Chairperson for all standing committees. The Executive Board and membership approve all chairpersons, projects and budgets.

2. How does the leadership set and communicate goals?

The Executive Board holds quarterly meetings to establish goals and a yearly plan. Goals are communicated to the membership at our next monthly meeting.

3. How do the leaders solicit input/ideas from the membership?

Ideas are solicited via one-on-one discussion, meetings, written surveys, e-mail and website feedback forms. We encourage open two-way communications by listening to our membership.

4. How do the officers inspire members to support and participate in the programs or projects?

Positive motivation is used to inspire support and participation. We lend guidance and support and always present a positive attitude. Individuals are recognized through the Master Gardener of the Month program. We always say thank you.

5. What percentage of the membership participates in the programs or projects?

We enjoyed 100% participation by our membership in one or more projects.

6. Describe how the Association or Corporation addresses the needs of the county residents.

We address residents' needs through news articles, home visits, website, Speakers Bureau, Seminars, and our weekly garden column that is published in the newspaper. Questions posed to the Extension staff are relayed to a Master Gardener for response. Through this feedback, we develop programs and projects for county residents.

7. Explain the procedure for addressing seasonal gardening problems and questions.

The Garden Patch newspaper article and our website are our most prominent ways of addressing seasonal gardening issues. Calls to the Extension Office are referred to Master Gardeners who work with individuals to address their problem and maximize positive results.

8. Explain the procedure for addressing unexpected gardening problems or questions.

We maintain a list of members who have expertise in specific horticulture areas. Master Gardeners are utilized to research, make house calls or phone anyone with an unusual or unexpected problem.

9. Describe partnerships with other organizations. (City, county, non-profit, or profit)

We partner with other agencies and organizations to help educate the public. Many of our business partners contribute to specific projects and assist in publicizing our projects. We provided landscape design and plant selection for the Granbury Beautification Counsel, the County Courthouse, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Annex. We also designed and landscaped an educational walking tour for the Friends of the Library. The Newspaper publishes regular press releases regarding upcoming educational seminars and programs.

10. Describe annual activities, programs or projects to educate the public. (Seminars, clinics, workshops, demonstrations or lectures.)

We participate in following public educational events: the Tarleton University Fall Garden Fair, Farm Safety Day, Pecan Show, Fruit and Vegetable show, Earth Day, Demonstration Garden, the Mambrino Elementary School Nature Trail. We presented programs to civic organizations, maintained an active Speakers Bureau, and published weekly Horticultural articles in the local newspaper. We also hosted an Advanced Training Seminar attended by 135 individuals,

11. Explain your procedure for yearly certification of members.

We maintain a database that stores volunteer and advanced training hours. Guidelines are established on the type of hours that may be counted. A minimum number of hours is established that corresponds with TMGA guidelines. Recertification certificates are presented annually to qualifying members.

II. Planning (150 points)

1. Is there a multi-year plan of objectives or goals? (How many years?)

Each year we establish goals for our organization. Accomplishments from previous years are evaluated. Our primary goal is always education for both our members and the public. Due to the ever-changing environment we have found that a two-year plan is best suited for our organization.

2. Is there an annual or monthly planning session for the programs or projects to achieve the objectives or goals?

Quarterly Executive Board meetings are held to evaluate and approve all projects. Individual project committees meet as needed to plan and evaluate the overall educational effectiveness of their projects.

3. Who attends these sessions?

The Executive Committee, Extension Agent and Project Chairman attend the Executive Board meetings. Individual committee members are invited as needed. Project Chairs host individual committee meetings with their members. The president attends most committee meetings.

4. How does the planning process consider the needs of the county communities?

We review feed back from the public and our membership. We work closely with the Chamber of Commerce, Visitors Bureau, Civic organizations, County officials and our Extension Agent to determine the needs of the community. All calls to the extension office and questions received via our website are also evaluated to determine the needs of the public.

5. Is the utilization of new methods, techniques or technology included in the planning process? (Give an example)

We utilize computer graphic programs, website programs, digital photographs, Excel spreadsheets, Pivot tables and Internet research in our planning process. Through the use of spreadsheets and pivot tables, we are able to evaluate man-hours and manpower required for projects. In our Demonstration Garden, we test new varieties of vegetables and flowers, various watering techniques, compost trials and different mulches to determine what work best in our county.

6. How are the unique talents of members considered during planning?

We survey members to determine their horticultural specialties, talents and abilities. Leaders use this data to consider new project opportunities or to design a new project to fit some member's unique talents.

7. How are the resources of current Master Gardeners and interns included in the planning?

We consider the special talents of each member and include them in our planning session for new projects. Also, we appointed mentors to assist and encourage interns to become involved by attending planning sessions and workdays. Mentors help guide interns toward projects where their talents can be best utilized.

8. How are outside partnerships utilized during planning?

Partners who have been supportive in the past, either for funds, supplies, or other assistance are considered in planning. Depending on the project we also include partners in our planning and project meeting.

9. Is there a procedure to track and document the progress of programs or projects?

The Project Chairman provides meeting minutes to the President and gives monthly updates to the membership. Our Historian maintains a historical record of documents and pictures for each project.

10. Is there a review process to critique or assess programs or projects for achievement and improvement of objectives or goals?

The Executive Board along with the Project Chairman evaluates the effectiveness of each project. The entire membership is given an opportunity to assess programs at monthly meetings. Notes are made on the positive as well as the negative features of each project.

III. Community Awareness (200 points)

1. Describe how the needs of the communities are determined.

We gain awareness of community problems through phone calls, e-mail and web site inquiries. Some issues are ongoing such as water pollution, Oak wilt and plant damage from wildlife. Our CEA also keeps us apprised of feedback he receives.

2. How are the short-term and long-term needs identified?

Needs are identified in ways previously mentioned including questions received at lectures and seminars, calls to the Extension Office, feedback from news articles, our website and membership.

3. Describe how specific portions of the community are targeted. (Children, youth, senior citizens, handicapped.)

We participate in youth educational programs such as the 4-H program, Cooking School, Livestock Fair, Farm Safety Day and Mambrino Elementary Nature Trail. Senior citizens and handicap enjoy our expertise at the Fruit and Vegetable Show, Pecan Show, Seminars and the Speakers Bureau and Tarleton State University Fall Garden Fair. A tree is planted at each Habitat for Humanity home and each homeowner receives our garden guide designed specifically for plants that grow in their yard.

4. Explain how the various media are utilized to communicate Master Gardener activities, programs or projects to the public.

The local newspaper publishes our weekly Garden Patch column, press releases and photographs. Educational events are publicized via our CEA's radio and TV shows, magazines, The Chamber of Commerce, The Convention and Visitors Bureau, our website. Local businesses display our flyers.

5. Describe the methods utilized to assess community satisfaction with the programs or projects of the Association or Corporation.

Speakers distribute evaluation sheets at their seminars. We also consider verbal feedback and attendance at seminars and speaking engagements. Honorariums and repeat invitations are good indicators of the success of our programs and projects. We also evaluate responses to our garden column and website.

6. Explain how community responses are utilized.

Consumer responses help us determine the needs of the community and thus develop programs and projects. If we receive frequent questions on a topic, we will offer more education on that subject.

7. Are new activities, programs or projects developed through feedback from the communities? (Give an example)

As a result of feedback from the community we developed an Advance Training Seminar, published a booklet containing information about plants that grow in Hood County and our website was revised to include more horticulture information.

IV. Work System (100 points)

1. Describe the organization of the membership for accomplishment of the programs or projects.

All projects consist of a committee and chairmen who are responsible for the program or project. The entire membership is encouraged to participate in each project. Members are contacted via phone, e-mail or our website regarding committee meetings and workdays

2. How are the leaders or chairmen of the programs or projects selected?

Interest is solicited from the membership. The Executive Board selects individuals based on their expertise and leadership ability

3. Describe any special training programs developed to assist in the programs or projects.

We offer training on the computer, Word, Excel, PowerPoint and projection equipment. Members also attend specialist training and seminars.

4. How are new members and interns integrated into existing programs or projects?

All interns and new members are matched with a mentor to answer questions, involve them in projects and help them to complete their volunteer hours.

5. How are volunteer hour kept?

Hours are reported to the timekeeper via the Internet. Hours are automatically imported into a database. Each member has a private location on the Internet where they can view their hours.

V. Critique and Review (100 points)

1. Describe the critique or review process to determine the progress of programs or projects.

The Executive Board meets quarterly to analyze all ongoing activities. Individual committees meet frequently to review their project. Project reports are given at our monthly meeting and input is solicited from our members. When we partner with another organization, the partner is included in project meetings and evaluations. Each completed project is reviewed to determine strong points and areas for improvement.

2. What is the role of the membership in the critique or review process of programs or projects for Master Gardeners?

Reports are given at each monthly meeting and feedback solicited from the membership. We are fortunate to have a membership that openly participates in the review and critique of our projects. We receive constructive as well as positive feedback.

3. What is the role of the local residents in the critique or review process of programs or projects for the public?

We solicited feedback from residents who attend public programs or projects. We also ask questions and ask for feedback by survey form, telephone, e-mail or website. If an organization partners with us on a project, we include them in the assessment process.

VI. Awards. (50 points)

1. Describe any awards program you have.

- A fall banquet sponsored by the Extension Program Counsel recognizes Interns who completed their volunteer hours.
- Honorary membership is awarded to individuals who contribute a significant amount of time helping our Organization.
- A Master Gardener of the Month is selected each month.
- A Master Gardener of the year is selected in December each year.
- A Certificate of Appreciation is given to members of the community or one of our members who have a positive impact on our Organization.
- A member in good standing who completes the required volunteer and advanced training hours receives a recertification certificate.
- A Scholarship for a Horticulture student
- Name badges have attachments identifying founding members and past presidents

2. List the criteria you use to select awardees and any special items you present to the recipients.

Leadership and participation in programs or projects are considered in all awards.

- Interns are awarded Master Gardener status upon completion of the required 50 hours of volunteer service. They receive a Master Gardener certificate and a patch.
- Honorary Membership status is very selective. Recipients must contribute a significant amount of time to our organization and be involved in projects that have a positive impact on our organization.
- Master Gardener of the Month is based on the individual's contributions and accomplishments for the month. It is a person that goes above and beyond the call of duty and possesses good leadership skills. They receive a Master Gardener of the Month certificate and a garden gift.
- Certificate of Appreciation is awarded to members of the community or one of our members. We consider their contributions and the positive impact it has on our organization. A special Certificate of Appreciation is presented to the recipient.
- Members in good standing who complete the required hours for recertification are awarded a recertification certificate that recognizes their continued status as a certified Master Gardener.
- Scholarship recipient must be a resident of Hood, Parker, Johnson, Somervell or Erath counties. The applicant must be a high school senior or beyond with a GPA of 3.0 or higher and intending to major in horticulture or a related field such as landscape design, ecology or forestry. A maximum of \$1000 is allocated for each one (1) year scholarship at Tarrant County College Northwest Campus, Texas A&M University, Texas Tech University or Tarleton State University. The award will be paid at \$500 per semester.

VII. Programs or Projects (200 Points)

1. List Continuing Programs or Projects

The Demonstration garden, Courthouse & Annex landscape, Chamber of Commerce, Habitat for Humanity Handbook, Backyard Banter newsletter, Garden Patch column for the newspaper, 4H Farm Safety, Hood County Pecan Show, Tarleton State University Fall Garden Fair, Speakers Bureau, Plants for Hood County book, Mambrino Elementary school Nature Trail, Earth Day, and our Outreach program.

2. List New Programs and Projects:

Educational Field Trips, Master Gardener of the Month, Advanced Training Seminar, Fall Favorites Plant booklet, Library landscape with educational walking tour, new expanded format for our website to include more educational events, and our first \$1000 Scholarship to a horticulture student.

3. List Community Partners:

Hood County News, Chamber of Commerce, City of Granbury, Granbury ISD, Granbury Beautification Counsel, local garden clubs, Tarleton State University, Extension Program Council, Extension Horticulture Committee, Convention and Visitor's Bureau, County Commissioners, Arrow Feed & Ranch, Accent Rock & Landscape Material, Architectural Landscape & Design, The Cutting Edge, Wal-Mart, Stuart Nursery, Turfgrass America, Martin's Business Supply, Texas Bank, Community Bank, Liberty Bank and Texas State Forestry Service

4. How many Master Gardeners participated in the programs or projects of the Association or Corporation.

100% of our 45 members participated in various aspects of the Association activities.

5. What was the total number of hours volunteered by the Master Gardeners for the Award Year?

6860

6. Describe your best community program or project.

Due to public demand, our Advanced Training Seminar was our best educational program. The Seminar proved very popular with local residents as well as Master Gardeners from surrounding counties. Our overall attendance was 135 garden enthusiasts.

Topics for the Seminar included

- Spring and Summer Color with Native Texas Plants
- Fall and Winter Plants for North Central Texas Ornamental Gardens
- Research based Information on Organic Gardening
- Rainwater Harvesting for Landscape, Wildlife and In-Home Usage

7. Describe your best internal program or project.

We implemented a Master Gardener of the Month program. This proved to be an excellent motivational tool that encouraged members to actively participate and take leadership roles. It recognizes individuals who go above and beyond each month. This has also had a positive impact on our organization through increased attendance at monthly meetings and renewed interest in members wanting to expand their knowledge by attending educational training programs.