

Master Gardeners Stay Busy All Summer Long
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Sometimes when I am out and about I am often asked, “What is a master gardener?” To which I tell a little about how the program requires nine weeks (one day per week) of classroom instruction in horticultural science and techniques. After which 50 hours of volunteering within the first two years and 10 hours each year after that is required to remain certified. There are also some continuing education requirements in following years.

Other questions asked of me about the program included, “What can I do to volunteer?” The master gardeners have been busy this summer assisting with the maintenance of the Journey Museum gardens, teaching horticulture classes, and answering questions in my office. They have been a great help enabling me to work on other projects and still having the horticulture calls taken care of. Other areas master gardeners can work in include getting involved with a school gardening project, a community landscaping project, answering horticultural questions, assisting an elderly person plant his/her flowerbeds, writing articles for your local newspapers, and holding plant clinics, only to name a few of the possibilities. All of these activities can be very rewarding and appreciated by someone or by an organization.

“What advantages does this program offer?” People that volunteer in their community find a great deal of community spirit and pride. Watching the flowers grow at your local elementary school can be very rewarding if you had an instrumental part in the design and implementation of the bed. In addition to the pride and spirit that is generated, there are several award programs available for smaller communities to be involved in. Wouldn't it be neat to be a part of a community project that has won an award?

Master gardeners are educated in many topics including; botany, plant pathology, entomology, soil science, plant nutrition, fruits, vegetables, indoor plants, perennials, bulbs, and pesticide safety, just to name a few. Basically, master gardeners become experts in the field of horticulture. This enables them to assist in many areas and help out at many events. Reference materials are provided so that the master gardeners are prepared for any horticultural situation.

Do you have a desire to volunteer and a willingness to learn horticulture? If so, the master gardener program may be what you have been looking for. But, where do you go from here?

Next year SD Cooperative Extension will be offering the core course in Spearfish and the following year back here in Rapid City. If you are interested I encourage you to call me and get on our mailing list for information on upcoming master gardener courses.

Feel free to call on me at 605-394-2188 or email to ricky.abrahamson@sdstate.edu.