

November 21, 2007

NEWS RELEASE FROM THE OFFICE OF:

***DENNIS SMITH
COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
GREGG COUNTY***

Who are Texas Master Gardeners?

Master Gardeners are members of the local community who take an active interest in their lawns, trees, shrubs, flowers and gardens. They are enthusiastic, willing to learn and to help others, and able to communicate with diverse groups of people.

What really sets Master Gardeners apart from other home gardeners is their special training in horticulture. In exchange for their training, persons who become Master Gardeners contribute time as volunteers, working through their cooperative Extension office to provide horticultural-related information to their communities.

To help you decide if you should apply to be a Master Gardener, ask yourself these questions:

- * Do I want to learn more about the culture and maintenance of many types of plants?
- * Am I eager to participate in a practical and intense training program?
- * Do I look forward to sharing my knowledge with people in my community?
- * Do I have enough time to attend training and to complete the volunteer service?

If you answered yes to these questions, the Gregg County Master Gardener program could be for you.

If accepted into the Master Gardener program, you will attend a Master Gardener training course. Classes are taught by Texas Cooperative Extension specialists, agents, and local experts. The Annual Master Gardener Training for Gregg County Master Gardeners will begin on January 9, 2008. Applications for the training is due by Friday, December 14, 2007.

The training for Gregg County is sponsored by the Gregg and Harrison County Extension Master Gardener programs and the horticulture committees. The class will be held for 10 weeks beginning at 8:30 a.m. each morning. The complete schedule of classes is posted on the Gregg County Extension web page at <http://gregg-tx.tamu.edu/>. The cost to enroll in the program is \$100.

The program offers a minimum of 50 hours of instruction that covers topics including lawn care, ornamental trees and shrubs, insect, disease, and weed management; soils and plant nutrition, vegetable gardening; home fruit production; garden flowers; and water conservation. In exchange for training, participants are asked to volunteer time to their County Extension program. At least 50 hours of volunteer service within one year following the training is required to earn the title of "Texas Master Gardener."

The type of service done by Master Gardeners varies according to community needs, and the abilities and interests of the Master Gardeners. Master Gardeners may speak to local groups and conduct workshops. They may help establish community garden projects, work with 4-H youth or assist with news or radio releases related to gardening.

The Gregg County Master Gardeners meet the 2nd Wednesday of each month in the Gregg County Extension Auditorium. Some of the major projects of the Gregg County Master Gardeners include landscaping the Gregg County Service Center, assisting with the planting and care of the beds in front of the Gregg County Courthouse, planning and conducting the Spring and Fall Landscape and Gardening Seminars and other special horticulture educational programs. An educational program is also held with each monthly meeting. To see other activities and projects of the local Master Gardeners, visit their web site at <http://www.greggmastergardeners.org>

Master Gardeners are representatives of Texas Cooperative Extension, The Texas A&M University System. In all volunteer work related to the program, Master Gardeners follow the research-based recommendations of Texas Cooperative Extension.

Participants become certified Master Gardeners after they have completed the training course and fulfilled their volunteer commitment.

For an application to enroll or for additional information please contact the Gregg County Extension office or our Gregg County Extension web site at gregg-tx.tamu.edu or any Gregg County Master Gardener.

Dennis Smith can be contacted at the Gregg County Extension Office by e-mail at dg-smith@tamu.edu or telephone at: 903-236-8429.

Extension programs serve people of all ages regardless of socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, religion, disability, or national origin.