

## **The Courier – January 4, 2022**

### **Become an OSU Master Gardener Volunteer in 2022**

It is that time of year when we set new goals and try new things. Many of us have discovered the pleasure of gardening during this pandemic. It was one of the few activities that an individual could do during the shutdown without wearing a mask, avoiding crowds and constant sanitizing. It also brought the satisfaction of growing our own vegetables. Now may be the time to continue that enjoyment and expand our knowledge about gardening and other horticulture topics.

This winter, The Ohio State University Extension will offer a new class for its Master Gardener Volunteer program. The program was created for individuals who want to learn more about yards and gardens and who are willing to share that knowledge with others. The program provides intensive training in horticulture to interested individuals who then volunteer their time to assist with educational programs and activities for fellow residents through their local county Extension office.

The Master Gardener program originated in Seattle, Washington, in 1972 when the agriculture Extension agent for Washington State University began to train and utilize the expertise of volunteers in order to more effectively reach the gardening public with research-based educational information. The program became the Master Gardener Volunteers and was adopted by the other land grant universities across the country. The program began in Ohio's urban counties during the late 1970s but now exists in 62 of the state's 88 counties.

You may have seen the Hancock County Master Gardener Volunteers teaching classes at the library and 50 North Heminger Center; answering questions at garden centers and the county fair; and providing guidance and training at community gardens. They also provide a monthly horticulture article in the Saturday edition of The Courier.

The volunteers continue their learning experience by attending regular monthly meetings, participating in field trips, and interacting with other individuals with a passion for gardening.

Those wishing to become a Master Gardener Volunteer do not need to have a strong educational background in horticulture or years of experience - just a desire to learn.

Classes will meet at the Hancock County Agricultural Service Center (7868 County Road 140) from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Wednesdays, Feb. 9 through March 30. After completing the training sessions, each participant will have received 50 hours of education on topics such as soils, fertilizers, botany, entomology, plant pathology, vegetable gardening, fruit production, annuals and perennials for the landscape, herbs and more. The knowledge obtained from this advanced training will be used to complete the last step of becoming a certified Master Gardener Volunteer: 50 hours of community service.

A \$150 fee will be charged to cover the cost of instruction, along with a manual and handouts. Sessions will be taught by horticultural experts from the Ohio State University Extension, and class size will be limited. Registrants will be accepted on a first come, first served basis. For a registration packet, call the OSU Extension-Hancock County office at 419-422-3851 or email [lentz.38@osu.edu](mailto:lentz.38@osu.edu)

An enrollment meeting will be held at 4 p.m. Jan. 19 at the agricultural service center, where the registration packet may be turned in. For those who cannot attend the meeting, the packet must be delivered to the Extension office by Jan. 28.

Becoming a Master Gardener Volunteer is a great way to beat the wintertime blues - and the pandemic. Join this exciting program and become a part of an Ohio State University team that has been serving Hancock County since 1992. It will be several years before the class is offered again in Findlay.

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