



Denton County Master Gardener Association

Growing Knowledge, Community, and Impact in 2024

The Denton County Master Gardener Association (DCMGA) is a vibrant community of 323 dedicated volunteers passionate about educating and inspiring North Texas residents in sustainable gardening. Sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife, our mission is to empower individuals through workshops, presentations, and hands-on projects that promote eco-friendly gardening practices. Helping residents create thriving landscapes enhances community well-being and contributes to a healthier environment.

In 2024, our members logged an impressive 40,542 volunteer hours, with 81% dedicated to community education and engagement through 41 impactful projects. We maintained our expertise with 8,975 continuing education hours and participation in 13 advanced training classes. Through workshops, presentations, and youth programs, our outreach efforts engaged 6,631 residents—including 3,962 adults and 2,669 youth. The Help Desk fielded 475 inquiries, and our online presence grew with 6,275 social media followers and 1,665 subscribers to our e-magazine, *The Root*, extending our reach to 1,185 additional residents. DCMGA continues cultivating knowledge and a love for gardening across Denton County through education and engagement.

A Strategic Vision for Growth

In 2024, DCMGA took a significant step forward by developing a five-year strategic plan to guide the association's growth and impact. Crafted with input from the Strategic Vision Committee, the plan outlines three key goals designed to enhance our reach, support our members, and inspire educational excellence. The first goal is to expand our presence across all of Denton County, emphasizing inclusivity and diversity while fostering partnerships to ensure a broader and more engaged community. The second goal focuses on strengthening our internal community by offering enhanced social opportunities, recognition, and retention strategies to ensure our members feel valued and engaged. Lastly, the third goal aims to elevate the quality of horticultural education by offering research-based learning and empowering members to share their knowledge with others.

The Strategic Vision Plan, presented to the membership in May, emphasizes growth, inclusivity, and educational excellence. Several of our standing committees—Member Engagement, Education, and Outreach—have already integrated the plan's objectives into their 2024 action plans. Notable initiatives include enhanced member recognition, the development of new educational presentations, a planned Vegetables Advanced Training for 2025, the launch of an academic scholarship program, and the creation of a program focused on supporting public education at project sites. Budget reallocations were made to prioritize educational programs for the coming year, and the Strategic Vision Committee will assess progress in mid-2025 to ensure the plan's continued success.

Community Outreach and Engagement

DCMGA's outreach efforts in 2024 focused on expanding public education across Denton County, with initiatives led by the Education, Outreach, and Member Engagement committees. A project manager roundtable in June helped refine strategies, emphasizing greater participation in major county events, strengthening the Speakers Bureau and Help Desk, and collaborating with AgriLife and the Upper Trinity Regional Water District for specialized educational programs. By responding to seasonal and emerging educational needs, DCMGA tailored its programs based on valuable community feedback. Post-event surveys from the *Garden Tour* and *Fall into Gardening* shaped future programming, while *Help Desk* inquiries influenced social media posts and *The Root* e-magazine articles. A subscriber survey of *The Root* provided insight into reader interests, inspiring fresh content for 2025. Our website also features *Timely Tips* and a *Monthly Gardening Tips* page, linking residents to research-based resources from Texas A&M AgriLife and other extension services.

DCMGA's partnerships with community organizations enriched our outreach efforts and expanded the reach of our educational programs. Collaborations included working with 4-H to support youth programs, the Denton County Soil and Water Conservation District distributing tree seedlings, and the City of Lewisville's Roots to Wings initiative promoting



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pollinator gardens. We also partnered with Texas Master Naturalists, the Native Plant Society of Texas, local municipalities, and community gardens to support fruit groves, pocket prairies, park restoration, and senior center beautification projects. These connections strengthened our ability to serve Denton County, bringing expert knowledge and sustainable gardening practices to a diverse and engaged audience.

Expanding Educational Outreach

DCMGA introduced several exciting programs in 2024 to enhance public education and community engagement. *Know, Grow, and Show* supports project managers by hosting workshops and demonstration activities at project gardens, highlighting sustainable gardening practices while strengthening community partnerships. Another significant addition was the launching of a *Junior Master Gardener (JMG)* program in collaboration with Denton County 4-H at Shiloh Field Community Garden. Led by a certified Master Gardener with JMG Leadership certification, this program provides children with interactive lessons in horticulture, environmental science, leadership, and life skills. Additionally, a new *Website Management Team* was formed to ensure that DCMGA's website remains a valuable educational hub for members and the public.

One of the most impactful educational programs in 2024 was the *Earth-Kind® Design* course, offered twice to enthusiastic audiences. This two-day course guided students through water conservation, pollinator protection, reducing chemical use, and increasing plant diversity. Participants explored the four phases of Earth-Kind® Design—Preparation, Development, Installation, and Monitoring and Maintenance—while working alongside Master Gardener “design guides” to create personalized landscape plans. Due to its success, DCMGA plans to expand the course to three sessions in 2025, ensuring that even more residents can benefit from this hands-on approach to environmentally friendly gardening.

Member Engagement and Recognition

DCMGA fostered strong member participation in 2024 through various initiatives to connect volunteers with meaningful opportunities. The annual *Volunteer Opportunity Fair* showcased 41 ongoing projects and committees, helping members discover ways to get involved. Leadership actively recruited members and interns for service roles. At the same time, opportunities were consistently shared through the private Facebook group, *Plan Your Week* newsletter, *The Root* e-magazine, and *Notes from the President*. Monthly membership meetings also played a key role in recognizing outstanding contributions and spotlighting projects and members to encourage continued engagement. These efforts ensured that every member had the chance to contribute their skills and interests in ways that supported DCMGA's mission.

Awards and Recognition

DCMGA's dedication to education and community service was recognized in 2024 with several prestigious awards and honors. The Denton County Commissioner's Court acknowledged our volunteers for contributing 40,542 service hours, reflecting our deep commitment to the community. Additionally, we received 10 letters of appreciation from municipal leaders and partner organizations, highlighting the impact of our projects and outreach efforts. At the Texas Master Gardener Association *Search for Excellence* awards, DCMGA earned four 1st-place honors in *Outstanding Association*, *Workshop-Presentation*, *Written Record*, and *Research*. These accolades underscore our members' hard work, passion, and expertise, reinforcing DCMGA's leadership in sustainable gardening education.

As we reflect on 2024, we celebrate the knowledge shared, the partnerships strengthened, and the lives enriched through gardening. We look forward to another year of growth, education, and impact!