

Adult and Youth Educational Programs and Events

Denton County Master Gardener Association (DCMGA) is a corps of volunteers, sponsored by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension, who learn, serve, and play together with the mission of helping Denton County and North Texas residents create sustainable gardens, landscapes, and communities by sharing research-based gardening information.

In 2022, our members volunteered over 27,000 hours (85 hours per member) to the community providing timely and topical gardening information through 43 programs and events. Examples include:

- Speakers Bureau: 74 requested classes, presentations, and Ask a Master Gardener Booths to over 2,000 attendees.
- Annual Garden Tour: 1,500 visited four member gardens; each featured property included Master Gardener docents and educational activities.
- Annual Plant Sale: members provided on-site support and education to help the public make the best choices for their needs; 10 pre-event social media posts highlighted select plants. An Ask-A-Master-Gardener information booth answered specific questions for attendees.
- Fall Into Gardening: a new event to fill a gap in our fall season educational outreach. In partnership with Upper Trinity Regional Water District (UTRWD), four water conservation-related gardening series classes were offered as a one-day symposium with demonstrations and hands-on activities. Over 150 county residents attended; 20 percent of those who responded to a post-event survey indicated a change in gardening practices.
- Garden Help Desk: Answered 700+ questions from community members about various gardening topics ranging from tree care to solving insect problems.

Member Education

Members are encouraged to increase their horticultural knowledge continually; in 2022, each member averaged 16 hours of continuing education; five attended Advanced Training classes in specialized horticulture topics, and many attended the Texas Master Gardener Association state conference for additional education. Annually, we recruit and train 45 new Master Gardeners, who must complete 70 hours of horticultural education and 70 hours of volunteer service in their first year to achieve certification. DCMGA sponsors several special interest groups that provide additional horticultural education for our members on succulents, herbs, trees, and plant propagation.

Outreach and Communication

In addition to our Adult and Youth Education Programs and Events, DCMGA published the following:

- Social Media: Help Desk Question of the Week (52) responded to seasonal information requests from county residents using AgriLife-based information.
- Website: 80+ educational horticulture articles
- Articles: three educational features in each Association monthly newsletter, monthly articles in three local media publications providing seasonally focused information.

Twenty-two community, municipal, and county organization partners expanded our educational reach.

- 4-H: County youth fair & youth programs
- Denton County Soil & Water Conservation District: Tree seedling distribution
- Master Naturalists & NPSOT: Youth programs, residential pollinator gardens, natural habitats/nature centers (2)

- Municipal (4) & County Organizations: Fruit grove, pocket prairie, residential pollinator gardens, park beautification & restoration
- Flower Mound First Baptist, Shiloh Fields Gardens, Beulah Acres: community gardens & agroforest (permaculture installation). Our Master Gardeners and community volunteers maintain the community gardens and donate the harvested fresh produce to area food banks. Shiloh Fields Gardens donated 55,000 lbs. of fresh produce, and Flower Mound First Baptist Church Community Garden donated 3,750 lbs. of fresh produce and 838 lbs. of canned goods in 2022.
- Senior Independent Living Center & Senior Centers: Educational programs & beautification
- Area Libraries & Senior Centers (6): Educational & youth programs
- Upper Trinity Regional Water District: educational programs

In 2022, a team of certified and intern members began a website redesign. Two audiences were identified: Denton County area residents and DCMGA members. Several critical objectives for each audience were defined:

- Provide a pleasant experience to all visitors, the public, and members by making it easy to find information or complete tasks efficiently.
- Provide up-to-date scientific and evidence-based information on horticultural topics, including gardening techniques and plants suitable for the North Texas area.
- Promote educational events and our monthly newsletter, The Root.
- Help visitors learn about Texas A&M AgriLife, the Texas Master Gardener program, and Denton County Master Gardener Association.

The website architecture was planned around the theme “A Gardener’s Journey,” which takes visitors through each step of designing, planning, selecting plants, growing, maintaining, and solving gardening issues. The team researched and prepared 80+ Gardening Basics fact sheets and 65+ Plant Facts sheets to support “A Gardener’s Journey” with content from AgriLife and other Extension Services. The website launched in early 2023.

Other

We work hard to show appreciation for our members and their contributions to the association and community. We recognized twenty-two outstanding members at our 2022 Annual Awards program; fifty-one members received Member Milestones for 5, 10, 15, 20, and 25 years of service. Ninety-eight members received President’s Volunteer Service Awards for their 2022 volunteer service. Sixty-five members received 2022 Cumulative Service Awards for volunteer service ranging from 100 to 7,000 hours.

We like to play together, too, at our annual Christmas Party, movie nights, plant swaps, and wine-tasting events. Our Sunshine Gardeners group reaches out to our members during times of need.

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