

Extension Master Gardener

2020 SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES

DEADLINE FOR SFE APPLICATIONS IS MAY 1, 2020

Search for Excellence (SFE) is the recognition program of Extension Master GardenerSM (EMG) volunteer work throughout North Carolina. SFE has seven categories in which EMGVs can demonstrate their outstanding contributions to their communities. **All SFE applications must show that significant learning took place, whether by EMG volunteers or the general public.**

All Extension Master Gardener volunteer projects are significant to their communities, but not all are SFE projects. **The SFE is designed to recognize outstanding group projects, and not an individual who does outstanding work.**

Project submissions must meet the following guidelines to qualify for SFE awards:

- 1. Choose the category that best fits the project.** Only one project may be submitted by a group per category:
 - a. Youth Programs
 - b. Demonstration Gardens
 - c. Workshop or Presentation
 - d. Community Service
 - e. Innovative Projects
 - f. Special Needs Audiences (for example – senior citizens, at-risk youth or audiences with disabilities)
 - g. Research (applied scientific methodology)

NOTE: Program projects that have previously won Extension Master Gardener SFE awards are not eligible in any category.

- 2. Projects will be judged on their merit from work done between the years 2018-2019.** Projects must have completed a full year to be entered.
- 3. Simple to replicate.** A goal of SFE is to share the excellent ideas and programs so that they can be replicated by other EMG groups. A 20-acre botanic garden would be difficult to replicate, but the gardening ideas inside it might be easy to recreate at another site. A step-by-step “how to do this” would be a great way to share your project.

4. **Practicality.** A SFE program is one that is easy to use and fits well for its intended situation and audience. In other words, you have found the best way possible to meet a need of your community and target audience. For example: You could develop a wonderful program with a \$50.00 admission cost, but if people can't afford the cost, they won't come.
5. **Original and creative.** We are looking for that added touch that makes this program your own, or that reflects the personalities of the Master Gardener volunteers involved. We don't want you to recreate the wheel, just maybe parts of it so that it fits your situation.
6. **Compatible with Extension and EMG missions.** Make sure to specifically link your project with the goals listed in a-d, below. Do not assume that the reader can figure out that your project is compatible with Extension and EMG missions.
 - a. Projects should have an educational component.
 - b. Projects must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientations, national origin, and marital or family status.
 - c. Projects should extend the resources of the University to the public wherever they live, helping them use knowledge to solve problems at work, at home, and in their communities.
 - d. Information provided should be university research-based.
7. **We also consider whether significant learning occurred,** as well as the number of people impacted by program.

QUESTIONS? Contact:

David Higginbotham, 2020 Search for Excellence Chair
Extension Master Gardener volunteer – Chatham County
davidhigginbotham1@gmail.com

2020 APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. The Search for Excellence project application must be written by the Master Gardener volunteers involved, not by Extension staff.

The application form should be submitted in Word (.doc or .docx) or PDF format and must be no longer than four pages in length using Times New Roman in a 12 point or larger font. Up to six digital photos in JPEG format may be submitted with the application as separate files (not embedded within the application document).

Use the application form to submit the following information:

- a. Name of Project
 - b. Name of County in which the EMG program is located.
 - c. Name, phone number and email of EMG volunteer contact person
 - d. Name, phone number, and email of Extension horticulture agent
 - e. **Category:** for each project, select and submit in only ONE category
 - Youth
 - Demonstration Garden
 - Workshop or Presentation
 - Community Service
 - Innovative Project
 - Special Needs Audiences
 - Research (applied scientific methodology)
 - f. **Description of project** - Include target audience, goals, location and partnerships
 - g. **Methods** – List all steps of the planning and implementation process, including evaluation (e.g. how results, learning and impact were documented). In the planning process, please indicate how the need for the project was identified.
 - h. **Results** – What were the results? How did you measure them?
 - i. **Significant learning and impact** (see page 4)
 - j. **Budget narrative** - What did the project cost? Where did the money come from?
 - k. **Names of active Master Gardener volunteer committee/team members who were involved in the project from start to finish.** Please do not include their role. Please do not include any other individuals in this listing.
 - l. **Volunteer hours logged for this project** - Please give the total number of volunteers involved in this project, regardless of length of involvement, and the total number of volunteer hours for the project for the years being judged (2017-18).
2. Attach a one-page press release (template provided at <http://www.ncsugarden.com>, statewide site, Search for Excellence) about the project including a summary of the project and a description of the benefits summarized from the above application. This may be used on Extension websites and in newsletters.

3. A **verification letter** from your Extension Agent is required and must come directly from that individual (template provided at <http://www.ncsugarden.com>, statewide site, Search for Excellence). Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.

The Extension Advisor/Coordinator's email must verify that:

- a. Extension Master Gardener volunteers involved are currently in good standing
 - b. Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the photos or as required by the applicable laws of the local state or province
 - c. All application documents have been reviewed.
4. Your Extension Agent/Volunteer Coordinator must **email** the application form, verification letter, press release, and pictures **as .jpg attachments** to:

David Higginbotham, 2020 Search for Excellence Chair
Extension Master Gardener volunteer, Chatham County
davidhigginbotham1@gmail.com

The deadline for receipt of the complete application packet is May 1, 2020.

Do not send handouts or other large files with this application. If possible, size your photos for use in a PowerPoint presentation (1280 x 720 pixels). Submit only the items listed in the application instructions 1-3 above (e.g. application, press release, verification letter, up to six photos). Any files, extra pictures, handouts etc. will be disqualified. Any applications longer than four pages will not be accepted for competition.

SIGNIFICANT LEARNING AND IMPACTS

Significant learning, change in attitude and practices are outcomes that Extension uses to evaluate the impact of their services and programs. Impacts from Extension Master Gardener projects should improve people's lives. Explain how this project augmented learning, increased knowledge, or changed practices to enhance quality of life.

These impacts could be economic, environmental, educational, health, community-based, etc. SFE projects should be developed to reach the most people possible from the target audience. Impact numbers are not as significant if the target audience does not learn or utilize information. Make sure you ask participants how this information helped them and record this as an impact.

Depending on the nature of the project the evaluations may be very informal (i.e. casually asking questions) or formal (i.e. pre-test/post-test).

For example: Evaluation questions that ask, "How do you plan to use this information?" or "Can you share specific information that you learned today?" can help show impact—especially if you can show that 70% of the participants plan to change a gardening practice such as use fewer pesticides.

EXPECTATIONS OF WINNING ENTRIES

- 1. Participate in the Search for Excellence webinar celebrating winning projects.**
 - The webinar will be open to NC EMGVs and Extension staff and will be held in June or July of 2020 (date to be determined based on availability of winners).
 - The webinar will be held via [Zoom](#), a free, easy to use meeting app.
 - During the webinar, members of the winning team will share a brief overview of their project (5 - 7 minutes).
 - A practice session will be held prior to the webinar.
- 2. Upon notification of winning status, a member of the project team will be responsible for submitting paperwork required to process the awards check.** Paperwork (W9 and automatic deposit form) will be completed by the entity to whom the check is be made payable.
- 3. Winning applications may be shared** with other Master Gardener volunteers and Extension staff to provide examples of a well-written application and to provide instruction on how to replicate the project in other counties.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION (100 point scale)

- 1. All applications are judged independently by NC EMGVs and Extension staff who are members of the Friends of NC EMG Volunteers Advisory Team.** They will use the following criteria:
 - a. Simplicity of project (easy to replicate): 10 points
 - b. Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project for situation: 10 points
 - c. Originality or creativity: 10 points
 - d. Consistent with Extension and MG missions: 20 points
 - e. Clarity and completeness of project application: 20 points
 - f. Did significant learning occur?: 20 points
 - g. Number of people impacted: 10 points

TOTAL: 100 points

All of the judge's scores will be totaled and divided by the number of judges.
- 2. For each category, the project receiving the highest score will be designated the winner and will receive a \$200 award.** Projects that do not achieve a score of 80% or better will not be eligible to receive a SFE Award.
- 3. A judge will be excused from judging a category that includes an application from the county in which they work or volunteer as an EMGV.**
- 4. An aggregate score sheet along with all of the judge's comments will be returned to the applicants as soon as possible.** We hope that the comments will help to strengthen your volunteer work. All decisions and scoring by the judges will be considered final.
- 5. In the case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.**

THANKS FOR YOUR APPLICATION!

The North Carolina Extension Master Gardener SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE is a recognition of the highest quality within Extension Master Gardener programs across the state. We applaud all the volunteer work done by Extension Master Gardener volunteers. We hope that this work is being recognized on the local, state and regional levels.

Many thanks to the members of the 2020 Search For Excellence Working Group for their assistance with the NC EMG Search for Excellence:

David Higginbotham, EMGV, Chatham County - CHAIR

Micki Levine, EMGV, Chowan, Gates, Perquimans

Wanda Crutchfield, EMGV, Durham County

Carolyn Flowers, EMGV, Guilford County

Charlotte Glen, NC State EMG Program Coordinator

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