

# CLEMSON MASTER GARDENER INTERNS GUIDELINES FOR EARNING CERTIFICATION HOURS IN RICHLAND COUNTY

*Updated: 7/23/2018*

## **Eligibility for RCMGA Assistance / Mentoring**

The Richland County Master Gardener Association (RCMGA) provides mentors and volunteer opportunities as a service to Clemson Extension and to help Master Gardener candidates complete the *volunteer service phase* of their certification requirements. Students and interns are accepted from Fairfield, Kershaw, Lexington and Richland, provided

- the student/intern first joins the Association as an “intern” member (with no dues until after certification and no requirement to stay beyond that).
- the student/intern actively cooperates with RCMGA in planning and earning certification hours.

*It is not required that candidates be mentored by RCMGA to earn certification, but it is extremely difficult to do so without the approved activities, events and support needed to accomplish it.*

Because Master Gardeners generously volunteer personal time for this project, RCMGA may drop from membership anyone who fails to communicate or cooperate with a mentor - or does not actively seek certification hours - without a valid, accepted reason. Any such person will be referred to the MG Coordinator who may arrange mentoring from another source, or remove the person from the program.

## **Interns must earn 40 volunteer educational service hours (within 12 months) to be certified:**

1. All 40 hours must be earned on projects, activities or events sponsored by Clemson Extension or approved by RCMGA’s Board or its Community Education Project. There are enough such activities and events to meet all interests and schedules.
2. At least 20 of the 40 hours must be “core” hours related to our mission. They are earned working directly with the public at:
  - Clemson Extension Horticulture Desk; or
  - Ask-A-Master Gardener (or demo) booths sponsored and staffed by RCMGA or by Clemson.
3. No more than 20 of the 40 hours may be earned on other, RCMGA-approved, “non-core” activities. Core hours may be substituted for non-core hours; the reverse does not apply.

## **Interns WILL NOT earn hours toward certification for:**

- Volunteer work performed before joining RCMGA;
- Volunteer work not approved by RCMGA as a project, event or activity for its membership;
- Volunteer work not supervised by RCMGA Master Gardeners or by Clemson personnel;
- Volunteer work for which the intern is paid (or otherwise compensated) for time, expertise or labor;
- Volunteer work with minors (see exceptions; next page);
- Volunteer work that is self-initiated or self-coordinated with schools, libraries, places of worship, military, non-profit, community, gardening or other groups, even if Master Gardeners are present.

Interns may not participate in – or log – RCMGA activities that do not qualify for certification hours until their required hours have been earned.

## **Interns who cannot meet their scheduled certification dates:**

- Any intern diagnosed with debilitating illness or injury, or with career or family changes that prevent earning volunteer hours, must communicate with RCMGA and disclose those changes as they occur.
- An intern with valid reasons for not earning 40 hours on schedule may request a 6-month extension.
- An intern who requests a “hiatus” from the program will apply to the Intern Mentor Director who will seek approval from the MG Coordinator. A hiatus may last up to two years, during which the intern will continue to receive the Weekly Digest, but will not be on the membership roles, listed in the Handbook, eligible for social functions or tied to a scheduled certification date. After two years, the intern must pass the course exam again and forfeit any previously logged volunteer hours. He/she will be reinstated as an intern member, without application, and scheduled for certification within 12 months.

**Activities Approved for CORE HOURS (minimum of 20 required; may earn all 40 here):**

Richland Extension Office Horticultural Desk, working with the public (highly recommended)
Sandhill Farmers Market or Lake Carolina Market Ask-A-MG (or demo) booth, working with the public
Riverbanks Botanical Gardens Ask-A-MG booth, working with the public
Midlands Plant & Flower Festival Ask-A-MG booth (State Farmers Market), working with the public
Columbia Classic Home & Garden Show Ask-A-MG booth (State Fairgrounds), working with the public
RCMGA Ask-A-MG (or demo) booth at Sparkleberry Fair Plant Sale, working with the public
RCMGA Ask-A-MG (or demo) booths at other fairs, festivals, or educational events approved by the Board or Community Education Project Director for staffing by RCMGA's membership

**Activities Approved for NON-CORE, OTHER HOURS (maximum of 20 allowed in lieu of Core):**

Making RCMGA Community Ed presentations (or segments) to clubs, groups, public
Teaching, facilitating Clemson-sponsored educational workshops (ex. rain barrel construction)
Conducting approved educational programs or tours of Clemson Pond Trail or Clemson gardens
Educating, assisting groups via RCMGA Community Ed projects (ex. advising community gardens)
Clemson School Days: Teaching chaperoned school groups
Harbison State Forest Garden Rejuvenation Project: Scheduled improvement workdays
Sandhill Children's Garden: Scheduled improvement / maintenance workdays
Clemson Compost Education Garden: Scheduled improvement / maintenance workdays
Clemson Carolina Yard at the Cottage: Scheduled improvement / maintenance workdays
Clemson Pollinator Garden: Scheduled improvement / maintenance workdays
Clemson Pond Trail: Scheduled improvement / maintenance workdays
RCMGA Plant Sale Receiving & Potting Days (horticultural work only: potting, plant ID or label research)
RCMGA Plant Sale Set-Up Day (horticultural work with plants only)
RCMGA Plant Sale at Sparkleberry Fair (horticultural plant recommendations, sales to customers only)
Working with McCrady National Youth Challenge (supervised by Clemson personnel)
Developing educational materials for Clemson or RCMGA: Displays; presentations; `powerpoints; websites, etc. (supervised by MGs)

**Activities NOT Approved for Certification Hours**

Volunteer work performed before joining RCMGA and being assigned a mentor
Work not sponsored or approved by Clemson Extension or by RCMGA for its membership
Work not supervised by RCMGA MGs or Clemson personnel
Work for which an intern is paid or in any way compensated
Activities/events involving working with minor children not accompanied by parents (exceptions: RCMGA Ask-A-MG or demo booths at school events; Clemson Fall School Days Festival; McCrady Nat'l Youth Challenge)
Serving as docent for Columbia Green's Annual Garden Tour
Working at Carolina Children's Garden Reindogs & Elves fundraiser
RCMGA Receiving & Potting Days (working on non-horticultural tasks or garden treasures)
RCMGA Plant Sale Set-Up Day (non-horticultural tasks; table/tent setups; garden treasures, etc.)
RCMGA Plant Sale (non-horticultural tasks; cashiering; garden treasures; plant sitting; clean-up, etc.)
Work in Clemson gardens not directly involving plants (i.e. building, painting, repairing structures, etc.)
Self-initiated or self-coordinated volunteer work with other organizations
Work on RCMGA non-horticultural, non-educational projects & committees (ex. Hospitality Committee)
RCMGA membership meetings, continuing education programs or social events. Interns are welcomed and encouraged to attend all of these, but without earning credits until after certification.