

Issue #3: Intern Requirements - Continuing Education

In the last blog, we learned that the requirements of the Master Gardener Volunteer program during the intern year were to:

- Complete the CORE curriculum
- **Complete 15 hours of continuing education**
- Complete 50 hours of volunteer work
- Complete responses of research to 15 questions from the public

For this blog, we will go in depth on the continuing education requirement. The annual 15 hours of continuing education is the same for the intern year as well as subsequent years to maintain master gardener active status. I think this requirement is the easiest to meet. There are so many opportunities and of course, one probably wouldn't be pursuing being a master gardener program volunteer if they were not interested in learning about all of the multitude of topics.

The easiest way to get continuing education hours in Hennepin County is by attending the master gardener volunteer monthly meetings and earning 2 hours of continuing education credit at every meeting. The meetings are held every month except for January, July, and December so 9 meetings that are 2 hours equals 18 hours which will fulfill the requirement. Some of the topics so far this year were: The historic influence of Black women on American horticulture, Jumping Worms, Tips on Sustainable Gardening, and Predatory Wasps & Native Bees.

The second easiest way is to gain continuing education to participate in the Minnesota Plants Spring series hosted by the Minnesota Landscape Arboretum – 13 topics equal 13 hrs. These topics covered everything from white clover to hickories to yellow prairie grass to garden trends and sustainable gardening.

But there are many other opportunities as well. Some of the volunteer activities have an education component to prep for the area such as the youth and senior programs. Programs offered by master gardeners, the Minnesota State Horticultural Society (MSHS) or the Minnesota Arboretum also are options. And then there are more intensive programs such as the Invasive Species online course, Nearby Nature online course or Tree Care Advisor Core Course.

So how does one find out about these opportunities? Most of them are highlighted in the two newsletters that are sent out to Hennepin County Master Gardeners. One of the newsletters is a monthly newsletter sent out by Tim Kenny who is the Minnesota State Director of the program. The other newsletter is a weekly newsletter sent out by Terry

Straub, who is an Educator in the Extension program with the target audience being the Hennepin County master gardener volunteers.

My challenge was limiting myself! It felt like being a kid in a candy store – so much to learn! We are blessed to have so many experts in our midst. I actually got behind in my CORE curriculum work because I was taking advantage of every offering in February – lesson learned. By March, I realized I needed to pace myself but then had catch-up to do with completing the CORE curriculum.