



# How to Become a Master Gardener in Ontario

## How can I become a Master Gardener (MG)?

All Master Gardeners in Ontario must belong to a local **MG** group. There are about [30 Master Gardener groups](#) across the province and many groups have information about joining directly on their website. You can contact a local group directly or fill out the online form and we will forward your request to the group coordinator who is nearest to your location. Once you make contact, arrange to attend a meeting and meet members. Some groups accept members year round, while other groups have a specified time of year when members can join.

## I came to a meeting and now I want to join. What happens next?

You will be asked to write a short eligibility test. The test consists of 50 true or false questions. A time can be set up, often before a meeting, for you to write the test. Once the test is marked, and you've passed, you may be asked to answer questions about your gardening experiences. You will be asked to complete a [Master Gardener Agreement](#) to ensure that you are aware of MG expectations. You will now be known as a **Master Gardener in Training (MGiT)**

## What does a Master Gardener in Training do?

All Master Gardeners strive to inspire and motivate the public about gardening and expand their knowledge of horticulture. You'll attend monthly meetings and participate in your group's activities. Some groups offer advice clinics to the gardening public and have a yearly social event. Others offer workshops, use social media to promote gardening and are present at local fairs and garden events. MGiT's are often paired with one or two MG's to get "on the job training". Your expertise in gardening will increase dramatically as you listen to questions from the public and try to answer them.

All Master Gardeners and MGiT's are expected to complete 30 hours of volunteer work a year. (20 hours with the public and 10 hours administrative, i.e. attending meetings, conferences etc.)

MGiT's must successfully complete an education component to become certified as Master Gardeners.

## How do I complete the educational component?

There are three ways of completing the educational component and you can take up to 3 years to complete it. *All costs are the responsibility of the MGiT, but some groups offer financial support.*

### 1) [University of Guelph Courses](#)

- a) Courses required for certification are:
  - i) [Cultural Practice for Plants](#)
  - ii) [Introduction to Plant Identification](#)
  - iii) [Growing Plants](#)

## 2) [Dalhousie University Master Gardener Program](#)

- a) This program is comprised of 4 courses:
  - i) *The Science of Gardening*
  - ii) *Maintaining the Garden*
  - iii) *Plant ID*
  - iv) *The Art of Gardening*

## 3) Certification Exam

- a) With the increasing costs of formal courses from the University of Guelph and Dalhousie University, Master Gardeners of Ontario is pleased to have a 3<sup>rd</sup> education option: independent study leading to writing a Certification Examination. While this option removes the financial barrier, it may not be suitable for all members. Candidates choosing the Certification Examination option need to manage their own preparation and study a wide range of topics using resources of their own choosing. Fortunately, the Education committee has prepared information to guide members.
  - i) [Requirements for Certification Exam \(Basic Knowledge\)](#) (includes a brief outline of topics of study, plant lists, pests and diseases, tips on how to take an exam, sample questions for practice)
  - ii) [Master Gardener in Training Forum](#) (mentoring service run by Cochrane Master Gardeners)
  - iii) [About the Certification Exam](#) (article written by Kelly Noel, Oct 2017)
- b) The Certification Exam is an open-book exam that is to be completed in 2 ½ hours under supervision of an invigilator chosen by your local coordinator. The cost of the exam is \$100.
- c) You are required to pass this exam with a mark of 70% or more.
- d) You may take your exams on these dates (or the closest weekday to these dates): December 1, March 1, May 1 and September 1.

## When do I become a Master Gardener?

After completing the educational component, fulfilling your yearly volunteer hours and working 2 years as a MGIT, you can apply to become a **Master Gardener** (MG). Your coordinator will complete a *Request to Become a Master Gardener* form.

After you receive your certification as a Master Gardener you will be expected to keep up to date about gardening issues on a yearly basis. There are many opportunities to do this such as Technical Updates (one day conferences), self-study and attending gardening presentations.

You will also be required to complete your 30 hours of volunteer work each year and submit your hours to the coordinator of the group.

## What does a Master Gardener do?

Master Gardeners are expected to provide current and up-to-date advice and information to the gardening public. Each member in the group contributes in their own way, but here is a partial list of things groups do:

- Advice clinics to the gardening public at garden tours, festivals, farmer's markets and horticultural societies
- Answer gardening questions via email or [Facebook](#)
- Make garden presentations (talks and workshops) at garden centers, public libraries, horticultural societies and events such as Canada Blooms

- Write gardening articles or blogs
- Use social media to promote sustainable gardening practices
- Attend technical updates (like garden conferences) to fulfill the yearly educational component

### **What are the benefits of being a Master Gardener (MG)?**

Here are just a few:

- Increase your horticultural knowledge
- Provide a valuable service to your community
- Develop personal leadership skills
- Improve communication skills in a supportive environment
- Receive recognition as a Master Gardener
- Meet and work with enthusiastic people who are excited to share their horticultural knowledge

### **We travel or live out of the country during the winter. Can I still be a Master Gardener?**

Master Gardeners started in the [US](#), so you might be able to attend local meetings during the winter. You may still be able to contribute to a group by researching and answering questions via social media or writing gardening articles when you are out of country. Check your group for such policies. All these activities will count towards your required 30 hours of volunteer work.

### **What computer skills will I need?**

Notices for events and meetings usually go out by email. You should have an email account and be able to “reply to” and “send” email. Information is also posted on the [MGOI](#) and group websites, so you should be able to search the Internet and navigate in general. Files are usually sent out in PDF form to make it easier for all users to read and open, so you will need a copy of Acrobat Reader which is free to download. If you need help updating your computer skills, one of our members will be happy to help you.

### **What if I have more questions?**

Please feel free to email [info@mgoi.ca](mailto:info@mgoi.ca) or a local group coordinator. Many groups have links on their websites with information about how to apply and become a Master Gardener. The [Groups and Advice](#) tab has contact information for all our MGOI groups.

### **Useful Links**

- [Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc](#)
- [MGOI Twitter](#)
- [Dalhousie University Master Gardener Program](#)
- [University of Guelph Courses](#)
  - [Cultural Practice for Plants](#)
  - [Introduction to Plant Identification](#)
  - [Growing Plants](#)

## Acronyms and definitions

MGOI	Master Gardeners of Ontario Inc. – the governing provincial organization
MGiT	Master Gardener in Training – a member working towards certification as a Master Gardener
MG	Master Gardener – a member of Master Gardeners of Ontario who has fulfilled the requirements for certification (i.e. 2 years as a MGiT, 30 hours of volunteer work per year, ongoing education requirements)
Coordinator	Head of a local MG group (similar to a club president)
Technical Update (TU)	A conference organized by a local MG group. Master Gardeners are expected to provide current and up-to-date advice and information to the gardening public. To achieve this, Master Gardeners must engage in continuing education activities, such as Technical Updates.
CEU	Continuing Education Credit- Master Gardeners value life-long learning and are committed to earning 6 CEUs per year. A Technical Update usually is equal to 6 CEUs. Attending a one hour presentation on horticulture is usually equal to 1 CEU. A description of how to complete CEUs is provided to members.
	The green watering can logo is the official mark of Master Gardeners of Ontario, Inc.