



Meeting with Applicants: Discussion Outline, Sample Questions and Rubric

The Extension Master Gardener Program is an outreach activity of the University of Minnesota. The program's focus is for volunteers to be of service in their local communities and share research-based gardening and horticultural information throughout Minnesota.

The purpose of meeting with the applicant is to determine how someone's gifts and talents fit into the Extension Master Gardener Program, not to identify barriers to their participation. The program welcomes learners with all levels of plant experience.

Do not ask questions about an applicant's age, marital status, children, race, national origin, creed, religion, disability, public assistance status, veteran status, or sexual orientation. Avoid any personal questions other than those focused on program priorities and interests.

INTRODUCTION

- Welcome the applicant
- Introduce the team
- Share the state annual report and your local report. Introduce the program's mission, vision, priorities and scope
- Explain the two program components: Education and volunteering
- Share examples of the types of projects the group supports
- Explain the community-engagement approach. Note: get a refresher on community engagement by reviewing the 2025 Core Course Community Engagement module. Contact mgweb@umn.edu if you have questions about accessing the module.
- Explain the commitment, including completing the course and volunteer and education requirements

QUESTIONS:

Tell me/us a little about yourself.

Why are you interested in joining the Master Gardener volunteer program?

Based on your application, it looks like you are most interested in priority XXXX.

What about this type of work interests you?

Based on your application, it looks like you are most interested in XXX type of community engagement work.

What about this type of work interests you?

Do you have special skills that you believe would be useful to the Master Gardener program? (e.g., speak a foreign language, art ability, writing, etc.)

Do you have any questions to ask me about the Extension Master Gardener program or University of Minnesota Extension?

Does the program align with your expectations?

Would you like to continue with the process of becoming a Master Gardener volunteer?

NEXT STEPS:

Program team to contact applicants and receive background check results by Dec. 1

Core course registration deadline is Dec. 1

NOTE: As part of the meeting, be sure to confirm volunteer agreement with the items listed in the Rubric, including reviewing and agreeing to the Code of Conduct, understanding the commitment, and agreeing to submitting a recurring background check and completing safety of minors training every three years.

Rubric

- ☐ The candidate understands the mission, vision, priorities and scope (welcoming to all Minnesotans) of the program.

Comments:

- ☐ The candidate has read and agrees to follow the [Board of Regents Code of Conduct](#) and policy on [Equity, Diversity, Equal Opportunity and Affirmative Action](#); the [Master Gardener Standards of Behavior](#) and Volunteer Terms of Agreement.

Comments:

- ☐ The candidate's behavior during the interview is in line with the policies noted above.

Comments:

- ☐ The candidate understands and agrees to the program commitment:

- First-year interns commit to volunteering a minimum of 50 hours of community service and completing 48-60 hours of education (core course)
- Active volunteers commit to volunteering a minimum of 25 hours per year and completing 5+ hours of education.

Comments:

- ☐ The candidate understands and agrees to the recurring background check requirement and safety of minors training. (every three years)

Comments:

- ☐ The program aligns with the candidate's expectations and ability to commit. The candidate understands if the applicant chooses to leave the program before completing the internship requirements, they may

be asked to pay the difference between the volunteer and non-volunteer rates for training (approx.\$300).

Comments:

- ☐ The candidate wants to proceed in becoming a Master Gardener volunteer.

Comments:

In order to move forward to becoming a Master Gardener volunteer, the candidate must meet each criteria (all boxes must be checked).

« Previous: [Application](#)

Next: [Interest and skills assessment »](#)

Related resources

[Sample interview questions](#)