

UNIVERSITY OF MARYLAND EXTENSION

UME Master Gardener State Office
12005 Homewood Rd.
Ellicott City, MD 21042

March 4, 2021

Subject: Limited Return to Gardening Activities

Greetings Master Gardener Volunteers,

It's almost spring! We know that means everyone's thoughts have turned to getting back out into the garden. We have been monitoring the guidance from the state, the University, and UME leadership to inform our decision regarding a return to volunteer activities.

UME offices across the state are working on their reopening plans and figuring out how to navigate the return to work amidst the pandemic. Many of our employees are still in a telework status. In order to allow them time to establish new protocols and schedules, **we are extending the suspension of all in-person programs and activities through March 21, 2021. Outdoor volunteer activities will be allowed beginning March 22, 2021.**

We have prepared protocols to follow when we do return to limited volunteer activity. These are in alignment with the protocols established by UME for return to offices. Two related sets of protocols are included; one specifically created for volunteer activities, and the other prepared by Aly Valentine, Assistant Director for UME Field Operations and the Area Extension Directors/ City Extension Director for office return to work protocols. We are including these protocols in order to help Master Gardeners prepare to follow them when returning to volunteering. However, as with all other things, these will be reevaluated and may change before the return to volunteer activities. Any changes will be communicated clearly via direct email and posted on the Maryland [Master Gardener website](#).

As it has been from the beginning, our priority remains the health and safety of our employees, volunteers, and constituents. We will continue to monitor the announcements and guidelines from the State, the University, and UME Administration and will keep you informed accordingly. We are grateful for your patience, understanding, and support. We look forward to a spring return to the gardens!

Regards,



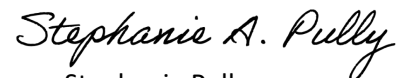
Jim Hanson

UME Associate Dean and
Associate Director



Bill Hubbard

UME Program Leader,
Environment and Natural
Resources



Stephanie Pully

State Master Gardener
Coordinator

Return to Volunteering Guidelines

Effective March 22, 2021

NOTE: Date and protocols are tentative and subject to change.

Welcome back! Thank you all for your patience in the previous months and for your respect of our safety guidelines. We are excited to see the return of Master Gardeners to the garden again. In order to create the safest environment for you and other volunteers, the following guidelines must be followed when returning to volunteer activities.

- **Any activities must be in alignment with all county, state, and UME / UMD protocols.** Please see the included UME Workplace Readiness document for UME protocols that must be followed.
- At this time, volunteers may not conduct in-person programming for the public. Continue hosting educational programs in a virtual format.
- Master Gardener meetings must continue to be held in a virtual format.
- All volunteer activity must be conducted outdoors. Volunteers may only be present in outdoor spaces in numbers that allow at least 6 feet distancing between each volunteer. Even if the garden is large enough, no more than 10 volunteers may be present at any time.
- Volunteers must schedule all volunteer activity using the scheduling system developed by the local MG Coordinator.
 - All volunteers must complete the [COVID-19 Health Check survey](#) on the day that they plan to volunteer prior to arriving at the garden. The MGC or other designated employee is responsible for matching the health check survey to the schedule on each scheduled volunteer day.
- Volunteers must remain in their outdoor work spaces. No volunteers are to enter any buildings on premises of their garden areas for any reason. Please plan accordingly.
- Volunteers must wear a mask at all times, even in outdoor spaces.
- Volunteers must wash their hands with soap and water for at least 20 seconds, frequently. Where soap and water are unavailable, hand sanitizer with at least 60% alcohol may be used.
- The use of shared equipment must be limited to one designated person per visit to the garden. That designated person must disinfect the equipment after use. Other volunteers must bring their own equipment.
- All surfaces, including entryways, must be disinfected at the end of the volunteer work. Personal tools must be removed from the garden.
- Bay-Wise consultations can occur on site at client's properties. There will be no contact between clients and MGs. All communication needs to be virtual (video or cell phone call).
- Pre-order is required for plant sales. Participants must schedule a time to come pick up their plants. Orders must be set up in an outside space and available for pickup in a no-contact manner (meaning MGs do not come into contact with customers).
- These guidelines are in effect for all volunteers, even those that have been vaccinated.
- Guidelines are constantly changing. **If previously allowed activities become prohibited, volunteers must respect this and cease activity immediately.**

University programs, activities, and facilities are available to all without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, marital status, age, national origin, political affiliation, physical or mental disability, religion, protected veteran status, genetic information, personal appearance, or any other legally protected class.

Working together we all protect one another.

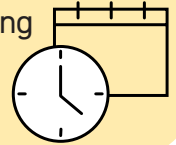
Expectations

- All employees are expected to follow workplace protocols for everyone's safety.
- Employees should not come to work if ill.
- Employees should review the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) to understand leave provisions detailed within the act. <https://go.umd.edu/ffcra>
- The protocols apply to UME County and City offices and UME workplaces at the Research and Education Centers.



Building Access Protocols

- Screening protocols will align with campus, state and county protocols, we will utilize the campus daily check-in portal. The protocol includes:
 - ✓ Health screening questionnaire
 - ✓ Temperature check if required by specific county/city governments
- Everyone entering the building must wear a mask.
- During the initial phase of returning to work, clients may enter the office by appointment only.



Workplace Protocols

- Facemasks must be worn; UME will permit employees to wear a mask of choice.
 - Facemasks must be worn in all public spaces (not required in individual offices).
- Hand sanitizer and wipes will be available for each employee's workspace – wash/sanitize hands regularly.
- Hand sanitizer stations will be available in high traffic areas (entrances, workrooms, etc.)
- Disinfecting/cleaning is everyone's responsibility.
- Employees should work in assigned spaces only.



- Social distancing should be exercised at all times; maintain 6 feet of separation. Employees should not gather in groups.
- Meetings with clients should take place in conference spaces, not individual offices in order to maintain social distancing
 - The UME faculty/staff member hosting the client meeting is responsible for disinfecting/cleaning the space after the meeting.
- Consider the purchase of disposable pens or pencils for clients to take with them.
- Consider the use of drop boxes for soil samples, plants/bugs for diagnostics.
- Continued use of technology for faculty/staff meetings.

