



Extension Snapshot

Master Gardener Volunteers Make a Difference

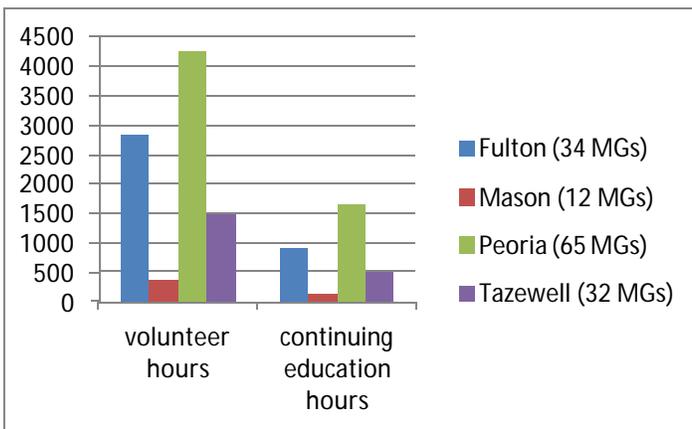
University of Illinois Extension Master Gardeners are a special group of people who all have a common interest – a love of gardening and the desire to share that knowledge with others. The program aim is to give intensive horticultural training to individuals who will, in turn, "Help Others Learn to Grow."

Master Gardener volunteers (MGs) are a tremendous resource for improving the quality of life in their communities. Examples of their work include:

- helping local citizens find sound management practices for home and urban natural resources,
- creating aesthetically pleasing environments,
- promoting well-being through people-plant interactions and horticultural therapy, and
- contributing to a safe, abundant food supply through home fruit and vegetable production.



The Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Extension Unit has a successful Master Gardener volunteer program. In 2010, MG volunteers contributed 8,596 hours to their communities. The value of their volunteer service is worth more than \$179,227 (using an estimated dollar value of volunteer time of \$20.85 per hour as calculated by Independent Sector).



Master Gardeners' volunteer work impacts a wide diversity of people and communities. Proactive educational programs include speakers bureau, community gardens, "Garden Helpline," horticultural therapy projects, and garden clinics. Youth programming has included schoolyard habitat projects, gardens that attract beneficial insects, and conservation projects. Other programming and volunteer efforts include composting, beautifying our communities, teaching the public about growing food, hosting plant sales, maintaining demonstration gardens, and gleaning produce for local food pantries.

For more information about the Master Gardener programs in the Fulton-Mason-Peoria-Tazewell Extension unit, including MG training in 2012, please go to <http://web.extension.illinois.edu/fmpt/mg/> or contact Rhonda Ferree, extension educator in horticulture (ferree@illinois.edu), or Julia Pryor, program coordinator (jpryor@illinois.edu). Rhonda and Julia are located in the Havana office at 309-543-3308.

