

## **My Master Gardener Intern Life**

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2022 Big Country Master Gardener Intern

Do you find that you are not quite sure why one plant lives and another dies? Are you from another State and cannot imagine how you could ever get things to grow in West Texas? Are you someone with a brown thumb who wants to grow some veggies in your back yard? These are some of the reasons I signed up for the Big Country Master Gardener program. I figured it would be a great way to gain a comprehensive overview of gardening basics. And I was right!

This program is an excellent way to start or improve your adventure in gardening, since it combines an introductory course with practical application through the volunteer hours and offers the best mentors you can find! And no prior gardening expertise is required! Having experienced the program over the past year or so, I thought I'd share 4 things that I've learned with you.

First, the classes are very informative. The speakers are experienced professors, researchers and practitioners who lay out the building blocks of what you need to know. There are excellent resources from the Texas A & M AgriLife Extension. And there's food! Master Gardeners are good cooks! The demands of the course are manageable if you are a working professional like me. The weekly evening classes and reading in advance (from the Master Gardener book) fit into my schedule with some advanced planning.

Second, it was great to get to know my fellow interns in the class. People from all walks of life join the Master Gardeners classes, but we all have a love of plants in common. It's fun meeting people from across Abilene and the nearby communities and hearing what they're growing. Each person comes with different levels of experience, and I've learned a lot from my classmates as well.

Third, the Master Gardeners are the best people you'll ever meet. The collegial atmosphere is wonderful and each person has been so welcoming. They are all willing to answer questions or point you in the right direction! Many folks have advanced training to share as well, specializing in certain areas such as irrigation, propagation or certain plant types. Master Gardeners share their seeds and cuttings as well.

Finally, the volunteering is a great way to learn as well as serve the community. Master Gardener interns volunteer 50 hours over the year to become Master Gardeners. This can be done through assisting at the Big Country Master Gardener plant sales in the Spring and Fall, through monthly workdays at the Swenson House or the Zoo, or assisting at the various Master Gardener demonstration beds.

I will admit, the time commitment feels significant because life for all of us is busy. But I can attest that each time I've volunteered, I have gained more than I have contributed. Working alongside experienced gardeners is such a privilege and I have already learned so much. I'm looking forward to deepening my knowledge and my friendships as I continue in the Master Gardener program.

It truly has been very rewarding to be part of this program. Not only have I gained knowledge and experience to apply to my own personal home gardening, I've also gained more appreciation for the role we all play in cultivating pollinator beds, curating the beauty of our shared environment, and inspiring the next generation of gardeners.

Come join us! You won't regret it!

If you are interested in joining us, registration is now open for the next Master Gardener Intern Training Program. Applications must be received in the Extension Office by February 1, 2023. Information about the training and the application form are available on the Big Country Master Gardener Association Facebook page and on our website at [www.bcmgtx.org](http://www.bcmgtx.org). You can also contact the Taylor County Extension Office at

325-672-6048 for the application or to get additional information about Master Gardeners and the Intern Training Program.

Remember that BCMGA is always available to help with your gardening questions. Call our hotline at 325-672-6048 or email us at [mgardeners@yahoo.com](mailto:mgardeners@yahoo.com). We are always available to help.