

BIG COUNTRY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL REVISED AND ADOPTED SEPTEMBER 19, 2017

Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to socioeconomic level, race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, or national origin.

Forward

The Big Country Master Gardener Association (“BCMGA”) Policies and Procedures Manual serves as the **Operating Handbook** for the organization. It is based upon the following documents:

- Big Country Master Gardener Association Bylaws as revised
- Texas Master Gardener Management Guide, rev. February 2006
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Youth Protections Standards
- Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Best Practices Financial Resource Management

The Guidelines and Procedures of the organization have been prepared by members responsible for the task(s). They are meant to be guidelines for performing the work of the organization, **not mandates** for how things are done.

If changes are needed to the Policies and Procedures Manual, the recommendations shall be submitted to the Executive Committee for approval. All changes, however, must continue to be in keeping with the BCMGA bylaws.

BIG COUNTRY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION
POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|---|----|
| Forward | i |
| Table of Contents | ii |
| Chapter 1 Mission Statement | 1 |
| Chapter 2 Goals and Objectives | 2 |
| Chapter 3 Policies and Procedures Manual | 3 |
| Chapter 4 Use of the Texas Master Gardener Title | 5 |
| Chapter 5 Membership | 6 |
| A. Trainee | 6 |
| B. Intern | 6 |
| C. Texas Certified Master Gardener | 6 |
| D. Probation | 6 |
| E. Removal | 6 |
| F. Reinstatement of Lapsed Intern and Master Gardener | 6 |
| G. Emeritus(a) | 7 |
| H. Lifetime Membership | 7 |
| I. Transferring Membership from Another TMG Program | 8 |
| J. Transferring Membership from Another State MG Program | 9 |
| Chapter 6 Certification Standards | 11 |
| A. Requirements for Certified Members | 11 |
| B. Requirements for Transitioning from Trainee to Intern | 11 |
| C. Requirements for Transitioning from Intern to Certified MG | 12 |
| Chapter 7 Timekeeping | 14 |
| A. Reporting Extension, Community, and Continuing Education Hours | 14 |
| B. Definition of Approved Extension Hours | 15 |
| C. Definition of Approved Community Hours | 15 |
| D. Definition of Approved Continuing Education Hours | 16 |
| Chapter 8 Criminal Background Checks | 19 |
| Chapter 9 Dues | 20 |
| Chapter 10 Meetings | 21 |

| | |
|--|----|
| Chapter 11 Executive Committee | 23 |
| Chapter 12 Officers and Directors | 25 |
| A. President | 25 |
| B. President-Elect | 27 |
| C. Vice President | 28 |
| D. Recording Secretary | 29 |
| E. Corresponding Secretary | 30 |
| F. Treasurer | 31 |
| G. Past President | 33 |
| H. Directors | 34 |
| Chapter 13 Standing Committees | 35 |
| A. Awards Committee | 36 |
| B. Resource Committee | 37 |
| C. Membership Committee | 38 |
| D. Program Committee | 39 |
| E. Projects Committee | 40 |
| F. Recurring Special Events Committee | 41 |
| G. Strategic Planning Committee | 42 |
| H. Hospitality Committee | 44 |
| I. Plant Sale Committee | 45 |
| J. Nominating Committee | 46 |
| K. Budget and Finance Committee | 47 |
| L. Specialty Certification Training Committee | 48 |
| M. Marketing Committee | 50 |
| Chapter 14 Property | 51 |
| Chapter 15 Special Reports | 52 |
| A. Chartering County Master Gardener Associations | 52 |
| B. Texas Master Gardener Association (Annual) Dues Invoice | 52 |
| C. Texas Master Gardener Association County Association Information | 53 |
| Appendix: Forms (Maintained and available by the Resource Committee) | |
| Big Country Master Gardener Time Sheet | |
| Group or Committee Budget | |
| Jr. Master Gardener Permission Form | |
| Membership Application | |
| Project Submittal Form | |
| Reimbursement/Check Request | |
| Revised Recording of Volunteer Hours (11/17/17) | |
| Sign-in Sheet | |
| Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement | |

Texas Sales and Use Tax Exemption Certification
Volunteer Application Form (Background Check)

CHAPTER 1. MISSION STATEMENT

The Big Country Master Gardener Association, assisting the Taylor County Extension Service, provides trained volunteer educators, dedicated to expanding research-based horticulture knowledge in the Big Country through teaching and service.

CHAPTER 2. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

1. Assist the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in providing unbiased, high quality, relevant horticultural education and service to the people of Taylor County and the State of Texas through outreach, teaching, and demonstration projects.
2. Protect and conserve the natural resources of Texas by teaching safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that promote the development of healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities.
3. To provide education for both gardeners and the public. The gardeners will identify needs for additional education, and efforts will be made to meet as many of those needs as resources allow. In turn, the Association will provide education to the public as needed.
4. The Big Country Master Gardener Association, assisting the Taylor County Extension Service, provides trained volunteer educators, dedicated to expanding research-based horticulture knowledge in the Big Country community through teaching and service.
5. Common procedures and activities of the Association will be documented and approved by the Association to ensure continuity of the Association's activities.

CHAPTER 3. POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

- A. The Big Country Master Gardener Association Policies and Procedures Manual (“Manual”) serves as the Operating Handbook for the BCMGA. This Manual is intended to define and document BCMGA policies, management guidelines, and operating procedures. This Manual is designed to:
1. maintain a current and easily accessible guide to all BCMGA policies and procedures;
 2. facilitate continuity of BCMGA operation, regardless of changes in officers and committees;
 3. ensure the periodic review and updating of all BCMGA policies and procedures.
- B. The initial version of the Manual was submitted to the Executive Committee for section-by-section discussion and approval. The version of the Manual approved by the Executive Committee was sent to all BCMGA members via email prior to the general membership meeting November 17, 2015. At that meeting, the members present voted to adopt the Manual.
- C. Amending the Manual

The Manual will be amended as follows:

1. Any certified BCMGA member may recommend a new policy, procedure, or a proposed change in writing to the Executive Committee.
2. The Executive Committee may recommend approval of new policies, procedures, or changes to the Manual at the Executive Committee regular meeting by a simple majority vote.
3. The Executive Committee will email the recommendations to the BCMGA membership at least **five** days before the next regular membership meeting and present those recommendations at the meeting for approval by the membership. A simple majority of members present may approve the policies, procedures, or changes.
4. If the Executive Committee determines the Manual requires an editorial update, change, or clarification, the Executive Committee may approve such at its regular meeting by a simple majority vote without approval of the membership. An example would be changing from Texas AgriLife Extension Service to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The Executive Committee will post the change to the BCMGA website and notify the membership of the change via email.

5. **However, the Executive Committee in particular and the membership in general should understand the policies and procedures are guidelines by which the organization is run. There may be instances of personal stress or conflict, natural or man-made disasters, or outside influences that may call for the Executive Committee to act independently within the intent of the policies and procedures on a case-by-case basis. These actions will be made a matter of record in the Executive Committee meeting minutes, and the membership will be notified of the change via email.**
- D. If there is ever any conflict between the Manual's policies and the existing BCMGA bylaws, then the BCMGA bylaws shall prevail.
- E. The Executive Committee will appoint a special committee to review this Manual every two years.

CHAPTER 4. USE OF THE TEXAS MASTER GARDENER TITLE

- A. The title of Texas Master Gardener or Big Country Master Gardener is to be used only by individuals who have completed training in the Texas Master Gardener Program and who are actively participating in the program through the Taylor County Extension Service. When an individual ceases active participation in the Master Gardener program or does not meet recertification requirements, the individual's certification as a Texas Master Gardener becomes void.
- B. The title of Texas Master Gardener or Big Country Master Gardener may not be used in advertising or for other business purposes, and certified, active members may not display credentials or give the appearance of being a Texas Master Gardener or Big Country Master Gardener at a place of business or in any form of advertisement where the individual is using the title for personal or business gain. The title is to be used only when doing unpaid volunteer work associated with and approved by Big Country Master Gardeners. Violation of the policy concerning the use of the title is grounds for removing the certification of a member.
- C. Texas Master Gardeners may not imply endorsement of any product by either the Texas Master Gardeners or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service unless that product has officially received endorsement by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service.
- D. Texas Master Gardeners or Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service may not imply endorsement of a place of business. Texas Master Gardeners may speak before groups at individual nurseries or other places of business and may also use business facilities for advanced education classes or for field trips. Appreciation to these businesses may be shown; however, recommendations for businesses that sell specific products or plants should be done by use of a list with at least three different names.
- E. At activities where information is distributed by the Big Country Master Gardeners, literature, catalogs and flyers on different nurseries, seed companies and other vendors may be offered to the public as long as it is clear that no preferential treatment is being given and more than one business is represented.
- F. Texas Master Gardeners who speak to various groups on horticulture topics may accept unsolicited reimbursements or nominal gifts or, if offered, suggest that a donation be made to the Big Country Master Gardeners.

It is also permissible to accept a "Master Gardener discount" on products and services offered by various businesses within the horticultural industry, as this is generally considered to be a method of showing appreciation for the volunteer time contributed by the Texas Master Gardener organization.

CHAPTER 5. MEMBERSHIP

- A. **Master Gardener Trainee.** A Master Gardener Trainee is defined as an individual who has applied for and been accepted into the Texas Master Gardener Training Program as per Chapter 6.
- B. **Master Gardener Intern.** A Master Gardener Intern is defined as a member who has successfully completed the required Master Gardener Training Program but has not completed the fifty (50) volunteer hours.
- C. **Texas Certified Master Gardener.** A certified Texas Master Gardener is defined as a member who is certified by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service after successful completion of the Trainee and Intern program and who has completed required volunteer and continuing education hours, paid annual dues, and passed/maintained the required criminal background check. Certified Master Gardeners are voting members of the BCMGA and can hold office or serve on the Executive Committee.
- D. **Probation.** A certified member who is unable to meet the necessary requirements for recertification and who is committed to staying with the BCMGA program shall be notified by the Membership Chairman and may be placed on probationary status. It is the requesting member's responsibility to apply in writing to the Executive Committee to move to Probation status if he/she has extenuating circumstances, such as injury or extended illness, a family member's extended illness, or a call to active duty. The decision to grant Probation status for a specified timeframe is made at the discretion of the Executive Committee. Normally the member may hold Probation status for up to one (1) year, although the Executive Committee at its discretion may extend this timeframe. Once granted probationary status, the member is required to pay dues, complete volunteer or continuing education hours for the current year as well as make up the hours not completed in the previous year, and may vote.
- E. **Removal.**
1. Removal of Members
 - a. Any member may be removed from membership in the Association by a two-thirds vote of the Executive Committee only for cause, which is defined as failure to pay dues, failure to maintain Certified Master Gardener status, or for conduct materially and seriously prejudicial to the stated purposes of the Association.
 - b. The member shall be provided with reasonable written notice and an opportunity to be heard either orally or in writing prior to any such vote.
- F. **Reinstatement of a Lapsed BCMGA Master Gardener Intern or Texas Master Gardener.** On occasion, a Master Gardener Intern or Texas Master Gardener may

allow their membership to lapse and later determine they would like to again become an active BCMGA member. It is the lapsed individual's responsibility to apply in writing to the Executive Committee for reinstatement. The decision to allow the individual to pursue reinstatement requirements is made at the discretion of the Executive Committee, providing the individual has been in a lapsed status for no more than two (2) years, although the Executive Committee at its discretion may extend this timeframe. The Executive Committee may reinstate membership if the individual accomplishes the following requirements within one (1) year from approval to pursue reinstatement.

1. Applies, pays for, and passes a new criminal background check prior to volunteering time on any BCMGA project.
2. Audits classes, as determined by the County Master Gardener Coordinator, at the next available BCMGA training course at no additional cost. A current manual is required. Field trips are not considered classes for this purpose.
3. A lapsed Intern is required to complete fifty (50) volunteer hours and any other certification requirements. A lapsed Texas Master Gardener is required to complete the current number of volunteer and continuing hours required for recertification. This may be done concurrent with or prior to attending the classes. Time spent in auditing class sessions is not counted as either volunteer service or continuing education credits.
4. Pay prorated annual dues based on time of certification.

G. **Emeritus(a)**. Texas Master Gardener **Emeritus(a)** is an honorary title awarded to a retired Texas Master Gardener volunteer for distinguished service to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. County Master Gardener programs may bestow this title on any Master Gardener who is permanently retiring as an active Master Gardener and who has served the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service with distinction. A retired Master Gardener is defined as an individual who chooses not to retain certification through the recertification process as established by State and County guidelines.

The process for nomination to Emeritus(a) status and the privileges then conveyed are further detailed in the Texas Master Gardener Management Guide, which can be found at <http://txmq.org/administration/management-guide/>.

H. **Lifetime Membership**. A Master Gardener in good standing may request and be granted Lifetime Membership if the Master Gardener is at least 65 years of age and has been a certified member in good standing for at least 10 years. If such membership is granted, the Master Gardener would no longer need to submit monthly volunteer hours or recertify each year, but would not be eligible to be an officer. Dues for said member would be paid by the Big Country Master Gardener Association. The following privileges shall be accorded such Lifetime Member:

1. Maintain membership in both the local/county and state Master Gardener Association;
2. Continued access to Extension facilities and educational resources;
3. Invitation to participate in Master Gardener educational and social events;
4. Right to serve as an invited advisor to the County Master Gardener programs;
5. Other rights and privileges as approved by the local County Master Gardener Coordinator and any ad hoc committee.

I. **Transferring Membership from Another Texas Master Gardener Program.** The Texas Master Gardener Program permits a person who holds Master Gardener membership in another Texas County to transfer membership. Upon determining all requirements for transfers are met, the Taylor County Extension Agent approves the transfer and informs the Executive Committee of his/her approval.

1. **Current Active Members.** A Certified Texas Master Gardener from another Association may request a transfer to BCMGA. The member should request the County Extension Agent where membership is active to provide the Taylor County Extension Agent the current status of his/her membership. The transferring Association's Extension Agent will notify the Taylor County Extension Agent whether the member currently holds certified status under the transferring Association's guidelines, or if not, when the member was last certified and the effective date of the last approved criminal background check.
2. **Previous Active Members.** If a person seeking a Texas county transfer once held active membership, and the membership has lapsed for no more than two (2) years, transfer will be approved if the following requirements are met:
 - a. The agent in the last certifying County shall confirm that the person was certified and held active membership during the required time period.
 - b. The transferring member must:
 - i. Apply, pay for, and pass a new criminal background check prior to volunteering time on any BCMGA projects;
 - ii. Audit classes, as determined by the County Master Gardener Coordinator, at the next available BCMGA training course at no additional cost. A current manual is required. Field trips are not considered classes for this purpose;
 - iii. Complete the current number of volunteer and continuing education hours required for recertification. This may be done concurrent with or prior to

attending the classes. Time spent in auditing class sessions is not counted as either volunteer service or continuing education credits;

- iv. Pay prorated annual dues based on time of certification.

J. Transferring Membership from Another State Master Gardener Program.

1. A Master Gardener holding membership in another state who desires a transfer to BCMGA will request the Extension Agent in the State jurisdiction where membership is active provide the Taylor County Extension Agent the current status of the transferring member. This notification will include whether the member currently holds certified status under that state's guidelines or if not, when the member was last certified and the effective date of the last approved criminal background check.

The Taylor County Extension Agent will inform the BCMGA Executive Committee of the transfer request and whether the process for completing the transfer may continue. The Executive Committee will make the final decision on state-to-state transfers.

2. If the person seeking transfer holds an active membership, that person must meet the following requirements before becoming a certified BCMG:
 - a. Purchase a copy of the Texas Master Gardener Handbook;
 - b. Audit classes, as determined by the County Master Gardener Coordinator, at the next available BCMGA training course at no additional cost. A current manual is required. Field trips are not considered classes for this purpose;
 - c. Apply, pay for, and pass a new criminal background check prior to volunteering time on any BCMGA projects;
 - d. Complete the current recertification required number of volunteer hours. This may be done concurrent with or prior to attending the classes;
 - e. Pay prorated annual dues based on time of certification.
3. Specialist training completed in another state will not be recognized in Texas per the Texas Master Gardener Association.

K. BCMGA will provide the following to persons who successfully transfer their membership either within Texas or from another state. Documents may be paper or electronic copies or both.

1. Current BCMGA Bylaws;
2. Current Policies and Procedures Manual;

3. Membership list;
4. Appropriate forms for submission of volunteer hours;
5. Name badge;
6. An introduction in the newsletter and at the next mutually convenient membership meeting.

CHAPTER 6. CERTIFICATION STANDARDS

A. Requirements for Certified Members

1. Annually recertify as Master Gardeners by completing requirements for volunteer service, continuing education, paying dues, and, as required, applying for and passing background checks. Members complete requirements in the current year for recertification. The number of recertification hours may be increased or decreased by the Taylor County AgriLife Extension Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator. Any changes made in the stated requirements will be included in the recertification packets.
2. Annual Recertification Requirements
 - a. Complete six (6) hours of Extension Service (EXT);
 - b. Complete twelve (12) hours of Community Service (COM);
 - c. Complete six (6) hours of Continuing Education (CEU);
 - d. Submit hours monthly to Membership Chairman;
 - e. Pay annual dues for the new year in January;
 - f. Apply for and pass a criminal background check every three years, or as necessary, to comply with the minimum standards required by the State.

B. Requirements for Transitioning from Trainee to Intern

1. Apply for and be accepted into the Texas Master Gardener Training Program;
2. Attend the Class Orientation or obtain the information presented at the Orientation prior to attending the first class;
3. Apply for and pass the criminal background check;
4. Complete a minimum of fifty (50) hours of combined classroom and field instruction;
5. Complete all chapter tests;
6. Graduation to Intern will be held after the last scheduled class, as determined by the Master Gardener Training Chairman (MGTC). Each graduate will receive a graduation certificate and introduction at the next mutually convenient membership meeting or scheduled social.

7. Additional Trainee Guidance

- a. Trainees must pass the criminal background check to continue the course. Students may not work on any BCMGA volunteer project dealing with children until the background check has been completed and the MGTC advises the student has passed.
- b. Trainees are responsible for informing the MGTC in advance of missed orientations or classes, especially for workshops or field trips. Trainees are responsible for completing any approved make-up sessions for missed classes. The topic of the make-up session will be the same subject as the missed class. The MGTC will determine and approve make-up opportunities on an individual basis.
- c. Class orientation does not count towards the fifty (50) hours of instruction time.
- d. Trainees are encouraged to start working towards the fifty (50) volunteer hours' requirement (separate from the fifty (50) hours of instruction) during the classroom training period as soon as notified they have passed the background check. A list of approved projects with contact names will be available. BCMGA highly encourages Trainees and Interns who are working towards final certification to work on approved projects. These projects are a major part of the BCMGA organization and require many volunteer hours to accomplish the stated goals.
- e. BCMGA encourages Trainees to attend the regular monthly Master Gardener membership meetings. Trainees are welcome to attend the Executive Committee meetings.
- f. Trainees will keep their contact information (email address and phone numbers) current with the Membership Chairman and the Corresponding Secretary. The Corresponding Secretary uses contact information to provide information about BCMGA general activities to all members, Interns, and Trainees.

C. Requirements for Transitioning from Intern to Certified Master Gardener

1. Complete certification requirements within one (1) year from the end of the month of the class graduation;
2. Complete a minimum of fifty (50) extension and community service hours;
3. Upon certification, pay annual dues to the Treasurer, prorated at the current rate based on the month certified for the remainder of the calendar year;

4. Upon certification, the Master Gardener will receive a certificate and a permanent name badge.
5. Additional Intern Guidance
 - a. Interns are defined as those members who have successfully completed the required Master Gardener Training Program but have not yet completed the fifty (50) volunteer hours or any other requirements for certification. Interns are not BCMGA voting members, nor can they hold office or serve on the Executive Committee. Interns can and are encouraged to volunteer for assistant positions with the various standing or special committees.
 - b. On occasion, a Master Gardener Intern may be unable to fulfill the requirements to obtain certification due to extenuating circumstances, such as injury, extended illness, a family member's extended illness, call to active duty, or other personal situation. In these cases, the County Master Gardener Coordinator may grant a Leave of Absence. It is the Intern's responsibility to request the Leave of Absence in writing explaining the circumstances. The Coordinator will notify the Intern and the Executive Committee of the decision to grant/not grant a Leave of Absence and the specific timeframe allowed to meet certification requirements. The Intern may hold Leave of Absence status for up to one (1) year, although the County Master Gardener Coordinator at his/her discretion may extend this timeframe. If the Intern has not completed the certification requirements within the approved timeframe, BCMGA will drop him/her from membership.
 - c. Interns are not required to pay annual dues.
 - d. Interns who certify are deemed to have met recertification requirements for the calendar year in which certified. The newly certified member has completed the required six (6) Extension, twelve (12) community service, and six (6) continuing education hours for recertification and is not required to earn any additional hours during the calendar year, although BCMGA highly encourages them to do so. They are also eligible to pay dues in January for the new calendar year.

CHAPTER 7. TIMEKEEPING

Why report? Volunteer hours are reported to better measure community benefits. The successful public and private partnership between Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and the BCMGA benefits the community through educational programming, activities, community projects, and shared expertise by significantly multiplying the outreach of Extension. **It is important to keep reporting hours even after the requirements to be certified have been met.** The success (and continuation) of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is heavily dependent upon BCMGA, and an important measurement of the Association's value is the number of hours contributed to the community. So for the Association and for Extension, it is important that every volunteer hour is reported.

A. Reporting Extension, Community, and Continuing Education Hours

1. Members are responsible for maintaining a record of and reporting all extension (EXT), community (COM), and continuing education (CEU) hours earned.
 - a. Members report hours using forms developed by the Membership Chairman and approved by the Executive Committee.
 - b. Members may submit completed forms by email or paper copy. Members may hand deliver or mail paper copies and should keep a copy for themselves to help resolve any question about the acceptability of hours reported.
 - c. Use of approved forms helps the Membership Chairman—who is also a volunteer—complete his/her work in a more efficient manner and facilitates reporting to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent and Texas Master Gardeners.
2. Members should report all hours to the Membership Chairman monthly.
3. The following guidelines apply for reporting:
 - a. Report volunteer hours in increments of thirty (30) minutes, rounded up or down. For example, if the time is “1 hour 10 minutes,” report “1 hour.” If the time is “1 hour 20 minutes,” report “1.5 hours;”
 - b. Separately identify “Extension Hours,” “Community Hours,” and “Continuing Education Hours” on the reporting form; provide enough detail to allow the Membership Chairman to determine what project was involved and have a general idea of what work was accomplished;
 - c. Members may not include travel time to and from an Extension, Community, or Continuing Education event in their reported time, except for as designated by the Plant Sale Chairman for investigating new vendors or picking up plants for the plant sale.

B. Definition of Approved Extension Hours

1. Committee meetings (awards, board, library, communications, membership, program, special projects, etc.)
2. Any non-horticultural events related to assisting the Extension Office (nutrition lessons; office work; stuffing bags for fair or Kids, Kows & More; state 4-H show; West Texas Fair (except in Association with Food & Fiber program), Farm and Ranch Show and Women's Fair (except giving horticultural presentations).
3. Business meetings for BCMGA.
4. Newsletter or website (unless research is required for topic; then may be CEU).
5. Trainee classes (unless specified as advanced training by the Master Gardener Coordinator).
6. Refreshments brought to meetings or trainee classes (1 hour maximum).

C. Definition of Approved Community Hours

1. Volunteers may report any approved volunteer activity that promotes the BCMGA Mission Statement to assist the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service in providing unbiased, high quality, relevant horticultural education and service to the people of Taylor County and the State of Texas through outreach, teaching, and demonstration projects. This includes teaching safe, effective, and sustainable horticultural practices that promote the development of healthy gardens, landscapes, and communities. Examples of reportable volunteer activity are holding approved classes on gardening, assisting organizations in laying out, designing, and building gardens and landscapes and teaching individuals how to maintain gardens/landscapes. However, the ongoing maintenance of the garden/landscape is not reportable volunteer hours unless the Executive Committee has deemed the garden/landscape as an approved BCMGA Volunteer Project.
2. Although the ultimate accountability for programs administered by the BCMGA lies with the Taylor County A&M AgriLife Extension Agent, the Projects Committee is responsible for evaluating every such request received for a community project. The Project Committee will look first at the requesting organization, the scope of work to be done, costs, and who has the ultimate responsibility for maintenance of the project. The Project Committee then submits the proposal to the Executive Committee for approval. Once approved, volunteer hours will be accepted for Master Gardeners working on that project.
3. Requests for speakers are directed to the Vice President to arrange for presentations. Once approved, volunteer hours will be accepted for Master Gardeners making presentations.

4. The current list of approved projects is posted on the BCMGA Home Page under What We Do: Projects, at www.bcmgtx.org. The Projects Committee Chairman will update this list as new projects are added and old ones are completed.
5. BCMGA highly encourages Trainees and Interns who are working towards final certification to work on approved projects. These projects are a major part of the BCMGA organization and require many volunteer hours to accomplish the stated goals.
6. If a member has any questions about whether the project on which they volunteer time is currently approved, they should either contact the Membership Chairman or check the website.
7. Community hours credited to the BCMGA cannot be credited to or from another volunteer group or program. For example, hours done for the Master Naturalists cannot also be reported to the Master Gardeners.
8. Preparation and research for presentations, workshops, and other training of both Master Gardeners and/or the public will be counted as CEU hours, and making those presentations will be counted as COM hours.
9. BCMGA will discuss new projects during membership meetings and announce them in the newsletter and on the BCMGA website. BCMGA also uses email as an important notification tool to keep members current on Extension, Community, and Continuing Education opportunities.
10. The Project Committee will annually review ongoing projects to determine if the project furthers BCMGA's educational mission and how, contributes to or erodes BCMGA's focus on public education, is worth the use of volunteer time and exposure, and whether there may be potential interest within the BCMGA membership in doing the project properly.

D. Definition of Approved Continuing Education Hours

1. Continuing education in the various facets of gardening is a critical part of being a BCMG and provides an opportunity to focus on specific interests. Lectures, workshops, hands-on training, all of these are important not only for advancing our knowledge but also for meeting other Master Gardeners and the public.
2. CEU opportunities are made available through the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and other agencies such as Texas Parks and Wildlife, the Texas Forest Service, along with Master Gardener sponsored activities or any number of short courses that are provided by other outside activities, as approved by the Master Gardener Coordinator.

3. Additionally, there are many good on-line programs via the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension website, such as Earth Kind and Tomato 101 learning modules, along with various other programs that provide a good learning experience. These programs can be found at <http://aggie-horticulture.tamu.edu>.
4. Understanding that there may be times when our members' access to continuing education is limited by physical restrictions, educational television programs may be considered an acceptable form of continuing education. However, members must obtain prior approval from the Membership Chairman for those educational television programs before those hours can be accepted. Contact the Membership Chairman with any questions regarding this option.
5. If a Master Gardener is a member of another volunteer organization that does not report hours for credit, garden-related educational programs provided by that organization may count as education hours for the BCMGA. However, business meetings, board meetings, plant sales, or other activities done on behalf of the other organization do not count as BCMGA volunteer hours.
6. Members may not count educational training sessions that are taken to certify or to meet a membership requirement necessary to become a member of another volunteer organization as education hours for BCMGA. For example, training classes necessary to certify as a Master Naturalist would not count as BCMGA hours. However, taking a class in plant identification organized by the Native Plant Society (NPSOT) would be reportable education hours since NPSOT does not require any reporting of hours or training to be a member of that organization.
7. Training for Master Gardener Specialist status is approved CEU hours, even if Specialist status is not achieved. Travel time to and from the training is not approved hours.
8. Once certified as a BCMG, the Taylor County AgriLife Extension Agent will deem certain classes of the BCMGA annual training classes as approved advanced training to increase knowledge of a particular subject. These are approved CEU hours.

Should there be any question about the validity of hours submitted for CEU credit, the Membership Chairman will send information to the Taylor County AgriLife Extension Agent for review and final approval.

Examples of Hours Not Approved:

1. Working on your own without approval of committee chair;
2. Reading a gardening book, watching HGTV programs, or visiting "Home and Garden show" booths;
3. Landscaping work at your church;

4. Helping a neighbor with their yard;
5. Employment hours.

CHAPTER 8. CRIMINAL BACKGROUND CHECKS

Taken from the “Youth Protection Standards, Qualification of Volunteers, Volunteer Handbook”;

The Youth Protection Standards Program was established by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service to protect youth involved in Extension programs.

The purpose of the Youth Protection Standards Program is to:

- *Provide a safe and secure environment for youth involved in Extension programs.*
- *Establish best management practices related to volunteer service and reduce associated risks.*
- *Protect the image and integrity of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and its affiliated groups.*

Under recommendations made by the Administrator of Extension Services of USDA, policy and guidelines are now in place that include background checks for Master Gardeners, Interns, and Trainees.

Upon application for Master Gardener training, new students will also be required to pass a criminal background check prior to performing any volunteer activities dealing with children.

Big Country Master Gardener Association members are required to apply for and pass a criminal background check every three years. This is as per the requirement established by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service and is subject to change in frequency.

CHAPTER 9. DUES

- A. Dues are paid by Certified Members on an annual basis as part of the recertification requirement.
 - 1. Any change in the amount of the annual dues shall be recommended by the Executive Committee and must be approved by the membership at a regular business meeting.
 - 2. Dues may be accepted if the minimum hours for recertification have not been submitted but the member is put on probationary status.
 - 3. Dues will be accepted as of January 1 of the new year. Notices will be sent to the membership about payment of dues in December.
 - 4. Members who have not paid dues by February 1 will receive a written notice from the Membership Chairman by email or by mail that if dues are not paid by February 10, they will be dropped from membership.
- B. Interns and Trainees are not required to pay annual dues. Upon certification as a Master Gardener, Interns will pay prorated dues at the current rate for the remaining months of the calendar year.
- C. Annual dues include the cost of the criminal background check and expenses related to other needs of the organization.

CHAPTER 10. MEETINGS

A. Association Meetings

1. The Association meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month, a minimum of ten months of the year.
2. An Agenda for the business part of the meeting should be provided for membership.
3. A Nominating Committee will be elected from nominations from the floor by the membership at the regularly scheduled August Association meeting. Election is by secret ballot, email, verbal, or show of hands. The Committee will recruit members to fill officer and director positions for the following year. All nominees for an officer or director must be an active, certified Master Gardener in good standing.
4. A slate of officers and directors will be presented to the membership at the regularly scheduled September Association meeting.
5. At the regularly scheduled October Association meeting, additional nominations will be accepted from the floor prior to voting. Officers and directors shall be elected by secret ballot, email, verbal, or show of hands, with results announced prior to close of meeting. Newly elected officers will attend the November and December Executive Committee meetings. Elected officers shall be installed at the December Executive Committee meeting and assume their duties January 1.
6. The next year's budget will be presented at the regularly scheduled October Association meeting and ratified at the regularly scheduled November Association meeting.
7. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the voting membership constitutes a quorum.

B. Executive Committee Meetings

1. The Executive Committee meets monthly or as necessary. A special meeting may be called if there is a specific point of business that requires action by the Committee that cannot wait until the next monthly Executive Committee meeting.
2. Traditionally the meetings are held the second Tuesday of each month. That schedule may be changed should the Committee deem it necessary to do so.
3. A quorum shall consist of four (4) voting members of the Executive Committee.
4. BCMGA members, interns, and trainees are invited and encouraged to attend the Executive Committee meetings.

5. In an emergency or a need for action where the Executive Committee is not available for a meeting, a poll of the Committee may be taken by email or telephone; the voted action will be ratified at the next regular Executive Committee meeting and entered into the minutes of the meeting at that time.

C. Special Meetings

1. Special meetings of the membership may be called if the need arises at the discretion of the President or three members of the Executive Committee.
2. Special meetings will be announced to the membership by phone, mail, or email at least three (3) days prior to the meeting date.

D. Committee Meetings

1. Committee meetings may be called at the discretion of the appropriate committee chairman. If a committee wishes to have notice of their meeting placed on the calendar, that committee chairman is responsible for sending details of said meeting to bcmg@bcmgtx.org as well as their Executive Committee representative.

E. Scheduling and Cancellations

1. The Taylor County Extension Office shall be notified of schedules and cancellations.

F. Socials

1. A Summer Social is usually held in June or July (month to be decided by membership based on availability of facilities) and a Fall or Holiday social is held in December.
2. The Socials are organized by a Committee Chairperson, with input from the membership.

CHAPTER 11. EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

- A. The Executive Committee is responsible for managing the affairs of the Big Country Master Gardener Association. Per the Bylaws, the voting members of the Board shall consist of the President, President-Elect, Vice President, Recording Secretary, Corresponding Secretary, and Treasurer. The Past President is an ex-officio member of the Executive Committee and may only vote in case of a tie.
- B. The Taylor County AgriLife Extension Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator employed by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service with horticultural duties shall serve as advisor to the Executive Committee.
- C. The Executive Committee is responsible for supporting the mission, goals, policies, programs, strengths, and needs of the Big Country Master Gardener Association and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and for encouraging the membership to do the same.
- D. The Executive Committee represents the public image of the Association.
- E. Duties of the Executive Committee shall include, but not be limited to:
 - 1. Authorize such committees, both standing and special purpose, as the Committee shall deem necessary and appropriate;
 - 2. Ratify and approve appointment by the President of chairmen for the standing and special purpose committees;
 - 3. Approve a Financial Review Committee established by the Budget and Finance Committee to annually review the financial affairs of the Association;
 - 4. Meet monthly, or as necessary, to accomplish the affairs of the Association, with a minimum of ten meetings per year.
 - 5. Review requests from the Project Committee for special projects, determining if the project is viable for the membership to undertake, and review current projects for continuation. Project proposals shall be submitted each year until the project is completed.
 - 6. Maintain the ongoing 5-Year Plan created by the Strategic Planning Committee to guide BCMGA as an organization and to help meet the identified goals and objections. The Executive Committee will solicit input from all Association members to incorporate into current and future plans. The Plan should be evaluated each quarter and added to or amended each November with the outgoing and incoming Executive Committee members, obtaining approval for the Plan prior to January 1.

7. An annual budget will be developed by the Budget and Finance Committee and presented to the Executive Committee for approval and forwarded to the membership for final ratification. Any proposal involving the expenditure of unbudgeted funds must be reviewed by the Executive Committee before being presented to the Association membership. The Executive Committee may authorize the expenditure of unbudgeted funds up to \$300 without the approval of the membership.

F. Members of the Executive Committee shall be held to the following minimum expectations:

1. Each Executive Committee member shall prepare for and participate in a minimum of ten Executive Committee meetings per year.
2. Each Executive Committee member is expected to participate in a minimum of eight regular meetings per year.
3. Each Executive Committee member is expected to read and understand the Association's Bylaws and Policies and Procedures Manual.
4. Each Executive Committee member is expected to seek and respect the opinions of other Committee members and support the majority decision.
5. Each Executive Committee member is expected to assist in identifying and recruiting future Committee members.
6. Each Executive Committee member is expected to be an active member of the Association in good standing.

F. Removal of an Executive Committee member

1. Any member of the Executive Committee may be disqualified from holding his/her elected position by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members of the Executive Committee, provided that in the notice of said meeting, specific mention is made that such action is to be considered.

G. Vacancies on Executive Committee

1. In the event a vacancy occurs on the Executive Committee, such vacancy shall be filled for the remainder of the term by a person approved by a majority vote of the Executive Committee.
2. If two or more vacancies occur on the Executive Committee at the same time (within a 30-day period), the approval of the appointees will be made through a regularly scheduled Association membership meeting.

CHAPTER 12.A. OFFICERS: PRESIDENT

Duties and Responsibilities

The position of the President requires a one-year commitment since the previous year's President-Elect moves into this position on January 1 when the current President's term expires.

Duties of the President include, but are not limited to:

- A. Be the primary spokesperson on behalf of the Big Country Master Gardener Association;
- B. Support the mission, goals, policies, programs, and activities of the Big Country Master Gardener Association;
- C. Provide leadership to the Executive Committee and membership; assist in setting goals and expectations for the Executive Committee; guide and mediate Executive Committee actions with respect to Big Country Master Gardener Association priorities and concerns;
- D. Work closely with the President-Elect and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent for the implementation of the policies as approved by the Executive Committee;
- E. Maintain awareness of the Executive Committee and membership activities; stay informed of the various activities in which the Executive Committee and membership are engaged and project a supportive attitude toward their involvement; be a model volunteer, visible at major and key activities;
- F. Be an ex-officio member with voting rights of all committees except the Nominating Committee;
- G. Appoint Chairmen of the Standing Committees and any special committees, as approved by the Executive Committee;
- H. Preside at all meetings of the Executive Committee and Association meetings;
- I. Prepare agendas for both Executive Committee meetings and Association meetings;
- J. Maintain good communication with the President-Elect and proactively seek to keep him/her informed regarding ongoing activities to ensure a smooth leadership transition for the incoming President;
- K. Meet with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Agent as needed to discuss Executive Committee and membership activities;

- L. Read and be familiar with the Association's Bylaws, the Policies and Procedures Manual, the Texas Master Gardener Management Guide, and the various forms and reports required by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service and the Texas Master Gardeners Association (See Chapter 14, Special Reports);
- M. Be an authorized signatory on all bank accounts, along with the Treasurer;
- N. Work with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent and the Recording Secretary in determining classes for new Intern training each year, reviewing applications for approval, and any additional duties as requested by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent pertaining to new Intern training;
- O. Serve for a term of one (1) year; may be re-elected if the President-Elect is unable to serve as President;
- P. Chair the Strategic Planning Committee;
- Q. Oversee the Recurring Special Events Committee;
- R. Serve as Immediate Past President for one year after expiration of term.

CHAPTER 12.B. OFFICERS: PRESIDENT-ELECT

Duties and Responsibilities

The President-Elect succeeds to the presidency upon the expiration of the President's term.

Duties of the President-Elect:

- A. Support the mission, goals, policies, programs, strengths, and needs of the Big Country Master Gardener Association;
- B. Provide leadership to the Executive Committee. Along with the President, assist in setting goals and expectations for the Association;
- C. Work closely with the President and the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent to ensure a smooth transition to the office of President;
- D. Serve as an ex-officio member with voting rights of all committees except the Nominating Committee;
- E. Maintain awareness of the Executive Committee and membership activities; be visible at key volunteer activities;
- F. Assist the President in his/her duties, as requested;
- G. Serves for a term of one (1) year;
- H. Officially assumes duties January 1. It is suggested that the incoming President-Elect who is elected at the October annual membership meeting attend the November and December board meetings as an observer;
- I. Chair the Budget and Finance Committee and be in charge of making the budget for the next year, in conjunction with the Treasurer. The proposed budget shall be presented at the Executive Committee's regularly scheduled October meeting and shall be presented at the regularly scheduled October Association meeting for review. The final budget shall be ratified at the regularly scheduled Association meeting in November;
- J. Oversee the Resource Committee.

CHAPTER 12.C. OFFICERS: VICE PRESIDENT

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties of the Vice President include, but are not limited to:

- A. Chairman of the Program Committee, which organizes educational programs for BCMGA regular membership meetings;
 - 1. Arrange programs a minimum of three months in advance. Prior to the end of the calendar year, make sure speakers are set up through March of the following year so that a smooth transition can be made to the new Executive Committee;
 - 2. Provide information on speakers and programs in a timely manner to the Corresponding Secretary and others, as needed, so that information on the program may be publicized to the membership;
 - 3. Coordinate with the Treasurer for timely payment to the speakers on honorarium fees and mileage, if necessary;
 - 4. Provide an updated list of speakers and topics for inclusion in the Speakers' Bureau to the Resource Committee.
- B. Act in place of President when required;
- C. Assist the President and President-Elect in their duties, as requested;
- D. Elected for a term of one (1) year, but may be re-elected for additional terms, but not more than two consecutive terms;
- E. Officially assumes duties January 1. However, it is suggested that the Vice President-elect attend the November and December Executive Committee meetings as an observer;
- F. Oversee the Nominating Committee;
- G. Oversee the Bylaws and Policies and Procedures Manual and the committees appointed to revise them;
- H. Oversee the Projects Committee;
- I. Oversee the Speakers' Bureau.

CHAPTER 12.D. OFFICERS: RECORDING SECRETARY

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties of the Recording Secretary include, but are not limited to:

- A. Recording the minutes of all Executive Committee meetings, Association meetings, and any special meetings that may be called;
- B. Notify the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent (Extension Agent) of all scheduled and special Executive Committee and Association meetings;
- C. In a timely fashion, provide a preliminary copy of the Executive Committee meeting minutes to the Executive Committee for their review and correction; provide the Extension Agent with a copy of the minutes after corrections are made; provide a copy of the Association meeting minutes to the membership for approval at the subsequent month's meeting; copies to be kept by year in the BCMGA file cabinet;
- D. Verify a quorum is present before any voting and include in the minutes;
- E. Be a member of the Resource/Newsletter subcommittee;
- F. Assist the President and President-Elect in their duties, as requested;
- G. Work with the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent and the President in determining classes for new Intern training each year, reviewing applications for approval, and any additional duties as requested by the Texas AgriLife Extension Service Agent pertaining to new Intern training;
- H. Elected for a term of one (1) year, but may be re-elected for additional terms, but not more than two consecutive terms;
- I. Officially assumes duties January 1. However, it is suggested that the Recording Secretary-elect attend the November and December Executive Committee meetings as an observer;
- J. Oversee the Hospitality Committee;
- K. Oversee Specialty Certification Training Committee.

CHAPTER 12.E. OFFICERS: CORRESPONDING SECRETARY

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties of the Corresponding Secretary include, but are not limited to:

- A. Take care of all necessary correspondence; e.g., sympathy cards, thank you cards, and other courtesy communications. Flowers and/or cards may be sent in the event of a death of the member or immediate family member (husband, wife, child);
- B. Send required notices for Executive Committee meetings and any special meetings, as requested by the President or other Executive Committee members. Notices must be distributed at least three (3) business days prior to the meeting;
- C. Maintain the calendar on the BCMGA website with assistance from the webmaster;
- D. Forward TMGA newsletters to membership;
- E. Keep a current list of members' names and addresses as provided by the Membership Committee;
- F. **Check BCMGA email accounts regularly and respond to emails or forward emails to appropriate members for response;**
- G. Be a member of the Resource/Newsletter subcommittee;
- H. Assist the President and President-Elect in their duties, as requested;
- I. Elected for a term of one (1) year, but may be re-elected for additional terms, but not more than two consecutive terms;
- J. Officially assumes duties January 1. However, it is suggested that the Corresponding Secretary-elect attend the November and December meetings as an observer;
- K. Be responsible for speaker appreciation gifts, cards, or certificates, as needed;
- L. Oversee the Membership Committee;
- M. Oversee Marketing Committee.

CHAPTER 12.F. OFFICERS: TREASURER

Duties and Responsibilities

Duties of the Treasurer include, but are not limited to:

- A. Act as Chief Financial Officer of the Association and ad hoc member of the Budget and Finance Committee. An approved software program is the vehicle of choice to maintain the Association's financial records;
- B. Prior to January Executive Committee meeting, meet with financial institution representative and establish new signature cards for check writing authorization and debit card for incoming President, Treasurer, and other designees as agreed upon by the Executive Committee. A signed copy of the approved "Minutes of the Executive Committee" which lists the elected officers must be presented to the Association's financial institution and a copy kept in the BCMGA file cabinet;
- C. Establish authorization and passwords for on-line banking and to receive monthly bank statements in conjunction with the President;
- D. Receive all dues and monies for the Association; keep an exact accounting of all dues, other income, bank deposits, disbursements, and other financial matters on approved software. Funds are to be deposited within five (5) days upon receipt by the Treasurer;
- E. Pay all bills upon receipt of a Reimbursement/Check Request and proof of purchase per Association bylaws. All documentation must be maintained and organized in financial review-ready fashion and kept in the BCMGA file cabinet for three (3) calendar years;
- F. Provide a monthly financial report to the Executive Committee and to the general membership;
- G. Ad hoc member of the Budget and Finance Committee;
- H. The annual approved budget and a profit and loss statement for the calendar year shall be provided for inclusion in the Chartering Documents that are given to the Extension Agent. The December bank statement shall be reconciled prior to providing the profit and loss statements;
- I. Present the records for annual financial review by the Financial Review Committee, said committee having been previously established by the Budget and Finance Committee and approved by the Executive Committee. The final review will also be provided for inclusion in the Chartering Documents in January;
- J. Whenever there is a change in Treasurer, an outside financial review will be conducted;

- K. Inventory to be done by the Resource Committee, under the supervision of the Treasurer, before the end of the year for inclusion in the Chartering Documents;
- L. Prepare all required reports and payments for various state and federal agencies on a timely basis, but always prior to the deadline;
 - 1. Sales tax report, presently set up on a yearly reporting schedule;
 - 2. IRS Form 990 for the Association's nonprofit status;
 - 3. Renew the state issued floral certificate to license the Association's fundraising plant sales (by March 31 of each year). Reminders are sent out by the Texas Department of Agriculture on January 31 of each year;
- M. File required report and pay Texas Master Gardener Association annual dues, based on membership as of December 31, due on or before March 1 of each year;
- N. Read and be familiar with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service Financial Resource Management Manual, which can be found at the Taylor County Extension Office. This Manual provides extensive guidelines for "External Support Groups" along with various forms that can be used or modified for specific use in our organization. Although it is not practical to strictly adhere to every item listed, the Treasurer should be familiar with the Manual, particularly related to internal controls and proper record keeping. Questions related to procedures that may be required by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service should be directed to the Extension Agent for input and final decision;
- O. Maintain a breakdown of income and expenses in various categories as requested by the Executive Committee;
- P. Assist the President and President-Elect in their duties, as requested;
- Q. Elected for a term of one (1) year, but may be re-elected for additional terms, but not more than two consecutive terms;
- R. Officially assume duties January 1. However, it is suggested that the Treasurer-elect attend the November and December Executive Committee meetings as an observer;
- S. Submit chartering documents yearly;
- T. Oversee the Plant Sale Committee.

CHAPTER 12.G. OFFICERS: PAST PRESIDENT

Duties and Responsibilities

The position of the Past President requires a one-year commitment.

Duties of the Past President include, but are not limited to:

- A. Support the mission, goals, policies, programs, and activities of the Big Country Master Gardener Association;
- B. Provide leadership to the President and Executive Committee;
- C. Attend Executive Committee meetings and vote when there is not a decisive decision;
- D. Perform other duties as requested by the President;
- E. Oversee the Awards Committee;
- F. Serve for a term of one (1) year;
- G. Member of the Strategic Planning Committee.

CHAPTER 12.H. DIRECTORS

Association representatives are elected by the local association to carry out state and county business. There are two (2) directors per association, and one vote per director at TMGA meetings. It is recommended that each association have two alternates who can represent the county in the absence of their designated directors. The Directors are elected annually.

Duties of the Directors:

- A. Vote regarding TMGA business;
- B. Attend Directors' meetings and report TMGA business to the BCMGA membership at the next regularly scheduled Association meeting;
- C. Let TMGA know of resources that the county association needs;
- D. Encourage the local association to contribute to the TMGA newsletter;
- E. Contact TMGA president if Director would like to present information pertinent to the state at a directors' meeting;
- F. If there is ever a decision/policy that is made by TMGA that is unclear, it is the Director's responsibility to inquire about the decision.

CHAPTER 13. STANDING COMMITTEES

As established by the Big Country Master Gardener Association Bylaws, standing committees are those committees deemed necessary and appropriate by the Executive Committee. Chairmen of the standing committees are appointed by the President and approved by the Executive Committee and announced at the January membership meeting. See the exception as noted in the Plant Sale Standing Committee chapter.

Chairmen of these committees shall be certified Master Gardeners, and interns and trainees may serve as committee members.

Chairmen of each standing committee shall work within the guidelines as defined in this manual to accomplish their duties as defined by the Executive Committee.

Leaders of the standing committees must be able to work independently to accomplish their mission and goals. However, no policy changes can be affected by an individual member, even as Chairman.

It is important to remember that all Board members work together as a cohesive unit to accomplish the goals of the Big Country Master Gardener Association. Some overlap of duties will occur and communication among the Executive Committee is critical.

Any minutes taken during the committee meetings will be filed at the Taylor County Extension Office in the BCMGA file cabinet.

All special committees as appointed by the President shall be reviewed annually for retention.

Definitions:

Oversee: To watch over and direct (an undertaking, a group of workers, etc.) to ensure a satisfactory outcome. Unless otherwise stated, a person overseeing a committee does not have to chair the committee.

Chair: The person in charge of or presiding over the meeting or committee.

Member: One of the individuals composing a committee.

Ad hoc: Ad hoc is a word that originally comes from Latin and means “for this” or “for this situation.” In current American English, it is used to describe something that has been formed or used for a special and immediate purpose, without previous planning. Ad hoc can be used as an adjective or an adverb. It is used more often as an adjective, especially in these expressions: ad hoc committee, ad hoc group, ad hoc basis.

CHAPTER 13.A. AWARDS COMMITTEE

The Awards Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Develop awards criteria for the Association, including recognition of specified volunteer roles, as well as the different service levels attained by Association members;
- B. Notify the newsletter staff and webmaster of recognition for inclusion in various Association communication avenues, including preparation of articles for publication;
- C. During the calendar year, identify potential award nomination activities and gather support data; create files with information; prepare and submit nomination of individuals and programs for state and national recognition the following year;
- D. Develop Awards Committee budget for year;
- E. The Past President shall oversee the Awards Committee;
- F. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.B. RESOURCE COMMITTEE

The Resource Committee, which encompasses the library, newsletter, website, and any on-line subscriptions resources, is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws. The duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Prepare monthly newsletter and notify members via email of availability on website; send copy to webmaster for posting on web page;
- B. Maintain all aspects of the website and help maintain monthly calendars to keep members informed;
- C. Track and utilize on-line subscriptions resources (e.g., Mail Chimp, Survey Monkey, On-line/Cloud storage, Quick-Books);
- D. Maintain forms in Policies and Procedures Manual (per the index instructions);
- E. Develop Resource Committee budget for year;
- F. Develop information brochures for distribution;
- G. Maintain presence of Facebook page;
- H. The Program Chairman shall work in collaboration with the Resource Committee Chairman regarding information and materials for use by speakers for presentations;
- I. The President-Elect shall oversee the Resource Committee;
- J. Maintain inventory of all MG resources. Any equipment belonging to the Association may be checked out for use of Association business by signing the inventory list, which shall be kept with the equipment in the Association storage closet at the Taylor County Extension Office;
- K. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.C. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

The Membership Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Maintain master copy of membership roster; distribute copies to the Secretaries and Treasurer; update email account and mobile membership directory;
- B. Gather and maintain volunteer hours of Association members; share volunteer information with Awards Committee; monthly hours shall be sent by email to the Membership Chairman by the fifth day of the month, to then be forwarded to the Extension Agent;
- C. Send out membership application forms and Master Gardener Volunteer Agreements at appropriate time of year to current Association members;
- D. Send out letters of invitation to Master Gardener Interns that have completed volunteer service, along with Association membership application, Master Gardener Volunteer Agreement, and copy of the signed Bylaws, inviting those individuals to join the Association;
- E. Renew Criminal Background Checks for certified Master Gardeners every three years;
- F. Provide information to the Executive Committee regarding members who have not paid dues for recertification;
- G. Develop Membership Committee budget for year;
- H. The Corresponding Secretary shall oversee the Membership Committee;
- I. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.D. PROGRAM COMMITTEE

The Program Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Developing additional education enrichment programs, seminars, and field trips;
- B. Developing seminars, classes, and educational materials for public and internal education, as needed;
- C. Coordinates JMG programs and activities;
- D. Develop Program Committee budget for year;
- E. The Vice President shall chair the Program Committee;
- F. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.E. PROJECTS COMMITTEE

The Projects Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Work with the Taylor County Extension Agent/Master Gardener Coordinator, Membership Chairman, and Executive Committee in developing community projects in which Association members may participate; present activities to membership at Association meetings;
- B. A project initiation form needs to be completed to obtain approval for a new project (See Appendix: Forms). The form will explain the project, how it will impact the community, who it will educate, the project's length of time, and BCMGA's resources required. A member can volunteer or be named as project Team Leader, who must be a Certified Master Gardener. The Team Leader reports to the Project Committee Chairman, who then is responsible for sending notices of workdays to the Corresponding Secretary for forwarding to the members. This form is submitted to the Projects Committee for review. Once approved by the Projects Committee, the form is submitted to the Executive Committee for review and approval. The Projects Chairman is responsible for verifying with the Taylor County AgriLife Extension Agent that any trainee has passed the Criminal Background Check before being allowed to work with children.
 - 1. If proposed project does not require any Association resources (excluding volunteers) or funds exceeding \$300, the Executive Committee may approve without the proposal going to the membership for a vote;
 - 2. If proposed project does require Association funding in excess of \$300 or Association resources (excluding volunteers), and after approval from the Executive Committee, the proposed project is submitted to the membership for a vote;
 - 3. If changes are necessary to the original project proposal, an amended project proposal shall be submitted and approved as above;
- C. Provide input to the Marketing Committee on strategies for promoting projects;
- D. Identify volunteer needs for projects and ensure sufficient volunteers are available at events;
- E. Develop Projects Committee budget for year;
- F. The Vice President shall oversee the Projects Committee;
- G. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.F. RECURRING SPECIAL EVENTS COMMITTEE

The Recurring Special Events Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Plan mid-year picnic and Christmas party;
- B. Work with the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent and 4-H Agent to provide support of their education programs; e.g., Food & Fiber Day and Kids, Kows & More;
- C. Develop Recurring Special Events Committee budget for year;
- D. The President shall oversee the Recurring Special Events Committee;
- E. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.G. STRATEGIC PLANNING COMMITTEE

Strategic Planning involves looking at the Association as a complete entity and is concerned with its long-term development. This involves looking at what the Association was set up to do, where the Association is now, determining where we want to get to, and mapping how to get there.

The Strategic Planning Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Membership will consist of the current President, the current President-Elect, the immediate Past President, and the two most recent Past Presidents. Should a vacancy occur, the President shall appoint someone from the Executive Committee or another Past President to fulfill the remainder of the term of the vacant position;
- B. Meet quarterly or more often as needed;
- C. Clarify what the Association is about;
- D. Develop a plan to utilize current and future resources to continue meeting the Association's purpose;
- E. Identify needs for future growth to the Association; for example:
 1. evaluate needs for major approved projects;
 2. research/write grants;
 3. provide oversight to any awarded grants;
 4. provide higher level research/oversight for major projects or programs,, including identifying legal needs, insurance requirements, and contracts;
 5. identify the type of Specialists needed to support the Association and how many of each are needed.
- F. Analyze the internal and external environment by means of surveys and/or direct feedback;
- G. Consider how best to deal with upcoming changes and transitions;
- H. Set out a clear direction;
- I. Set concrete goals for the future;
- J. Oversee Property in Chapter 14;

- K. Develop Strategic Planning Committee budget for year;
- L. The President shall chair the Strategic Planning Committee;
- M. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.H. HOSPITALITY COMMITTEE

The Master Gardener Hospitality Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Coordinate with specific committees and the Recurring Special Events Committee to provide food/refreshments for plant sale, regularly scheduled Association meetings, fall symposium, and intern training, as needed;
- B. Work with the Recurring Special Events Committee regarding food for the yearly picnic and Christmas party, if needed;
- C. Develop Hospitality Committee budget for year;
- D. The Recording Secretary shall oversee the Hospitality Committee;
- E. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.I. PLANT SALE COMMITTEE

The Plant Sale Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Committee consisting of one chairperson who oversees subcommittees as needed (e.g., plant selection and ordering, cashier training, set-up); all subcommittee chairpersons will report to the committee chairperson;
- B. Develop Plant Sale Committee budget for year;
- C. The Treasurer shall oversee the Plant Sale Committee;
- D. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 13.J. NOMINATING COMMITTEE

The Nominating Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, with oversight by the Vice President. The duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. A nominating committee will be elected from nominations from the floor by the membership at the August meeting. Election is by secret ballot, email, verbal, or show of hands. The Committee will recruit members to fill officer and director positions for the following year. All members agreeing to be officers or directors must be currently certified and in good standing with the Association at the time of nomination. The Nominating Committee will supply a copy of the duties for each office from this Policies and Procedures Manual to each member agreeing to be nominated before said member accepts the nomination.

- B. A slate of officers will be presented to the membership at the regularly scheduled September meeting. At the October meeting, additional nominations will be accepted from the floor prior to voting. Officers shall be elected by secret ballot, email, verbal, or show of hands, with results announced prior to close of meeting. Newly elected officers will attend the November and December Executive Committee meetings. Elected officers shall be installed at the December Executive Committee meeting when they will be oriented to their new responsibilities and assume their duties January 1.

CHAPTER 13.K. BUDGET AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

The Budget and Finance Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws and is responsible for period review of the financial position of the Big Country Master Gardener Association.

- A. The Budget and Finance Committee is chaired by the President-Elect, who also oversees the committee.
- B. The Committee shall consist of at least three (3) volunteer members, who can be members of the Executive Committee.
- C. The Committee, with the Treasurer, shall establish an annual budget and shall quarterly review the financial position of the Association.
- D. The budget shall be available for review by the Executive Committee at the October Executive Committee meeting, and shall be presented at the October Association meeting for review. The final budget shall be ratified at the November Association meeting.
- E. A Financial Review Committee will be established by the Budget and Finance Committee and approved by the Executive Committee, consisting of a chairperson and three (3) members. The committee reports to the President. Two (2) members of the committee must be selected from the general membership. The remaining committee members may be selected from either the general membership or any position on the Executive Committee, except Treasurer.
 - 1. The committee shall conduct a review of the financial records by January 15 of each year. The Treasurer shall be available to answer any inquiries of the committee.
 - 2. The committee shall report the results to the general membership at the next general meeting.
 - 3. A written report of the financial review and results will be provided to the Treasurer for retention in the Association's financial records.
 - 4. Whenever there is a change in Treasurer, an outside financial review will be conducted.
- F. The Financial Review Committee shall review the financial records after the first six months of a new Treasurer's term to assure accounting records are correct. The results of this review shall be reported to the Executive Committee for any further actions.

The Treasurer shall be an ad hoc member of the Budget and Finance Committee.

CHAPTER 13.L. SPECIALTY CERTIFICATION TRAINING COMMITTEE

The Specialty Certification Training Committee is a standing Committee as per the Bylaws. The purpose of the Specialty Training Committee is to provide advanced training whereby Master Gardeners can obtain specialization in areas that support or expand designated educational programs of Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The duties of said committee are as follows:

Approved training:

- A. The Strategic Planning Committee will identify and prioritize the apparent needs of the Association for specialists with input from the Specialty Certification Training Committee and the County Extension Agent. These needs will be reviewed and revised, as needed, annually.
- B. Scholarships are based on the needs identified by the Strategic Planning Committee and budgeted in the annual BCMGA budgeting process.
- C. Scholarships are awarded for the amount of tuition for the training and are paid directly to the training entity.
- D. The funding for scholarships will be a minimum of 5% of the annual budget and more as the budget allows.

Applicants:

- A. To be eligible for Master Gardener Specialist training, an individual must possess an up-to-date Master Gardener certification.
- B. Members desiring to attend specialist training as provided by the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service must submit an application to the Specialists Training Committee at least two weeks before the application deadline for the training.
- C. The Specialist Training Committee will review and recommend to the County Extension Agent Coordinator and the Executive Committee the name(s) of persons requesting to attend the training.
- D. Applicants requesting scholarship monies from the Association must indicate so on the application.
- E. The individual approved to attend the training with or without scholarship monies will agree to serve a minimum of one year as a Master Gardener Specialist in the

Association, providing a minimum of 20 hours of service or whatever number of hours is required by the state training they attended.

- F. The individual receiving scholarship monies agrees to complete the training and service, or if unable or unwilling, must repay the scholarship monies to the Association within three months.
- G. No more than two persons may receive scholarships for specialist training in one topic per year.
- H. Individuals not receiving scholarship monies but desiring to attend training must be approved by the Specialist Committee and receive training in one of the topics identified as needed by the Strategic Planning Committee.
- I. Upon completion of the service hours required by the state training, individuals may apply to the state for reimbursement (\$50) offered by the state to offset their costs involved with the training (gasoline, meals, lodging).
- J. The Recording Secretary shall oversee the Specialty Certification Training Committee.

CHAPTER 13.M. MARKETING COMMITTEE

The Marketing Committee is a Standing Committee as per the Bylaws, and the duties of said committee are as follows:

- A. Work in collaboration with the other standing committees, as necessary;
- B. Create marketing strategies for various events, i.e, plant sale, workshops, etc.;
- C. Implement those strategies in a timely and efficient manner;
- D. Follow through to see whether those strategies are working or not;
- E. Keep notes of strategies that work and all contacts;
- F. Develop Marketing Committee budget for year;
- G. The Corresponding Secretary shall oversee the Marketing Committee;
- H. Other tasks as identified.

CHAPTER 14. PROPERTY

- A. Keys to the Taylor County AgriLife Extension Office will be provided to the President and Membership Chairman. At the end of the term, the keys are to be returned to the Extension Office. The Extension Office will then distribute the keys to the new officers.

- B. Real Property leased or used by the Association will be managed by a Property Committee (PC) consisting of at least five and no more than eleven members from the Association, excluding any Executive Committee members. The PC's purpose is for planning and managing only. They are not required to do the actual work, although they may volunteer to help.
 - 1. One member of the PC shall be the Chair and will be chosen by the Strategic Planning Committee from the list of volunteers.
 - 2. The PC members will serve alternating terms of one or two years. Terms can be consecutive for each rotation.
 - 3. The PC reports to the Strategic Planning Committee and the Association each month.
 - 4. Meetings will be at least monthly, between the monthly Association Business meeting and the monthly Executive Committee meeting. This will facilitate input and funding.
 - 5. The PC will work together to determine the best use of the property, with input from the Association.
 - 6. The PC will formulate an annual plan with cost predictions for budgeting purposes. These cost predictions will be due to the Association Treasurer the month of September each year.
 - 7. Each year in November, the Strategic Planning Committee, with input from the PC, may solicit volunteers to replace members of the PC who are rotating off the Committee.
 - 8. Any unexpected vacancies on this Committee will be reported to the Strategic Planning Committee so they can solicit a member to fill such vacancy.
 - 9. More specific details on actual members, terms, plans, etc. will be contained in a PC binder that the Chair will maintain.

CHAPTER 15. SPECIAL REPORTS

A. Chartering County Master Gardener Associations

The Charter Agreement Form is required annually by the Texas Master Gardener Association and the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service. The details from the TMGA regarding the purpose and use of the document can be found in the Appendices Section of this manual.

Details for completion of this form by BCMGA are as follows:

1. Chartering is done on an annual calendar year basis, running from January 1 to December 31 of the year which follows the date of the submitted report.
2. The completed form is due to the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Agent no later than January 31. However, every effort should be made to submit the form prior to that date.
3. The form and attachments must be receipted by the Extension Agent and a copy of the receipted document kept on file with all back-up documentation in the BCMGA business office. Particularly important is a printed copy of the BCMGA membership list provided with the chartering package since the list will be updated in January as per item C below.
4. The list of the BCMGA membership is based on all members who are certified as of December 31.
5. The current financial statement, which will be based on the financial activities from the current calendar year, will be provided.
6. The budget for the upcoming year, as provided by the Treasurer and approved by the Board of Directors, will be part of the chartering package.
7. A copy of the IRS Form 990 or 990-N, or evidence of filing of the form for the previous year, will be part of the chartering package.
8. The last financial review will also be included.

B. Texas Master Gardener Association (Annual) Dues Invoice

1. Dues for the current year are due beginning in January. The form will be provided on the TMGA website.
2. Dues must be sent by Certified Mail **to be received** by the TMGA Treasurer no later than March 1 or they will be considered delinquent. A delinquency will eliminate the ability of the association to submit any awards applications for activities during that year.
3. Dues will be paid for Certified Master Gardeners.

C. Texas Master Gardener Association County Association Information

1. A list of the current BCMGA officers, directors and alternates, and contact information will be provided by January 31 to the TMGA.