July 2020

Earlier this week it was announced that our Extension office will be merging with Marion County to form the new Chisholm Trail Extension District effective July 1. We are excited for this new endeavor and now is the perfect time to introduce the Extension Master Gardener program. The Extension Master Gardener program is a volunteer program in which K-State Research and Extension “trades” classroom training for volunteer time.

Extension Master Gardeners are a vital part of K-State Research and Extension. Donating time in return for horticultural training, Master Gardeners help our county agents meet the need for horticultural information in their communities. The means of providing this information is diverse including horticultural “hotlines”, demonstration gardens, working garden shows, public presentations and providing tours.

Training consists of 40 to 50 hours of instruction in all aspects of horticulture. Instructors include state specialists from Kansas State University, local extension agents, and local experts in specific subject matter. After training is completed, volunteers donate an equivalent number of hours of service as was received in instruction. Service activities are coordinated by the local county extension agent. Though volunteer activities vary widely, all are educational, extension related and represent the interests of K-State Research and Extension.

Master Gardeners have become a vital part of the University’s ability to provide accurate, up-to-date and research based information to our clientele. Volunteer time during the year 2018 totaled 103,736 hours with an average of 74 hours donated per volunteer.

Anyone with an interest in horticulture can apply for the Extension Master Gardener Program if it is active in your county. If you want to improve your skills and knowledge and you like to work with people, the Extension Master Gardener Program may be for you. The training used to be offered once a year and the closest training location was Salina, but there will be some changes this fall. The Extension Master Gardener training will be available online, so that will allow us to train people as they are available and to go at our own pace.

If you have any interest in the Extension Master Gardener program, please reach out to Tony Whitehair, our Agriculture and Natural Resources agent. He will keep a list of interested individuals and will reach out to everyone when we start the program in the fall. You can reach Tony by calling our office at 785-263-2001 or by email at tonyw@ksu.edu