



## What is a Master Gardener?

Katie Burch, ANR Agent

These days you see the title “Master Gardener” used frequently. Unfortunately, many folks are not sure who these people are and what they do for our community. The Master Gardener Program is a part of the Extension Service, which was established in 1914. The overall objective of the Extension Service is to plan, carry out and evaluate learning experiences that will help people gain the knowledge and skills needed to solve farm, home and community problems. Extension Service programming in Georgia falls mainly under three areas: Agricultural and Natural Resources, 4-H and Youth Development, and Family and Consumer Sciences. In the early 1970's, interest in home gardening was growing and county Extension offices were overwhelmed with requests for horticultural information. A Cooperative Extension Agent in Tacoma, Washington developed a program to train experienced gardeners to help answer homeowners' questions. These volunteers came to be known as Master Gardeners.

Currently, there are 2,789 active Master Gardener Extension Volunteers in the state of Georgia. For the year of 2018, those dedicated gardeners contributed 181,667 hours of volunteer service, worth an estimated \$4,385,441 given back to communities. Master Gardener Volunteers teach, model, and share research-based information through environmental stewardship, gardening with youth, adding value to landscape, home food production, and improving quality of life.

This year, the Georgia Master Gardener Extension Volunteer Program will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Ironically, the Burke County Master Gardener Extension Volunteers will celebrate their 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary!

What better way to support these volunteers than by joining the Master Gardeners for their Annual Plant Sale, April 26, 2019, under the pavilion of Southern Bank on Liberty Street.

If you are interested in becoming a Master Gardener, or would like more information, please contact Ag and Natural Resource Agent, Katie Burch, at the Burke County Extension Office at 706-554-2119.

