

March 31, 2020

Subject: MG Program Update re COVID-19

To: Master Gardeners and Interns of King County,

Hello again everyone.

We are in a fluid situation as things evolve and more information is understood. Thank you for your patience and flexibility as our program policies evolve. Although we do not know for certain, some models indicate we will be working under pandemic conditions for months not weeks. If more restrictive guidance is announced by authorities, we will again update our program plans.

Our first priority is to ensure the health and safety of all of you so that when this is all over and our program is up and running again, we are all still here to enjoy each other, garden together, and sustain our program. Here are a few updates.

Documentation of COVID-19 Program Impacts

WSU has requested we document the impacts COVID-19 is having on our program activities and finances. Much of this can be done by program staff and the foundation however there are some things we need everyone to do.

Please document time you spend planning or communicating program activity changes resulting from COVID-19. In the WSU Volunteer Hours Database enter these hours as Program Support and for the Specific Activity Title please enter "COVID". Entering this data is critically important for accurate tracking. Also important is that everyone be consistent with the verbiage entered or we won't be able to easily pull the data. Please simply type "COVID", nothing more nothing less.

2020 Volunteer Hours Requirements

We are acutely aware that the activity restrictions resulting from COVID-19 will impact all MG's abilities to complete their annual volunteer hours requirements. We will be adjusting the requirements but until we know the extent of the impact in 2020, we can't define policy details. I can say, though, we are still asking everyone to complete their Continuing Education hours this year. There are numerous online options to do this. You can find a list of them here:

<http://www.mgfk.org/education/online-continuing-education>

Please do not worry about (non-CE) volunteer hours, especially if you are in a population defined by the Health Department as being vulnerable to COVID-19. Your MG status will not be negatively impacted. Please focus on keeping yourselves and your families healthy.

Clinics

We had previously delayed our clinic start dates until May 1st. Given the news coming from the medical community about the likelihood of the social

distancing requirement continuing much longer than the month of April even if the Governor's Stay at Home order lifts, and given the lead time required for scheduling clinic shifts, we are delaying the clinics start date to June 1st. Clinic leaders, please be in communication with your host sites about the delayed start date.

We are still working out the details involved in establishing an e-Clinic so that questions from the public can be handled online.

Diagnostics Lab

The Diagnostics Lab is not accepting plant or insect samples at this time.

MG's in Populations Defined by the Health Department as Being Vulnerable to COVID-19

Current guidance from the Health Department is for individuals who are in vulnerable demographics to shelter-in-place. This includes individuals over the age of 60 and those with certain health conditions. Please refer to the Health Department for those definitions. If you fall within those demographics, please refrain from all in-person MG activities. If you fall outside those populations, please follow Health Department social distancing and sanitation guidelines.

Gardens

WSU Master Gardener volunteers who *do not* fall within the Health Department definitions as being vulnerable to COVID-19 may continue to support food bank gardens provided all non-pharmaceutical interventions such as hand washing, social distancing and sanitation can be practiced.

- *Demonstration Gardens:* In order to mitigate the risk of plant loss, WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers may volunteer in outdoor demonstration gardens at a minimal level provided all non-pharmaceutical interventions are upheld and garden locations have not been closed under the Governor's Stay Home Stay Healthy order.
- *Community Food Bank Gardens:* In order to support community recovery, WSU Extension Master Gardener volunteers may ready plants for community food bank gardens and teach community members how to grow their own food (via virtual means). All non-pharmaceutical interventions must be upheld.
- *Greenhouses:* In order to mitigate the loss of plant starts for plant sales and community food bank gardens, WSU Master Gardener volunteers may work in greenhouses, provided all non-pharmaceutical interventions can be upheld.

Plant Sales

As stated previously, the April CUH plant sale is cancelled. We are awaiting a response from the Governor's office to determine if a plant sale of vegetable starts can be deemed an essential activity as it pertains to food security. If approved, we may hold a limited plant sale in May using advance online payments and some form of curbside pick-up. The plant sale committees are exploring options.

Raffle

The raffle fundraiser has been cancelled. If you were given tickets to distribute, please simply discard/recycle them.

CUH Closed to the Public

UW Botanical Gardens and CUH are closed to the public. Most UW staff as well as myself and Mimi are working remotely and the building is locked. MG

volunteers are considered agents of WSU Extension and therefore can have access to our office. If you need access to the MG program office, please make a request to King.mg@wsu.edu and we will make arrangements to get you what you need.

Continuing Education

The Spring @ Shoreline CE event went online and was a great success! Growing Groceries has also moved online and launches in that new format on April 1st.

A list of prerecorded, on demand online CE opportunities are posted on the Foundation website. You can find a list of them here:

<http://www.mgfkf.org/education/online-continuing-education>

MG Advanced Education Conference

The 2020 Master Gardener Advanced Education Conference has been rescheduled from October 2020 to fall of 2021. Updates will be posted on <http://mglearns.org> later this spring.

Intern Training

Intern training has completed with 102 graduates. Welcome class of 2020 !!

Where to find the latest MG Program Updates

Latest copies of these communications will be posted on the foundation homepage: <http://www.mgfkf.org/>

Additional COVID-19 Resources

- Please familiarize yourself with and follow the King County Dept of Health recommendations. Here is that link: <https://www.kingcounty.gov/depts/health/communicable-diseases/disease-control/novel-coronavirus/protection.aspx>
- If you want to speak with someone about concerns you may have regarding COVID-19, you can call the King County COVID-19 Information Line at (206) 477-3977.
- Stay informed. Information is changing frequently. Check and subscribe to Public Health's website (www.kingcounty.gov/COVID) or blog (www.publichealthinsider.com).

Please do take care of yourselves, your families, and each other.

Warm Regards,

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behalf the the [WSU Extension Master Gardener Program in King County](#).
