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For more information,
contact: Jesse Gilmore
Horticulture Agent, Wildcat Extension District
jr637@ksu.edu, (620) 724-8233

Master Gardener training goes virtual for 2020

With garden centers selling out of plants amidst COVID quarantine, there is a need for trained horticulture volunteers. Kansas State University's Extension Master Gardener program is planning to offer a statewide online training option this fall for those wanting to join the popular group but have concerns about traveling for in-person trainings.

"This online choice is optional and local units are not required to use this training in place of their own programming plans," Dr. Cheryl Boyer said. "However, because fall travel is limited for K-State Research and Extension educators, face-to-face training cannot be expected or required." Online trainings will take place via Zoom, a teleconferencing platform available on computers, tablets, and phones. For training, a camera and microphone are required.

Weekly online sessions begin Sept. 3 and will occur on Thursdays from 1:00-4:00 p.m. through Dec. 17. The topics include plant growth and development, soils, turfgrass, annual and perennial flowers, landscape maintenance, woody ornamentals, vegetable gardening, insects, pesticide safety, plant diseases, fruit, landscape design and wildlife management.

The K-State Research and Extension Master Gardener program is available to anyone with an interest in horticulture. "If you want to improve your gardening skills and knowledge, and you like to work with people, this program may be for you," Boyer said.

Once certified as an Extension Master Gardener, participants are asked to donate time in their community to help local parks and businesses with gardening, and teach local residents about gardening and horticulture. Other volunteer opportunities will be coordinated with the facilitation of local horticulture extension agents. In 2019, Extension Master Gardeners donated approximately 99,000 hours for a total value of more than \$2.6 million.

The cost for online training in Wildcat District is \$60 – or about \$1 per hour of educational content -- and can be paid at the local extension office. The deadline for 2020 Master Gardener training signup is August 27.

For more information about how to sign up, please contact Jesse Gilmore, Horticulture Extension agent, (620) 724-8233.

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