As youth gardens continue to gain widespread popularity, the need for knowledgeable, community-minded volunteers is also on the rise. Extension educators can play an important role by coordinating Master Gardener Volunteers (MGVs) to fill this need. The mission of Master Gardener Volunteer programs is to train MGVs to become community volunteers who help people understand horticulture and the environment and perform horticulture-related work for their communities. This publication provides Extension educators and school garden coordinators with tips for creating mutually beneficial relationships between MGVs and school gardens, so that both come away asking for more!

### What MGVs Can Offer School & Youth Gardens

Master Gardener Volunteers come equipped with knowledge and resources to share. Specific talents differ from volunteer to volunteer, but overall, here are some of the things that MGVs can offer to school gardens.

- **Technical Assistance**—planting recommendations, soil testing, weed identification, insect/disease identification
- **Garden Expansion & Installation**—give assistance with garden design, planning, or construction
- **Summer Garden Maintenance**—provide extra support watering, weeding, or mulching
- **Class Time Support**—teach and guide children through garden lessons and activities
- **Find Curriculum**—provide teachers with garden-based curriculum to support educational goals

### Tips for Volunteer Coordination

**Prior to MGV Classes**

- Create a survey or application process for school gardens looking for support
- Incorporate time at youth gardens into mandatory MGV service hours to provide a consistent volunteer support team
- Hold an orientation for school gardens: introduce them to Extension & discuss best practices for coordinating volunteers

**During MGV Classes**

- Present the benefits of youth garden education during a class in the MGV training
- Use class time for volunteer teams to plan and get to know each other, share ideas, resources, and inspire
- Have volunteer teams select a primary contact to streamline communication with garden coordinators (Remind teams to include all members in emails)
- Direct volunteer teams to meet with garden coordinators in person for an introductory meeting, and continue regular communications & meetings throughout the season
- Use year-end surveys of volunteers and garden coordinators to improve the program

Copies of this document are available online at [www.WISchoolGardens.org](http://www.WISchoolGardens.org).
For more information about the Wisconsin School Garden Initiative, visit us at WISchoolGardens.org

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