



Master Gardener Volunteer Time Changes for 2009

We know that lack of consistency in counting CEU and volunteer activity hours around Alabama has led to considerable confusion in the Alabama Master Gardener program. We hope these guidelines both assist with clarification and encourage volunteers to have a diversity of activities to fulfill their commitment for certification.

Certified MG's (Alumni)

1. Change the total volunteer activity hours (excluding CEU hours) needed to remain active to 25 hours
2. Allow the monthly meeting time to be counted as CEU for any educational portion and the remaining meeting time to be counted towards the volunteer activity time commitment. Drive time for monthly meetings is excluded - except for members who have a specific volunteer duty at the meeting: ie, officers, committee member, presenter, refreshment committee, etc (rationale: to encourage participation by giving extra reward to those who have various responsibilities - drive time hours are a bonus for those who get involved. Also, to discourage people from depending on the monthly meetings to get all their volunteer time without getting involved in other activities)
3. Drive time for **ALL** other approved activities counts as volunteer time.
4. To give further credit for volunteer time dedication, CEU hours and volunteer activity hours should be combined for a **gross total of volunteer time** for the year (example: in 2009, Susie accomplished 20 CEU's and 180 volunteer activity hours for a total of 200 total volunteer hours - this total will be used in the "Reach for the Stars Award" program).

Our goal here again is to create consistency, to encourage MGA dedication, and a diversity of volunteer activity.

Drive time: All drive mileage still counts for any and all activities if using these numbers in an itemized IRS tax deduction. Mileage expense for volunteers, as defined by the IRS, is deducted as a direct expense OR at the mileage rate of 14 cents per mile (in 2008). Mileage is a deduction for the vehicle on the owner's itemized tax form (see IRS publication 526).

Intern MG's:

1. Change the total volunteer time for certification to 50 volunteer hours (rationale: the training time was always a training time match on an hour for hour basis. The training in most programs is now closer to 50 hours than the original 40 hours.)
2. Allow the entire monthly meeting time to be counted towards this commitment, but exclude drive time to monthly meeting **unless** the Intern has a specific responsibility at the meeting (rationale: to encourage interns to get involved in the local association activities).
3. Drive time for **ALL** other approved activities counts as volunteer time.