

**Bylaws of
The Rutherford County Master Gardeners, Tennessee,
DBA the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, TN**

Article I. Name

Section 1.01 The name of the Association shall be Rutherford County Master Gardeners, Tennessee, DBA (Doing Business As) Master Gardeners of Rutherford County, Tennessee, henceforth referred to as "MGRC".

Article II. Public Law

Section 2.01 These Bylaws shall not be enforced in any manner to conflict with public law. If any article, sections, sub-section or portion thereof of these Bylaws should be held illegal, invalid, or null and void by a court or competent jurisdiction, each provision of the remaining guidelines shall remain in full effect.

Article III. Purpose

Section 3.01 The purpose of the MGRC shall be to educate and engage in projects which will foster horticulture and related activities for the residential community of Rutherford County in support of Tennessee Extension programs.

Article IV. Prohibitive

Section 4.01 The MGRC shall not intervene, participate, or engage in political campaigns. The MGRC shall not lobby, attempt to influence legislation, or interfere with any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Section 4.02 Neither the MGRC nor its members may use Master Gardener status to promote any commercial activity or private business.

Article V. Terms of Existence of the Master Gardeners of Rutherford County (MGRC)

Section 5.01 The MGRC shall have a perpetual existence, but may be reorganized or have the form of its organization changed in compliance with these bylaws.

Section 5.02 Upon dissolution of the MGRC, the board of directors or officers shall surrender all funds and assets to The University of Tennessee Extension, Rutherford County office.

Article VI. Powers of the MGRC

Section 6.01 The MGRC shall have the following powers:

- A. To collect, receive, hold, manage, invest and expend dues and donations consistent with the purpose of the MGRC.
- B. To employ agents and enlist the services of independent contractors paying to each reasonable compensation for services provided.
- C. To perform all other lawful powers, deeds and acts consistent with the purposes of the MGRC.

Article VII. Management of the MGRC

Section 7.01 The business affairs of the MGRC shall be managed by the officers of the MGRC as defined in Article XIII Executive Board.

Section 7.02 The Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Handbook, as revised, provides the basic information to guide the official activities of the MGRC and holds precedence over these bylaws.

Section 7.03 All education, projects, and activities shall be subject to the approval of and under the supervision of the Rutherford County TN Extension Coordinator (“RCTN Ext. Coordinator”) and in cooperation with the University of Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program. The refusal or dismissal of any project by the RCTN Ext. Coordinator shall be submitted to the MGRC Board in writing with an explanation of the decision.

Article VIII. Membership

Section 8.01 Membership of the MGRC shall be open to all persons who have either completed or are in the process of completing the required course of study and have had or will have the title of Master Gardener conferred upon them by the University of Tennessee or any other state Extension Service (Section 8.05).

Section 8.02 Membership in the MGRC is open to all regardless of race, color, religion, sex, age, veteran status, national origin, disability or political affiliation.

Section 8.03 Term of Membership shall be for one year with the following qualifications:

Members are responsible for paying dues, submitting all paperwork required by state and local coordinators of the University of Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program, and meeting annual certification requirements.

Section 8.04 Certification Requirements are dependent upon membership status:

- A. All members (including interns) must pay dues and attend a minimum of 4 MGRC monthly association meetings each calendar year.
 1. Interns: must complete their initial certification as a Master Gardener in one year by completing the training courses (classroom instruction meets Continuing Education Units (CEUs)) and contributing a minimum of 40 hours of volunteer service.
 2. Active members with less than 10 years of service: must complete a minimum of 8 hours of CEUs and 25 hours of volunteer service.
 3. Active members with 10 or more years of service: must complete a minimum combined total of 15 hours of volunteer service and CEUs.
- B. Members may record up to 5 service hours annually on activities that are non-MGRC approved projects. Request for service hours in excess of the 5 non-MGRC approved project hours must be presented to the board for approval to be approved on a case by case basis.

Section 8.05 Transfers

- A. Individuals transferring from other counties or states must provide proof of certification, name and office address of their previous Extension Coordinator and proof of active status.
- B. Out-of-state transfers must audit the next available Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Training in Rutherford County.

Section 8.06 Privileges of the Certified MGRC members include voting, teaching, holding project leader positions, and holding office (some office positions indicate years of membership required). Intern members are granted full membership privileges upon certification at December graduation.

Section 8.07 Inactive Members (per Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program Volunteer Handbook)

- A. Inactive members are either:

1. Members who have requested and received approval for Leave of Absence status with the RCTN Ext. Coordinator (refer to Volunteer Handbook for documentation), or
 2. Members who have failed to meet certification standards in a given calendar year.
- B. Dues are a requirement for inactive members.
- C. Inactive members may attend all MGRC activities, but cannot vote, teach, hold project leader positions, or hold office.
- D. Reactivation/Reinstatement Policies:
1. Reactivation applies to previously certified MGRC members who wish to return from Leave of Absence status. The individual must have a completed Leave of Absence form on file with the RCTN Ext. Coordinator before cessation of volunteer service. To be reactivated, a Reactivation Form must be submitted and approved by the RCTN Ext. Coordinator. Certification standards must be met within one year.
 2. Reinstatement applies to previously certified RCMG members who wish to return but did not complete the Leave of Absence paperwork. To request reinstatement, the Reinstatement Form must be submitted and approved by the RCTN Ext. Coordinator and the MGRC Board. If it has been less than 5 years since the volunteer was an active member, reinstatement requirements consist of meeting the annual certification requirements. If it has been 5 or more years since the volunteer was an active member, the individual must audit the next available Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Training in Rutherford County and meet certification standards within one year.

Article IX. Dismissal of a Master Gardener Volunteer

Section 9.01 As representatives of University of Tennessee (UT) Extension, MGRC volunteers agree to abide by UT policies and expectations. If a volunteer's behavior is not acceptable or in the best interest of UT Extension, the volunteer program or program clientele, he or she may be reprimanded or asked to leave the program according to the Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program Volunteer Handbook guidelines and procedures.

Article X. Dues

Section 10.01 Dues shall be recommended by the Executive Board and approved by a majority vote of the MGRC at the October Association meeting.

Section 10.02 Annual Membership fees are payable as of January 1 each year.

Section 10.03 Any member failing to pay dues by March 31 forfeits membership privileges as outlined in Section 8.06 until dues are paid.

Article XI. Meetings

Section 11.01 Association meetings of the MGRC shall be held monthly on the third (3rd) Monday of each month at 6:30 P.M. except when there is a need to reschedule.

Section 11.02 Executive Board meetings shall be held as directed by the president, preferably, at least 1 week prior to a monthly MGRC meeting. Executive Board meetings shall be open to all members.

Section 11.03 Voting:

- A. Voting on routine matters at general MGRC monthly meetings requires a simple majority of the voting members of the MGRC present. Non-routine matters, such as changes to bylaws, shall be handled in accordance with Article XIV. Amendments.
- B. Voting at Executive Board meetings requires more than 50 percent of its voting members to be present to form a quorum.

Section 11.04 Special meetings of the MGRC and/or Executive Board may be called by the RCTN Ext. Coordinator, President, or by a majority vote of the Executive Board. The MGRC shall be notified of specially called meetings by written notice via email.

Section 11.05 Roberts Rules of Order, Revised, shall govern all meetings of the MGRC.

Article XII. Elections

Section 12.01 A Nominating Committee will convene each year to identify qualified candidates willing to hold office. The Chair of the Nominating Committee shall be the most recent past president of the MGRC, unless otherwise appointed by the Executive Board. The chair will appoint two other MGRC members to serve on the committee.

Section 12.02 Annual elections of the MGRC shall be voted on at the October Association meeting each year. Elections shall begin with nominations from the Nominating Committee, followed by nominations from the floor. Nominees presented from the floor must be present to accept or decline the nomination.

Section 12.03 Officers-elect shall assume a supporting role alongside their outgoing counterpart effective November 1st through December 31st. This serves as a transition period for the Officers-elect, and affords them the opportunity to receive “on the job training”. The Officers-elect shall participate in all key activities and tasks, such as: leading or speaking at meetings, planning and organizing classes, preparation of annual reports, database access and membership communications, and any other tasks relevant to their positions.

Section 12.04 The new officers will assume responsibilities effective January 1st.

Article XIII. Executive Board

Section 13.01 The Executive Board shall be composed of all MGRC officers, the RCTN Ext. Coordinator and the immediate past president of the MGRC. The RCTN Ext. Coordinator and the immediate past president of the MGRC will be advisors to the Board and serve as ex-officio members without voting privileges. All voting Executive Board Members are required to attend a minimum of 2/3 of the Board meetings held per calendar year.

The Executive Board shall:

- A. Approve standing committee recommendations for the MGRC.
- B. Oversee the execution of an annual peer review financial audit.
- C. Meet at the discretion of the president.
- D. Submit an annual budget to the MGRC for approval at the January MGRC Association meeting. After approval of the annual budget, the Executive Board shall have the authority to approve unbudgeted expenses up to \$200. Such approvals shall be included in the minutes of the Executive Board meetings. Unbudgeted expenses over \$200 shall be presented to the Executive Board by the requester, then presented to the MGRC membership at the next monthly meeting by the President for approval.
- E. Have the authority to fill the unexpired vacancy of any officer for the remainder of the unexpired term.

Section 13.02 The Executive Officers of the MGRC shall consist of President; First Vice President; Vice Presidents of Education, Demonstrations, and Outreach; Treasurer; and Secretary, all of whom must have met the requirements to be an active certified Master Gardener at the time of nomination.

- A. President – The president shall be the presiding officer at all meetings of the Executive Board and the MGRC. To hold the office of President, candidates must be active,

certified members of the MGRC for at least two years prior to holding office. The president shall appoint and charge all committees with the agreement of the Executive Board. The president shall be an ex-officio member of all standing and special committees and is responsible for requesting a project report from all active committees detailing activities, project impact, program impact and anticipated budget.

- B. First Vice President and Program Chairperson shall perform the duties of the president in his or her absence and shall become president for the unexpired term of the president upon his or her death, incompetence, or resignation. Additionally, the First Vice President is responsible for planning the programs for the monthly MGRC Association meeting.
- C. Vice President of Education shall be responsible for assisting with and counseling project leaders of all educational classes of the MGRC, including, but not limited to:
 - 1. Annual Master Gardener Training
 - 2. Garden Basics
 - 3. Rutherford County Farmers Market Educational Series
 - 4. Speakers' Bureau Coordinator
- D. Vice President of Demonstrations shall be responsible for coordinating approved activities by the RCTN Ext. Coordinator and the Executive Board, including but not limited to the Educational Gardens at the Lane Agri-Park (i.e., Butterfly Garden, Herb Garden, Orchard, Vineyard, Rain Garden, et al.). The Vice President of Demonstrations shall also coordinate with demonstration project leaders to ensure demonstrations meet educational goals.
- E. Vice President of Community Outreach shall be responsible for promoting MGRC and publicizing Association-led programs. He or she shall provide leadership to the Association's media activities, such as the website and social media accounts, as well as more formal publications, such as newsletters and fact sheets.
- F. Secretary shall take minutes at all general, special and Executive Board meetings and submit them to the Executive Board in a timely manner. The secretary shall be responsible for all MGRC correspondence and maintain complete records of minutes, attendance at Executive Board Meetings, and correspondence.

Secretary shall also maintain the official roster of active certified Association members.
- G. Treasurer shall maintain all income and expenditures in ledger form and conform to GAAP (Generally Accepted Accounting Principles) and such guidelines as recommended by the University of Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Program.

The treasurer will be responsible for:

1. Collecting dues and all other income for the MGRC, issuing receipts, and paying all Executive Board approved debts. A report of revenue and expenses shall be prepared and made available at each meeting or as requested by the Executive Board.
2. Maintaining the official roster of dues paid.
3. Maintaining and submitting all financial records, returns, and reports as required by local, state, and federal laws as applicable, as well as providing financial documents for annual peer review audits as required by the University of Tennessee.
4. Obtaining a signed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between MGRC and The University of Tennessee and filing MOU with the Rutherford County Extension office by January 15 of each year.
5. Preparing and filing an annual report of the financial status of the MGRC with Rutherford County Extension by January 15 of each year.
6. Preparing budget proposal for following year and submit to the Executive Board no later than the December meeting.

Section 13.03 Removal of Officer

An officer or chairperson may be removed from office for reasons of neglect, lack of interest or other causes that work against the interest of the MGRC. Removal of an officer or chairperson must be by a majority vote of the Executive Board with subsequent notification to the general membership at the next MGRC Association meeting.

Article XIV. Amendments

The procedure for amending these Bylaws shall be as follows:

Section 14.01 Any proposed amendment to these Bylaws shall be presented at least one Association meeting before a vote is taken on said amendments.

Section 14.02 Proposed amendment(s), in its entirety, shall be emailed to the members at least four weeks before the next MGRC Association meeting.

Section 14.03 The Bylaws of this MGRC may be amended only by a 2/3 approval of the voting members present at such meeting.

Article XV. Non Profit (501(c)(3)) Status

Section 15.01 The members of the MGRC shall operate as a 501(c)(3) non-profit with the United States Internal Revenue Service solely to comply with federal tax code and in no way to

distance the organization from the mission and goals of the Tennessee State Master Gardener program or the University of Tennessee.

Section 15.02 If 501(c)(3) status is in any way contradictory to policies made by the University of Tennessee, the MGRC's designation as a 501(c)(3) shall be formally dissolved; MGRC will comply with all University of Tennessee policy directives; and MGRC will once again be solely under the authority of the University of Tennessee. In this instance, this addendum shall be void and stricken from the Bylaws of the MGRC.