



2015 INTERNATIONAL MASTER GARDENER SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES DEADLINE FOR SFE APPLICATIONS -- JANUARY 1, 2015

Search for Excellence (SFE) is the recognition program of Extension Master Gardener (EMG) volunteer work throughout the United States, Canada and South Korea. SFE has seven categories in which EMGs can demonstrate their outstanding contributions to their communities. All SFE applications must show that significant learning took place, whether by the EMG or the general public with whom they were involved.

All volunteer projects done by Extension Master Gardeners are significant to their communities, but not all are SFE projects. The SFE is designed to recognize outstanding group projects, not an individual who does outstanding work.

Project submission must meet the following guidelines to qualify for SFE awards:

1. Choose the category that best fits the project. Only **ONE** project may be submitted by a group per category
 - a. Youth Programs
 - b. Demonstration Gardens
 - c. Workshop or Presentation
 - d. Innovative Projects
 - e. Special Need Audiences (Senior, Disabled Audiences or Horticultural Therapy)
 - f. Research (Applied Scientific Methodology)
2. **Projects** will be judged on their merit from work done between the years 2013-2014. Projects entered must have completed a full year to be entered.
 - a. Program projects that have previously won SFE awards are not eligible in any category.
3. **Simple to replicate** -- A goal of SFE is to share the excellent ideas and programs so that they can be replicated by other EMG groups. A 20 acre botanic garden would be difficult to replicate, but the gardening ideas inside it would be easy to create somewhere else. A step-by-step "how to do this" would be a great way to share your project.
4. **Practicality** -- A SFE program is one that is easy to use and fits well for the situation it is intended for. You have found the best way possible to meet a need of your community. For example:
 - a. You could develop a wonderful program with a \$20.00 admission cost, but if people can't afford that, they won't come.
5. **Original and creative** -- We are looking for that added touch that make these programs your own -- or that reflects the personalities of the Extension Master Gardeners who are working with it. We don't want you to recreate the wheel, just maybe parts of it so that it fits your situation.
6. **Compatible** -- with Extension and EMG missions.

7. **Projects** should have an educational component.
 - a) Projects must be available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientations, national origin, and marital or family status.
 - b) Projects should extend the resources of the University to the public wherever they live, helping them use knowledge to solve problems at work, at home, and in their communities.
 - c) Information provided should be University research-based.
 - d) Did Significant Learning occur and number of people impacted by program.

THE APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

1. The Search for Excellence project application must be written by the EMGs involved, not Extension staff. Use the application template (see below).
2. An emailed verification letter from your Extension Advisor/Coordinator is required and must come directly from that individual. The Extension Advisor/Coordinator's email must verify that:
 - a) Extension Master Gardeners involved are currently in good standing.
 - b) Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the photos or as required by the applicable laws of the local state or province.
 - c) All application documents have been reviewed.
 - d) The deadline for this verification is the same date as the application deadline January 1, 2015.
 - e) Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.
3. The application document:
 - a) Can be created in Word (.doc or .docx) however, sent in PDF format
 - b) Document must be no longer than 4 pages in length
 - c) Using a sans serif font with a font size of 12 point or larger.
 - d) Up to 6 digital photos should be submitted with the application.
 - i) Photos should be in JPEG format and sized to 640 x 480 pixels.
 - e) Your Extension Advisor/Coordinator must email the verification letter along with the application and pictures to:
 - i) Sharon Box - sharonbox2001@comcast.net
 - f) Please put the following in the subject line of all email correspondence:
 - i) EMG program name
 - ii) County
 - iii) state/province
 - g) Entries are to be **ONLY** sent between September 15, 2014 – January 1, 2015 to:
 - i) Sharon Box - sharonbox2001@comcast.net
 - h) Questions should be directed via email to:
 - i) Sharon Box - sharonbox2001@comcast.net
 - i) No hard copy of mailed applications will be accepted.

4. Do not send handouts or other large files with this application. Size your photos to 640 x 480 pixels - no large picture files please. Submit only the items listed in instructions 1-3 above. Any files, extra pictures, handouts etc. will be disqualified. Any applications longer than 4 pages will also not be accepted for competition.
5. Receipt of the Extension Coordinator's email containing the application and attachments along with the Extension Coordinator's verification comments will be verified via email from the IMGCSFE Committee within two days of receiving it. If the Extension Coordinator fails to receive verification within 4 business days of submission, contact Sharron Box (sharonbox2001@comcast.net). We cannot be responsible for applications that we do not receive due to spam mail blockers, etc.

SIGNIFICANT LEARNING AND IMPACTS

Significant learning, change in attitude and practices are outcomes that Extension uses to evaluate the impact of their services and programs. Impacts from EMG projects should improve people's lives. Explain how this project augmented learning, increased knowledge, or changed practices to enhance quality of life. These impacts could be economical, environmental, educational, health, community-based, etc. SFE projects should be developed to reach the most people possible from the target audience. Impact numbers are not as significant if the target audience does not learn or utilize information. Make sure you ask participants how this information helped them and record this as an impact. Depending on the nature of the project the evaluations may be very informal (i.e. casually asking questions) or formal (i.e. pre-test/post-test).

For example: Evaluation questions that ask, "How do you plan to use this information?" or "Can you share specific information that you learned today?" can help show impact—especially if you can show that 70% of the participants plan to change a gardening practice such as use fewer pesticides.

Look to the National Master Gardener website at:

<http://create.extension.org/node/32333>

for information about the previous winning SFE projects.

EXPECTATIONS

1. If you are selected as a Search for Excellence first place winner, you will be expected to provide a short (3 minute maximum) talk about your project at the International Master Gardener Conference (IMGCSFE), September 22-25, 2015 at Mid-America Center - Council Bluffs, IA (<http://mastergardener.unl.edu/imgc2015>). This presentation can be done in person by a designated representative or by sending a pre-recorded video. The presentation must be coordinated in advance with the SFE committee. Second and third place winners will be acknowledged at the conference but will not be asked to give a talk.
2. Each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winners will be expected to create a short blog post about their winning projects for the National EMG Blog <http://blogs.extension.org/mastergardener/>

3. The top three entries in each category will be asked to prepare a poster to be displayed at the IMGC. Posters should include photos of the project, a state map showing where the project is located, name of the EMG group and information about the group, as well as other pertinent information. Size will be determined by the states or province hosting the conference.
4. There is no reimbursement for your registration fees or travel expenses to the International Master Gardener Conference.
5. The Extension Master Gardener program, rather than individual EMGs, will receive a monetary award and plaque for winning first place in each Search for Excellence category. Second and third place winners in each category will receive a certificate but no monetary award.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION

1. 100 point scale.
All applications are judged independently by at least three Extension Faculty and three Master Gardeners who are members of the SFE Committee. They will use the following criteria:

a) Simplicity of project (easy to replicate)	10 points
b) Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project for situation	10 points
c) Originality or creativity	10 points
d) Consistent with Extension and MG missions	20 points
e) Clarity and completeness of project application	20 points
f) Did significant learning occur?	20 points
g) Number of people impacted	10 points
TOTAL	100 points

All of the judge’s scores will be totaled and divided by the number of judges.
2. Projects that do not achieve a score of 80% or better will not receive a SFE Award.
3. A judge will be excused from judging an application from the state in which they work or volunteer as an EMG.
4. An aggregate score sheet along with all of the judge’s comments will be returned to the applicants as soon as possible. We hope that the comments will help to strengthen your volunteer work. All decisions and scoring by the judges will be considered final.
5. In the case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.

We applaud all the volunteer work done by the Master Gardeners. We hope that this work is being recognized on the local, state and regional levels. The International Master Gardener recognition is a SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE of the highest quality within Master Gardener programs across the United States and Canada.

2015 Search for Excellence Award Application Template

Name of MG Program:

County:

State/Province:

Master Gardener Completing Application:

Name:

Email:

Address:

Phone:

Master Gardener Coordinator/County Extension Staff:

Name:

Title:

Email:

Address:

Phone:

Category for Submission:

Youth

Demonstration garden

Workshop or presentation

Community Service

Innovative Project

Special Needs Audience

Research (applied scientific methodology)

Name of Project:

Description of Project: (Include target audience, goals, location and partnerships)

Methods: (Discuss planning and implementation)

Results:

Significant Learning & Impacts:

Budget Narrative:

Names of All Active Master Gardeners Directly Involved in the Project: