



Marje Luce Search for Excellence

A Program Funded by the Oregon Master Gardener™ Association

Criteria and Guidelines for 2018

The Search for Excellence (SFE) program recognizes superior Master Gardener volunteer work, both throughout the United States and Canada (at the international level), and across the state of Oregon within the OMGA. The Marje Luce Search for Excellence Criteria and Guidelines mirror the International Search for Excellence Guidelines. All SFE applications must show that significant learning took place, whether by Master Gardeners or the general public.

All volunteer work done by Master Gardeners is significant to their communities, but not all is a SFE project. How do you determine if your project meets the SFE criteria?

1. **Categories.** First, the project must fit into one of the following categories:

- Youth Programs
- Demonstration Garden
- Workshop, Presentation, or Hands-on Demonstration/Program
- Community Service
- Innovative Project
- Special Audiences (e.g., Senior, Disabled, Horticultural Therapy)
- Research (applied scientific methodology)

Your project may cover more than one category; however, one main category must be chosen for it to be considered.

2. **Timeliness.** The project must have been worked on over the past two years, (e.g., one for development and at least one year of usage) that has produced measurable results. Program projects that have previously won SFE awards are not eligible in any category. Chapter winners are encouraged to submit their project for International Master Gardener recognition. Winners of the 2017 OMGA award may submit to the 2018 International Search for Excellence.

3. **Recognition.** Marje Luce Search for Excellence is designed to recognize a group project, not an individual.

4. **Simple to replicate.** One of the goals of Search for Excellence is to share ideas and programs so other Master Gardener groups can replicate them, or parts of them. A step-by-step “how to do this” would be a great way to share your project and meet this criteria.

5. **Practicality.** A Search for Excellence project is one that is easy to use and fits well for the situation it is intended for; it is the best possible way you have found to meet a need of your community.

6.. **Original and creative.** We don't want you to reinvent the wheel, just maybe parts of it that fit your situation. We are looking for that "added touch" that makes this your own, or that reflects the personalities of the Master Gardeners who are working with it.

7. **Mission Compliance.** This refers to the OSU Extension and Master Gardener missions. Every chapter has its own mission statement, but there are some generalities that we all use:

- All Extension and Master Gardener programs should have an educational component.
- All Extension and Master Gardener programs are available to all persons without regard to race, color, sex, disability, religion, age, veteran status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, national origin, financial capacity, and marital or family status.
- All Extension and Master Gardener programs should extend the resources of the University to the public wherever they live; helping them use knowledge to solve home horticulture related problems at work, home, and in their communities.
- Information provided should be University research-based.

8. **Author.** The project application should be written by the Master Gardeners involved, not by Extension staff. Use the application template and submit your response in a WORD document. It should include the following information:

- Name of Chapter
- Name and contact information for author of submission.
- Name and contact information for Master Gardener Coordinator/Extension staff
- Category (only one category per application)
- Name of Project
- Description of project (include target audience, goals, location, and partnerships)
- Implementation of project (include initiation date)
- Results
- Significant learning and impacts
- Budget narrative
- Other pertinent information
- Names of Master Gardeners who participated in the project.

9. **Submittal.** Please email applications to Chris Rusch at: crusch@hughes.net with a copy to Gail.Langellotto@oregonstate.edu by May 15, 2017. Please put "Search for Excellence, [Chapter]" in the subject line, provide your contact information in the body of the email. Include the actual application as an attachment.

10. **Format.** Limit the application to three single spaced pages in Microsoft™ WORD (PC or Apple format) using Times New Roman in a 10 point or larger font. Up to 5 digital photographs in JPEG or PDF format may be submitted with the application. Do not include additional attachments, photos, or additional information in the body of the email. No hard copy or mailed applications will be accepted. Use the application template.

11. Verification. A verification letter via email from your Extension Advisor/Coordinator is required and must come directly from that individual and be submitted to Chris and Gail. This letter is also due on or before May 15th. Please do not include this letter with your application. The advisor endorsement should use the verification template and must verify that:

- MGs involved are currently in good standing
- Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the photos as required by the state of Oregon.
- All attachments have been reviewed by the submitter. The deadline for the receipt of this email is the same as for the SFE application.

12. Acknowledgement of Receipt. Receipt of the application, as well as receipt of the verification letter, will be acknowledged by a return email within two days (48 hours). If you do not receive this reply, please contact Seamus Ramirez.

13. 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 Extension Master Gardener 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 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 how a significant percentage of the participants plan to use the information in a positive way.

14. Expectations.

- Depending on the number of submissions, applicants may be asked to give short oral presentations at Mini-College 2018. If we have more presenters than we can accommodate in the SFE allotted time frame, we will use the judges' input as to "present-ability" of the submission and the score given to the submission to make final selections. Submitters will be notified by June 19th of the decisions about presentations
- All SFE submissions are expected to have a representative available at Mini-College to chair a lunch table discussion of their project. Your chapter may provide handouts if you wish or a source to contact for more information.
- The SFE winner(s) will be announced at the Mini-College Awards Banquet.
- There are no reimbursements for expenses related to applications, including but not limited to registration fees or travel to or from Gardener's Mini-College.

15. Criteria for Selection.

- 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. The following criteria will be used:
 - Simplicity of project (easy to replicate) 10 points
 - Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project for situation 10 points
 - Originality or creativity 10 points
 - Consistent with Extension and MG missions 20 points

- Clarity and completeness of project application 20 points
- Did significant learning occur? 20 points
- 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.
- Projects that do not achieve a score of 80% or better will not receive a SFE Award.
- A judge will be excused from judging an application from the county in which they work or volunteer as a MG.
- 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.
- In the case of a tie, duplicate prizes will be awarded.
- Judges will also comment on whether the submission should be presented at mini-college.

16. Recognition of Excellence. We applaud all the volunteer work done by each chapter in the Oregon Master Gardeners Association. The OMGA SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE Award recognizes the highest quality within our Master Gardener programs across the State.