



2019 INTERNATIONAL MASTER GARDENER CONFERENCE: SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE AWARDS

DEADLINE FOR SFE APPLICATIONS IS JULY 16, 2018

GUIDELINES

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 Volunteers or the general public.

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

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

- 1. CHOOSE** a single category that best fits the project. Only **ONE** project may be submitted by a group per category:
 - (1)** Community Service
 - (2)** Demonstration Garden(s)
 - (3)** Innovative Project(s)
 - (4)** Research (applied scientific methodology)
 - (5)** Special Needs Audiences (senior, disabled audiences, or horticultural therapy)
 - (6)** Workshop(s) or Presentation(s)
 - (7)** Youth
- 2. PROJECTS** will be judged on their merit from work done between the years 2016-2018. Projects entered must have completed a full year to be entered. Program projects that have previously won International Master Gardener Committee (IMGC) 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 might be easy to recreate at another site. 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 its intended situation. In other words, you have found the best way possible to meet a need of your community. For example: You could develop a wonderful program with a \$20.00 admission cost, but if people can’t afford the cost, they won’t come.
- 5. ORIGINAL AND CREATIVE** We are looking for that added touch that makes this program your own, or that reflects the personalities of the Extension Master Gardeners involved. 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 Make sure to specifically link your project with the goals listed below. Do not assume that the reader can figure out that your project is compatible with Extension and EMG missions.

(1) Projects should have an educational component.

(2) 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

(3) 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.

(4) Information provided should be university research-based.

7. We also consider whether significant learning occurred, as well as the number of people impacted by program.



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APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS

The **ON-LINE** Search for Excellence project application must be filled out by the Extension Master Gardeners Volunteers involved, and not by Extension staff. Have the following information available when you begin to fill out the form.

1. Name of EMG Program
2. County and State/Province (e.g. XYZ EMG Program, Lancaster County, Nebraska or Some Other EMG Program, Toronto, Canada)
3. Name, address, phone and email of EMG volunteer contact person(s)
4. Name, title, address, phone, email of EMG coordinator/staff person

CATEGORY: MUST SELECT AND SUBMIT IN ONLY ONE CATEGORY

1. Community Service
2. Demonstration Garden(s)
3. Innovative Project(s)
4. Research (applied scientific methodology)
5. Special Needs Audiences (senior, disabled audiences, or horticultural therapy)
6. Workshop(s) or Presentation(s)
7. Youth

NAME OF PROJECT

Description of project. Include target audience, goals, location and partnerships. Be sure to address items 3 through 6 in the guidelines.

METHODS

1. Discuss planning, implementation and evaluation (e.g. how results, learning and impact were documented)
2. Results
3. Significant learning and impact
4. Budget narrative
5. Names of active Master Gardeners Volunteers ONLY who are involved in the project from start to finish, and that should receive a certificate. Please do not include their role. Please do not include any other individuals in this listing.

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 Volunteer 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 using fewer pesticides. Look to the [EXTENSION MASTER GARDENER BLOG](#) for information about prior winning SFE projects.



APPLICATION FORM

1. Application form **MUST** be filled out on-line at: [THE SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE APPLICATION](#).
NOTE: We recommend you create the descriptive files in a word document (or another text form) then cut and paste them into the on-line form. The total length of the descriptive sections should be no more than three pages before pasting them into the form.
2. Up to **SIX** digital photos in JPEG format may be submitted to accompany the application after filling out the application, the online form for submission can be found at: [APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD \(PHOTO DROP\)](#) You have a maximum total of 100 MB for these pictures.
3. An online verification from your Extension Advisor/Coordinator is **REQUIRED** and must come directly from that individual. It should be posted within 7 days of the application at: [APPLICATION FOR A SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE AWARD \(VERIFICATION PAGE\)](#)

EXPECTATIONS OF WINNING ENTRIES

1. If you are selected as a Search for Excellence first place winner, you will be expected to provide a short (3 minute, maximum) **PRESENTATION OR VIDEO** about your project at the [2019 INTERNATIONAL MG CONFERENCE](#), which will be held in Valley Forge, Pennsylvania, June 17-21. 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 required to give a presentation.
2. Each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner will be expected to create a short **BLOG POST** about their winning projects for the [NATIONAL EMG BLOG](#).
3. Each 1st, 2nd, and 3rd place winner will be expected to prepare a **POSTER** to be displayed at the 2019 International Master Gardener Conference.
4. There is no reimbursement for your registration fees or travel expenses to the [2019 INTERNATIONAL MG CONFERENCE](#). We will inform you of the outcome of your Search for Excellence application by mid-October 2018, to allow your group to take advantage of early registration discounts for the 2019 International Master Gardener Conference.

5. The Extension Master Gardener Volunteer program, rather than individual EMGs, will receive a small monetary award and plaque for winning first place in each SFE category. Second place winners may receive a monetary award, if funds are available. Second and third place winners in each category will receive a certificate.

THE EXTENSION ADVISOR/ COORDINATORS MUST VERIFY

1. Extension Master Gardeners involved are currently in good standing
2. Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the photos or as required by the applicable laws of the local state or province
3. All application documents have been reviewed—***The online application process will include an email verification of the full application which the Master Gardener should forward to the Extension Advisor/Coordinator.***
 - The deadline for receipt of this verification is seven days after the application is received. The final deadline for entries: July 16, 2018. The final deadline for verification letters: seven days after submission of application or July 23, 2018, whichever is sooner. Any project submitted without this verification letter being received will be disqualified.
 - Questions should be directed to Diane Nolan via email by using the contact form below. No hard copy of applications will be accepted. No large picture files, please! You have a maximum total of 100 MB for these pictures.
 - Submit only the items listed in the application instructions **(1) application, (2) verification letter, (3) photos.**
 - Receipt of the Extension Coordinator's email will be verified via email from the IMGC SFE Committee within three business days. If the Extension Coordinator fails to receive verification within 4 business days of submission, contact Diane Nolan by using the contact Diane Nolan at dnolan2@unl.edu.

IMPORTANT DATES

- **July 16, 2018:** on-line Search for Excellence applications due. Remember to submit the application and up to 6 JPEG images, forward your application email to your coordinator, and have that person submit the verification letter within 7 days of the application date
- **October 19, 2018:** Applicants will hear back about the status of their SFE application by this date.
- **October 2018:** 2018 IMGC early registration begins
- **June 17-21, 2019:** 2019 IMGC in Valley Forge, PA.

CRITERIA FOR SELECTION (100 point scale)

1. All applications are judged independently by at least three Extension Faculty and three Master Gardeners. They will use the following criteria:
 - (1) Simplicity of project (easy to replicate): **10 points**
 - (2) Practicality, usefulness or relevance of project for situation: **10 points**
 - (3) Originality or creativity: **10 points**
 - (4) Consistent with Extension and MG missions: **20 points**
 - (5) Clarity and completeness of project application: **20 points**
 - (6) Did significant learning occur: **20 points**
 - (7) 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 are not eligible for 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 Extension Master Gardener Volunteers. We hope all of the work being performed by EMG Volunteers is recognized at the local, state and regional levels. The **SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE AWARDS** recognized at the International Master Gardener Conference is the highest quality representation of EMG Volunteer programs across the United States, Canada, and South Korea.

GOOD LUCK