The Cooperative Extension Center in New Hanover County was the first in the state to utilize volunteers to assist the gardening public by establishing a Garden Hotline. In March, 1979, the Cooperative Extension Center in Wake County started training volunteers in a Master Gardener program. The first Master Gardener reported to work on April 2, 1979. New Hanover quickly adopted and expanded their Garden Hotline program into a Master Gardener program.

The Extension Master Gardener program is an educational program designed to enhance public education in consumer horticulture. It provides educational assistance to the citizens of the county concerning lawns, fruits, vegetables, trees, and ornamentals through the utilization of a trained and supervised volunteer staff.

Under the guidance and support of Extension agents, selected residents of a county enter a specially designed training program in horticulture. Participants in the program must complete the training program, pass an examination, and volunteer a minimum of 40 hours per year (20 hours in subsequent years) through the local Cooperative Extension Center.

The Extension Master Gardener program allows the local Extension to extend education to an ever increasing gardening audience. It also provides the local center with a highly visible way to meet the public demand for information and to develop a strong clientele support group.

North Carolina Cooperative Extension increasingly utilizes trained Master Gardeners volunteers to meet the constant demand for consumer horticulture information by the citizens of our state. Seventy three counties offer the Extension Master Gardener program. Many of our county programs are relatively new. There are currently over 3,000 active Master Gardeners volunteers.

Extension Master Gardener | Consumer Horticulture

The terms Master Gardener, Master Gardener Extension Volunteers, North Carolina Master Gardeners, and Extension Master Gardeners are NC State University service marks and can only be used by North Carolina Cooperative Extension.