

# **Become a University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener, Gardening Bloomed In 2020**

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EXTENSION

Do you want to know more about horticulture? Are you looking for ways to volunteer and connect with other gardening enthusiasts? The University of Illinois Extension Master Gardener program trains adult volunteers who assist on many local projects. Master Gardeners grow produce for area food pantries, maintain demonstration gardens, and teach educational workshops for youth and adults.

All trainees receive a copy of the Illinois Master Gardener Manual. Topics included are soil health, fruit and vegetable production, ornamentals and landscape design, disease, and insect management, and much more.

Online and classroom training is available. Online training is a self-paced program that uses prerecorded presentations. Online sessions begin January 25 and costs \$350. The classroom training will include presentations, hands-on activities, and group discussions. Classes are held on Tuesdays, February 16 through May 4 from 9:00 a.m.-noon. Classroom training costs \$250.

Participants must pre-register for the training. Online training deadline is December 18, 2020. Classroom training deadline is February 1, 2021. Applications are available at <https://extension.illinois.edu/mms/master-gardeners>. If you have questions or would like to request a an application, please contact Sarah Ruth at 618-939-3434 or [ruth1@illinois.edu](mailto:ruth1@illinois.edu).

## **FOUR SEASONS GARDENING WEBINARS RETURN IN 2021**

The University of Illinois Extension Four Seasons Gardening series will return in 2021 with three monthly webinars starting in January.

Horticulture educators will lead seasons on winter fruit tree pruning, the therapeutic value of nature and adaptive gardening to accommodate age and mobility.

**Fruit Tree Pruning**, 1:30 p.m. CT January 19: Pruning fruit trees in late winter is a necessary task to reap the greatest benefit and yield from trees. Horticulture educator [Andrew Holsinger](#) will present a variety of pruning techniques for apples and other fruit trees.

**Therapeutic Value of Nature**, 1:30 p.m. CT February 16: Are you stressed from having to practice social distancing? Can't go anywhere? Do anything? Spending time in Nature can help soothe and heal. Horticulture educator [Mary M. Fischer](#) will present research-based studies to support the healing powers of Nature.

**[Adaptive Gardening](#)**, 1:30 p.m. CT March 9: The therapeutic benefits of gardening have been documented since ancient times but there has been a recent upswing in the interest for therapeutic gardening and horticulture. But how can people of different abilities adapt their garden space to suit their needs? Horticulture educator [Chris Enroth](#) discusses best practices for adapting gardens to accommodate age, mobility or other means. Chris will also share how to help yourself and others enjoy the art of gardening at home or in institutions such as schools, assisted living facilities and others.

The webinars are free, but advance registration is required. Sign up online at [go.illinois.edu/fourseasons](https://go.illinois.edu/fourseasons). After registering, participants will receive an email with access information.

University of Illinois Extension provides [equal opportunities](#) in programs and employment. If you need [reasonable accommodation](#) to participate in this program, please contact Martha Smith at [smithma@illinois.edu](mailto:smithma@illinois.edu). Early requests are strongly encouraged to allow sufficient time for the requested accommodation.

## Gardening interest bloomed in 2020

In a strange and stressful year, many people turned to gardening for respite.

Gardening increased 43% in 2020, according to a [survey](#) conducted by the Minnesota firm Axiom Marketing.

“A whole bunch of us got into, or *more* into, gardening in 2020,” says University of Illinois Extension Horticulture Educator [Richard Hentschel](#). “And it looks like that trend may continue into 2021.”

Extension educators and Master Gardeners helped many first-time home gardeners solve problems and source materials. Garden centers saw a boom in sales.

“Younger gardeners really embraced growing in their yards this year,” Hentschel says. Seventy-two percent of gardeners under 40 say that they spent more time gardening in 2020. Renters of condominiums and apartments also grew gardens, with more than half of the respondents growing vegetables and one in three using container gardening.

The increase in vegetable gardening is likely due to concerns of food safety or shopping and an increase in naturally or organically grown foods, Hentschel says.

In addition to vegetables, 73% of survey respondents grew flowers. “If you are going to be spending more time at home and in the yard, you want it to look good,” Hentschel says.

Why did people garden in 2020? Top responses included creating a beautiful outdoor space, personal enjoyment, and something to do. About 82% said they were successful in their gardening endeavors. “Some may have been first-time gardeners, or others may have taken on the challenge of a new type of gardening, or a new crop,” Hentschel says.

The gardening push is expected to continue in 2021, with 86% indicating they'll garden the same amount *or more* next year. The youngest gardeners, those under 40, are most anxious to return, with 94% planning to garden again next year.

Looking ahead to 2021, Hentschel says winter is a good time to start planning for the growing season. You can find Extension resources to help at [extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture](https://extension.illinois.edu/global/horticulture).

**ABOUT EXTENSION:** Illinois Extension leads public outreach for University of Illinois by translating research into action plans that allow Illinois families, businesses, and community leaders to solve problems, make informed decisions, and adapt to changes and opportunities.