

2024

Delaware Master Gardeners Provide On-Site Garden Advice Program to Homeowners in New Castle County



RELEVANCE Homeowners often have busy schedules and **need assistance** with their landscaping that is flexible around their day.

Homeowners need easier access to **Master Gardener Volunteer Educators** to help establish

- Science-based best management practices
- Soil health
- Plant selection
- Maintenance
- Provide guidance in vegetable and fruit production
- Improve, augment, or remove landscape plants
- Establish and maintain healthy turf

Homeowners are in need of a program to bring **landscape assistance** directly to them **on-site**.



RESPONSE The New Castle County Delaware **Master Gardeners** have developed the **Garden Advice Program (GAP)** to provide **on-site** landscape sustainability **assistance** directly to New Castle County **homeowners** and their properties.

Master Gardeners provide **on-site** technical assistance to **homeowners** who request advice and guidance through GAP.



From **April** through **October** each year, small teams of Master Gardeners conduct **2 hour site visits** which include:

- **Identify** their site characteristics, problems, and issues and rank their landscape priorities.
- Work with the **Horticulture Educator** to prepare and provide a detailed summary of their visit.



RESULTS In 2023 and 2024, Master Gardeners provided information on **horticultural topics** during **45 home visits** throughout New Castle County.

Topics included

- Integrated pest management
- Composting
- Mulching
- Pruning
- Water conservation
- and more

Master Gardeners had **direct contact** with



51 Homeowners

Post Visit Evaluations **Favorites**

- Learning what some of the plants in their yard were, what they needed to do.
- [That] it was very informative in what was [an] invasive [plant].
- The ability to show their garden, ask questions and follow up later.
- The pruning advice and hearing each one's [Master Gardeners'] different ideas.
- The thorough evaluation of the entire yard and garden spots.
- [That] everyone was very knowledgeable, thoughtful, and kind.
- The practical suggestions for new plant choices.



"Thanks for the suggestions for plants in the front beds ... Here's what I've implemented right away: enlarge beds around trees; added compost/manure with a 6" trim of mulch; water the little arborvitae manually on a regular basis."



"This is just what I wanted/needed – a direction to work with suggestions for specific plants."

RELEVANCE

Homeowners often have busy schedules and need assistance with their landscaping that is flexible around their day. Homeowners need easier access to Master Gardener Volunteer Educators to help establish science-based best management practices related to integrated pest management, soil health, plant selection and maintenance; provide guidance in small-scale vegetable and fruit production; improve, augment, or remove landscape plants; and establish and maintain healthy turf. Homeowners are in need of a program to bring landscape assistance directly to them on-site.

RESPONSE

The New Castle County Delaware Master Gardeners have developed the Garden Advice Program (GAP) to provide on-site landscape sustainability assistance directly to New Castle County homeowners and their properties. Master Gardeners provide on-site technical assistance to homeowners who request advice and guidance through GAP. Master Gardeners share and discuss information and demonstrate landscape sustainability techniques at homeowners' residences to help them make informed choices to further develop their landscapes. From April through October each year, small teams of Master Gardeners conduct site visits to these homeowners' properties. In the homeowners' applications to the program, they identify their site characteristics, problems, and issues and rank their landscape priorities. Following the approximately 2-hour site visit, the Master Gardeners work with the Horticulture Educator to prepare and provide a detailed summary of their visit to include resources and recommendations in line with sustainable landscape practices.

RESULTS

In 2023 and 2024, Master Gardeners provided information on horticultural topics during 45 home visits throughout New Castle County. Topics included integrated pest management, composting, mulching, pruning, water conservation, native plants, foundation plants, flower beds, vegetable gardens, turf, and more. During these 45 home visits, Master Gardeners had direct contact with 51 homeowners. Homeowners who completed the post-visit evaluation reported that they most appreciated:

- Learning what some of the plants in their yard were, what they needed to do to correct problems, and suggestions for what to plant.
- [That] it was very informative in what was [an] invasive [plant], a problem, and what could be improved upon.
- The ability to show their garden, ask questions and follow up later.
- The pruning advice and hearing each one's [Master Gardeners'] different ideas.
- The thorough evaluation of the entire yard and garden spots.
- [That] everyone was very knowledgeable, thoughtful, and kind, and offered an array of suggestions while making sure to address their needs despite the fact that they weren't sure what they wanted or needed.
- The practical suggestions for new plant choices, tree, and shrub maintenance, and [providing] various resources they were not aware of.

One homeowner commented, "Thanks for the suggestions for plants in the front beds ... Here's what I've implemented right away: enlarge beds around trees; added compost/manure with a 6" trim of mulch; water the little arborvitae manually on a regular basis (It does look better.)" Another homeowner said, "This is just what I wanted/needed – a direction to work with suggestions for specific plants."

PUBLIC VALUE STATEMENT

The Garden Advice Program in New Castle County has created an avenue for homeowners to receive on-site education on their landscapes, gardens, plants, and related environmental sustainability concerns.