

## **Web Surfing for Master Gardeners**

Its been brewing for sometime now, this discussion about Master Gardeners using the web as a tool for their own communications and for assisting gardeners in New Mexico. It came up again at the January Statewide Steering Committee Meeting and evolved into a request for specific suggestions about what to do and what to change to make our web presence more useful to Master Gardeners and to the public.

Nearly all of us have some experience with web use and perhaps have ideas and insights into how to improve our presence as Master Gardeners. As a foundation, but not an exhaustive study, I have assembled an annotated collection of Master Gardener website for your use and review and pose some questions that may assist you in making your thoughts and suggestions part of the discussion – its voluntary! Lets begin with New Mexico Master Gardener web sites.

### **New Mexico Extension Master Gardener Website**

(<http://cahe.nmsu.edu/mastergardener/index.html>)

This is the statewide site created and maintained by NMSU and the Extension. On it, you will find a section (password req.) for Master Gardeners. John can provide you with the password. The 2005 revision of the Master Gardener Manual is posted there along with four distance-learning presentations that were originally presented over the Centra system and are now formatted for Windows Media Player. What else could be included that would be useful and informative for all NM Master Gardeners? I would like to see the monthly newsletters and reports of all county groups posted here. Seems a simple way to get informed about what other NM Master Gardener groups are doing.

There are other sections on this website that are not password protected with some content. From the Programs Section you can link to all of the NM County Extension web pages. There is sometimes information about Master Gardeners posted on the County Extension web page, but it is not consistent. Seems to me that the site is under developed and underused, but has potential. Would this be a place to answer many of those repetitive hotline questions? Could this site be made user friendly for the gardening public? The University builds some physical restrictions into the site.

### **New Mexico Master Gardeners**

(<http://www.nmmastergardeners.org/>)

This New Mexico Master Gardeners web site is not hosted on a NMSU server and has a lot of information about Master Gardeners and gardening in New Mexico. It also has links to the 15 NMSU Extension web sites that have MG programs and to other county MG web sites. Want a history of New Mexico Master Gardeners? Go here! Want to ask a gardening question using email? Go here. There is a lot of information on this site. How does or could it serve Dona Ana County Master Gardeners and residents?

### **Gardening From the Ground Up**

(<http://gardeningfromthegroundup.us/>)

This site contains most of the Master Gardener training materials for reading and download (without a password). There is also a link to a Gardening History Timeline (<http://www.gardendigest.com/timegl.htm>) and to the Santa Fe Master Gardener Association (<http://www.sfmga.org/smghome.htm>)

### **The Albuquerque Area Extension Master Gardeners**

(<http://abqmastergardeners.org/>)

This site is self-explanatory and contains a monthly garden activities calendar, common garden questions and answers, a daily weather report, agriculture news and links to other useful gardening sites.

### **Santa Fe Master Gardeners Association**

(<http://www.sfmga.org/smghome.htm>)

The Santa Fe Association site contains a [bulletin board](http://www.sfmga.org/smgbull.htm) (www.sfmga.org/smgbull.htm) for group and community gardening related events. It also lists some of their current projects.

### **Valencia County Master Gardeners Association**

(<http://home.flash.net/~gdc/ValenciaMG/>)

This site also has a gardening question and answer section and a Master Gardener Events Calendar along with a listing of association officers.

### **Sandoval County Master Gardener Index**

(<http://home.earthlink.net/~ewbtcb/scmg.htm>)

The site contains information about becoming a Master Gardener and about scheduled Master Gardener programs. *“Disclaimer: This is strictly unofficial information provided by a Sandoval County Master Gardener, Therese Barts.”*

### **Los Alamos Master Gardeners' Web Page**

(<http://www.losalamos.org/lamg/>)

The site contains the 2004 MG Conference information and “A Master Gardener’s Secrets to Gardening in Los Alamos” along with Xeriscape and Firewise Gardening information and links. It also has information about their demonstration garden.

### **Otero County Master Gardener Association**

(<http://www.oteromastergardeners.com/>)

The site contains information about the 2005 MG Conference and local gardening information.

### **Master Gardener Web sites for other States**

I have visited only a handful of the 19,000 or so Extension Master Gardener web sites that are returned by a Google search. A few of them are noted here. I have included some discussion about why I brought them up, to demonstrate ways that you may look at a site to determine what is important or useful. The question that I ask when looking at all of

the MG sites is who are the users and are they being served effectively? This listing of 94 Master Gardener websites in the U.S. is a handy page to surf from.

[http://dmoz.org/Home/Gardening/Organizations/Master\\_Gardeners/United\\_States/](http://dmoz.org/Home/Gardening/Organizations/Master_Gardeners/United_States/)

### **Texas Master Gardeners**

<http://aggiehorticulture.tamu.edu/mastergd/index.html>

There's a lot on this site, but material is well organized and easy to find. The Problem Solvers is an interesting approach to using information and I found the concise descriptions in *Plantanswers* quite useful.

### **Los Angeles County Extension Master Gardeners**

<http://celosangeles.ucdavis.edu/garden/>

Their *Common Ground Program* is focused on food growing and nutrition, but their monthly gardening tips, also provides extensive information on ornamentals.

### **The California Backyard Orchard Web – UC California, Davis**

<http://homeorchard.ucdavis.edu/generalinfo.shtml>

Although not a MG site, I include it because of the superior organization of a wealth of information. I wish all the information sites were this thoughtfully designed and organized.

### **Purdue University Garden Publications**

[http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/garden\\_pubs.html#GeneralHort](http://www.hort.purdue.edu/ext/garden_pubs.html#GeneralHort)

I include it here as an example for organizing information that is used by both MG's and the public.

### **Some questions**

- Do you currently use the Master Gardeners and NMSU Extension websites for information and communications?
- Is it important to you to have a website that serves Dona Ana Co. Master Gardeners?
- If so, what priority should it have as an MG/Extension/NMSU project?
- What kind of content would be useful to Master Gardeners?
- What kind of content would be useful to the public?
- What knowledge, time and talent would you contribute to creating and maintaining a MG website?

The Master Gardener web presence is up for discussion and suggestions at the March 24<sup>th</sup>, 2006 Steering Committee Meeting. If you have ideas or wish to participate in some way, please let John know about it by mid-March.

This article is available (with links) on the Master Gardener section of my web site. ([www.darrolshillingburg.com/GardenSite/MasterGardener.html](http://www.darrolshillingburg.com/GardenSite/MasterGardener.html))

Darrol Shillingburg  
Master Gardener