

RICHLAND COUNTY MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION STANDING RULES
May 23, 2024, replacing April 22, 2021



AUTHORITY

- A. The Standing Rules of the Association are adjuncts to the Richland County Master Gardener Bylaws. They present binding policies and procedures, in compliance with the Association's Bylaws.
- B. Responsibility and authority to update the Standing Rules lies with the Board of Directors. The President will lead a review biennially with suggested changes presented to the Board for ratification. At least four current members, appointed by the President, will serve on this subcommittee.

MEMBERSHIP

- A. RCMGA membership is open to Master Gardener-trained persons of all ages, regardless of race, color, gender, religion, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, marital or family status.
- B. Membership is open to residents of Richland, Fairfield, Kershaw, and Lexington counties who are Clemson-trained Master Gardeners, current students, interns from the Clemson Master Gardener Volunteer Training course (MGVTC) or individuals trained by other Master Gardener programs in another state or country upon review and acceptance of their credentials by Clemson.
- C. Membership in the Association is contingent upon agreement to (a) support RCMGA and the Master Gardener mission by participating in programs and volunteer service, (b) pay annual dues when assessed and (c) keep contact information current.
- D. The Membership Committee receives all applications for membership and maintains appropriate records.
- E. Dues
 - a. Full members receive notification of the amount and deadline for dues payment either by electronic or written notice. Members not paying by the due date will receive at least one additional notice. Former members do not appear in the membership Directory. The Board receives a report on non-renewing members at the September meeting.

- b. Honorary and emeritus members do not pay dues.
- c. Interns do not pay dues until June after they are certified.

F. Full members are certified, active, inactive or emeritus.

- a. **Certified** members have passed a background check and performed and logged a minimum of 20 hours of educational service and 10 hours of continuing education during the prior year.
- b. **Active** members have passed a background check and performed and logged volunteer hours during the prior year but fewer than the minimum hours needed to maintain certification.
- c. **Inactive** members did not submit to a background check, have an expired background check or did not log volunteer hours in the prior year.
- d. **Emeritus** members are Master Gardeners who are no longer able to fully meet the volunteer service requirements for annual recertification. Emeritus status can only be granted with concurrence of the local Master Gardener Coordinator and State Coordinator. The application form is available from the State Coordinator.

G. Background Check.

- a. Clemson's legal advisors mandate criminal background checks for all volunteers.
- b. Without a background check, RCMGA members will not have access to the Clemson Reporting System and may not volunteer for any Clemson- or RCMGA-sponsored events or other events taking place on the Clemson Sandhill Research and Education Center (REC) property.
- c. Failure of a criminal background check precludes a person from membership in RCMGA.
- d. Background checks will expire if members have not recorded any hours in the reporting system during the previous year and will show as expired in the reporting system. Members with expired background checks will not be able to enter information in the system until they sign another volunteer agreement and complete another background check at their own expense.
- e. To prevent being blocked from the reporting system, members must document at least one hour of volunteer service during each year (July 1 to June 30).

H. Inactive members may return to active status as follows:

- a. Inactive less than 5 years. Notify the local Master Gardener Coordinator that you wish to become active. Complete a new volunteer agreement and background check. If the member has already had one background check done, the cost of the additional background check will be the responsibility of the individual. The Master Gardener Coordinator may require some training, for example, auditing Master Gardening Training Course classes or participating in local volunteer training.
 - b. Inactive 5 years or more. Notify the local Master Gardener Coordinator that you wish to become active. Complete a new volunteer agreement and background check, audit the entire Master Gardener Training Course, passing the final exam with a minimum score of 70%. If the member has already had one background check done, the cost of the additional background check will be the responsibility of the individual. There is not a charge for the course, however, you will need to purchase any revised or added training materials, e.g., a new manual.
- I. Once you return to Active status, completion and logging of a minimum of 20 educational service hours and 10 continuing education hours prior to the end of the fiscal year will result in your status changing to Certified.
- J. Rejoining RCMGA
- a. Less than one year since leaving RCMGA
 - i. Sign a volunteer agreement, and if no background check has been entered in the Clemson reporting system, contact the MG Coordinator and request a criminal background check.
 - ii. Complete a membership application, which can be found on the RCMGA website.
 - b. Over one year since leaving RCMGA
 - i. Contact the MG Coordinator, sign a new volunteer agreement, and request a criminal background check, even if one has been recorded in the Clemson reporting system. The cost of the additional background check will be the responsibility of the individual.
 - ii. Complete a membership application, which can be found on the RCMGA website.
 - c. Dues. Prorated dues will be assessed.
 - i. Rejoining in July/August/September, dues will be \$15.00.
 - ii. Rejoining in October/November/December, dues will be \$10.00.

- iii. Rejoining in January/February/March, dues will be \$5.00.
 - iv. Rejoining in April/May/June, no dues will be assessed.
- K. A Directory of members' contact information, in electronic form, goes to the current membership during September of each year. Members agree to not share this information with anyone outside RCMGA.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETINGS

- A. At the beginning of each fiscal year, the current Board will determine the day and time of its meetings. This information is available on the RCMGA website. Typically, Board meetings are held on the fourth Thursday of the month except August (no meeting), November (third Thursday/Thanksgiving is the fourth Thursday), and December (no meeting).
- B. Members and guests of the Board may attend meetings. Guests observe, but do not take part in, meetings unless they have been invited to speak to the Board on a specific topic.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

- A. Membership meetings are typically on the first Tuesday of each month except August. The *RCMGA Digest* announces and confirms dates, sites, times, and program topics. A list of meetings is available on the RCMGA website.
- B. Members may bring guests to the regular monthly meeting except for the Annual Business Meeting held in May. There is a fee for non-members to attend the Holiday Luncheon and the June Gala.
- C. The election of officers will be done electronically. Votes will end 48 hours prior to the annual meeting to both facilitate officer transitions and accurately record them in the annual meeting minutes. The President and Treasurer will tally the votes.

MINUTES FOR MEETINGS

- A. All drafts of board and membership meeting minutes, distributed before final approval, have a "Draft" watermark and contain the word "Draft" in the subject line of the email. After approval, the official minutes of each meeting go out to the respective members labeled "Approved" on the document and on the subject line of the email.
- B. The Board reviews and approves the minutes of the Annual Business Meeting at the board meeting later the same month.

GUIDELINES FOR ALL PROJECT DIRECTORS AND OFFICERS

- A. Ongoing association activities include projects, committees, and publications. These activities require frequent updates to the Board, Board input and decisions, and major commitments of time, money, and volunteer resources. Procedures, budgeted expenditures, forms, issues, and decisions affecting only the internal workings of an office, project, or committee are the responsibility of its assigned officer, director, or chair. Policies, procedures, forms, plans, issues, and decisions; including all monies, properties and assets of the Association affecting other initiatives, Clemson personnel, Board member (s), or RCMGA as a whole go to the Board as recommendations.
- B. All officers and project directors will maintain records, procedures, and passwords (where applicable) and deliver them to their back-ups and successors. The appointments of backups are necessary to assure the work of projects and committees will move forward without interruption if the directors and chairs cannot serve. Directors, chairs, and editors will provide the name of their back-ups to the President.
- C. Directors must coordinate with Sandhill REC via the RCMGA President and MG Coordinator regarding any projects or outside groups coming to the station. After the visit, the Director reports the number of visitors to the MG Coordinator who informs Sandhill REC.
- D. When an event that received prior approval is scheduled, insurance is required. Clemson Cooperative Extension employees are able to get coverage for Extension-related activities. If we are working with an employee or agent regarding a sanctioned event, please discuss insurance options with them.
- E. Should a project or committee need the help of Clemson personnel, the director or the chair should contact the RCMGA President explaining the reason for the request and an estimate of the resources involved. If approved, the President will relay the request to the appropriate Clemson staff member, via the MG Coordinator. In the absence of the President, requests should go to the Vice President.
- F. All officers and project directors must notify the President one week before any activities to take place on Clemson Sandhill property if they are not listed in the *RCMGA Digest*.
- G. All officers and project directors must submit budget requests to the Treasurer in July so that they can be approved by the Board in September. Single-item purchases of \$250.00 or more require approval of the President and the Treasurer.
- H. All project directors, except the *Gardening in Rich Land* (GIR) editor, shall submit electronic reports of project activities each October, February, and April (annual project reports to be sent to the membership). Reports shall be sent to the Secretary for distribution to Board members and inclusion in the minutes. The GIR editor publishes quarterly in December, March, June, and September.
- I. All project directors are to publicize their own activities and submit updates to the webmaster and the *RCMGA Digest*.

- J. The Treasurer shall reimburse members for project and committee expenses. Members shall submit a Reimbursement Form with supporting receipts and descriptions. Reimbursement Forms are available under the Members' Corner tab, RCMGA Forms, on the Richland County Master Gardener Association website (<https://www.richlandmastergardeners.com>).
- K. The Treasurer maintains all bank records (statements and reconciliations), paid invoices and reimbursement forms for at least seven years. The Treasurer prepares an annual financial report; this report with any attachments is a permanent record of the Association. Records may be in paper or electronic form. Electronic records must have an off-site backup.
- L. Once a year, four months after the close of the RCMGA fiscal year, the Treasurer files the Annual Financial Report and the Request for Renewal with the Secretary of State to maintain the Association's legal nonprofit standing. In addition, the Treasurer submits an annual filing with the IRS the information to maintain our 501(c)(3) status.
- M. RCMGA members receiving a cash honorarium will turn it over to the Treasurer. It becomes general income unless given for support of a specific project. Honoraria in the form of gift cards go to the President, who decides which project or event will benefit.

STANDING PROJECTS – VOTING MEMBERS

- A. Standing projects are ongoing Association activities requiring frequent updates to the Board, Board input and decisions, major commitments of time, money, and volunteer resources. In this document, the term Standing Projects includes all projects, committees, and publications.
- B. Standing project directors are members of the Board and must maintain certified or active member status.
- C. Board members, whether an officer, director, or chair, have one vote. One person, one vote. An officer may also be the director of a standing project, the chair of a committee or the editor of a publication. A project director may direct a maximum of two projects, including a committee and a publication. Should the need arise, the Board may make exceptions to the above restrictions. Officers and project directors may head non-voting advisory projects without restriction.
- D. Standing project directors should attend all Board meetings. When this is not possible, they may give their proxy to another Board member or may assign their vote to the majority. Once a designee has agreed to stand in as proxy, the information is emailed to the Secretary. Any Board member can stand in for no more than two absent members.

STANDING PROJECTS include all non-Advisory projects, committees, and publications. The following are the Standing Projects.

Ask-a-Master Gardener

Master Gardeners provide sound, research-based horticultural information to the public at various venues.

Carolina Yard at the Cottage

The Carolina Yard is a garden built around the twelve principles of the Carolina Yards initiative. The garden is now located within the Sandhill Children's Garden.

Community Education

RCMGA is committed to educating and serving the public. Members work to develop educational materials, including handouts, displays, exhibits, and programs for our members to share with the public or horticultural groups. Programs are research-based and require updating as established information expands. Members of the committee give presentations and provide support for other members who provide presentations to various groups.

Compost Education Garden

The Compost Education Garden committee develops educational materials and activities for the public, oversees maintenance of the Compost Education Garden, schedules workdays and ensures there is compost for Association projects.

Continuing Education

This committee plans and schedules continuing education programs for our membership meetings and field trips. These programs provide members an opportunity to accrue 8 to 9 of the 10 continuing education hours required to maintain certification.

Development

This project manages grant writing and identification of new grant opportunities, and prepares and presents regular reports on the progress of pending grants.

Fundraising

Fundraising is responsible for organizing events and campaigns to raise funds and other types of donations for the Association. RCMGA plans, advertises, coordinates volunteer resources, holds periodic workdays to receive donated garden accessories and plant materials and prepares them for sale.

Gardening in Rich Land (GIR) Newsletter

This publication is distributed quarterly by email to celebrate the accomplishments of RCMGA during the previous three months-

Hospitality

This committee organizes three major social events: The Gala in June, the Tomato Tasting every other year in July and the Holiday Luncheon in December. For these events, the committee members adopt a theme and prepare table decorations. The committee recommends menus and manages the physical setup and cleanup for the Gala and the Tomato Tasting.

Intern Coordinator

The Intern Coordinator monitors and encourages Interns who complete the Clemson Extension MG

training and choose RCMGA to manage their eventual certification. RCMGA assigns a mentor to each intern, conducts an orientation session, and monitors the Intern's progress toward certification. The Coordinator maintains contact information for Interns and reviews submitted hours for classification assuring correction of any error. Once the Intern completes 40 eligible volunteer hours, the Coordinator places their name on the list for certification by Clemson and requests the Treasurer order a permanent name badge.

Membership

This committee maintains a record of current members including contact information in the form of a Directory which is emailed to members in September. In addition, the Membership Committee awards scholarships, distributes a Quick Reference Guide, offers memberships to the current Clemson Master Gardener class students and reviews the RCMGA Bylaws and Standing Rules every other year.

Plant Sale and Community Education Day

This is RCMGA's principal fundraising event. RCMGA plans, advertises, coordinates volunteer resources, holds periodic workdays to receive donated garden accessories and plant materials and prepares them for sale.

Sandhill Children's Garden

The mission of the Sandhill Children's Garden is to "engage, educate, and inspire our community to connect with nature and each other in the ecosystem of the garden." The Children's Garden hosts events and classes for both Master Gardeners and the community. The garden was designed, built, and is maintained by Master Gardeners and community members.

Social Media

Webmaster

The Webmaster develops and maintains the RCMGA website which serves as an archive for association documents including Bylaws and Standing Rules, all issues of the *Gardening in Rich Land* newsletter and Association forms and photos. The RCMGA website also lists certification requirements and Board and Membership Meeting schedules. For the public, there is a description of our demonstration gardens and a list of scheduled library presentations. The website also includes links to useful gardening sites and information on many gardening topics.

Facebook Account Administrator

The Facebook Account Administrator administers RCMGA's Facebook account. It is a forum to showcase research-based horticultural information by Master Gardener Interns (with Master Gardener oversight) and certified Master Gardeners to share with the public and with each other.

Turfgrass Demonstration Area

The RCMGA Turfgrass Demonstration Area provides examples of well-maintained Southern turfgrasses commonly grown in the midlands of South Carolina that will help citizens of Richland County choose a turfgrass that best fits their unique set of circumstances.

RCMGA Digest

The RCMGA Digest is emailed to members biweekly and as needed to provide them with information

about volunteer opportunities, meetings, and social events as well as to send emergency information, cancellations, and time-sensitive messages.

ADVISORY PROJECT DIRECTORS

- A. Advisory projects are ongoing or *ad hoc* Association activities requiring infrequent Board updates and decisions or commitments of time, resources, and volunteers.
- B. Advisory Project Directors attend Board meetings when they wish to update members on plans, give progress reports or request resources for their project(s).
- C. Advisory project directors do not vote on Board matters.

ADVISORY PROJECTS

- A. Volunteer Coordinator. This person recruits volunteers for
 - a. Carolina Classic Home and Garden Show (March at the SC State Fairgrounds).
 - b. Ask a Master Gardener tables at the Midlands Spring Plant and Flower Festival (April at SC Farmers Market).
 - c. Ask a Master Gardener tables at the Fall Plant and Flower Festival (September at the SC Farmers Market).
 - d. Clemson School Days (October at Clemson Sandhill property on Clemson Road).
 - e. Other events needing volunteers.
- B. Historian. The Historian preserves archival materials; collects, files, and preserves data that pertains to the establishment, growth, and development of the organization.

PROTOCOL FOR RCMGA MEMBERS' LIFE EVENTS (Member Illnesses or Death, Family Deaths, Special Celebrations)

- A. Death of an RCMGA member or a member's immediate family.
 - a. The Secretary sends a condolence card.
 - b. A verbal announcement to the membership takes place.
 - c. If approved by the family, there is an announcement in the *RCMGA Digest*.
 - d. For an RCMGA member
 - i. The announcement includes name, date of death, class year, RCMGA offices and awards and a link to the obituary.

- ii. The RCMGA member's name, class year, and date of death are added to the "In Memoriam" page of the RCMGA website. *A Celebration Brick will be obtained and placed in the Celebration Brick Walkway in the Sandhill Children's Garden. Approved by the RCMGA Board June 27, 2024.*

- B. Celebrations of special awards or recognition received by a member. Should a member receive an award for their service to our community from another organization, they will be honored with a brief write up in the next edition of the *Gardening in Rich Land* newsletter.

ACHIEVEMENT AWARDS

RCMGA presents annual awards at the June Gala to full members who distinguish themselves in various categories. Awards may be given to multiple winners and may be given to the same person more than once. The Award Committee is composed of the President, President-elect, the Treasurer and Golden Trowel and Volunteer of the Year award winners from the previous year.

- A. **Golden Trowel:** Awarded to a member who has showed involvement in RCMGA for at least three years, is active in a variety of projects/events, promotes a sense of teamwork and camaraderie with others, exemplifies a high level of excellence when representing the MG program. Other criteria: At least 100 hours logged into the Reporting System by April 30 (beginning May 1 of the previous year) plus the 10 continuing education hours required to maintain certification.*
- B. **Volunteer of the Year:** Awarded to a member who met or exceeded criteria in any of four categories during the previous 12 months:
 - a. A project (or committee) director (or chair) who showed strong leadership, initiative and teamwork in his/her area, ensured the project met its goals, and volunteered noticeable, non-leadership hours in educational and community service projects.
 - b. An officer who showed initiative, promoted teamwork, and went out of the way to assist projects and members to make their work easier.
 - c. A full (non-board) member who performed substantial, non-leadership volunteer hours for multiple projects or committees with most hours accumulated in educational service and/or community service (weight is given to numbers of projects and hours of service to each), and who showed initiative and teamwork in each.
 - d. A full (non-board) member whose schedule may not have permitted volunteering for regular events, but who completed a major, solo, board-approved project in educational service, community service or administration during a fiscal year, updating the board on its status at least quarterly.
 - e. Additional criteria for this award: At least 100 hours logged into the Reporting System by April 30 (beginning May 1 of the previous year) in addition to 10 continuing

education hours required to maintain certification.*

(*) Earned continuing education hours more than the required 10 are counted as volunteer service hours.

- C. **President's Award:** Given each year to our President in recognition of meritorious service to the organization.
- D. **Milestone Awards:** Awarded to each full or honorary Master Gardener who reached cumulative recorded hours of 50, 100, 250, or 500 or higher during the past 12 months. Those hours must be earned beginning on May 1 of the previous year through April 30 of the current year and logged into the Reporting System by April 30. They will be added each year to the previous year's total to determine the milestone pin awarded.* Hours earned for certification do not count toward these awards. Interns may accumulate milestone hours after certification.

Milestone Pins

50 hrs Work Glove	1,000 hrs Pruners	3,500 hrs Garden Boot
100 hrs Seed Pack	1,500 hrs Magnifying Glass	4,000 hrs Sunflower
250 hrs Watering Can	2,000 hrs Flowerpot	4,500 hrs Magnolia Bloom
500 hrs Trowel	2,500 hrs Garden Basket	5,000 hrs Dragonfly
750 hrs Oak Leaf	3,000 hrs Wheelbarrow	Emeritus Oak Tree

(*) All members' service hours for this award have been accumulating since May 1, 2015.

- E. **Lifetime Achievement Award:** This award is given to members who have shown significant contributions over a lengthy period to improve the horticultural education of the public and to enhance the community of the Richland County Master Gardener Association.
 - a. The member served as an active member of the association for 10 years, educating and encouraging interest for new members and the community.
 - b. The member encouraged and developed programs that expanded and enhanced RCMGA's push for excellence in horticultural knowledge and community service.
 - c. The member was generous in providing volunteer hours, exhibited dedication and enthusiasm for association projects and was ethical when dealing with RCMGA members and the public. Consistently exhibits dependability and a positive attitude.
 - d. The member shows initiative, strong leadership, and cooperation in a team setting.
 - e. The Awards Committee accepts nomination for this award in April and May. This award does not have to be given each year, and the committee may award multiple Lifetime Achievement Awards in some years.

F. **Outstanding Community Partner Award**

- a. This award is presented to a business, school, church, or other organization that has consistently worked with RCMGA to enhance the public’s horticultural knowledge or conservation awareness.
- b. The award shall be in the form of a framed certificate presented at the June Gala by a Master Gardener appointed by the president of RCMGA.
- c. The Awards Committee accepts nominations for this award in April and May. This award does not have to be given each year, and the committee may award multiple Outstanding Community Partner Awards in some years. *This award was approved by the RCMGA Board on March 27, 2025.*

Nominating Committee

- A. The Nominating Committee identifies candidates for open officer positions on the RCMGA Board. The committee selects candidates for members to vote for officers for the coming year.
- B. The committee is appointed by the President and chaired by the Past President. In the absence of the Past President, the President chairs the committee.
- C. No member seeking election or re-election shall serve on that year’s Nominating Committee.
- D. A call for nominations is advertised in April or earlier in the *RCMGA Digest*.
- E. The committee presents one nomination for each position needed to the Board at the April Board meeting. Once the Board approves the slate, voting will be done electronically, closing 48 hours prior to the annual business or special meeting.

RCMGA Board Meetings updating the Standing Rules:

July 26, 2012	May 25, 2017
June 27, 2013	June 28, 2018
February 2, 2014	July 26, 2018
June 25, 2015	July 25, 2019
October 27, 2015	July 23, 2020
July 28, 2016	April 22, 2021
	May 23, 2024