

## **MEMORANDUM**

Date: July 1, 2004  
To: Master Gardener Organizations in Washington State  
From: Edward B. Adams, Ph.D.  
Director of Agriculture and Natural Resources Programs  
Subject: WSU Master Gardener Enrollment in Master Gardener Organizations

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The WSU Assistant Attorney General has brought to my attention that the longstanding practice of automatically enrolling Master Gardener volunteers in local Master Gardener organizations without their specific written consent is a violation of a citizen's constitutional right to free association.

This means that your organization may need to revise enrollment procedures and rosters, and discuss the role differences between the WSU Master Gardener Program and the Master Gardener Organizations. Because WSU Master Gardener volunteers are not required to join a Master Gardener organization, on behalf of WSU I am asking each Master Gardener Organization to offer and implement participant-initiated opportunities to enroll in their membership. This will allow County WSU Master Gardener volunteers the option of joining a local Master Gardener Organization by filling out and signing a form. Your County WSU Master Gardener Program Coordinator received a sample form and cover letter at their staff meeting in Ellensburg on May 20, 2004. These sample forms and a sample cover letter are available for your reference on the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State website, <http://mastergardener.wsu.edu/mgfws>.

There may be a period of confusion as volunteers adjust to an understanding of their role as a WSU Master Gardener Volunteer versus a member of a Master Gardener support organization, but this process is necessary to uphold the rights of volunteers and to protect Master Gardener Organizations from legal complications. It is my hope that this procedural adjustment will help volunteers more clearly understand the distinction between their county-led WSU Master Gardener Program and their local Master Gardener support organization, to the benefit of both groups.

Please work together with your local WSU Extension staff to make this procedural correction for the good of the Master Gardener Program statewide. Should you have questions regarding this procedural change, please contact your local Extension office, the WSU Statewide Master Gardener Program Coordinator or the Master Gardener Foundation of Washington State. I appreciate your cooperation and support with this process. Master Gardener Organizations have always been vital to the success of the WSU Master Gardener Program and I look forward to a future of continuing collaboration.

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