PAYBACK VOLUNTEER HOURS INFORMATION

New Class Information 2011: The new class “payback” volunteer service requirement is 65 hours. This includes 28 hours minimum "on the desk" or at a clinic. The remaining 37 volunteer service hours may be spent in any program related activity such as additional desk or educational activities, or work on the projects of the YCMGA such as the plant sales and demo garden. Classes that you take in addition to the prescribed training should be noted, but do not count toward payback.

Early-Bird Awards. Although only 65 hours of payback are required, new class members are encouraged to volunteer for additional hours. Any new class member logging more than 100 hours qualifies for special recognition from the Yamhill County Master Gardener™ Association with an “Early Bird Award.”

Desk or Clinic Hours. For the Class of 2011, 28 hours of service must be spent answering questions from the public in person, via telephone, or email. For most people, this service will take place in the Master Gardener office. You may include hours served at clinics which are held in the community (such as Farmer’s Markets or retail locations) or at the county and state fairs or other activities such as answering “Ask an Expert” questions forwarded by Extension staff.

YCMGA & Other Activities: Activities sponsored by the Yamhill County Master Gardener™ Association (YCMGA) include plant sales, general membership & board meetings, committee meetings, work in the greenhouse or the demo gardens, and work parties. Other Activities may include giving presentations, working in Community Gardens, working with youth, creating displays, work on the newsletter or other special projects assigned by Linda McMahan. If you have a question about whether an activity qualifies in this category, contact Marcia Sherry, President of the YCMGA, or Linda McMahan.

Classes You Took. These include the time you spend learning information useful to you as an OSU Master Gardener™. Examples are workshops on horticultural knowledge or increasing leadership skills. Included are YCMGA Programs, advanced training offered in Yamhill or other counties, and training offered through the OMGA such as Gardener’s Mini-College. To qualify as recertification hours, the class must be designated as a recertification opportunity or approved by Linda McMahan. (Qualifying classes will be designated with a * on schedules). Class of 2011 members are encouraged to take advantage of classes that are offered outside of their training, and to record them on their volunteer hours sheets, but this time does NOT count toward the volunteer payback requirement. Class hours are not counted in the Total Volunteer Hours for Veterans.

Contacts: Please record the number of people directly contacted as a result of your volunteer work. Examples are the number of individuals attending a presentation you gave, number of people talked with at clinics, or the number of people you interacted with while on desk duty. You must complete this column to provide adequate information about the overall effects of our program to OSU.

Veteran OSU Master Gardener and Recertification: See the definitions of categories above. For recertification, you need 10 or more hours on the desk or at clinics, and 12 hours of additional training that is specified for recertification (though these classes are required to increase your knowledge and to qualify you for recertification, they do NOT count in your total volunteer hours). If you wish to recertify by exam, please see Linda McMahan. The exam substitutes for the additional training requirement for recertification but not for the desk hours. Any OSU Master Gardener™ who wishes to interact with the public by providing educational programs or gardening advice must recertify each year. Mentors are also expected to recertify. New trainees are certified for the year following their training, but must recertify that year to work in the following year. Recertification during any calendar year qualifies the MG to provide educational activities in the following year.

VRS (Volunteer Reporting System)
All volunteer hours should be entered in the Online VRS  http://extension.oregonstate.edu/mg/vrs
Hard copy hours sheets are provided for those who wish to keep track of their hours on paper before entering them online. Hours for 2011 must be entered in VRS by October 31, 2011.
Answers to some FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) about payback hours:

1. The “Mileage” entry in VRS is only for your own records. You can enter mileage to/from volunteer activities if you wish to claim your volunteer mileage on your taxes. You do not have to enter any mileage.
2. Time travelling to and from your volunteer activities normally does not count toward your payback hour time (the same way that your time commuting to and from work does not count as work time). Exceptions may apply if you are volunteering at OSU or at another long distance location. Ask Linda if you are not sure.
3. Attending meetings of other non-profit groups, such as the Native Plant Society, does NOT count as volunteer payback time.
4. Attending YCMGA board meetings counts as OTHER payback hours (not desk/clinic hours).
5. Attending presentations given at meetings of other non-profit groups, such as the Native Plant Society, MAY qualify as Continuing Education (CE) hours, if the content is approved by Linda (more technical or practical information, as opposed to armchair travel presentations).
6. Attending classes is always encouraged, because refreshing and expanding your knowledge base is valuable. However, if you attend classes that are NOT approved for recertification, they do not count toward any kind of payback time. You cannot log them as “OTHER” hours in VRS. If you take more than the 12 required hours of approved classes for recertification, the extra hours do not count toward your total hours in any way. You can log them in VRS, but they will not be added to your total payback hours.

**DESK/CLINIC HOURS** would include any time you spend volunteering to answer gardening questions from the public. In general, you would get these hours in the Extension MG office, at Farmer’s Markets, at retail clinics, at state or county fairs or at functions offered by other groups where the MGs are invited to man a table or booth specifically to answer gardening questions. Any time spent replying to eXtension “Ask an Expert” questions would also qualify (may be done by email or phone).

**YCMGA/OTHER HOURS** would include any volunteer time spent working at YCMGA sponsored activities or committees, such as the 2 annual plant sales, the greenhouse at the Fairgrounds, the Newberg High School greenhouse, board meetings, insect committee, newsletter or library committee. Time attending YCMGA social events, such as the annual pig roast or garden tours, does NOT qualify. Time volunteered in activities such as giving presentations to schools or other groups, creating displays, working with youth, working in Community Gardens, assisting with set up and organization for functions of other groups (such as SWCD), count as OTHER hours.

**QUALIFICATION vs. AWARDS HOURS:** There are a minimum number of payback hours required in order to QUALIFY a trainee MG to graduate (65 hours—desk/clinic, YCMGA & other) or a veteran MG to recertify (10 hours—all desk/clinic). However, all MGs are encouraged to volunteer more than just the bare minimum number of hours to qualify. New trainees who volunteer a minimum of 100 payback hours receive an Early Bird special award. Recertifying veterans receive recognition for every 500 hours they volunteer, including awards certificates, a swinger bar to add to their badges, their name on the awards plaques outside the MG office, and at 1000 hours, a lifetime membership in the YCMGA (free annual membership renewal).