

## NATIVE PLANT MASTER® PROGRAM GUIDELINES

The Native Plant Master® (NPM) Program is an award winning, non-credit, educational program offered by various county Extension offices through the state's land-grant institution. Colorado State University Extension operates the flagship Native Plant Master Program. Educational offerings are open to participants ages 16 and above on a space available, paid registration basis. Participants under age 18 require written parent/guardian permission. Some offerings may have prerequisites. All those successfully completing three NPM courses are awarded the Colorado Flora Certificate. Accepted volunteers become certified Native Plant Masters after completing volunteer requirements. See details below.

### NPM COURSES AND CLASSES

Two types of educational experiences are offered: NPM courses and NPM special classes. NPM courses are all held outdoors while special classes may be held in the classroom, outdoors or a combination of both sites. Early registration is recommended as space is limited in these popular offerings. Smoking is prohibited in all courses and classes except in areas designated by the trainer.

#### **Native Plant Master Courses**

Level I NPM courses are open on a space available, paid registration basis. In some county NPM programs, the NPM Basic Botany class is required for participants without a background in botany. Participants in Level II NPM course participants must have successfully completed at least one NPM course and/or have a prior background in botany. Each Native Plant Master course is made up of three sessions held three successive weeks although NPM courses may be offered that differ from this model as long as the same number of contact hours with students are maintained (12.5). NPM courses are the only courses that count toward certification as a Native Plant Master for accepted volunteers.

#### **NPM Special Classes**

Special classes are open on a space available, paid registration basis. Special classes are offered on a variety of topics that may vary from year-to-year such as basic botany, native plant landscaping, invasive weeds, plant families, keying, grasses and subalpine/alpine ecosystems. Special classes do not count toward certification as a Native Plant Master for accepted volunteers and they do not count toward the Colorado Flora certificate.

#### **Native Plant Master Course Themes**

NPM courses are held at varying locations and during times. The session themes for each NPM course are listed below. Depending on what plants are present and blooming, some subjects may be covered in a prior or later session than shown.

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|-----------------|---|
| First Session:  | Botanical characteristics of plant families and species, identification using a botanical key, scientific and common names, and stewardship of native plants. Session Evaluation.           |
| Second Session: | Ecological relationships including non-native species, noxious weeds, relationships with wildlife, pollinators, other plants etc.   |
| Third Session:  | Written certification exam on material from first and second sessions. Human uses including use of natives for sustainable landscaping, ethnobotanical and other human uses. Course Survey. |

## **Native Plant Master Course Details**

All course sessions will be held entirely in the field. Please check the directions and be sure to arrive at the first session 15 minutes prior to the scheduled start time as the trainer will have materials to distribute. All sessions start promptly, so please plan ahead to arrive by the designated time. Participants may not attend other course sessions for which they are not enrolled. Carpooling is encouraged and the Extension office will send the contact information for any participants wishing to do so to other participants. Any liability arising from such arrangements are the participants' sole responsibility.

Please Note: All participants must bring the required textbook and edition of that textbook as listed in registration materials to each session. A significant focus of NPM courses is use of this scientific key including scientific names and families.

Each course will cover 40 – 50 plants, 9 to 15 of which will be keyed using the required text. Some county NPM Programs require basic botany for those without a background in botany or for those who would like a refresher class to brush up on their botanical skills. The instructor will be present 20 minutes in advance on each course session day so participants may ask questions before the session begins.

Courses held outdoors may require strenuous walking for extended periods on steep inclines for two or more miles on wet, rough, and/or slippery footing during windy, cold, hot, rainy or snowy days. Courses include risks, hazards and dangers that are integral to natural areas. Participants should bring appropriate clothing, equipment, footwear etc. for comfort in a variety of weather and trail conditions. Restrooms may be available at the trailhead, but will not be present anywhere else on the trail so participants are asked to plan accordingly.

Sessions will be held in almost any weather. Only in the event of extremely unusual weather (for example, a foot of snow or hazardous lightning) will class be canceled. If weather conditions may warrant cancellation, participants should call the county Extension office to see if class will be canceled. If a session is canceled, no make-up sessions are held due to potential scheduling conflicts. Make-up sessions are also not held for those who are not able to make a specific session.

## **Native Plant Master Certification Exam**

A certification exam is given in the field at the beginning of the third session of each course. Passing grade is a "C" or higher in order to count for either the Colorado Flora certificate or Native Plant Master certification. The exam is optional for participants who are not interested in certification although they may wish to do so as a personal test of their knowledge. Attendance at course sessions is also not required, so a participant may simply take the exam without attending any course sessions in order to "test out" and receive certification credit for the course.

The exam is conducted on the trail where participants are asked to identify living specimens and provide additional information. The exam covers only material from the first and second sessions. Participants may use the required textbook to complete the exam as one of the goals of the course is to teach participants how to use the text and to make notes in it of the date and location of the plants observed to use as a future memory aid. No other books (including the NPM Manual) and no glued or pasted items such as tabs or loose notes will be allowed during the exam. An electronic version of the text may be used during the exam but participants are not allowed to use images in the text, the internet or any other electronic materials during the exam. Because the exam is "open book", spelling of technical terms does count.

Scientific names should be those from the text. Grading of the exam is as follows:

- 90 – 100% = A, 80 – 89% = B, 70 – 79% = C, 60 – 69% = D, 59% or lower = F.
- A minimum of 12 and maximum of 14 species on the exam.

- Because there are 3 sub-questions (a – c) for each species, total points possible for this section of the exam is the number of species times 3.
- Incorrect answers are a full point off. A scientific name from another text loses one point if even if it is a formerly accepted name.
- Misspelling of a technical word counts one half point off.
- The grade is calculated by subtracting total points off from total points possible and dividing the result by the total points.

Participants are asked to evaluate the course after the first session on a session evaluation form. Participants are also asked to complete a course survey during the last session. This feedback is very important and will be used to modify future sessions and/or courses so they best serve participants' needs.

### REFUND POLICY

Refunds will be processed according to the following guidelines:

- 1) Cancellation at least four weeks prior - full refund less a 15% processing fee.
- 2) Cancellation at least two weeks prior - 50% refund.
- 3) Cancellation less than two weeks prior - no refund.

### COLORADO FLORA CERTIFICATE PROGRAM (NON-VOLUNTEERS)

Non-volunteers completing three Native Plant Master courses with a grade of "C" or higher on the optional exam will be awarded the Colorado Flora Certificate from the University sponsoring the Native Plant Master Program. There is no educational contact requirement for non-volunteers participating in the Native Flora Certificate Program.

### CERTIFIED NATIVE PLANT MASTER VOLUNTEER PROGRAM

#### Certification as a Native Plant Master

Recruitment for apprentice Native Plant Master volunteers is held on an annual or less frequent basis. Acceptance into the NPM volunteer program is a competitive process and is based on a demonstrated ability to make educational contacts. Typically, NPM volunteers are employed by, or volunteer for, public agencies or private businesses in a paid or volunteer role that includes educating the public.

Apprentice Native Plant Masters must receive a grade of "C" or higher for three different courses. In order to reduce overlap, it is recommended that courses at the same location or lifezone be taken in different months. There is no time limit on when the three-course requirement must be completed. Some courses may have prerequisites.

Apprentice Native Plant Masters may take courses in any county but must select a home county to report contacts. The home county will verify that the person has passed courses by contacting the other county. In no case should the individual report the same contacts to more than one county as this would be double counting.

Certification as a Native Plant Master, including a special pin, removable window sticker and patch, will be awarded upon successful completion of three Native Plant Master courses including 1) passing exams with a grade of C or higher and 2) cumulating a total of 60 educational contacts. The certificates are normally awarded once a year in December/January. NPM volunteers are eligible for a course/class fee discount in their home county as

determined by that county.

Biannual certification in future years may be maintained by: 1) teaching at least 120 people about Colorado plants during the two-year recertification period and reporting at least annually on those educational contacts, and 2) taking at least one NPM course or special class or an outside course or class on a related topic every two years.

### **Educational Contact Requirement**

The Extension office will send Educational Contact Record forms quarterly or at least annually for volunteers to report educational contacts and volunteer hours. Volunteers are asked to return the forms to help document that the Native Plant Master program has impact on the public. Education of the public is a key mission of the program and documenting contacts and volunteer hours also helps ensure continued funding for the program.

Contacts and hours can be reported at any time. If participants forget to include contacts or hours on the current quarterly report or would rather group contacts/hours, those should be included on the next Contact Record. Extension volunteers who report educational contacts/hours to another Extension program, (e.g. Master Gardener, Energy Master etc.) need to select the program to report contacts and hours to on a case-by-case basis in order to avoid double reporting.

Educational contacts and hours can be reported after the first session of the first course taken. Educational programs may be team-taught with another volunteer or staff member and each person may count *one half* of the total program participants towards their fulfillment of the educational contact requirement. Educational contacts and hours from programs taught for agencies other than the volunteer's home organization also may be counted.

In order to get credit for educational contacts, the title of the program given does not need to be specifically about native plants as long as some information learned from one or more Native Plant Master courses is used in the program. For example, educational contacts can be counted if the program is about noxious weeds using information from a Native Plant Master course.

Individual educational contacts made outside of formal public programs may also be counted. Examples of these are educational contacts about plants that made while roving on a park trail or at the front desk of the volunteer's organization. Individual contacts made that were not public, for example, wildflower walks or educational information provided to friends or neighbors may also be counted.

The cumulative educational contact requirement for certification or the biannual contact requirement to maintain certification can also be met by any one of the following: an actively maintained website or blog, published article or an aired TV show, radio or video program. Contacts for these media communications are not reported. Qualifying electronic media such as a blog or website must be published for at least 3 months in the reporting year.

### **Native Plant Master Status**

Certified Native Plant Master volunteers can go on sabbatical status by contacting the County Extension office. Sabbatical status means that the volunteer's Native Plant Master Certification is temporarily suspended and volunteers are not required to report any public contacts or volunteer hours. During sabbatical status volunteers receive only very important mailings (e.g. annual Impact Survey and notification of next year's courses). Certification can be reactivated at any time by contacting the Extension office and by fulfilling the annual teaching requirement. Volunteers on sabbatical do not need to retake courses to be reactivated. Those who wish to be dropped from the program (permanently forfeit certified status and receive no mailings) can only be reactivated by repeating the required coursework and educational contacts.

## **NPM Trainers**

Certified Native Plant Master volunteers may apply to become a trainer mentee who will work with an existing mentor trainer to observe and co-teach a portion of a Native Plant Master course or who will teach a new NPM special class within their area of expertise. Mentee selection is a competitive process based on botany background, teaching experience, references and status as a certified Native Plant Master. All mentee applicants are required to undergo a background check process. Mentees become trainers once they have successfully taught one or more NPM courses or classes. At the discretion of the county agent, individuals with significant plant expertise may become trainers without being certified Native Plant Masters but if they wish to teach NPM courses, they must take at least one Native Plant Master course as a student before becoming a mentee.

All trainer mentees who wish to teach NPM courses must review the written course curriculum and view the NPM course training videos at <http://www.extension.colostate.edu/jefferson/npm/npm-trai-vid.shtml>. Current trainers may use the contacts they make from teaching NPM courses and classes to fulfill the educational contact requirement. Current trainers are eligible for a course/class fee discount in their home county as determined by that county.

### **TRADEMARK**

Native Plant Master® is a registered trademark of Colorado State University. Certified Native Plant Master volunteers are certified for two years and may use the title “Certified Native Plant Master” only when the two-year certification period dates are included. Other land grant Universities wishing to join the program and use the trademark must receive permission and pay licensing fees to the Colorado State University NPM Program.

### **FOR MORE INFORMATION**

For more information about the Native Plant Master Program, please visit [www.nativeplantmaster.org](http://www.nativeplantmaster.org) or contact Colorado State University Extension in Jefferson County at 15200 West Sixth Avenue, Golden, CO 80401, phone: (303) 271-6620, fax: (303) 271-6644, email: [npmassistant@jeffco.us](mailto:npmassistant@jeffco.us).