

Are you looking for a way to share your gardening knowledge with others? Are you interested in finding a way to better serve the community? If so, The Botanic Garden (TBG) at Oklahoma State University has a place for you. Laura Payne, volunteer coordinator for TBG, is excited to announce applications are now being accepted for the 2014 OSU Cooperative Extension Horticulture Volunteer Program. Applications are due Jan. 10. "The Payne County Master Gardeners train alongside The Botanic Garden Ambassadors, and while the horticulture aspect of the training is identical, the two programs actually serve two very different, but related, functions to the garden," Payne said. The Master Gardeners is primarily an educational group dedicated to sharing gardening knowledge obtained through the OSU Cooperative Extension Service. The Botanic Garden Ambassadors help support TBG by staffing open houses and special events, give tours of the gardens, help with garden maintenance and serve as TBG's special representatives in the community. Training for both programs consists of 13, four-hour training sessions covering all aspects of horticulture. Sessions begin Jan. 17, 2014 and run through April 18. The groups will meet every Friday afternoon from 12:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the educational building located at The Botanic Garden at OSU, 3425 W. Virginia in Stillwater. There is no registration fee, however, the course materials are \$100. The educational material for this program is designed for the beginner or the advanced gardener. Topics to be covered include soils and composting, landscape design, plant disease, plant propagation, ornamentals, fruits and nuts, turf and weed identification, vegetables, woody ornamentals, entomology and pesticide safety. Ray Campbell, who has served as an Ambassador for a number of years, said gardening is a common denominator for people from all walks of life and encourages gardening enthusiasts to share their time and knowledge with others. "Regardless of social or economic class or gender of people, gardening is the equalizer. Put gardeners together regardless of their background and they find they have something in common," Campbell said. "You will find this true as a Botanic Garden Ambassador. One can not only learn more about their gardening interests and hone their own skills from the professionals

who work with the group, but also from sharing information from other ambassadors. The added benefit is to serve and share knowledge with visitors to the gardens in a variety of ways and activities.â€• Steve Miller, who also serves as an ambassador, said he especially enjoys the hands-on gardening learning experiences. â€œBeing an ambassador is a great opportunity to learn gardening information among the other fun-loving ambassadors,â€• Miller said. â€œWhere else can one learn so much while enjoying fellowship with others? Itâ€™s a wonderful opportunity to serve your community.â€• For more information about the Master Gardener Program, please contact Keith Reed, OSU Cooperative Extension horticulture specialist in Payne County, via email at keith.reed@okstate.edu, by phone at 405-747-8320 or visit him at the Payne County Extension Office, 315 W. 6th St., Suite 103, Stillwater. Payne has additional information about The Botanic Garden Ambassador program. She may be contacted via email at laura.payne@okstate.edu, by phone at 405-744-4531, or in person at the Horticulture Resource Center, 3425 W. Virginia in Stillwater. For application information, please contact Stephanie Larimer at 405-744-5404, or stephanie.larimer@okstate.edu.