



Cornell Cooperative Extension Tompkins County

Volunteer Job Description

Title: Master Composter Volunteer

Purpose:

Master Composters (MCs) are highly skilled composters who educate and enthuse the public about the benefits and methods of composting. The Master Composter Program includes evening training sessions, field trips, class projects and volunteering in the community.

Anticipated Audience:

Master Composters primarily work with adults. There are also opportunities to work with youth.

Responsibilities:

- Attend meetings to plan events, share information and prepare for presentations
- Plan and co-teach classes, slide shows and compost demonstrations
- Set up and staff interactive compost displays at community events
- Assist with composting at community sites (build bins, manage compost, maintain sites)
- Create fact sheets or posters, write articles for the public, promote composting on social media
- Provide technical assistance for on-site composting in group settings

Expected Results:

Master Composters actively promote the practice of composting in Tompkins County, thereby helping to divert compostable materials from the waste stream.

Training (Total 40 Hours):

Class Sessions

Ten 2-hour class sessions are held one evening per week from February to early-May. Topics include the importance of composting, the science and the mechanics, and outreach/education skills. Presentations by specialists and trained MCs provide instruction on theoretical and applied aspects of composting and education. MC trainees receive access to online informational materials. In addition to the classes, two field trips will be scheduled during the training period.

A deposit of \$60 is collected at the beginning of training to cover the cost of materials. Financial assistance is available for trainees in need. The training deposit is **fully refunded** upon completion of volunteer hours after training (see section below) thereby making the Master Composter Program FREE.

Practical Internship

During training, 20 hours of “practical internship” are required. The internship complements and reinforces the material learned in class. It includes *assisting* with the activities listed in the Responsibilities section (above), homework, experiments, field trips, and the creation of a compost mini-presentation. Master Composters in-training work in small groups to research, prepare, and deliver their mini-presentation to the class. There is also an option to plan an independent outreach project, which is usually implemented after training.

Volunteering After Training (Minimum of 20 hours):

After completion of training, new MCs are asked to complete at least 20 volunteer hours by the end of the calendar year (Dec 31). While the practical internship involves *learning* through volunteering and engaging in class projects, volunteering after training is more about *educating others*.

Activities may include those listed in the “Responsibilities” section above. Trained MCs can continue to support Program-sponsored activities, or they may assume responsibility for one or more independent project(s). These projects may be done alone or in collaboration with others. New projects must first be approved by the Program Manager to ensure that they fit within the Compost Program’s scope of work.

Program Support:

After training, program staff support MCs in their education and outreach activities for the remainder of their service. Program staff send out information about upcoming volunteer opportunities and how to sign-up for them. Communication between MCs and program staff is expected to occur in both directions.

Reporting:

MC trainees are responsible for entering their **practical internship hours** online as they are completed. Similarly, after training, MCs are responsible for entering their **volunteer hours** online as they are completed. Program staff have access to and may also input hours for volunteers when those hours have already been reported (i.e. on an event summary form).

Time Commitment:

Each trainee is expected to:

- Attend **ten 2-hour classes** – if a conflict arises, alternative means of instruction should be arranged with program staff
- Complete **20 hours of practical internship time** during the training period. This includes completing class homework & experiments, participating in field trips, volunteering at community events, creating a compost mini-presentation, and possibly designing an independent outreach project
- After training, complete and document a minimum of **20 volunteer hours** by the end of the calendar year, i.e. December 31

Qualifications:

- Basic interest in composting and community outreach
- Curiosity to expand understanding of the composting process
- Enthusiasm to share compost knowledge and skills with others
- Good communication skills – verbal or written
- Willingness to participate in a variety of Program-sponsored events
- Ability to honor the minimum time commitments to the Program
- All Tompkins County residents are eligible to apply

Benefits:

- Acquire new knowledge and skills shared by composting experts
- Reduce waste and produce some wonderful humus for gardening
- Improve teaching and leadership skills through community education
- Gain a personal sense of satisfaction by initiating community composting efforts
- Make new friends and work as a team with others who share similar interests

Level of Background Screening Required:

- [Cornell Cooperative Extension of Tompkins County Long Term Volunteer Application](#)
- [NYS Sex Offenders Registry & National Criminal History check](#)