



## *Greater Harmony Between Agriculture and the Environment* **Environmentally Responsible Gardening in Maricopa County**

### **Issue**

With close to 3 million people in Maricopa County, Arizona—a large percentage of them newcomers to the Sonoran Desert—there is a tremendous need for public education regarding appropriate selection, placement and care of plants. The Master Gardener program seeks to improve the health of plants and people while promoting environmental responsibility in the garden. It includes the efficient use of water, fertilizers and pesticides and the reduction of green waste.

### **What has been done?**

Two 17-week training sessions were held through the Arizona Cooperative Extension in 2000; 120 new Master Gardeners were trained. Using the multiplier effect, training of Master Gardener volunteers expands the coverage of county extension agents to fulfill needs throughout Maricopa County.

### **Impact**

Master Gardeners immediately give back to the community by teaching others what they've learned themselves about gardening and landscaping. In 2000, volunteers gave over 170 talks attended by more than 4,300 people. Participants said they improved their general knowledge about soils, turf, efficient irrigation, pruning, vegetables, native plants, wildlife habitats, citrus and fruit trees, ornamentals and botany.

As a result of educational outreach regarding pesticide use, Maricopa County Cooperative Extension learned, from a call-back survey, that 75 percent of patrons who had contacted them were willing to use alternatives to pesticides. Ninety-five percent of patrons contacted in the survey said they would contact Extension again with future horticultural questions.

About 400 Master Gardener volunteers donated 28,000 hours fielding 23,000 telephone calls at the main Extension office and three satellite locations in 2000.

### **Funding**

Smith Lever

### **Contact**

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