



District 10 Master Gardeners

Final Exam

2012

Exam Structure — There are two parts to this exam: five lengthy, 35-point and five short, 15-point questions. Choose two of each.

Exam Rationale — As we have said so often, these questions are actual Help Desk cases; and so this evaluation is based on problem solving, your ability to analyze these problems and create science research-based solutions.

Answer Format — Use any format, or integrate several formats for your responses: narrative, flow-chart, list, diagram, brochure, dialogue, horizontal or vertical linear sequence or any other format that lends itself to the problem.

Cite Sources

Use the Virginia Master Gardener manual as a primary source. Attribute all science research-based sources: manual, website, periodical, and book, with page and paragraph number. Use quotation marks to attribute all science research-based sources from credentialed persons in the field of horticulture and related areas like agriculture.

We want to see how you alone would handle these dilemmas and so group efforts, often referred to as collaboration or team effort are not allowed for this exam.

Lengthy Questions

1.) A homeowner plans to install four, 4' x 3' x 1' raised beds on his property for a vegetable garden. He/she emailed the Help Desk and wants to know what materials would make the best sides. Cite agencies, websites and Virginia Cooperative Extension (VCE) publications to which you would refer him/her and briefly paraphrase them.

2.) A Help Desk client living in Fluvanna County, Virginia asked this question by email. Since the client uses the Internet, provide him/her with online resources as well as a narrative. Question further if you think you need more information, or provide at least two alternative explanations and invite further email conversation. Remember to use information about weather for that region at that time.

“Do you know of any problems with Weeping Willows and Chrysanthemums?”

Our willow is about a year old and made a good transition from the nursery but then towards late summer had a fairly early (in my opinion) leaf drop and concerned me that perhaps there's something afoot with this tree.

It's probably about an eight-foot tall tree at this point. The hole it went into was prepared in the manner I found I've used in the past in terms of giving room for roots to penetrate the clay, etc. I have not "fed" the tree anything because I'm not entirely clear that this is worthwhile.

The reason I ask about the mums is that they are planted below the tree and I just thought I'd ask to rule that out. BTW, there seems to be no blight, not unusual bark color or aberrations nor are the leaves malformed in any way (from fungus, bugs, etc.).”

3.) A homeowner plans to establish a meadow where there had been a quarter-acre lush green lawn in front of the house facing the street. Provide a checklist, diagram or decision-making sequence and at least one online resource for the owner to use as a guide.

4.) A family has moved into a house on a quarter acre lot next to yours in late October. You notice that they are mowing and bagging their grass clippings and raking, blowing and bagging their leaves for landfill disposal along with other yard waste like pruned branches from shrubs. Their trash bin is often full while their recycling bin is used only occasionally. They've just mulched many areas of the yard with fresh shredded pine-bark. Some of the trees have "mulch volcanoes".

During the course of a friendly conversation they express their frustration with this additional yard work as they have just moved from a townhouse, where a homeowner association's grounds maintenance crew did these chores. They ask you, as a Master Gardener, what they can do to streamline, change or avoid these tasks.

5.) A young family of four has recently moved to Fluvanna County. They describe a one-acre yard with a strong stand of K-31 Tall Fescue, a few contractor-grade boxwoods around the house and no shade or ornamental trees. Extensive landscaping is planned and your advice is requested. Probe with at least five questions before offering any suggestions.

Short Questions

1. Five essential tools or equipment for a gardener new to Central Virginia: what would you recommend?
2. Briefly discuss three trusted information sources for gardeners in Central Virginia.
3. Create reminders (sequence, diagram, list, etc.) for yourself when talking about remedies often used in an integrated pest management (IPM) program for deer damage.
4. What basic principles would you follow when choosing ornamental grasses for a home landscape?
5. Why aren't my fruit or ornamental trees, indoor exotics, shrubs, annuals, perennials blooming? Create a list, diagram, sequence, dialogue, etc. of at least five basic issues to explore when confronted with this common question at the Help Desk. There are more than five but give yourself a starting point with that number.