



Models for Successful Mentoring Programs

This booklet was developed as an initiative of the Master Gardener Steering Committee. Its contents were coordinated by Joyce Mudrak, Chair of Mentoring subcommittee-Baldwin County MGA and contributors were Martha Cook-Shoals MG's, Sarah Pass-Blount County MGA, and Mary Pendley-MG's of North Alabama. This collection of local programs developed for Intern retention is compiled as examples of tested models for mentoring Intern MG's (May 2010).

Master Gardener Associations in other states have had success with mentoring programs that enhance the Cooperative Extension training experience and help to create a smooth and lasting transition to the local MG association. In Alabama, Baldwin County and Shoals County have successfully initiated their own mentoring programs.

The following suggestions can be used to develop a mentoring program that fits your individual county or region.

BENEFITS

Benefits to the Master Gardener organization:

- Faster and more effective induction to the Program and the local MGA
- Retention of membership
- Retention of volunteers for both your MGA and for ACES
- More productive volunteers – Interns are potentially more productive because they have “new eyes” on the operations and goals of the Program
- Increased involvement by Interns at the beginning keeps them involved longer

Benefits for the Intern:

- Enhances training and development as an MG volunteer
- Positive influence on their attitude
- Guides them through procedural obstacles
- Improves their results by challenging their assumptions

Benefits for Mentors:

- Satisfaction from helping others
- Enhances their knowledge too
- Increases their network by familiarity with all Interns
- Improves commitment and motivation to the local MGA and the Program

SUCCESSFUL MENTORS

- Always listen first, then advise
- Are approachable by e-mail or phone, or any other method that fits
- Initiate contact at least twice a month
- Share your experiences with the MG Program and local MGA
- Invite the Intern to attend special events with you
- Volunteer together
- Maintain an open mind, learn from each other
- Maintain confidences
- Are intermediaries if an intern has problems – i.e. illness, or family challenges
- If either partner needs help, contact the Mentor Coordinator, Class Leader or Extension Agent

OPPORTUNITIES

Mentors to the Interns have a unique opportunity to:

- Help set and reach goals
- Encourage professional volunteer behavior

- Build relationships between the ACES and the local MGA
- Offer friendship
- Listen to problems
- Lead by example
- Share knowledge
- Inspire

Mentoring succeeds when one person invests time, energy and personal involvement in the growth and ability of another. This partnership can become a friendship that lasts a lifetime.

Mentoring programs should be developed to suit the local Master Gardener association and needs of the Extension Office. The following shows examples for an informal mentoring program and a structured mentoring program.

INFORMAL MENTORING OPPORTUNITIES:

- Find one or more individuals who will work with the Extension Agent as the class leader/coordinator. This person or group will:
 1. Be at every class meeting during the training period to encourage the Interns
 2. Partner with the Agent and assist with class logistics
 3. Ensure that Interns are invited to monthly MGA meetings
 4. Ensure that Interns are aware of volunteer opportunities
 5. Make sure each Intern meets other MGA members during each gathering, meeting, or volunteer activity
- Host a special gathering for new Interns (Luncheon, picnic, Bar-B-Q, etc). Use this gathering to answer questions
 1. Local projects and member interests
 2. Volunteer hours reporting
 3. Dues, meeting dates
 4. Etc., etc.
- A special Intern gathering can be hosted before the new class starts or sometime during the series. These are opportunities to:
 1. Develop a class project for the Interns (as a whole group or divided into smaller groups). Or ask them to choose from a list.
 2. Visit gardens with Interns as a group
 3. Plan Master Gardener-Intern field trips (these are sometimes part of the class series too)
 4. Intern graduation at the Master Gardener monthly meeting that is 11 to 12 months after classes end.
 5. Offer alternating day and night MGA meetings month to month, or host quarterly meetings that accommodate.

6. A newsletter containing information on volunteer hours, CEU's and volunteer opportunities. Brag on Intern activities.
7. Develop a folder for Interns with Program and Project descriptions. Use the Service Report as a communication tool.
8. Encourage study groups

A STRUCTURED MENTORING PROGRAM:

- Establish a Mentor Program committee or team
- The Mentor Program committee should meet at least once with the Extension Agent responsible for your Program.
- Develop a time line for the activities prior to classes, during classes, and after the classes have ended
- Develop Mentor guidelines that fit your MGA
- Develop Intern guidelines that are realistic
- Suggestions:
 1. Establish an interview process. The committee/team decides how best to interview the MG applicants.
 2. This activity should help you learn about the Interns beyond the information obtained from a paper application form.
 3. Develop a script for the interviews; consistent, uniform communication starts everyone on the same page.
 4. Match Mentors and Interns by their locations, gender or other criteria you have decided.
- Evaluation of your mentoring program at the end of the year (this might be at the end of your class series or later)
 1. While recent activities are fresh is the best time to make changes and improvements for the following year
 2. This annual evaluation benefits everyone
 3. After the first two to three years your program should feel like it fits and need only minor adjustments each year

The following from the Baldwin County MGA and Shoals MGA offer examples of structured mentor programs

SHOALS MASTER GARDENER MENTOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

NEWSLETTER ARTICLE

As we prepare to say goodbye to 2009, I am excited about our new MG Intern class of 2010. The mentor program started mid-year in 2009 with almost half of the class requesting Mentors. They were matched with current MG's by gender and residential proximity. Graduation for the 2009 class was a day that all of our new members worked long hours to achieve. We are proud of each of you and glad to have you as members of the Shoals Master Gardeners.

The Mentor Program is designed so that the previous class will mentor the next new class. The new class of 2010 will need Mentors and so far, we have 22 applicants; meaning we will need 22 Mentors from the 2009 class. I hope you will all volunteer to help.

As Mentors you are not expected to know all the answers. The Mentor Program is designed to encourage Interns, teach them how to work the Helpline, be a friend at meetings, and get them started in our community projects.

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PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Purpose: ACES encourages the formation of local MGA's or groups to maintain a relationship with volunteers to assist the Extension Agent in meeting the horticulture educational needs of the community. The Mentor Program is designed to provide provisional members (Interns) support with an active MG, one on one additional training, and fellowship. This helps the Intern become familiar with community projects, responsibilities, Association operations and increase the level of involvement within the MGA.

Mentor Team: Mentor Coordinator, Assistant Mentor Coordinator, Class Coordinator (assistant to the Extension Agent for class management)

Mentor Selection: Comprised from the previous Intern class. If needed additional Mentors can be any other MG who volunteers. Mentors and Interns will be matched by gender, proximity of address and common interests.

Mentor Responsibilities:

1. Host a welcome luncheon one week before the new Intern class starts.
2. Encourage Interns to attend SMGA meetings and introduce Interns to other MG's at the meetings and at our community projects.
3. Participate with and teach the Intern how the Helpline works for their first two time slots.
4. Work with the Intern two or three times on approved projects that the Intern is interested to do.
5. Follow up with the Intern making sure that 25 hours are worked on the Helpline and 25 service hours on other projects are completed and reported prior to graduation.
6. Complete an evaluation form about this year's Mentor Program.
7. A class project with the Interns.

Intern Responsibilities:

1. Attend all training classes
2. Attend SMGA meetings
3. Work 25 hours on the Helpline
4. Work 25 hours on other approved service projects
5. Complete a class project with Mentor

SMGA TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDELINES

(conducted by the Shoals MG Mentor Program Team at least one month before classes start)

Purpose: To establish a relationship with the applicant, to discuss the purpose of the MG Program, give an overview of the Mentor Program, discuss time considerations, and answer any questions for the Intern.

1. Call the Intern applicant
2. Introduce yourself
3. Ask if this is a convenient time to talk
4. Start off by saying you're happy they have been accepted for the program. Tell them what fun our SMGA is and how they'll make new friends with similar interests.
5. Ask the Intern what they know about Master Gardener.... let them talk.

6. Ask the Intern if they know any MG's.... let them talk
7. Ask the Intern how they found out about the MG Program.... let them talk
8. Explain the purpose of Master Gardener – The SMGA is organized as a non-profit organizations. There are many local associations in Alabama; there is a state association (AMGA); and there is even an international organization. The purpose of each local association is to assist the Extension Agent (Chris Becker) in meeting the horticulture educational needs of the community. The title Master Gardener may not be used to help you with your job and you cannot charge for your services as a Master Gardener... let them talk.
9. Review the certification process starting with the classes:
 - a. Classes start the second Tuesday of January
 - b. Classes are held at the County Extension Office
 - c. Classes are from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.
 - d. Classes are on subsequent Tuesdays for 14 weeks
 - e. You will receive a large notebook with the class curriculum
 - f. Items you might want to bring to class are: a tote bag, additional paper for notes, pen/pencil, highlighter, paperclips, post-it notes, a calendar (etc)
 - g. SMGA meets monthly on the third Tuesday of the month and we encourage all Interns to attend. SMGA normally meets from 10:30 to 12:00/12:30. We have a guest speaker (tell a few you have enjoyed), business meeting and a pot luck lunch. However, for January thru March meetings, we meet from 12:30 to 2:30 so all Interns can attend. This will make three of your class days longer when you attend both the class and the SMGA meeting.
 - h. Membership payment is due at the first SMGA meeting you attend.
 - i. Do you have any questions?
10. Ask if the Intern knows anything about our Helpline; the second part of their certification process... let them talk. Explain the Helpline:
 - a. It is a service provided by MG and ACES. We answer questions from the public about home horticulture. Tell the Intern they are not expected to know all the answers to all the questions and that they will have a Mentor there for their first two work shifts. They will do research and/or talk to the Extension Agent to find answers. Then call the person back with information and suggestions.
 - b. We have an MG office at the Extension Office with two phone lines, computers and shelf references.
 - c. The Helpline is operational from March to October, 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. (five hour shifts), Monday thru Friday.

- d. Part of the Intern's certification process is to work five shifts (25 hours, or half of your required service hours) on the Helpline by the end of October.... Share some of your Helpline experiences.
 - e. After graduation and you become a Certified MG, we then ask you to work two shifts (10 hours) per year.
11. The third part of certification is the remainder of your required service hours. Interns need 25 or more volunteer hours additional to their 25 hours on the Helpline. Explain some of our working projects and some that you enjoy. Service hour credit is given for attending SMGA meetings too.
12. Graduation is in November and annual dues are \$20.
13. To help you achieve all of this, you will have a Mentor who completed certification just last year. Your Mentor will:
- a. Work with you the first few times you work the Helpline
 - b. Meet you at the regular SMGA meetings and introduce you to other members
 - c. Work with you on projects to ensure you complete your other 25 service hours
 - d. Answer questions you have or point you in the right direction for answers
 - e. After graduation you will then be asked to mentor a new Intern next year
14. Luncheon – We will have a luncheon one week (first Tuesday in January) before class starts. We'll meet at the Extension Office so you can see where we meet for classes. (Mentors bring side dishes and Extension provides the entree.) This gives everyone a chance to meet.... let them talk.
15. This month you will receive a letter in the mail confirming your acceptance into the MG Program and a telephone call from your mentor. Do you have any questions? If anything comes up before the luncheon, please feel free to call me or our Extension Agent, Chris.... Give the phone numbers.
16. Take a minute and share your excitement about MG, the work we do, and how happy we are that they have applied to the program.

SMGA MENTOR PROGRAM TIMELINE

July

- Prepare media info for the upcoming class that starts in January; including but not limited to newspaper, radio, flyers.
- Meet with Chris to prepare.

August

- Advertise for MG class to begin in January. Run newspaper ads & articles, and radio.
- Have all current members distribute flyers to local Co-ops, garden centers, community bulletin boards, senior centers, etc.
- Make them available at the August SMGA meeting.
- We accept applications through October 15.

September

- Take applications through October 15.
- Prepare Mentor packets - include four post cards with postage for Mentor/Intern correspondences, a luncheon invitation, mentor contact info with photo, and the class syllabus

October

- Meet with Chris to review applications.
- Mentor Coordinator and Assistant Mentor Coordinator begin interviewing applicants by phone (see guidelines)

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November

- Phone interviews should conclude by end of first week, November.
- Coordinate with Chris to check for any last minute applicants.
- Mentors and Interns are matched before the November SMGA meeting where Mentor Coordinator announces time for a Mentor meeting.
- Coordinator meets with Mentors before ACES December holiday break. Mentor packets are distributed. Mentors complete the luncheon invitations and give them to Chris for mailing in December/January.
- Welcome letters to Interns include confirmation of their acceptance to the MG Program and gives specifics for January Intern luncheon.

December

- Send luncheon invitations

January

- Mentors should follow up with Interns to invite them to the luncheon by telephone.
- Luncheon is hosted by ACES and SMGA at the Extension Office. Mentors prepare side dishes and Extension provides the meat.
- Attendees: local Extension Agent(s), all MG coordinators, Mentors, and Interns
- Purpose: an informal meeting for Interns to meet each other and the members of the local MG network
- Everyone should have a name tag
- Class begins the second Tuesday
- Mentors should personally encourage Interns to attend the SMGA meeting

February

- Classes continue
- Mentors encourage Interns to attend SMGA meeting
- Prepare for Helpline season with advice and tips

March

- Classes conclude
- Mentors make plans to work with Interns on Helpline
- Mentors encourage Interns to attend SMGA meeting
- Mentors make plans to work with Interns on their project

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April

- Mentors stay in touch with Interns concerning Helpline commitment and assist them as necessary
- Mentors encourage Interns to attend SMGA meeting
- Mentors make plans to work with Interns on their project

May - same as April

June - same as May

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE BALDWIN COUNTY MG MENTORING PROGRAM

(A program developed by Sherry Arnold, Joyce Mudrak and Laurie Reddinger)

Recently the guidance of a Mentor has become a welcome tool. Mentoring has gained widespread support and is common in schools, corporations and professional and social associations.

In Baldwin County the Intern Class Coordinator (assistant to the Extension Agent for class management), Joyce Mudrak saw a need for a mentoring program to assist the MG Interns through not only their class time, but also to ensure their successful integration into the Baldwin County MGA. In 2008 a pilot program was introduced.

For the 2009 Interns, Sherry Arnold was asked to formalize the program to clarify the purpose and process of mentoring, and to generate stated goals, definitions and guidelines. A Mentor Team consisting of Joyce, Laurie Reddinger, and Sherry as Team Coordinator was created. The Team approach was essential in successfully developing a new program. In effect, the three Team member mentoring each other; helping to stay focused; spotting pitfalls; editing and supporting each other's work.

The Team drew from the most recent graduates of certified MG's for the first group of Mentors. They were matched with Interns by preference to gender and home residence proximity. The Team met with the Mentor volunteers to share a roadmap to success. A packet of information was provided which included guidelines and additional suggestions were discussed. Top on the "to do" list was the creation of an opportunity for the Mentors and their Interns to meet prior to the beginning of the first MG class. Invitations were provided for a Welcome Luncheon. Each Mentor sent this to their Intern and included their contact information. They added an additional welcome note as desired.

The luncheon was a casual meeting with a minimum of official business. Both Mentors and Interns enjoyed pleasant conversation and shared common interests with new friends. Each Mentor gave a short introduction of him/herself and talked of their involvement in the Baldwin County MGA. The Interns then shared their own hopes and expectations for the upcoming class and participation in the BCMGA. The new Interns expressed feeling welcomed and part of something special. It became clear to the Mentor Team that they had achieved one of their goals: immediate involvement of the Interns in the BCMGA.

Additional information about the BCMGA Mentor Program is available to any interested MGA. Contact Sherry Arnold: sugarxena@gmail.com.

BALDWIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS MENTOR PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITIES

Established 2008 – Joyce Mudrak

Refined 2009 – Sherry Arnold, Laurie Reddinger, Joyce Mudrak

Baldwin County MG Mentor Program is now an ongoing.

Purpose of the Program: The purpose is to encourage Interns to take an active role in becoming BCMG's by providing support and guidance during the learning process.

Mentor Selection: The previous Intern class members mentor the incoming Interns of the following year. If additional Mentors are needed, BCMG volunteers are used.

Mentors and Interns will be matched according to gender and home residence proximity.

Mentors meet with Mentor Coordinator prior to the new sessions to review the outline of the program.

The Class Coordinator (assistant to the Extension Agent in class management) is part of the Mentor Program Team.

Responsibilities: A welcome luncheon will be hosted by the Mentors. It will be held the week before the class begins. The luncheon is an informal event. Those attending should include: Interns, Mentors, Mentor Team and other Volunteer Workers assisting the class sessions.

Mentor responsibilities include: inviting their Intern to the luncheon, staying in touch at least 2x per month, informing the Mentor Coordinator or Class Coordinator of any issues, completing and end of class report and reviewing the information packet provided.

THE BALDWIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENER MENTOR

Mentor: a wise and trusted counselor

Mentor's Role: As a Baldwin County MG, your experience, knowledge and volunteerism are an invaluable resource to an MG Intern. Pairing the newcomer Intern with a Mentor provides support, guidance, and encouragement during the learning process. It is an excellent pathway to networking and becoming familiar with the BCMGA organization.

Rationale: Mentoring succeeds when one person invest time, energy and personal involvement in the growth and ability of another person. In educational training, mentored individuals have a 50% higher success rate than those without mentors. The persistent encouragement builds confidence for the Intern. You can make a significant **impact** on our new Interns!

A Successful Mentor Program: Success involves initiative on the part of the mentor and the Intern. Use your **talents** to help set and reach goals, set a professional tone, listen to problems or difficulties, share, lead, and inspire Interns to grow and learn. What does that look like? Send a card, check on their progress, make a phone call, invite to lunch, join for a class meeting, meet after class, carpool, or volunteer together.

Do what you can do to help the Intern feel GREAT about their experience in the MG program!

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MENTOR PROGRAM TIMELINE

Prepare a Mentor Program proposal for your Master Gardener organization. It should be clearly stated that this program will be linked to the MG Intern class. Timing should be appropriate for the following steps and considerate of other local logistics.

Six months prior to class beginning:

1. Form a Mentor Program Team consisting of a Mentor Coordinator, Class Coordinator (assistant to the Extension Agent for class management) and one additional member (a recent graduate, previous Mentor, and/or the Extension Agent).
2. Verify that the committee is available and prepared to work diligently.
3. Be open and ready to receive input from all team members, and make new decisions by vote if necessary.

Five months prior to class beginning:

The Mentor Team should meet to:

1. Determine how many Mentors and alternates will be needed.
2. Mentor Coordinator should contact each potential Mentor Volunteer to discuss general responsibilities of a Mentor.
3. Organize a future meeting with the Mentors. Prepare a meeting agenda and a packet of information for each Mentor. The meeting should take place approximately two months prior to class beginning.
4. Plan a Familiarity Luncheon for the Interns. Schedule this one week prior to the first class. Decide who will provide lunch. Consider asking someone beyond the Team to coordinate the menu.
5. Prepare stamped invitations to the Familiarity Luncheon with a request for RSVP. Mentors will later send invitations to their assigned Interns.

Three months prior to class beginning:

1. Place an informative article in your Master Gardener newsletter.
2. If applicable, arrange for at least one Team member to participate with the Intern Nomination Committee.
3. Mentor/Intern matching should occur as soon as possible after the Interns have been identified for the next class. Match-up preference is 1) same gender if possible and 2) home residence proximity.

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Two months prior to class beginning:

1. The Mentor Team and the Mentor Volunteers meet. Team members address aspects of the Mentor Program and goals.
2. A packet including pertinent information should be provided to each Mentor and alternate.
3. The Familiarity Luncheon invitation should be given to the Mentors.
4. When the Mentor/Intern match-up has been made, provide Mentors with Intern personal contact information.

One month prior to class beginning:

1. Mentor Coordinator should remind Mentors to mail the invitations to their Intern. The invitation should be acknowledged by RSVP. If the Intern has not responded in ten days the Mentor should contact their Intern via phone or e-mail. Mentors should keep the Mentor Coordinator informed.
2. An early personal contact is encouraged to form the nexus which is at the heart of a good mentoring experience. The Mentor Coordinator should follow up as needed.

One week prior to class beginning:

1. The Familiarity Luncheon should take place. There should be a minimum of official business. This is the opportunity for the Mentors and the Interns to get to know each other.
2. Temporary name tags should be given to Interns as they enter. Everyone should sign in for the record.
3. Allow some time for the partners (Mentor/Intern) to find each other and discover common interests.
4. The Intern Class Coordinator should moderate this occasion. There should be few announcements and minimal introductions.
5. The Mentors should be asked to stand and share their Master Gardener experiences and then introduce their Intern. Interns speak of their hopes and expectations for the upcoming class and participation in the Master Gardener Program.
6. Each Mentor and Intern should be paired together during lunch.

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After class begins:

1. The Mentor Team should support the Mentors as the class progresses. It should be made clear that any concerns should be shared with the Mentor Coordinator or other Team members.
2. The Mentor Coordinator should stay in touch with all Mentors to keep communication flowing.

After the class ends:

1. Recognition of the Mentor Volunteers should be made in an appropriate manner by the team. An example of a certificate is the last page of this booklet (p. 20). An anonymous survey should be completed by Mentors and Interns to identify any problems and to improve the program for the future.

MENTOR GUIDELINES AND SUGGESTIONS

- Be positive and welcoming. Keep a good attitude with regard to the Master Gardener Program, BCMGA and ACES. Set a good example by always wearing your name tag at Master Gardener functions.
- Discuss the best method/place/time to contact you.
- Occasionally come to class. Maintain contact **at least** twice per month. Carpool with your Intern if feasible.
- Share your experience and knowledge. Suggest resources; books, web sites, local gardens, nurseries, etc. Learn from each other.
- Volunteer with your Intern on their first mission.
- Encourage friendship beyond advice. Have lunch together. Be a good listener. Maintain confidences.
- On your Intern's "bring the snack" day, participate with them.
- Use your interaction with the class to network with other Interns. The more Master Gardeners they become acquainted with, the easier their volunteering and transition into the BCMG association will be.
- Keep notes for your input at the end of the class, pros and cons, so that we may continue to improve the Mentor Program.
- Encourage your Intern to sign up **EARLY** for the Info-Line. Go with them for their first session or two.
- Don't give direct answers to tests. Suggest information to help them find the answer for themselves. Contact the Mentor Coordinator or the Class Coordinator if you have a question or concern.
- And finally: Make your Intern feel that they are so lucky to have you. They are!

INTERN GUIDELINES & SUGGESTIONS

- Welcome your mentor's attention and involvement. Successful relationships are built on investments from both parties.
- Remember to wear your name tag at all functions.
- Discuss the best method/place/time to contact you.
- Occasionally invite your mentor to class. Carpool with your mentor if feasible.
- Ask about resources such as web sites, reference books, local gardens or nurseries. Ask about your mentor's experiences in volunteering, gardening, belonging to the Master Gardeners Association, and working with Extension.
- Invite your mentor to join with you on your first volunteer activity.
- Encourage friendship beyond advice. Have lunch together. Be a good listener. Maintain confidences.
- Ask your mentor to assist you on your "bring the snack" day.
- Introduce your mentor to other Interns, and get to know other mentors. You will be welcomed by all.
- Keep notes for your input at the end of the class, pros and cons, so that we may continue to improve the Mentor Program.
- Invite your mentor to join you for your first Info-Line session.
- Don't expect your mentor to give you answers to tests. They will, though, have suggestions on how to find the answers yourself. Contact the Mentor Coordinator, Class Coordinator, or Extension Agent if you have a question or concern.
- And finally, make sure your mentor knows that you appreciate their help and guidance.

(2009)

MENTOR/INTERN PROGRAM

END OF YEAR EVALUATION

A. POSITIVE COMMENTS:

B. NEGATIVE COMMENTS:

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C. SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT:

Thank you so much for being part of this program.

Mentor Volunteer Certificate of Achievement

*With great appreciation for your volunteer efforts,
the Alabama Cooperative Extension System of Baldwin
County, Alabama, the Baldwin County Master Gardeners
Association and the Mentor Team present to*

(Susie Somebody)

*This award for excellent service as a Mentor for the
Master Gardener Class of (2009)*

Sherry Arnold, Mentor Coordinator

Joyce Mudrak, Class Coordinator

Laurie Reddinger, Asst. Class Coordinator