Search for Excellence (SFE) is the annual recognition program of the Iowa Master Gardener program. Applications are judged by the Master Gardener Advisory Committee; there is no limit to the number of winners each year. The objective of the SFE is to award Master Gardeners for their impactful and innovative projects. Short-term impacts on the target audience can be recorded as changes in behavior, attitude, practices, or knowledge. All volunteer projects led by Master Gardeners are significant to their communities, but not all are SFE projects. SFE is designed to recognize outstanding group projects, not an individual who does outstanding work.

GUIDELINES

Project submissions must meet the following six guidelines to qualify for SFE awards:

1. **Category:** Please choose the category that best fits the project. *Groups may submit only one project per category.* Past winners are not eligible to submit the same project. However, previous submissions that did not win are encouraged to apply again with additional data suggested by reviewers. Multiple submissions per county are permissible by submitting separate projects in different categories, which include:
   - Youth/School Garden Programs
   - Demonstration/Research Garden (applied scientific methodology)
   - Workshop or Presentation
   - Underserved Audience (i.e. seniors, low-income families, people with disabilities, minority groups, incarcerated individuals)
   - Mass communications (i.e. newsletters, television, radio, social media, website, publications)

2. **Project Duration:** Projects will be judged on their merit from work done through the end of 2015. Projects entered must have completed at least one full year. If the project has been in operation for less than 1 year, the judging committee will not consider it.

3. **Replication (15 points):** A goal of SFE is to share the excellent ideas and programs so that other Master Gardener groups can replicate them. For example, a 20-acre botanic garden would be difficult to replicate, but the gardening ideas inside it could be easy to create somewhere else. A step-by-step description of how to do this would be a great way to share your project.

4. **Practicality (15 points):** A SFE project is one that is easy to use and fits well for the situation for which it is intended. How well did the educational goals meet the needs of the
target audience? How were the needs determined?

5. **Originality (10 points):** What are the added touches that make this program unique or innovative, or that reflect the personalities of the Master Gardeners who are working with it?

6. **Compatibility (60 points):** Alignment with ISU Extension & Outreach and Master Gardener missions is very important. This category amounts to 60% of the total points, broken down in the following five sub-categories:
   a. How clear was the horticulture education component of the project (15 points)?
   b. Did the project extend the resources of ISU Extension and Outreach (5 points)?
   c. Were the significant impacts of the project measured and described well (25 points)?
   d. Were the results worth the volunteer efforts put forth in the project (10 points)?
   e. How clear and complete was the entry (5 points)?

**APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS**

*Master Gardeners involved in the project, not Extension staff, must write the Search for Excellence project application. Use the application pdf template.*

**COVER PAGE:**
- County/Counties Involved:
- Master Gardener completing application: Name, E-Mail, Address, & Phone
- Extension Staff approving the application: Name, Title, E-Mail, Address, Phone, Signature to approve
- Category for submission (choose one):
  - Youth/School Garden
  - Demonstration/Research Garden
  - Workshop or Presentation
  - Underserved Audience
  - Mass communications

**NARRATIVE:**
- Name of Project:
- Project Start Date:
- County Name:
- Who was the target audience for this project? How were they identified?
- What were the goals of this project? (Maximum of five goals)
- Describe the planning process and implementation of the project. What were the results? (150 words or less)
- What are the impacts and significant learning? (Maximum of 5 outcomes - quantitative measures of outcomes and impacts rather than anecdotal evidence)
- What was the total budget for the project and how was it funded? (If applicable, list funding sources.)
- List any partnerships associated with the project and their support roles.
- Names of active Master Gardeners directly involved in the project. If the project is selected as an award winner, this list will be used to generate the award certificates.
IMAGES:
- Select up to six high resolution images to submit with the application. Please make sure that Iowa State University Extension photo releases are on file at the county office for each person photographed.

SUBMITTING YOUR APPLICATION
Please follow the following guidelines to submit your application:

1. Provide an emailed verification letter directly from the Extension Master Gardener Coordinator. The Extension Master Gardener Coordinator’s email must verify that:
   a. Master Gardeners involved are currently in good standing
   b. Photo releases are on file for all individuals in the images
   c. All application documents have been reviewed by the Extension staff person
   d. The deadline for this verification is the same date as the application deadline, March 15, 2015. Any project submitted without this document will be disqualified.

2. The Extension Master Gardener Coordinator must e-mail the verification letter along with the application and pictures to: mgardener@iastate.edu. Please put SFE and the MG county program in the subject line of all e-mails. Direct questions to Susan DeBlieck at deblieck@iastate.edu.

3. Up to 6 high-resolution digital photos (5 megapixels or greater) in JPEG format should be submitted with the pdf application. Do not send handouts or other large files with this application. Submit only the items listed in instructions above; any extra files, extra pictures, handouts etc. will be ignored.

4. Winners will be notified after the spring Master Gardener Advisory Committee meeting, at which the winners will be selected. Individuals involved in the winning projects will receive a certificate of recognition and each winning project will be awarded a plaque to display in the county extension office.