

SAMPLE NOMINATION FOR HONORARY MASTER GARDENER

West Virginia Master Gardener Association Format for Nominations for the Honorary Master Gardener Award:

Date of Nomination: January 10, 2007

Name of Individual: Thomas E. Branch

Affiliation (if employed or representing another organization/company): Branch & Kitts Construction Company, Owner

Address: 30 Morningstar Lane, Towson, WV, 20000

Phone Number: 304-600-0000 (Office), 304-600-0001 (Home)

Name of Person Submitting Nomination: Jane B. Buzz, Chr. Activities Committee

Email address: jbbuzz2@aol.com

Group from which the nomination is being made: Green County Master Gardeners

Nature of Contribution:

It is with pleasure that I nominate Thomas E. Branch for the WVMGA's Honorary Master Gardener Award. Mr. Branch has supported our local Master Gardener program in many ways over the past few years. Following are several significant examples of how he has supported and sustained the local Master Gardener program over time.

During 2004, our local group decided to establish a demonstration garden on property owned by the WV Extension Service, adjacent to the Green County Extension Service Office. This land had been neglected for years, and required extensive clean up before we could put the garden in. At that time, we identified potential sources of equipment. Our president called Mr. Branch and asked about the possibility of his company assisting us to clear the land. We shared that we had limited funds to pay for his services. Mr. Branch quickly and without hesitation said he would meet with us and look at the job, before he would make a commitment. After our meeting with him, and to our surprise, he volunteered to commit "in-kind" resources to the project. On several Saturdays we used B&K Construction Company equipment (backhoes, plows, rot tillers, and his trucks to clear the land, haul away debris, and prepare the ground for the garden. Along with several of his men, he worked each Saturday, taking a keen interest in the project and asking many questions about the Master Gardener program.

Early in the spring of 2005, the master gardener group was spending a Saturday morning working in the demo garden and Mr. Branch stopped by to see how we were doing. John Willow, Green County Extension Agent, told Mr. Branch we were considering adding raised beds to the garden. Mr. Branch said, "Let me help." and help he did. His company supplied lumber, and hauled in top soil and mulch. Again he was on site to watch this happen.

Our relationship with Tom Branch continued to thrive. As a member of the local Rotary Club, he suggested to the program committee that they invite a representative of the local MG group to come and speak about educating people on horticulture topics and encouraging people to grow vegetables. He was also a member of the city's planning commission, and when discussion arose about the constant eroding of the city's river banks, he suggested that we use the expertise of the Extension Service and master gardeners to explore solutions to the erosion problem and stabilizing the river bank, as well as beautifying the area with plants that would support the banks. I believe that this was a turning point for our chapter and promoted the image of master gardeners as a viable source of education and expertise within our community.

In January 2006, our local group petitioned city government to allow us to establish a community garden project in Brookview, a section of our city that provides homes for many low-income families. It was our hope that by establishing family garden plots, we could teach people to garden and put high quality, fresh foods on their tables. Mr. Branch became our advocate on the city council, and again because of his help we were able to get permission to start the garden. Again, he volunteered use of his company equipment, and we would be able to help our families plant their first garden in May of 2006. Without his assistance, we do not know if this project would have been approved, or done with such ease.

Mr. Branch frequently stops by the Extension Office, and if we are out working in the community as a group is always stops by. We have extended an invitation to him numerous times to become a Master Gardener, but he just chuckles, and says he is just fine doing what he can do to support us.

Outcome Measures

Without his voluntary support and “in-kind” contributions in terms of labor, equipment and supplies the projects described would have taken considerably more time and money to do. The advocacy role that he has freely chosen to be, has really helped to get the word out in our community about the Master Gardener Program. Although we cannot validate why, we have seen an increased interest in taking the formal Master Gardener Course, and have seen growth in our local Master Gardener organization. We have seen an increasing number of requests for assistance, including kindergartens that now have children’s gardens, patio gardening and other educational topics.

Although Mr. Branch is quick to say he doesn’t have a “green thumb” – he loves to see things grow. And we know our county group has grown, flourished, and touched more lives within our community because of his support.

Knowledge of WVU Extension Service MG Program

Tom Branch over time has learned much about the Master Gardener Program, and our goals- to grow healthy communities. He has been able to articulate to other groups the value and contributions that Master Gardeners can make to the community. This is evident by the number of requests for assistance that we have received over the past 3-4 years.

Attachments:

Letter of Support from Green County MG Association President
Letter of Support from Green County Extension Agent

Sample Letter of Support #1

Letter of Support

Date of Nomination: January 12, 2007

Name of Individual: Thomas E. Branch

Affiliation (if employed or representing another organization/company): Branch & Kitts Construction Company, Owner

Address: 30 Morningstar Lane, Tollson, WV, 20000

Phone Number: 304-600-0000 (Office), 304-600-0001 (Home)

I have had the opportunity to read the narrative/nomination written by Jane Buzz and know the facts as stated to be accurate.

As president of the Green County Master Gardener Association from 2005-2007, I had many opportunities to talk with Mr. Branch about the purpose and goals of the Master Gardener Program. He was always interested in what we were doing within the community and county. Because of his sharing information about the Master Gardener program with his teacher/daughter we got our first request to do a children's vegetable garden at the daycare/kindergarten at which she teaches. It was a joy to work with 4-6 year olds teaching them about the soil, planting, and caring for the carrots, cukes, tomatoes and squash they grew in that garden and picked and had a part of their lunch meal at the daycare. The children were so proud of their success and we hope will grow up wanting to grow their own vegetables for their families. The following year, we had requests from two other daycares for the same program.

It is my belief that Thomas Branch would be most deserving of the WVMGA's Honorary Master Gardener Award.

Respectfully submitted,

Lora Loom

President, Green County Master Gardener Association

Sample Letter of Support #2

**West Virginia University Extension Service
200 East Live Street,
Tollson, WV 25000**

Letter of Support

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I have had the opportunity to read the narrative/nomination written by Jane Buzz and know the facts as stated to be accurate.

As the Green County Extension Agent and advisor to the Green County Master Gardener Association, I had many opportunities to work with Mr. Branch on Master Gardener, community betterment projects. Although he runs a large construction company, and has numerous projects going on within a three county area, he has always shown an interest in seeing this county grow and flourish. He is well known in the county- a family man who is seen frequently coaching little league ball, a member of Rotary involved in many of their projects. He is a member of the Green County Soil Conservation group, and participates in their annual county clean up. He serves as a deacon in his church. As a member of the city council, he has worked diligently to improve the playgrounds and parks in our area. From my perspective the most remarkable thing about Mr. Branch is his ability to see needs and without hesitation to offer help. In my conversations with him, he has demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the university's extension service in the community and the master gardener program. He is a most deserving nominee for the West Virginia Master Gardener Association's Honorary Master Gardener Award.

Lester Look

WVU Extension Agent, Green County

FINAL TIPS

Remain aware of deadlines for nominations. The official deadline for these nominations is 2 months before the Annual Conference. So get them mailed to the Awards Committee chairman no later than the first week in March when the conference is in the spring.

Mail the nomination and 2 letters of support together as a packet.