

Tillamook County Master Gardener's Association Procedures

2.5

Subject: BUS TOURS

Purpose: To describe the tasks necessary to arrange and conduct bus tours. The tours are considered a community service more than a fund raiser.

Task 1 The committee of two (2) or more persons is appointed by the President. The committee meets periodically and reports to the Board.

Task 2 **Transportation Rates:** Contact the bus company early in the year and as needed during the year to determine hourly rates. If fuel prices rise dramatically during the year, rates are likely to increase also.

Task 3 **Bus tour binder:** A binder is kept in the Master Gardener's office at the OSU Extension Office. It contains a list of tours by date and by location as well as garden and nursery brochures and articles. It also has contact information and copies of tour itinerary, press release, bus bill, and planning notes for each tour. The committee is responsible for keeping this current.

Task 4 **Tours:** Bus tours are offered approximately four (4) times a year usually between April and October. Most tours are on a Wednesday or Saturday. Be sure the site can accommodate a bus. Committee members may take turns being the tour leader and organizer. Begin planning early in the year.

The **tour leader** contacts the place(s) to be toured, arranging date and time. A tour can be one location only, such as The Oregon Garden, or morning and afternoon tours at different locations. Sometimes a guide will be available at the site. Tour leader keeps a record of contact person, phone number, address, driving directions, etc. If a nursery, ask if a discount is available to our group. Sometimes -10% is offered. When scheduling a tour, ask for nearby restaurant recommendations. If there is an entrance fee, ask for a group rate.

Task 5 **Transportation for tour:** Tour leader contacts the bus company to make sure a bus and driver are available and asks that it be put on their calendar. Provide their office with a list of dates, times, location, etc. as soon as possible. Confirm that hourly rates are current. About a week prior to the tour, it is important to confirm the tour is a "go" or "cancelled". Tour group is usually 18 or more persons. After checking with the Extension office staff for head count, give that information to the bus company and confirm the bus availability.

Task 6 **Driving Directions:** The tour leader is responsible for providing driving directions to the bus driver. Ask the tour site contact person about a suggested driving route or use an internet mapping program. Being personally familiar with the route will make the drive go more smoothly.

Task 7 **Lunch** is almost always "no-host". The exception would be when lunch is included in the tour fee such as The Thyme Garden Herb Co. meal. Tour chair determines if lunch is available at the tour site or if the group will go to a restaurant. Try to locate a restaurant near

Tillamook County Master Gardener's Association Procedures

the tour site which can accommodate a bus. If not familiar with restaurants in the area, ask the tour site contact person for ideas, others on the committee, or check the internet. Be considerate of meal costs and menu choices since some taking our tours are on a fixed income. Be sure the restaurant can serve a large group in a timely manner. Sack lunch can always be brought on the bus.

Questions to ask: will the gratuity be included; order off of the regular menu or a specific menu; what is the price range, is there room to park a bus, will the group be seated together.

Task 8 **Tour cost** is dependent upon estimated bus cost, entrance fees, parking fees, etc., plus 15% to 18% to be sure we at least break even. It has been customary to allow tour leaders two (2) seats per trip at no charge, however, they do pay entrance fees, etc. If more than 2 persons on the committee, they take turns.

Task 9 **Press Release & Itinerary:** Tour leader writes an **article/press release** which includes names of tour sites, date, time, location, brief description, lunch info, etc. The **itinerary** includes tour sites, date, departure location and time, morning rest stop; estimated time of arrival at tour site, lunch, tour cost, etc. (See examples in tour binder) Four (4) to six (6) weeks prior to tour, these are to be submitted to the Extension Office for editing and distribution to local radio and printed publications. Direct questions to the Extension Office staff person who handles this.

Task 10 **Sign up:** People wishing to take the tour will sign up and pay at the Extension Office. Tour leader will check with staff periodically to see how this is progressing and will pick up a copy of the sign-up sheet a few days prior to the tour.

Task 11 **On tour day,** the leader arrives at the bus lot at least 15 minutes early. Begin loading as soon as the bus arrives. Using the tour sign-up sheet, check off names as people board. Since keeping on schedule is necessary, do not wait long for people who are not there by the designated time. Always do a head count or roll call at each bus stop during the trip.

Task 12 **Income and Expenses:** Extension staff will collect all tour fees and give money to the club treasurer. If money is needed for entrance fees or other tour expenses, make prior arrangements for a check from the club Treasurer or the leader may pay and turn in receipts for reimbursement. Following the tour, the bus company will mail a bill to the Master Gardeners PO Box for the treasurer to pay. It is important for the tour leader to communicate tour dates and anticipated expenses with the treasurer. Request periodic account balance details from the treasurer. This helps determine if fees charged for the tours are appropriate.

Task 13 **Following the tour,** the leader files related trip notes in the tour binder. Send thank you notes to the places toured. Committee critiques the tour and notes if any changes are needed for future tours.

For help with any problem that may arise, refer to: _____.

Author: Louise Bogard. Approved by TCMGA board: 1/15/2009.
(Date)