



Department of Pesticide Regulation



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February 4, 2015

PML 15-02

TO: County Agricultural Commissioners
SUBJECT: MAINTENANCE GARDENER SURVEY RESULTS

**Licensing
Maintenance
Gardeners**

The Department of Pesticide Regulation (DPR) administers roughly 100 maintenance gardener (MG) exams as part of nearly 3,500 people who take a licensing exam each year. Nearly 17,000 MGs are thought to be applying pesticides without a Qualified Applicator Certificate, category Q (QAC-Q). DPR is developing a strategy to provide MGs more information about certification and provide more opportunities for MGs to take the exam.

**Maintenance
Gardener
Certification
Response**

In September 2014, DPR sent out a survey to all County Agricultural Commissioners (CAC) that focused on how to encourage MGs to become certified and maintain their certification. The CAC response was overwhelming and provided valuable feedback about MGs in each county. The results are available on request to the counties. The following is a brief description of the responses grouped by the five area groups: Northern California, Sacramento Valley, San Joaquin Valley, Central Coast, and Southern California.

**Northern
California Area
Group**

Based on the responses from eight counties, most are interested in administering the MG exam at the local level. On average, county staff reported that there are 27 uncertified MGs performing pest control work within each of the Northern counties, while the average registration per county is 11. To increase awareness of MG certification, the majority of counties suggested sending information directly to MGs and displaying information at 'big box' retailers. To expand MG certification, most counties suggested making the exam locally available in English and Spanish and estimated the costs to do so to be in the \$30-50 per exam range. Although there are several reasons presented as to why MGs are not renewing their certificates, the lack of enforcement is believed to be the biggest barrier. To keep MGs certified the majority of the counties would be willing to offer training or expand their current training tailored to MGs with support from DPR.

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Sacramento Valley Area Group

Based on the responses from 12 counties, the majority are interested in administering the MG exam at the county level. On average, county staff reported that there are 231 uncertified MGs performing pest control work within each county of the region, while the average registration per county is 31. To increase awareness of MG certification, the majority of counties suggested displaying information at 'big box' retailers. To expand MG certification, the Sacramento Area Group suggested making the exam locally available in English and Spanish and considered a cost range of \$31 - \$50 per exam to be reasonable. Although there are several reasons MGs are not renewing their certificates, language is believed to be the biggest barrier. To keep MGs certified, the majority of counties would offer training or expand their current training tailored to MGs with support from DPR.

San Joaquin Valley Area Group

Based on the responses from eight counties, all are interested in administering the MG exam at the county level. County staff reported that there are up to 400 uncertified MGs performing pest control work within some of the counties, while the average registration per county is only 27. To increase awareness of MG certification, the majority of counties suggested sending information directly to MGs, sending information to homeowners, and displaying information at 'big box' retailers. To expand MG certification, all of the counties suggested making the exam locally available in English and Spanish and the majority suggested a cost in the \$0-\$30 per exam range. Although there are several reasons MGs are not renewing their certificates, the cost of compliance (to become certified and maintain certifications) as well as the counties ability to 'catch' unlicensed MGs are believed to be the biggest barriers. To keep MGs certified, the majority of counties would offer training or expand their current training tailored to MGs with support from DPR.

Central Coast Area Group

Based on the responses from three counties, all are interested in administering the MG exam at the county level. On average, county staff reported that there are at least 100 uncertified MGs performing pest control work within each of the counties, while the average registration per county is 33. To increase awareness of MG certification, the majority of counties suggested sending information directly to MGs or broadcast the information on Spanish radio or television. To expand MG certification, all of the counties suggested making exams locally available in English and Spanish with an estimated cost of either \$31-\$50 per exam or greater than \$50 per exam.

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**Central Coast
Area Group
(continued)**

Although there are several reasons MGs are not renewing their certificates, the cost of compliance (to become certified and maintain certification) is believed to be the biggest barrier. To keep MGs certified, all of the counties would offer training or expand their current training tailored to MGs with support from DPR.

**Southern
California Area
Group**

Based on the responses from five counties, the majority are interested in administering the MG exam at the county level. County staff reported that there are up to 410 uncertified MGs performing pest control work within each area group county, while the average registration per county is the highest among the area groups, at 47. To increase awareness of MG certification, half of the counties suggested sending information to 'big box' retailers while the other half suggests sending information to homeowners; the second most popular suggestion was broadcasting on Spanish radio or television. To expand MG certification, the majority of counties suggested making QAC-Q exams locally available in English and Spanish with an estimated cost of more than \$50 per exam. Although there are several reasons MGs are not renewing their certificates, language is believed to be the biggest barrier. To keep MGs certified, the majority of the counties would offer training or expand their current training tailored to MGs with support from DPR.

Conclusion

DPR would like to thank all of the CACs that participated in the survey. Your valued responses will help DPR develop outreach to MGs to increase certification and possibly provide more opportunities for MG certification.

Sincerely,

Original signed by

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cc: Mr. Joe Marade, DPR Agricultural Commissioner Liaison, Pesticide Programs Division
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