



Florida Master Gardener Volunteer Conference Facility Usage Fee Explained

Where to stay? Conference organizers understand that for many attendees, finding the lowest possible hotel rate is paramount, and we are aware that participants often choose to stay on the outskirts of town and drive to the conference each day. However, before you book your hotel room for the Master Gardener Conference, we want to make you aware of the following:

The Florida Master Gardener Continued Training Conference continues to make every effort to keep costs to a minimum for program attendees. One way this is done is by making a commitment to the conference host hotel that a specified number of hotel rooms will be occupied by Master Gardener meeting attendees. **In exchange for the hotel room occupation, the property provides the Master Gardener Conference with complimentary meeting space and reduced food & beverage pricing.**

In the past, meetings have not fulfilled their hotel guest room pickup commitment and as a result faced hefty penalty fees. Conference participants who choose to stay at non-host hotels receive the benefits of the host facility but do not contribute to the necessary commitment that allows the Master Gardener Conference to use meeting space on a complimentary basis and provide sufficient food & beverage to meeting attendees at reasonable rates.

Therefore, the Master Gardener Conference organizers instituted a \$100 Facility Usage Fee for those who are attending the conference but have chosen not to stay in the conference host hotel. This is the only way that we can continue to host this educational meeting without raising registration fees. The Facility Usage Fee will apply only to those who register for the conference (including exhibitors, speakers, students, one-day attendees; *excluding guests*) but choose not to stay at the host hotel.

We therefore encourage all meeting attendees to avoid this additional charge and stay at the **Embassy Suites Orlando – Lake Buena Vista South** at the reduced group rate of \$133 per night, plus 13.5% state & local taxes, which includes complimentary overnight self-parking and WiFi throughout the meeting space and guest rooms. Please be aware that if you are sharing a hotel room with another participant, all guest names must appear on the room reservation by the Thursday, September 12th hotel reservation cut-off date. Otherwise, the Facility Usage Fee will be assessed, and you will be unable to pick up your conference materials until the fee is paid.

Staying at the host hotel makes it easy to enjoy program camaraderie with fellow Master Gardener attendees inside and outside of scheduled activities. Just imagine – no commuting time to conference activities; additional networking time with colleagues; and amenities, such as room service, safes, exercise facilities, and restaurants & shops – all in one convenient location.

Where you lodge during the meeting is certainly your choice, but please understand that the Florida Master Gardener Conference organizers have contractual commitments that must be honored, and we must do all we can to avoid negative financial implications to the Master Gardener Conference and Program.

*Please note: if your residential address is in Osceola, Orange or Seminole County and you are commuting to the conference, you are exempt from this fee. Please contact Kristin Zupancic, kzupancic@ufl.edu with questions.