



Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • April 2021



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However, *Garden Thyme* is best viewed in your browser (instead of viewing it within your email). Formatting within an email often gets messed up (sorry for the technical jargon there), which is a frustration for you and for your newsletter committee that works so hard to provide you with a newsletter lovely to behold. **So, to view *Garden Thyme* in its full glory, just click on the link at the top of this page that says "View this email in your browser."**



April Program: Happy Birthday to Us!

Our April 6 program at 6:30 p.m. is a 30th birthday celebration. **Special guests are Janet Carson, Merle Gross, and Berni Kurz.** Janet was our state Master Gardener leader until her retirement in 2019, Merle was Washington County Master Gardeners' first county agent, and Berni was our county agent until he moved into the state position. We'll get to hear from them on April 6.

Colin will send out the Zoom link a day or so in advance of the April 6 meeting.

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on the following at our April 6 Zoom meeting.

February 2021 Treasurer's
Report

March 2021 Meeting Minutes

Special Edition of *Garden Thyme*

Look for a special 30th Birthday edition of *Garden Thyme*, coming to your email inbox on Wednesday, April 7. This issue will include proclamations from our mayors, photos, member memories, events, and activities since our beginning in 1991.

From Your President

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

Dear Friends,

The February doldrums have passed, yielding to the glories of March, with even more to come in April. What a delight to see the daffodils and hyacinths blooming, as other plants emerge to remind us of the great circle of life. These discoveries make me smile and breathe easier when I look around. Soon we'll see dogwoods and service berries and redbuds blooming (and Bradford pears, but that's another story). Life is good.



It has felt even better than I had thought it would to get outside to dig up weeds around the shrubs and perennials while I look to see what seeds have sprouted and what's coming back. I love just looking at what's there, whether it's encountering gigantic worms, or eggshells that didn't get broken down completely in the compost. The buds on the service berry and the dogwood and the leaves coming out on the ninebark make me smile. Everywhere I look in my yard I see signs of what I'm learned through Master Gardeners, and I'm grateful to be a part of this group.

This month we celebrate the accomplishments of the Washington County Master Gardeners over the past 30 years. We owe a special debt of gratitude to Judy Smith and the 30th Birthday Committee for creating a special edition of the newsletter (which will be delivered to your inbox on April 7) to help us see where we've been and also for the program we'll enjoy at our April meeting. We've come a long way and continue grow and change, thanks to all of you.

Happy April!
Kathryn

From "Little Gidding" by T. S. Eliot

We shall not cease from exploration
And the end of all our exploring
Will be to arrive where we started
And know the place for the first time.

Uncle Mike's Veggie Garden Tips

MIKE STANDROD

In my non-gardening life, I do insurance and financial planning. **DIVERSIFICATION** is a basic axiom in investing. This can also apply to home gardening.

Intermix your plants rather than row-crop. Make sure they are good "companion" plants. Unless you are running a large farm, with tractors and mechanized harvesting, there is no compelling reason to plant in rows. Seed packet instructions state "plant X inches apart in rows X inches apart". Why? Long monocrop rows, if discovered by pests

(insects or bigger critters) are a sitting duck. They'll start on one end of the row and ravage to the other.

Plant in groups (leaving room to access your plants, of course), and intermix with beneficial ornamental plants. Native pollinator-attracting plants do double-duty. You'll get pollinators and enhance your plants by using companion plantings. Added bonus: it beautifies the garden.



Don't plant the same thing in the same spot year after year. A recipe for re-infestation by insects or disease.

Plant different cultivars. If you've planted four varieties of tomatoes, even in a bad year, one should do reasonably well. Insects and diseases will usually focus on their favorite variety, leaving others for you.

Stagger your planting. If you have X number of transplants to set out, divide in thirds and plant about 2 weeks apart. The same applies for seeding. This will accomplish 2 things: You'll avoid losing all in a late frost, and you'll lengthen and level your yield. I chuckle at my friend who every year sets out dozens of tomatoes (one variety) and squash all in one day (usually way too early). He'll announce "Well, I put in my garden yesterday – aren't you going to?" Then if not lost to frost, he will have far too much produce for a two-week period. Increase varieties, stagger your planting (and harvesting). You'll enjoy more, longer.

TO-DO LIST:

EARLY APRIL. You can still plant some cool weather crops (mentioned last month).

Expect lettuces to bolt and become bitter once hot weather arrives.

LATE APRIL /EARLY MAY. Now is the time to start planting warm-weather plants.

Tomatoes, beans, peppers, eggplant, corn, cucumbers, melons, summer squash, okra, etc.

RECOMMENDED FOR YOUR LIBRARY:

Carrots Love Tomatoes, by Louise Riotte (Storey Publishing)

Square Foot Gardening, by Mel Bartholomew (Cool Springs Press)

Field to Feast, by Janet Carson (*Arkansas Democrat-Gazette*)



Left: Diversify your garden. Right: Row crops are a pest's best friend.



Left: Marigolds are good garden companions. Right: Enjoy your lettuce crop before hot weather sets in.

Meet the Trainees

OLIVIA HARRINGTON and LYNETTE TERRELL

Diana Oliver

I am excited to begin my adventure as a Washington County Master Gardener! My

husband and I have been married for fourteen years, and I am a stay-at-home homeschooling mom to our four children (ages 10, 8, 5, and 3) and founder of the West Washington County Homeschoolers Network. My husband and I were born and raised Southern Californians, but knew very early on in our marriage that we did not want to set roots or raise our children there. So, we packed up our three kids (at the time) and moved to Northwest Arkansas. That was six years ago, and it has been the best decision we have ever made.



My interest in gardening was inspired by my husband and his love of all things outdoors, as well as the memories that we treasure on his grandparents' farm in upstate New York. My passion to learn, as well as a goal to live more naturally and focus on healthy living, further motivated me to learn to grow our own food with a goal to be more self-sustainable. We are going into our sixth year of vegetable gardening, and we hope to learn more about growing medicinal herbs, as well as flowers. For us it is a family affair! Our kids work alongside us in the garden, and it is a very special time for our family. Along with gardening, I am going into my second year of canning and preserving our harvests and absolutely love learning about the process. In my spare time, I also enjoy reading, sewing, and finding new things to learn about.

We have big goals and dreams for the future of our little homestead. We hope to find twenty acres to grow on, have some horses, cattle, and many more chickens, along with a bigger garden. I am excited about becoming a Master Gardener and look forward to meeting awesome people and learning more about plants and gardening. I hope to be able to share my passion for gardening with others, including those in our homeschool group, and pass on such an important skill to others.

Kathy Sampson Stinson

Hi, I'm Kathy Sampson Stinson, a transplanted Iowan by way of Macon, Georgia. I am from a family of gardeners who plant bounteous vegetable gardens each year, carrying on gardening traditions passed down from our maternal grandfather, Charlie Brower. Grandpa Brower was a first generation American—his parents were German immigrants, and his father saw action on the Civil War battlefields in Prairie Grove and Pea Ridge. In Kanawha, Iowa, my extended family is in its sixth generation, where my mother and brother maintain reputations as extraordinary gardeners, engaged in a friendly competition between themselves. My brother recently bought a ninety-foot greenhouse to take his game to the next level.



Two of Charlie Brower's grandchildren did not learn how to garden, and we both have lived at least two states away from North Iowa for over thirty years. While I have something of a green thumb with office plants, I joined the Master Gardener program to get up to speed on some of the details my extended family has developed through years under Grandpa Brower's (and my mother's) subtle apprentice programs. I also enjoy meeting and getting to know other Arkansans. From my years of teaching Arkansas natives, I have an Arkansas highway map, circa 1993, with the names of places in the state I'd like to see marked by little colored dots. After COVID, I plan to visit the historical society in Heber Springs to follow up on a curiosity I discovered while working on an Arkansas History class project about the former Sugar Loaf of Cleburne County.

My husband, Bob, and I moved to Fayetteville in 1993. I taught writing and research at the University of Arkansas for 25 years and took emeritus status in 2018. I'm a perennial student, currently enrolled in a couple of history courses and a general film studies course at the UA. Bob works in international logistics and through his work we enjoy European travel destinations about once a year. Our grown son, Bobby, has spent his life in Fayetteville, has his name on the UA Senior Walk, and is marrying another Arkansas graduate in Fall 2021.

Adriana Treadway

I am Adriana Treadway, born in Mar del Plata, Argentina, 62 years ago. I am an ESL (English as a Second Language) teacher, and I have worked in the ESL field for almost 40 years. I have lived half of my life in Fayetteville, having come to study at the University of Arkansas in 1990. Here in Fayetteville, I have worked at Spring International Language Center at the University since 1992, and I am currently the director of the intensive English program.



In Argentina, I always lived in an apartment and never had the opportunity to grow a garden, though we did have flower beds. I never knew I loved gardening until I met my husband, Jim, 25+ years ago. He has taught me most of what I know about gardening, and both of us love working in the garden, producing the food we eat, sharing the excitement of planting things with our three grandchildren, and making our garden beautiful with vegetables and flowers. At Spring International, I created a community garden project for and with our students and we enjoyed it for several years, until our recent move to Gregson Hall.

I am excited and happy to be a Master Gardener Trainee. I love learning about plants and working the soil. If I had to choose one, I'd say I enjoy growing vegetables more than growing flowers but, in truth, I love both. I also love cooking, and I love food. I love to think about, talk about, prepare, and eat food from different countries and cultures. I love traveling, but the pandemic has slowed that down. I am also very interested in reducing food waste and in reducing, reusing, and recycling. I plan to retire sometime this year, or at

least go to half-time or less, and I look forward to having more time to spend with my husband and my family, doing the things we love.

Remembering Betty

JOYCE MENDENHALL

Note: WCMG Joyce Mendenhall wrote this article about her good friend and fellow WCMG Betty Swope a few years ago for Arkansas Gardener magazine. Joyce shares it now in memory of Betty.

When Betty Swope brings out her 60-plus-year-old shovels to work with other Master Gardeners digging in the dirt, everyone thinks they are brand new. That is because Betty's father instilled a respect of machinery and tools in her. Nothing was ever put away without being cleaned. Soil was removed, and then the tool, shovel, saw, etc., was given a rub-down with a cloth soaked in oil. She currently uses WD-40.



At the age of 88 Betty is still an active Arkansas Master Gardener in Washington County. In January 1998 Betty was due to retire from the University of Arkansas at the end of the month, however, Master Gardener training classes started in January and Betty had it on her bucket list to do as soon as she retired. Luckily, her supervisor let her take off early to attend the classes. Betty says she needed a way to stay involved in the community and give back in a way that would be enjoyable to her.

Betty says that her dream garden would be one that was weed-free because weeding has become such a big chore for her. She hires someone to help her in her own garden although she has been known to pull a few weeds at the many Master Gardener projects where she works. Three of her main projects are the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO), where she works in the greenhouse, Headquarters House, where she works in the vegetable demonstration garden, and Garden Explorers Junior Master Gardeners 4-H, where she helps teach kids about gardening.

Betty was instrumental in helping BGO grow into the showplace it is today. She was there in 1999 when there was only an open field and Master Gardeners created gardens around a sign saying "Future Home of Botanical Garden of the Ozarks" and she has supported the gardens both physically and financially ever since.

Hard work is something Betty has never shied away from. A great example of this is when she was a teenager, her dad decided to build a new barn. She helped him cut down trees and cut them into lumber on a machine designed to cut logs into wood stove lengths. She then helped him build a large hip-roof barn which is still standing on the property she grew

up on in Missouri. She knows this because she recently took a trip to visit the old home place.

After completing the barn, she helped her dad put up hay to fill it. While her dad mowed with a tractor, Betty raked it into wind rows using a horse drawn sulky rake. Once the hay was bunched, they hooked up the baler. She pitched hay into the baler right alongside her dad and then she tied the bales with wire. Those bales weighed 50 to 60 pounds each.

Betty says she does not have design capabilities so she just gardens and describes her garden as eccentric and haphazard. She enjoys finding new blooms or new growth on plants she thought she had lost. In her garden, she has Christmas roses in late winter; daffodils, early, mid and late season; lilacs that came from Missouri; peonies from Iowa; daylilies that begin to bloom and last into summer and in July and August after the first rains; "Naked Ladies" (*Lycoris squamigera*); and finally, the fall colors of grasses and mums. Her favorite flower is the old-fashioned snowball bush, a start from her mother's garden. Most of her favorite flowers are ones she grew up with and remembers as a child.

Each year, for her own enjoyment, Betty grows some of her favorite vegetables such as tomatoes, lettuce, peppers, and cucumbers. She also maintains a patch of strawberries that provide just enough for her to pick and eat fresh for several weeks.

Although she enjoys looking through the gardening catalogues each spring, she usually reverts back to varieties recommended by the University of Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service, which have done well for her in the past.

In addition to gardening, Betty loves to travel, read, and enter her flowers in the Washington County Fair, where she has won numerous awards.

Joyce Mendenhall gardens in Fayetteville and is proud to call Betty Swope her special Master Gardener friend.

February Photo of the Month: "Favorite Tropical Plant"



FIRST PLACE
"Homesick" by Karen Takemoto



SECOND PLACE
"Bat Wings and Whiskers" by Chris Bell

Natural State Natives

MEL ZABECKI



Young poke plant—but too large to eat. Plants should be ten inches or less to be safe.

Phytolacca americana is American pokeweed, or poke, or poke salad, or poke sallet. The seeds have been found in archeological deposits in Arkansas, but we know that the berries were not eaten as the seeds and the roots and most of the mature plant are poisonous. Many have heard, though, that the very young leaves and shoots (green, not red) are edible if boiled a few times with water changes. I'm living proof of this fact and have enjoyed poke sautéed with onions on early spring days. Whether or not the American Indians knew of the edible parts is unknown, but it is likely that they figured it out due to the fact that poke is one of the first greens to come up during the hungry season. While the root is extremely toxic, it has been used in a poultice to treat swollen joints and as a wash for sprains and swelling.



Poke berries ripening in late summer.

Late summer brings another use for poke: natural dye. When the berries ripen, they look almost black, but when juiced the color is a vibrant magenta. Anyone who has worked with natural dyes knows that it's a lot of work because even though brightly colored berries will stain the heck out of your hands when you pick them, the juice usually doesn't stain permanently. If you want to make a lasting dye, you need to mordant the fabric you plan to use. Mordants help make the color "stick" to the fabric by opening up the pores of the fabric. Natural fabrics like cotton, wool, or silk are the easiest to use for natural dyes and I've found silk to be the most successful. For poke, vinegar can be a useful mordant and the fabric should soak in a vinegar-water solution until it is ready to go into the dye. Heat is often used for dyeing but if the poke dye is allowed to go over 180 degrees F, then it might turn brown, ruining the fun magenta. Don't use any chemical with ammonia to try and set the dye, as it will turn black!

I have seen some fabrics from Spiro Mounds (across the border in Oklahoma, but representative of the Arkansas Mississippi Period of 900-1600 AD) that might possibly have been dyed with poke based on the purplish red hues. We're not exactly sure if it was poke, but there aren't very many other natural dyes of that brightness!

Planning Ahead for Surplus Produce

KAREN HANNA-TOWNE

WCMG Vice President



Photo by [Elaine Casap](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Next August our speaker will be one of our own members, Nena Evans, the program coordinator for gardening and nutrition education at the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank. I reached out to Nena to find out how Master Gardeners might participate in the work of the food bank and discovered that there are several ways.

The NWA Food Bank networks with about 135 partners across their four-county service

area to distribute food to those in need. Anyone is eligible to receive food through this distribution network. The food bank receives food donations but the partners actually distribute the food. These include churches, soup kitchens, and shelters. The food bank also has 14 mobile pantries that move from one location to another on a schedule. For example, one of the mobile pantries sets up at Parsons Stadium in Springdale on the second Friday of every month.

As Master Gardeners we can help by donating excess produce, seeds, herbs, and even canned goods. Here are a few tips to keep in mind.

- The best types of produce to donate are those that store well, such as peppers, cucumbers, cabbage, potatoes, melons, root vegetables, etc. However, any type of produce that's in good condition is welcome.
- The food bank accepts fresh greens that have been placed in bags and then in a box to prevent them from wilting. They have walk-in coolers to keep things fresh once delivered.
- Herbs are also in demand; dried herbs are easiest to handle, but fresh ones are also welcome.
- If you're donating canned goods, please select vegetables and fruits that are low in sodium and/or sugar.
- Should you have spare seeds after you plant your garden, think about donating those as well. NWA Food Bank works with other organizations to grow produce year-round.

So, on a hot day in August when you've made every zucchini dish you can think of, you're tired of canning, and your freezer is full, please consider a quick trip to the Northwest Arkansas Food Bank warehouse. It's located at 1378 June Self Drive in north Springdale. It's west of Old Wire Road and south of Jackson Avenue. The warehouse opens at 7:00 a.m. and they receive donations until 1:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. Please visit their website to learn about their partners and the schedule for the mobile pantries:

<https://www.nwafoodbank.org/find-food>, or <https://www.nwafoodbank.org/what-we-do#OurPrograms>. And we'll get a lot more information from Nena on August 3!

Just Us

JUDY SMITH

From Judy Smith

If you're interested in native plants, here are some resources you might find helpful:

- *The Midwestern Native Garden: Native Alternatives to Non-Native Flowers and Plants* by Charlotte Adelman and Bernard L. Schwartz. Organized by seasons. Descriptions of plants with color photos and an extensive bibliography by topic. Recommended by the Audubon Society.
- *The Midwest Native Plant Primer: 225 Plants for an Earth-Friendly Garden* by Alan Branhagen. Organized by plant type with color photos and an index.

And online:

- Missouri Prairie Foundation – <https://moprairie.org/>
- Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter (includes handouts from Lissa Morrison) – <https://ozark.wildones.org/>
- National Audubon Society (You can create your own list of natives when you search by zip code, and there is a Northwest Arkansas chapter) – <https://www.audubon.org/>
- Arkansas Native Plant Society (there is an Ozark chapter) – <https://anps.org/>

Gardening and Community Events

PAM BUTLER

Through mid-April, 10:00 a.m.–6:00 p.m. daily. DAFFODIL DAYS and TULIP EXTRAVAGANZA. Garvan Gardens, 550 Arkridge Road, Hot Springs. Free with membership or reciprocal membership, \$15 non-members

Through April 3, by appointment only, Monday–Friday 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m., Saturday 8:00 a.m.–Noon. 2021 NATIVE TREE AND PLANT SALE. Compton Gardens, Bentonville. In-person, book your 30 minute shopping appointment at [Native Tree and Plant Sale | The Peel Compton Foundation](#)

April 1, 1:00–4:00 p.m. OZARK WILDFLOWER HIKE. Ozark Natural Science Center. In-person, register at <https://olli.uark.edu/>. Cost is \$39 OLLI members/\$54 non-members.

April 3, 11:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. SUCCULENT 101 MAKE AND TAKE CLASS. In-person, Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO). Register at <https://www.bgozarks.org/succulent-101-make-take-class>. Cost is \$35 BGO members/\$50 non-members

April 7, 11:00 a.m. **HOSTING POLLINATORS THROUGHOUT THE YEAR WITH LISSA MORRISON.** Online with Facebook Live, join at <https://craftontull.zoom.us/j/95891852067>. Free event by Wild Ones, Ozark Chapter.

April 8 and April 15, 1:00–3:00 p.m. NATIVE PLANT ECOLOGY. Lake Fayetteville and Zoom. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$19 OLLI members/\$34 non-members.

April 12 and April 19, 1:00–2:00 p.m. THE JOY OF A GOOD BIRD WALK. BGO and Zoom. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$35 OLLI members/\$50 non-members

April 13, 1:00–4:00 p.m. INSIDE THE FARM. UA Research Station off Garland. In-person. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$25 OLLI members/\$40 non-members.

April 13, 6:00 p.m. BUTTERFLY GARDENING. Zoom program. Register at <https://www.bgozarks.org/butterfly-gardening>. Cost is \$10 BGO members/\$15 non-members.

April 16, 1:00–3:00 p.m. INTRODUCTION TO WILDFLOWER IDENTIFICATION. Zoom program. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$29 OLLI members/\$44 non-members.

April 20, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. INVASIVE PLANT IDENTIFICATION. Zoom program. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$29 OLLI members/\$44 non-members

April 23, 5:00–8:00 p.m. for BGO members and April 24 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. for non-members. BOTANICAL GARDEN OF THE OZARKS PLANT SALE. Vendor-grown plants.

April 27, 9:30–11:30 a.m. CONTROLLING INVASIVE PLANTS. Zoom program. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>. Cost is \$25 OLLI members/\$40 non-members.

April 28, 8:30–10:30 a.m. BEGINNER/NOVICE BIRD WALK. Fayetteville area. Register at <http://olli.uark.edu>, Cost is \$25 OLLI members/\$40 non-members

May 1, 1:00 p.m. BENEVOLENT TREES: NATIVE WOODY PLANTS IN AMERICAN HERBAL TRADITIONS WITH STEVEN FOSTER. Online with Facebook Live. Free event by Ozark Chapter, Arkansas Native Plant Society, and Arkansas Native Plant Society. To register, contact ANPS.President@gmail.com.

May 1, 8:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. 2021 ANNUAL SPRING PLANT SALE. Free event sponsored by The Learning Fields at Chaffee Crossing, Hwy 22 and Mahogany Ave. in Fort Smith. Contact them on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/The-Learning-Fields-at-Chaffee-Crossing-118964358188282>, to let them know you're coming or if you have questions. The Demonstration Gardens and Children's Garden will be open to visitors.

On a special note, there will be a Washington County Fair this year. Doris Cassidy says the dates are August 24–28 with workdays of August 21–23. The fair always needs lots of volunteers and is a great way to get some hours late in the gardening season.

Contact Information

The *Garden Thyme* email address is wcmgnewsletter@gmail.com. You may use this address for submissions and for questions and comments that are specific to the newsletter. For other needs, please contact the appropriate officer or chairperson as listed in your WCMG workbook.

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UA Extension Service Website

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