

Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • February 2020



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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."**

Taking Care of Business

These items will be voted on at our February 4 meeting.

January 2020 Meeting
Minutes

December 2019 Treasurer's
Report

From Your President

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

WCMG 2017

A friend once said that the best career advice he ever got was to “always follow a toad.” Boy, am I out of luck here! It’s hard to say enough good about Susan Young (as a matter of fact, I don’t think it’s possible). I’m grateful for her good humor, for her kindness, for her leadership, and most of all, for her friendship. She’s a long, long way from being a toad.



In an executive board meeting last year, Tanya Collins said she believed that it’s the relationships we have with each other as we do our work that make us feel connected to the Master Gardener organization, and I think she’s right. In Master Gardeners, I’ve worked alongside people who have become my friends, and I’ve renewed friendships with others whom I first met a lifetime ago. Our relationships matter.

And it’s not just our current relationships that matter. I suspect that lots of us came by our love of gardening through our grandparents, parents, aunts or uncles, neighbors, or someone else we’ve loved. Even though I’ve learned how important natives are and am now determined to make my yard at least 80% native plants, I find myself remembering the yard I grew up in. Because of those fond memories, I’ve ended up ordering some of the varieties of iris and daffodils that Mother and Daddy had in our yard and the celosia and cosmos that Grandmother grew at her house. There’s something very satisfying about that link to an earlier time. Working in the earth feels good for my soul and makes me feel close to those I’ve loved. I’m grateful to be on this journey with you all, people who value our connections to the earth.

Last year, Susan introduced poetry into her monthly message, and that really struck a chord with me. I’m eager to continue her tradition. This piece by New England poet Judy Brown seems particularly appropriate as I’m writing to you on this icy January day, looking at the bare oak tree in my back yard.

Branches 'Gainst the Sky

The pattern
of the branches
'gainst the sky,

reaching out
with finer,
finer fingers;
winter only
lets us see
such beauty.

Have a good month!
Kathryn

February Program



See you on **Tuesday, February 4 at 6:30 p.m.** for our first-ever Project Fair! MG volunteers from each of our sanctioned projects will be on hand to share information and gently encourage you to sign up for the season. While we cannot guarantee the presence of a funnel cake stand, the atmosphere is sure to be as festive as a county fair and some project reps may even be handing out free candy (HINT).

Photo by [Mandy Jansen/flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/mandyjansen/)

Kudos, Grads!



Congratulations to our 2019 graduates: Brad Baldwin, Renee Baldwin, Talya Boerner, Mary Boetel, Heather Burch, Pam Butler, Doris Calleja, Karla Caraway, Carter Carrigan, Trudy Carrigan, Margo Clark, Laura Gallagher, Karen Hanna-Towne, Emily Harper, Margaret Herold, Jenean Hill, Belwalee Jurkovich, Steve Lisle, Vicki Mayo, James McGinty, Susie McKinney, Marilyn Misenhimer, Beverly Morgan, Alan Ostner, Joyce Sattler, Dale Thomas, Jane VanTuyl, Sherry Wallis, Melissa White, Mary Wood, and Mel Zabecki.

Uncle Mike's Veggie Garden Tips

MIKE STANDROD

WCMG 2006



FEBRUARY: *Jump start your garden—GROW your own transplants.*

With a few simple and inexpensive tools and a good amount of tender care, you can start your own plants rather than buying expensive half-grown transplants. I reserve buying store-bought plants to replace my failures. Think about the savings: A single tomato seed costs pennies. A transplant 6-pack \$3-\$5. A 4-inch pot \$3. A gallon plant \$10+.

Starting Trays

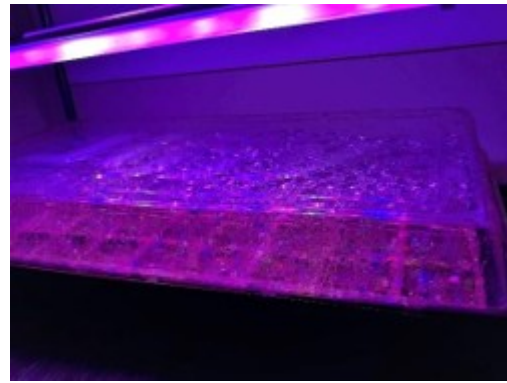
- Simple seed starting kits can be obtained from your local box stores and garden suppliers. Get a tray with bio-degradable pots/inserts, with a clear plastic top. The clear top is important, as it will create a little micro-climate for your babies. (See photo at end of article.)

Grow Light

- A grow light designed specifically for plants is a must. Today there are some really good LED lights with the light spectrum needed for tiny plants to thrive. Incandescent or fluorescent lights won't cut it. The light must create a spectrum similar to natural sunlight. If you have a really bright, sunny, south exposure (most of us don't), that might work.

Plant Heat Pad

- Although cool-season plants (lettuces, greens, etc.) don't need them, you'll need a heat pad to germinate warm season plants such as tomatoes, peppers, cucumbers. Note: Once the seedlings emerge, remove from the heat pad, and start another flat.



Starting Medium

- You should start seeds with a STARTING mixture, not potting soil. This medium is usually sterile and disease-free unlike most potting soil, which is primarily finely ground pine with a little soil or peat + fertilizer. The starting mixture is great to germinate seeds but won't sustain them long unless you provide nutrients through a water-soluble fertilizer. OR you should quickly transplant your seedlings into another flat with good, organically rich potting soil.

Hardening

- Don't take your transplants straight from the flats/pots to the garden. Expose them to the elements gradually by setting outside (tops of trays off).

When you grow from seed, not only can you grow and experiment with endless varieties not available as transplants, but you'll receive extra satisfaction for your efforts. Happy gardening!



Photo by [urban bohemian/flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/urbanbohemian/)

2019 Award Winners

WCMG 2019 Annual Award winners were announced and applauded at the January 7 general meeting at the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences. Our winners in the MG of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Project of the Year, Friend of MGs, and Excellence in

Education categories will be considered for the state awards announced at the May conference in Jonesboro.



Chris Bell
MASTER GARDENER OF THE YEAR



Trudy Carrigan
ROOKIE OF THE YEAR



Veterans Community Garden
PROJECT OF THE YEAR



Alexis Powell
FRIEND OF MASTER GARDENERS



**Garden Explorers
Jr. Master Gardeners 4-H Club
EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION**



**Doris Cassidy
MENTOR OF THE YEAR**



**LaDeana Mullinix
YES I CAN**



**James McGinty
YES I CAN ROOKIE**

Watering Can Award: 200+ Hours for 5 or More Years

Geraldine Alvis, Chris Bell, Dorothy Carney, Mary Crumley, Susan Cardner, Dian Holmes, Gayle Howard, Jan Judy, Jan Lefler, Patsy Louk, Joyce Mendenhall, Kitty Sanders, Jim Sposato, Truman Stamps, Martha Ward

Trowel Award: 200+ Hours

Kathryn Birkhead, Steve Brizzi, Doris Cassidy, Mary Beth Lohr, Lisa Owen, Gail Pianalto, Joyce Veasey, Neta Winston

"Berry Grateful" Award: Perfect Attendance

Geri Alvis, Kathryn Birkhead, Anita Bukey, Karla Caraway, Jan Judy, Steve Lisle, Judy Smith, Dolores Stamps, Truman Stamps, Susan Young

Natural State Natives

MEL ZABECKI

WCMG 2019

As an archeologist and former park interpreter, I'm interested in how past folks used plants native to Arkansas. So, every month in "Natural State Natives," I plan to explore the ethnobotanical history of Arkansas, one plant at a time. While many of these plants are useful to pollinators and wildlife, I will focus on the human uses (hence the use of the word ethnobotanical) recorded in ethnographic descriptions, inferred from archeological analysis, or shared by modern tribal members.

It's hard to start a new plant column in the dead of winter, so I chose a native that is very easy to see this time of year: sumac! Now I know you're thinking, "How could sumac be a useful native, it's poisonous!!" But not all sumac is poisonous. We have around 4 of the 65 species of sumac here in Arkansas, and only one of them is poisonous and it's not even of the same genus as the other three. Poison sumac is *Toxicodendron vernix*, whereas the other three are in the genus *Rhus*. Poison sumac has white berries that droop, whereas all the other sumacs have red berries on erect branches. I've never even seen poison sumac here, so let's forget about that poisonous stuff for now and think about the smooth (*Rhus glabra*), winged (*Rhus*



copillinum), and fragrant sumac (*Rhus aromatica*) that we see all the time. Smooth and winged are pretty similar, save for the fact that winged is . . . winged! The fragrant sumac has smaller, less conical, clusters of berries and the leaves are often mistaken for poison oak. Examples from the *Rhus* genus are mentioned in many botanical reports from archeological sites all over the region as both preserved seeds or berry casings and as pollen. Specific species are not identifiable due to preservation, but American Indians all over Arkansas and the southeast used sumac for food, dye, ceremonies, and medicine.

Food: The berries are covered in a sort of sticky powder that has a very strong lemony taste. The best and strongest taste comes in late summer before any heavy rains wash off the powder. I have had the best luck in early August for collecting sumac to make sumac tea. I cut the berry clusters off and stick them in big jars of water (leave the jars open so the bugs that you didn't see can escape off the top!) for an hour or two in the sun and then strain the liquid off. If you like tart drinks, this will be great for you, but if you're like me, add lots of sugar or honey and you get modern Cherokee Qua-lo-ga! Also, sumac is available as a specialty spice and is used around the Mediterranean and Middle East on its own or in za'atar (a spice blend), which is delicious.

Dye: The berries can also be simmered down in water to create a very light pink dye on its own, or combined with bedstraw root and other things for a more vibrant red. I have had varying degrees of success with sumac dye and mordants and fixatives are necessary.

Archeologists assert that sumac was used for dyeing ancient fabrics made of dogbane and pawpaw fibers, but the American Indians were a lot more talented than me in getting that color to pop and stay!

Medicinal/ceremonial: Members of the DeSoto expedition and other historical authors claim that American Indians mixed sumac leaves with tobacco (*Nicotiana tabacum*) for smoking. Many plant medicinal guides claim that the boiled bark/leaf/berry tea can be taken for painful menstruation, urinary tract infections, bloody diarrhea, and dysentery, roots can be steeped for a wash for sores on skin, and berries can be chewed for canker sores. The berries are astringent, so it probably works!

Don't go collecting sumac berries now, but note where they are and make plans to make some late summer sumac-ade!



Photos by Mel Zabecki

Our Fearless Leaders



The 2020 Executive Board members are ready and eager to serve you. They are, from left: Linda Morrow, member at large; Diane Standefer, member at large; Mel Zabecki, member at large; Wanda Gore, assistant treasurer; Chris Bell, treasurer; Steve Brizzi, vice

president; Kathryn Birkhead, president; Susan Young, past president; and Ruthanne Hill, secretary/parliamentarian.

2021 Conference Update

The first meeting of the entire 2021 MG State Conference Steering Committee occurred on January 6, 2020. Conference co-chairs Steve Brizzi and Patsy Louk welcomed 30 of the 35 members of the Steering Committee. Berni Kurz and Julie Treat from the State Office joined Colin Massey to give us initial training in our goals and responsibilities. Documents with committee jobs, and rules and regulations were distributed. There are 16 different committees, so communication is going to be very important so that efforts are not redundant and so that the whole conference is a success!

We will be having meetings as a large group every few months for now and more frequently as the conference gets closer. Individual committees will be meeting soon to talk about their budget plans before submitting their wish lists to Colin Massey so that he can collaborate with the State Office to come up with an overall budget. While the theme "Ozark Adventure" is set, logos are being worked on right now. The official dates of the conference are Thursday, Friday, Saturday, May 20-22, 2021.

We're working hard to organize a state conference that all Washington County Master Gardeners will be proud of!

November and December 2019 Photos of the Month



November: "Oak Leaves and Old Blooms" by Judy Smith



December: "Fall Walk" by Steve Lisle

2019 Photo of the Year



Washington County Master Gardeners have spoken, and their choice for Photo of the Year is "Bountiful Beets" by Steve Lisle. Steve's picture was entered in the June contest. Balloting took place at the January general meeting. Congratulations to Steve who had several winning photos this past year.

Photo Contest Update



Photo by [Sid Verma](#) on [Unsplash](#)

The Photo Subcommittee has met and with suggestions from MG members has developed the list of themes for next calendar year. A few reminders:

- Photos must have been taken in Arkansas.
- Attention should be paid to what the theme is.
- Members can enter one photo each month.
- Mark your new MG workbook on these pages to find entry information (in Calendar section, p. 5) and to find the yearlong permission form (Forms, p. 24).

It is easier to process the entry forms if sent electronically as outlined in the procedures, but if one is unable to submit in that manner, the form which gives us permission to post your photos for the calendar year can be filled out and submitted according to the information on that form.

We hope that many more of you will send in your garden shots this year. Remember, the photo can be sent straight from your phone if sent in “actual size.” It is fine to send the photo from your phone and a separate email can be sent from your computer if that is where you store the entry form. Please remember that you may contact us for a private tutorial if the procedure is keeping you from participating.

Please study the calendar below to be thinking of pictures that you’ve already taken that might be appropriate. The photo doesn’t have to have been taken in the listed month or even in this calendar year.

Theme	Month	Description
<i>Trees</i>	Jan	Any tree, e.g., in bloom, fall color, winter structure
<i>Best Flower Close-up</i>	Feb	Zoom in on a favorite flower
<i>Potpourri</i>	March	Your choice of plant photo; open category
<i>Spring Madness</i>	April	Anything related to a spring garden
<i>Mother's Day</i>	May	Flowers or plants my mother grew
<i>Container Gardens</i>	June	Any plants grown in containers
<i>Annual Flower Bed</i>	July	Show off your favorite annuals
<i>Wildflowers</i>	Aug	Including side of the road beauties
<i>Garden Bounty</i>	Sept	Could be harvest, but any "bounty" including county fair contributions
<i>Critters in the Garden</i>	Oct	Animals in the garden, including insects and pollinators
<i>Water in the Garden</i>	Nov	Any water in the garden including water features
<i>Holiday in the Garden</i>	Dec	Does not have to be winter holiday; could be Halloween, Fourth of July, etc.

Meet Our Trainees

LYNETTE TERRELL

WCMG 2020

Alexis Power

I grew up tending to our family garden in the summers and always counted it as one of my favorite activities. I now have the privilege of assisting people with their diets as part of nutritional therapy, and one of the things that I strongly encourage people to do is to purchase as much of their food from local sources as possible. This is what inspired me to learn more myself about growing food, with the hopes of growing my own someday and serving as a resource for others.



Teresa Honey Youngblood

I love a good challenge, which is how every year I justify trying to grow luscious and prolific fruit, vegetables, herbs, and flowers on a packed-clay city lot in South Fayetteville! It helps that my neighbor kids all have green thumbs and tons of energy and pitch in to help with everything from planting pumpkins to staking dahlias to keeping the green beans well-picked. Education is my biggest love, followed by homegrown food, religions and

philosophies of the world, writing poetry, baking bread, knitting socks, and attending fitness classes.



Just Us

A new place to submit creations, requests, offerings, and such

A memorial service for MG Johnny Southerland is scheduled for Tuesday, February 11 at 11:00 a.m. at St. Paul's Episcopal Church in Fayetteville. Johnny's obituary is available here: <https://www.siscofuneral.com/obituaries/John-Southerland-3/#!/Obituary>

This spring, members of the Mock Park MG sanctioned project will plant a rosebush or two at the park in remembrance of Johnny.

From Doris Cassidy, Washington County Fair Project Chair

If you are downsizing, tired of dusting or desire to help a worthy cause, it is time to search for treasures to be sold at the *Rummage to Treasure Shop* at the **Washington County Fair**. Your donations netted \$900 last year. This money is used for premiums for the Champion and Reserve Champion best of show. It supports supplies needed to operate our project for the fair, meals for the judges and food for the Master Gardeners who work the week of the fair. This year, we want to be competitive with the animal winners and provide a gift basket of gardening/educational items to go with the premium check as we strive to develop future Master Gardeners and encourage more participation in the fair within our group. Think what an impact we would have if each Master Gardener entered a single exhibit. DONATED ITEMS may be delivered to the Extension Office. I will collect and move weekly. Thanks for your support.

From Judy Smith, Garden Thyme Newsletter Co-Chair

We are thrilled about the response to our survey. Look for a detailed report and plans for the newsletter in the March issue.

From Mary McCully, Garden Thyme Newsletter Co-Chair

Many of you asked for more project coverage in the *Garden Thyme*. Beginning in March, we hope to feature two projects with photos and updates. Be sure to submit your project information before your designated month.

Coming Up Soon

February

1 - Registration opens for State MG Conference in Jonesboro

4 - Master Gardeners monthly meeting, 6:30 p.m.

20 - Volunteer dinner at Botanical Garden of the Ozarks for those with set number of hours

24 - Master Gardeners Executive Committee meeting, Extension Office, 5:30 p.m.

28-March 2 - Arkansas Flower and Garden Show, Arkansas State Fairgrounds, 2600 Howard, Little Rock. <https://argardenshow.org/>

March

Date TBA - Wye Mountain Daffodil, United Methodist Church, Bigelow, Arkansas

1-3 - NWA Lawn and Garden Show, Washington County Fairgrounds, Fayetteville

6-8 - Orchid Show and Sale, Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, Fayetteville. <https://www.bgozarks.org/orchid-show-sale/>

13-14 - Camden Daffodil Festival and Garden Tour, Camden. <http://www.camdendaffodilfestival.com/>

20-22 Jonquil Festival, Old Washington State Park. <https://www.arkansasstateparks.com/events/jonquil-festival>

20-22 - Arkansas River Valley Lawn and Garden Show, Kay Rodgers Park, 4400 Midland Blvd, Fort Smith. <https://www.fslawngardenshow.com/>

21 - Baxter County Spring Seminar, "Developing an Ozark Green Thumb," Mountain Home. <https://www.baxtercountymg.com/spring-seminar.html>

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.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

[Judy Smith](#), managing editor/submissions; [Mary McCully](#), editor/submissions and videos; [Pam Butler](#), reporter; [Lynette Terrell](#), reporter; [Susan Young](#), production assistant; [Mel Zabecki](#), reporter.

Send all newsletter submissions to Judy Smith or Mary McCully.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

[Kathryn Birkhead](#), president; [Steve Brizzi](#), vice president; [Ruthanne Hill](#), secretary/parliamentarian; [Chris Bell](#), treasurer; [Wanda Gore](#), assistant treasurer; [Susan Young](#), past president. Members at large: [Linda Morrow](#), [Diane Standefer](#), [Mel Zabecki](#).



WCMG Facebook Group (private)



WCMG Facebook Page (public)



WCMG Website



UA Extension Service Website

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information or any other legally protected status and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.

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