



Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • July 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."**

July Program: Starting and Maintaining a

Successful Koi Pond

We return to in-person programs at the Extension Office, Tuesday, July 6, at 6:30 p.m. Our guest speaker, Julia Mann, will join us via Zoom to present a program on backyard koi ponds. She will discuss pond requirements, how to select and care for koi, and how to keep both pond and koi healthy and happy.



Julia Mann is property manager at Garvan Woodland Gardens in Hot Springs, the botanical garden of the University of Arkansas Fay Jones School of Architecture.

Garvan Gardens' half-acre koi pond in the "Garden of the Pine Wind" is Mann's current koi pond obsession.

A longtime ornamental fish expert and a certified koi judge, Mann received her training in Singapore. She has bred and shown many national and international champions of exotic fish, but the koi pond fish is her true love.

Mann is also an accomplished garden and landscape photographer, as well as a recovering attorney, having practiced law for many years before discovering the joy of working in a garden.

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on the following at our July 6 meeting.

[May 2021 Treasurer's Report](#)

[June 2021 Meeting Minutes](#)

From Your President

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

Dear Friends,

Oh, how I wilt in the heat! A saving grace is that at this moment, the humidity has dropped a little bit, and that helps some, but it's still too hot for me to stay outside for long. When I look at the poor things that I haven't gotten around to planting yet, I wince and realize that I'm acting like I expect them to get their own water and plant themselves. Guess I'd better accept that responsibility and act on it.

Last month I asked how you go about figuring out what you're going to work on in your

yard, and one friend replied that she made a list of what needed to be done, gathered her tools and went outside, then she worked for an hour on something that wasn't on the list and went inside to rest and regroup before setting out again. A kindred spirit for sure!



Did you all "attend" the conference? I was impressed by the work the Craighead County Master Gardeners had done. It was especially fun to watch it with other Master Gardeners at the Extension Office where we could visit and share our thoughts with each other. The audio and video equipment in the Extension Office Community Room has been upgraded now, so in addition to being with friends, we were treated to exceptional picture and sound. You're going to be impressed when we go back!

And speaking of going back, our next meeting will be in person! For our July meeting, you'll have a chance to visit with old friends and meet new folks. Even though we can go back to meeting in person, COVID is still a threat. Before our meeting on July 6, please take a look at the [CDC website](#) for the latest guidance for both indoor and outdoor activities.

Last year, I shared Pablo Neruda's "Ode to the Tomato" with you, and this summer, here's his ode to the onion, another culinary essential.

"Ode to the Onion"

Pablo Neruda

Onion,
luminous flask,
your beauty formed
petal by petal,
crystal scales expanded you
and in the secrecy of the dark earth
your belly grew round with dew.
Under the earth
the miracle
happened
and when your clumsy
green stem appeared,
and your leaves were born
like swords
in the garden,
the earth heaped up her
power
showing your naked transparency,
and as the remote sea

make you,
onion
clear as a planet
and destined
to shine,
constant constellation,
round rose of water,
upon
the table
of the poor.

You make us cry without hurting us.
I have praised everything that exists,
but to me, onion, you are
more beautiful than a bird
of dazzling feathers,
heavenly globe, platinum goblet,
unmoving dance
of the snowy anemone

in lifting the breasts of Aphrodite
duplicating the magnolia,
so did the earth

and the fragrance of the earth lives
in your crystalline nature.

2022 Conference Update

JUDY SMITH

2022 Conference Steering Committee



The steering committee for the 2022 Master Gardener State Conference met recently to restart the planning process for the event. The conference dates are **May 19–21** and the conference will be held at the Holiday Inn Convention Center in Springdale. The committee is planning for 400 MGs to attend from around the state.

With the theme of "Ozark Adventure," the various committees are working to have decorations, goody bags, merchandise, speakers, tours, a special event, entertainment and the garden market that highlight the personality of Northwest Arkansas.

The Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists will be growing plants to give away to conference participants and will be a market vendor as well. The market subcommittee is actively seeking vendors for the 24 spaces that are available. Contact [Gayle Howard](#) or [Marilyn Misenhimer](#) with vendor suggestions.

County 76 will be handling the silent auction.

Be sure to read the announcement about rock painting in this newsletter and don't forget to collect seeds for the suitcase table favors being prepared by Doris Cassidy.

Sponsorship packets are available and individual donations are needed. The steering committee would like to have enough sponsorships and donations to keep the registration fee around \$120 as it has been in the past.

If you are interested in joining one of the subcommittees, contact [Patsy Louk](#) or [Steve Brizzi](#).

Uncle Mike's Veggie Garden Tips

MIKE STANDROD

Gardener's Velcro: A Vertical Gardener's Best Friend

Because I have little space, I garden vertically as much as possible.

One of the BEST items I've found at my local box store is Gardener's Velcro. It is a handy way to "train" climbing plants to a trellis or to support heavy tomato branches to a stake or cage. It is inexpensive, and best of all, reusable. I've found Velcro rolls will last about three years. Just snip off the length you need for each "tie." When cleaning up, just re-roll your various length strips into a large roll. Next year you don't even have to snip. Just pull off the right length. You can even use Velcro strips to lash together bamboo supports for a trellis. (Not everyone learned how to lash with rope or twine in the Boy Scouts.)



Ways to utilize Velcro in the garden.

Bigger is Not Better

When growing up, I watched my dad attempt to grow the biggest tomato, biggest cucumber, biggest squash, biggest melon, biggest turnip. Maybe it was a macho competition. I suspect it was simply to grow the most volume, given our limited garden space. With the exception of a pumpkin or melon contest, biggest was not necessarily the best. It took me a while to realize that. As a child, I remember eating bitter cucumbers, tough squash, and long stringy okra. Aaargh! My earliest enlightenment was as a teenager, when I discovered Atkins baby Polski Wyroby gherkins. They were pickle heaven! I couldn't get my folks to buy them because they were (1) too expensive, and (2) "why would anybody make tiny, tiny pickles when they could let them grow and make big, big pickles?" But thankfully "Big Momma" bought them and I became addicted. When I went to college, I lived on them. Unfortunately, Atkins Pickle Company (Atkins, Arkansas) has since closed, but one can still find such yummy pickles.

Point being, garden for QUALITY, not quantity. Pick your cucumbers, squash, okra, etc., while young, tender, and tasty! Also, picking early in the morning preserves the best flavor.

Compare the cucumbers in the photo below: the cuke on the left (overlooked while picking) will be BITTER...guaranteed. Best send it to the compost pile or to the chickens.



Bitter cukes = chicken feed.

Help Rock the 2022 Conference!



Here's a fun way to get some hours and help us get ready for the conference. Gayle Howard is organizing a group to paint 400 rocks for the goody bags for the conference next year. WCMGs can help in a couple of ways:

- Collect small, smooth, and preferably flat rocks for the project or by letting Gayle know of a source for rocks. Rocks should be palm size or less but big enough to paint on. Drop off the rocks at the Extension Office or the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. Gayle can also pick up the rocks at your house; call her at 479-799-9134 to arrange a time.
- Join Gayle for a rock-painting party in the Extension Office meeting room on Monday, August 9, from 1:00–4:00 p.m.

The County Fair is Happening!

DORIS CASSIDY

Save the date! The Washington County Fair is on go. This is a great project for obtaining WCMG hours and there is something to do for all types of talent.

The work day for cleanup and set up for the horticulture building is **Saturday, August 14**.

Outdoor art will enter on Saturday, **August 21**. Horticulture will enter on **Monday, August 23**, with judging on **Tuesday, August 24**. The fair will close on **Saturday, August 28**. Checkout and building cleanup will be **Sunday, August 29**.

The pandemic had slowed the collection of items for the sale we hold every year. The Extension Office lobby is now open and you can drop off any items for the sale. Things you no longer want can become someone else's treasure.



Speaking of the Extension Office lobby, if you are saving seeds for the 2022 conference table favors, you can now drop those seeds off in Extension Office lobby. Please include the name of the seeds and your name on the container. I have 400 tiny suitcases like the one pictured here to fill with seeds!

Questions? Call Doris Cassidy, 479-684-6833.

Meet the Trainees

OLIVIA HARRINGTON and LYNETTE TERRELL

Sarah Bryan

Hey there! Hi there! I am an Arkansas native currently residing in Fayetteville with my partner, two guinea pigs, and our two BIG dogs. I grew up in Bentonville where I graduated high school in 2010. After high school, I went on to receive a bachelor's degree in criminal justice and sociology from the University of Arkansas in 2014. After college, I quickly experienced a series of unfortunate events and decided to take off on the road to get back in touch with my head and my heart again. I built a bed stand in my Honda Element and spent the next four years traveling (mostly along the West Coast) while working on seasonal farms and living off the grid, commune-style. It was an incredible experience that led me to be able to travel all over the world.



I returned to Fayetteville over two years ago now and really love being back and being involved in my community again. I am a previous Food Corps member and I currently work at the NWA Food Bank as their garden and nutrition specialist, where I help oversee their teaching garden with fellow Master Gardener Nena Evans!

I love reading, biking, skating, homesteading, crafting, and ALL the board games. I am

currently in school for a master's in public administration and while I'm not totally sure what the future holds for me yet, I know that it includes lots of manure!

Lynne Patterson

Hi everyone! I am originally from Little Rock. I moved to Fayetteville in 2009 with my children and am very excited to be involved with the Master Gardening program here! I have always enjoyed the happiness, artistic satisfaction, and peace that gardening brings. I love being outside and, in addition to gardening, I enjoy hiking, camping, painting, astronomy, and cooking.



I work as a registered nurse in ICU/critical care and per diem as a nurse at a local hospice home. I love being a nurse. When the shifts are long, gardening is my therapy. I find it very relaxing. I have four raised beds in my backyard this year and a few flower beds that I built up. I have planted perennial flower seeds this spring and hope to have a beautiful butterfly garden this summer.

I developed a love of gardening when I was a little girl. My American grandparents had a farm near Perryville, Arkansas. I have very fond memories of stargazing away from the city lights and picking strawberries and green beans during the summer. My granddaddy had an orchard and a very large garden on the farm. He grew every vegetable you can think of. I sat in the hot screened-in porch and shelled peas with my grandma. She then canned the goods, and she was the best cook I've ever known. Every Sunday lunch at their house had a kitchen table filled with goodies fresh from the garden.

I fell in love with flowers and landscaping during my trips to Scotland when I was young. We spent every other summer visiting my Scottish grandparents. My granda had a black gardening shed with bright pink and purple hanging fuchsia plants that bloomed all summer long. I loved walking towards the High Street in Montrose and seeing the beautiful gardens in front of the small Scottish cottages. It was so interesting to see plants and flowers that I had never seen before, plants that could not have grown in the Arkansas heat. A few of my favorite places to see flowers were the gardens at Edzell Castle, Princes Street Gardens in Edinburgh, scotch broom by the North Sea, and the purple heather in the Glens.

I am very grateful for the opportunity to become a Master Gardener and I would like to take this time to say thank you to everyone for the wealth of information that is here for us all. I have really enjoyed the classes and the recordings that are available. My mentor has been a wonderful friend and resource to me as we navigate volunteering during a pandemic. I am looking forward to helping out in our community and learning all I can along the way!

May Photo of the Month:

"Pets in the Garden"



FIRST PLACE

"The Standoff" by Vicki Mayo



SECOND PLACE

"Sometimes It's the Little Things" by Geri Alvis



THIRD PLACE

"Spring Is in the Air" by Alfie Anderson

Natural State Natives

MEL ZABECKI



Goosefoot: weed or food? *Photo courtesy Dr. Emily Beahm, Arkansas Archeological Survey station archeologist at Winthrop Rockefeller Institute*

Weeds! Weeds! We are harassed by weeds! Especially this time of year when we want our FOOD to grow! But did you know that at various points in history, weeds WERE food? Before farming became a way of life for different societies around the world, foragers, also know as hunter-gatherers, collected wild plants and animals from their landscape. These resources kept us alive for most of human history. The pre-contact American Indians did not start farming until 2,000 years ago, yet their ancestors arrived in this hemisphere 14,000 years ago. So what plants made up most of their plant diets? WEEDS!

We get most of our info about foragers in Arkansas from what archeologists call the Woodland Period, which spanned from about 600 BCE to 900 CE. There were, of course, foragers before 600 BCE but as their numbers were not as high and settlements not as permanent as in later periods, evidence is sparse. During the Woodland, people began to settle down and populations rose-thereby leaving more evidence behind for archeologists to find. Horticulture began during the Woodland, with controlling where plants grew and some domestication due to choosing seeds from particular plants with desired characteristics.

As with all human societies, grains were an important part of the diet. However, at the Woodland time period, corn still had not made it to North America from Mexico and wheat from Europe was 1,000 years in the future. The grains of Woodland Arkansas were the weeds! There were starchy grains and oily grains like goosefoot, erect knotweed, sumpweed, maygrass, little barley, and sunflower. Some could be ground for flour and some for oil. I can say from personal experience that all these grains are incredibly labor intensive to make edible, but from the massive amounts of carbonized seeds and plant parts found at archeological sites, and seed bags preserved with millions of seeds, we know that these grains were important parts of the pre-corn diet.



Little barley: weed or food? *Photo courtesy Dr. Emily Beahm, Arkansas Archeological Survey station archeologist at Winthrop Rockefeller Institute*

Little barley and goosefoot (see photos), are things that you often pull out of your gardens today, but it's the sumpweed/marshelder (*Iva annua*) that is the topic of much research currently. At Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park in central Arkansas, archeologists have been attempting to re-domesticate the sumpweed by choosing the largest seeds from the tallest plants to replant and over the past eight years each generation has been metrically larger. This is part of an ongoing experiment in collaboration with other ethnobotanists around the country to understand wild seed domestication. Perhaps these archeological experiments will translate into real-world uses for sustainable agriculture. See, weeds might not be so bad after all!

Join the Saturday Crew

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD



Saturday Crew at Shiloh Museum. Left: Marty Powers and Kathryn Birkhead. Right: DeLee Holbert (from left), Glen Robillard, and Lynne Patterson.

What do you do when a lot of your new members work full time, yet want and need to get their volunteer hours in? You find a way to help!

That's what has happened this year, thanks to the impetus one of our trainees provided. She was concerned that she was not going to be able to work as many hours as are typically required, and she was not alone in her anxiety. Several other trainees had voiced the same concern. The Saturday Crew was formed to meet that need, and it also helps meet the needs of sanctioned projects that don't have large regular volunteer teams.

The Saturday Crew typically has about 8-9 trainees and Master Gardeners who come out to prune, weed, remove invasives, thin overgrown areas, and whatever else needs to be done.

The crew goes to different projects each week and has so far been to Shiloh Museum, the Air Museum, Elkins, the Lincoln Community Garden, and the Extension Office.

The crew needs guidance from someone familiar with each project on what needs to be done at each site. Even if the project chair can't be there, they can communicate with one of their regular team members, and that person can guide the crew. Folks like to be able to log at least a couple of hours while they're at each project.

The work site for the weekend is typically announced each Friday, and ideas and invitations for project work are welcomed. Come join us! Questions? [Email Kathryn Birkhead](#).



More Saturday Crew at Shiloh Museum. Left: Mr. T supervises Lynne and Glen. Right: Jayne Laster (from left), Alfi Anderson, and Kim Hosey.

Just Us

JUDY SMITH

GARDEN ANXIETY

Pam Johnson

“Rain, rain, go away, come again another day.” Many of us recall this little rhyme from our childhood days, but the more things change, the more they stay the same. Oops, there’s another blast from the past.

July is the month where we typically consider it the start of the summer dry spell, when we seem to forget about the rainy spring. My garden anxiety starts in July. Just how much watering am I going to have to do out in those hotter days? Can’t go on a trip, because no one would want to water as much as I have to water. And walking the garden every day?

No one would do that for me.

Don't even get me started on weeding. Those things sprout up overnight. I don't care how much mulch I use, they find the microscopic chink in my armor. And while I'm on my rant, where in the world do those new rocks come from? I've gardened in this spot for years and thought I had rid it of the rocks. Heck, my yard used to be



the truck garden for the farm, so wouldn't they have already removed most of the rocks? Plus, my garden is raised! I think there are sadistic rock demons who come out at night and place the rocks in my garden. What other explanation is there?

But, the planning, the work, and the anxiety are so worth it. The garden scents, the textures, the colors . . . yes, I complain about the weeds, the rocks, the hot temperatures, and the watering, and yes, I'm chained to my garden, but the chains, I have found, have velvet handcuffs!

Photo by [David Ballew](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Gardening and Community Events

PAM BUTLER

Tuesday nights through August 31, 5:00–8:00 p.m. TERRIFIC TUESDAY NIGHTS. [Botanical Garden of the Ozarks](#). Free. Volunteers needed.

July 1, 12:00–1:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: WATERMELONS. Zoom program. [Registration](#)

July 9, 8:00 p.m. HERPING AT THE NATURE CENTER (looking for reptiles and amphibians at the Nature Center). [Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center](#), Fort Smith. Free.

July 10, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. or 7:00–10:00 p.m. FIREFLY FLING. [Botanical Garden of the Ozarks](#). Advance tickets \$13 for adults, \$4 for children ages 0-13. At gate \$15 for adults, \$5 for children ages 0-13. Volunteers needed.

July 15, 12:00–1:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: SOUTHERN PEAS. Zoom program. [Registration](#)

July 19, 12:00 p.m. In place of July Master Gardener Monday. Details coming soon.

July 20, 6:00—7:00 p.m. PHYTOREMEDIATION WITH NATIVE PLANTS: HOW NATIVE PLANTS CAN BE USED TO CLEAN UP ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINANTS. Zoom program hosted by Faulkner County Master Gardeners. [Registration](#)

July 22. COUNTY 76 PROJECT MEETING. Zoom.

July 27. COUNTY 76 GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING. Details coming soon.

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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WCMG Website



UA Cooperative 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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