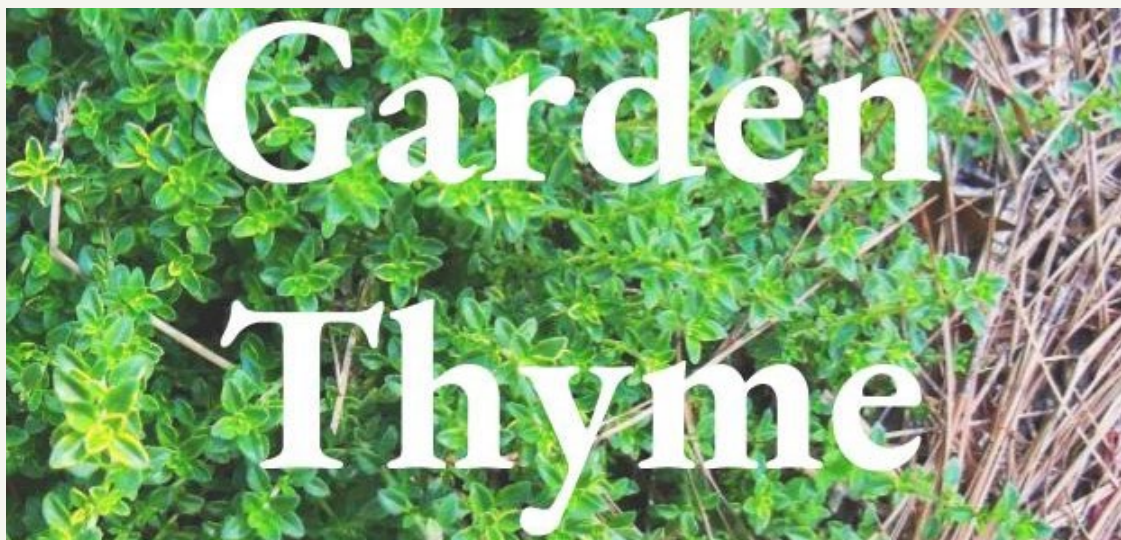


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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • May 2020



Please note! Your email provider may show an abbreviated version of this newsletter, so if you see the words "[Message clipped] View entire message" or something similar at the end of this email, **be sure to click on "View entire message"** so you don't miss important news!

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."**

May Meeting—Yep, You Read That Right!

Good news! Our May 5 meeting is a go, but rather than us meeting in person, we will log into Zoom to attend the business meeting and program. Members who are unfamiliar with Zoom will have an opportunity to attend a trial meeting to do troubleshooting on April 30. Watch for an email from Colin with instructions on how to participate in that meeting.



Our May 5 speaker is Dr. Mel Zabecki (WCMG 2019), education outreach coordinator for the Arkansas Archeological Survey. In honor of Cinco de Mayo, Mel will discuss the many amazing qualities of corn, including where it came from and what we know about it historically, in a program entitled, “Mexico’s Legacy: Corn.”

At first glance, most of us would consider our relationship with corn to be pretty basic: open can and heat up or roast/boil cob and butter it up. Grits are a southern staple and tortillas and corn chips have made their way into our diets thanks to Mexican restaurants opening up. Popcorn at the movies, yum. But corn makes its way into our lives in many other ways when it’s broken down into high fructose corn syrup, corn starch, ethanol, etc. But how far back have we been using corn and who first cultivated it?

Mel is an archeologist who educates the general public on Arkansas archeology and spends a lot of time learning about the history of plants in this region. She has grown different varieties of corn and has learned through trial and error what you can and can’t do with corn. Please join her on Zoom for this discussion of a grain that touches each and every one of us.

In lieu of our June 2 picnic, we’ll have a Zoom meeting with Larry West as our speaker. See details at the end of this newsletter.

Links to participate in all of these meetings will be sent out through Mail Chimp and through Colin’s listserv. Until we can be together in person, it will be good to at least be together virtually.

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on the following at our May 5 meeting.

March 2020 Meeting Minutes

February 2020 Treasurer's Report

From Your President

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

WCMG 2017

Dear colleagues,

Many of you will remember the line from a Joni Mitchell song that says, “you don’t know what you’ve got till it’s gone.” I’m pleased to say that there are many things in my life that I realized at the time were blessings, and I was grateful for them in that moment. Recent joy-filled events include holding my two-day-old granddaughter, seeing the 'Little Joe' Joe Pye weed and false indigo re-emerge, watching the breeze move the oak tree in my back yard, and enjoying the cilantro that surprised me by over-wintering.



One thing that has absolutely brought me up short, though, is the possibility that it may be a long time (perhaps a very long time) before we can be physically close to people in a large group without putting our health and the health of our colleagues at risk. I hadn’t fully appreciated the joy of hugging friends, standing together and talking, sitting in a restaurant, grocery shopping without wearing a mask, and so many other interactions that used to be casual affairs. I took all of those for granted, and as Joni said, I truly didn’t know what we had until it was gone.

Our board is grappling now with how we can best serve our members, in the near term and in the foreseeable future, so that we can be a strong organization in the long term. Colin is working hard at developing resources and pointing us toward them, as you’ve seen in some of the announcements we’ve received recently. In spite of his personal aversion to Facebook and Instagram, he has created pages that contain valuable information, including a timely chart of the effects of low temperatures on fruits and vegetables that are budding or flowering. If you’re on Facebook, look for UAEX– Northwest Arkansas Horticulture (<https://www.facebook.com/UAEXNWAHORT/>), and on Instagram and Twitter, look for @NWAPlantAgent (<https://www.instagram.com/nwaplantagent/>). You’ll find useful science-based information there, and I’m grateful to Colin for the work he is doing to keep us engaged and informed.

I’ve been reminded lately of another quote, but this one is a quote that has always made me crazy:
“Bloom where you are planted.” What we know as



gardeners is that some things simply can't bloom where they are planted. They might need more sun or more water or a different soil. While I was cleaning out a bed at the Shiloh Museum last week, though, I saw a little columbine that surprised me, because despite how absolutely unlikely it was, it was indeed blooming where it was planted, which happened to be in the middle of a rock. That little plant has a lesson for me, and perhaps for you as well. Sometimes we can bloom where we are planted, no matter how impossible the circumstances seem. May we find a way to bloom now, even without the opportunity to be with each other.

My best wishes and prayers for your good health and well-being,
Kathryn

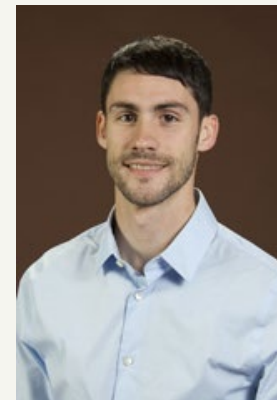
A Memo from Mr. Massey

COLIN MASSEY

Washington County Extension Agent, Horticulture/Gardening

Dear Washington County MGs,

What a strange time we are living in. I know we are all missing the camaraderie and rubbing elbows in the garden. If there is any silver lining, I hope it has afforded you more time in your own gardens alongside family. I certainly have more vegetables started than I ever have.



I want to thank all of you that are leading, sharing knowledge with your community, sewing masks, and helping the Cooperative Extension Service educate folks on how to stay safe during the pandemic. I know it's not what you wish you were doing, but your efforts have helped spread our message far and wide, and we are all very grateful for your help. As many of you know, many new gardeners are trying to grow food this year and are going to be asking a lot of questions. This a great way to volunteer your knowledge and help them along the way.

Benton County Horticulture Agent Ryan Neal and I have been busy bees trying to make videos and social media content to reach clientele in this way. It's time consuming, but we've seen a positive response and hope to continue providing education this way. I hope

you'll share those as you see fit. I sent the links in my email to you last week.

Arkansas never fails to throw a curveball. I used to get tired of hearing people say, "You want the weather to change? Stick around a few hours," but it is true. Everyone was spooked about the freeze, even so that Susan Young set me up with a 5News television interview last week (thanks Susan 💎💎). Here in town, I got away pretty light with just a few damaged blossoms on my fringetree and a couple of stung potato shoots. Even the uncovered volunteer tomatoes in the garden survived. My berries were fine, though I did bring my strawberry planter inside and covered a few things. The higher elevations and Benton County probably saw a bit more freeze damage. Here are a few pictures of what that looks like:



But alas, the time is here to plant what we've all been waiting for: tomatoes and peppers. I was able to use my Berkeley Tie-Dye seeds leftover from last year for most of my tomato starts. I also started green beans, some funky watermelons, beets, and cucumbers. I made a video on constructing a raised garden bed on a budget, so I'm excited to see how it does this year. I'll document with photos as the season gets started, because who doesn't love baby pictures.

Lastly, I hope you'll keep your local farmers and produce growers in mind. We are working closely to make sure they not only navigate this pandemic, but thrive and spring into new market opportunities. Many farmer's markets have had to employ online ordering systems. I just submitted my Saturday order for the Fayetteville Farmer's Market. If you've ever ordered anything online, it's a breeze. Support your local farmers!

Photo of the Month: "Spring Madness"



FIRST PLACE
"Dewdrops and Pink" by Kitty Sanders (WCMG 2012)



SECOND PLACE
"Spring Glory" by Nancy Sloan (WCMG 2012)



THIRD PLACE
"Must Have Coleus" by Jodie Miskell (WCMG 2012)

**From Your Photo Contest
Committee:**

Now's a great time to look through old photos or take new ones for the monthly WGMG Photo Contest. Photos are to have been taken in Arkansas, but they can be from any year. Many of you may have intended to participate, but just haven't had the time. Perhaps you do now! We'd love to see participation from more of you.



Our theme for May is designed to celebrate Mother's Day. Snap a photo of one of those plants that bring back fond memories. The theme is "Plants My Mother Grew." The deadline to submit is May 15.

The theme for June is "Container Gardens." We welcome pictures of any plants grown in containers by June 15.

BGO Plant Sale

Online Plant Sale Prices

Yarrow Colorado Mix - \$7	False Hollyhock Zebrina - \$6
Sweet Flag Ogon - \$7	Bee Balm - \$7
Agastache Black Adder - \$7	Basil Newton - \$6
Dill Hera - \$6	Basil Cinnamon - \$6
Dutchman's Pipevine - \$20	Basil Genovese - \$6
Milkweed - \$7	Blue Spice Basil - \$6
Wild Blue Indigo - \$7	Basil Evening Primrose - \$6
Borage - \$6	Basil Italian - \$6
Harebell - \$7	Basil Mrs. Burns - \$6
Celosia Eternity - \$6	Basil Parsley - \$7
Orange Sweet Plum - \$7	Cashew Bean - \$7
Yellow Coneflower - \$7	Common Rosemary - \$6
Echinacea - \$7	White Sage - \$6
Bronze Fennel - \$7	Canary Island Sage - \$6
Hardy Geranium - \$7	Sedum Mix - \$7
Early Sunflower - \$7	Tropical Candlestick Tree - \$10
Smooth Hydrangea - \$10	Wrinkleleaf Goldenrod - \$10
SunPatiens Compact Fire Red - \$6	Lambs Ear Helen Von Stein - \$7
Lavender - \$6	New England Aster - \$10
Lobelia Mrs. Clibran - \$6	Mexican Sunflower - \$6
Sweet Alyssum - \$6	Veronica Coerulea - \$7

This is the roll call of plants that were to be offered at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO) annual spring plant sale this weekend, which was to be an online sale due to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, within a couple of hours of opening the online sale on April 27 to BGO members, all the plants were sold! The BGO staff asked us to express their gratitude to all of you for this "unprecedented and enormous response."

If you missed out on the sale, consider supporting one of the BGO vendor partners listed on the BGO website: <https://www.bgozarks.org/events-2/plant-sale-2/>

Uncle Mike's Veggie Garden Tips

MIKE STANDROD
WCMG 2006



APRIL: Get Ahead of the Weeds

WHAT IS A WEED?

Uncle Mike's definition: **WEED**, noun; Any plant that grows where you don't want it to grow. verb; 1. To attempt to remove weeds by hand or with various tools such as a hoe. 2. Punishment for misbehaving children or hardened prison inmates, particularly in the South. 3. Monotonous drudgery or punishment for adult gardeners who failed to mulch

their garden.

OK, you've started your garden. Please TELL ME you've been gardening (with the Coronavirus isolation!) NOW: Get a jump on your weeds! Prevention is far better than elimination. Try one of these methods (listed in order of my personal preference):

MULCHING

(1) With EDIBLE mulch: Fast-growing radishes, lettuces and greens in between larger, slower-growing plants will keep down weeds. As you pull and eat the "mulch plants", replace with an organic mulch (see #3). As the weather warms, lettuces especially enjoy the shade given by taller plants.

(2) Prevent weeds by closely spacing plants such as lettuces, kales, spinach, etc. Their leaves will shade out emerging weeds.

(3) Use ORGANIC mulches whenever possible. Why? They break down quickly adding organic material to your beds. My favorite is: Wheat straw (not hay, which is full of seeds which will sprout), grass clippings, pine needles, and FINELY ground pine bark (though be aware that pine lowers pH). Note: Avoid straw or lawn clippings that have been sprayed with broadleaf herbicides. The weed killer can leach right to your "broadleaf" vegetables with dire results.

(4) Hardwood or nugget mulches. Cheap, but awfully slow to break down. Pine "nuggets" will float away at the first heavy rain.

(5) Black plastics, landscape fabric. You must plant through holes; plastic warms the ground (both good and bad, depending on your goals), but does not allow moisture to pass. Often used in long row monoculture crops. Doesn't really fit backyard raised beds. I've seen plastic hold pools of water and breed mosquitoes. Unfortunately, my neighbor does this – and guess who gets the mosquitoes?

TORCHING

I just have to mention this. Had a friend set fire to his garden which was too thinly mulched with pine mulch, trying to burn weeds with a butane torch. The pine mulch was perfect kindling. This may work on sidewalk cracks, but not a good idea elsewhere.

HOEING

Not weed control, but punishment for not mulching. Enough said.



Left: Early spring-planted lettuces, kales, onions in which I will plant tomatoes or peppers in the middle of them, carefully placing cage around them. I'll harvest just a few plants in the middle to make ample room for the tomato or pepper plant. Then gradually harvest outward from the center and replace with straw mulch. Between the two types of mulch, there will be few, if any weeds.

Middle: Remember the tiny seedling trays pictured in the February *Garden Thyme*? Now after a couple of transplanting upgrades, they are teenagers, ready to be planted in the middle of my edible mulch bed. If you didn't start seedlings, just buy transplants ready-to-go at your favorite garden supplier. But at 100x the price.

Right: Yukon Gold potatoes. By tradition they were planted on St. Patrick's Day. My kind of crop: low maintenance, high yield. Just plant, hill and straw them, and wait. Dig them around the 4th of July.



Our bluebird couple decided on the box directly in front of our patio. And the feeder on our patio. Good choice! Mama is now building her nest. Makes morning coffee most enjoyable.

2022 Conference Update

MEL ZABECKI

WCMG 2019



That's not a typo! It's now the 2022 State Master Gardener Conference that we're working on. Due to COVID-19, your conference steering committee agreed to let the Craighead County Master Gardener crew move their conference to 2021 due to the cancellation of the 2020 Jonesboro conference. So now we'll just have more time to make an even better meeting!

Your steering committee recently met on Zoom to take a look at the conference logo, which is shown here! Thank you to those who contributed to the idea. All committees are currently working on individual budgets and the wish-lists will be compiled this summer.

Meet Our Trainees

LYNETTE TERRELL

WCMG 2020

Brad Neidecker

I was reared on a small beef cattle farm in Crawford County. We sold cattle and hay and had roughly a quarter acre garden. When it came time to go to college and choose a major, my school of choice was the U of A and my major was anything except agriculture. I thought that I had spent enough time dealing with animals, plants, crops, trees, pests, and uncooperative weather to last a lifetime.



I ended up earning a degree as a math and science

teacher. In retrospect, I realize that my upbringing on the farm was a big asset when studying the sciences and math. I probably had about a dozen years of practical internship experience before I started college.

As I meandered from Springdale to Houston with a few international schools in between, I realized how much I missed working with the things that were such an aggravation in my teenage years. So after retiring, my wife and I moved back to Washington County where we have a little elbow room and a climate that represents all four seasons.

I'm looking forward to learning more about gardening from the Master Gardeners and then sharing that knowledge with others.

Leslie Bailey

Although I've been in Fayetteville 34 years, I spent my childhood and teen years in Little Rock, Arkansas, where my love of gardening began. I was initially influenced by my grandmother who taught me how a garden could give back. Her backyard garden was the place where we would have lunch, play games and host our birthday parties.



But the biggest lesson on the ability of a garden giving back I learned from my mother. Tragically, one summer the daughter of one of our neighbors was killed in a plane crash. To show our love and give regards to the family, my mother spearheaded a garden project to memorialize their daughter. Volunteers showed up and donations flowed in. That summer we created a memorial garden that still exists today for new generations of neighbors to enjoy. Who knew a small neighborhood garden could give back so much?

As a new Master Gardener, I look forward to giving back to our garden community in Northwest Arkansas—beautifying, teaching, bringing solace to and bringing neighbors together.

Natural State Natives

MEL ZABECKI

WCMG 2019



The chokecherry blooms are just about gone, but were very obvious in the past few weeks.

I set out to write this column about native plants that I have experience with, but sitting in my backyard this month, I saw a blooming tree that I couldn't recognize and was intrigued. A few plant identification photo apps called it black cherry but I was sure I hadn't missed that in my backyard. After waiting a few more weeks for full bloom, I was able to identify this mysterious plant as chokecherry (*Prunus virginiana*) and yippee it's native and is found in the archeological record!



The lower chokecherry's bark is distinctly striated. As you go up the tree, though, it's less obvious because the bark fractures higher up and the striations are not as noticeable.

Last month I explained that archeological specialists called paleoethnobotanists identify seeds from soil samples. Well there are also palynologists who study even smaller fractions of soil samples to identify pollens. Chokecherry pollens have been reported by palynologists at Mississippi Period sites right here in Arkansas! But how do we know the American Indians were eating the berries or using them otherwise? We don't find very much preserved food nor dyed textiles that can be easily studied for dye elements. But the fact that use of the berries occurs in tribal nations today means that they were probably used in the past as well.

The berries are astringent (think unripe persimmon) and need to be either cooked or dried to consume—supposedly they get sweeter. The fruit was mashed up and then dried into balls and broken down and added to pemmican, much like the serviceberries I wrote about in April. The berries also make a nice purplish dye but don't go mashing it into your cotton clothes thinking it will hold. I've made that mistake with other berries and found out that you need to mordant (treat) the textiles first to prepare the fibers to accept the dye, and it's also important to set the color in with something like tannic acid afterwards. It's not an easy process.

Nowadays, folks use the berries for jams, jellies, and other homemade goods. I wonder if any of y'all have harvested and done something with chokecherry?

https://www.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_PLANTMATERIALS/publications/kspmcp5596.pdf thoroughly describes every bit of the plant better than I can. I plan on watching my chokecherries ripen and using them for chokecherry liqueur! Wish me luck!

Photos by Mel Zabecki

Just Us

JUDY SMITH

WCMG 2011

Judie Branson (WCMG 2009) passed away on Sunday, April 19. Judie was our president in 2012. Her garden was on the Flower, Garden, and Nature Society's "Through The Garden Gate Tour" a few years ago and she recently served as the national president of the American Daylily Society. Judie worked at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, serving as membership coordinator, for several years. WCMG will be giving a donation in her memory to our county Endowment Fund.

Jan Judy (WCMG 2012) is at Regency Rehab facility in Springdale. She is getting better but will have another surgery to replace a bone graft that did not take. She would love to have some gardening magazines to read.

Our first annual **"Through the Garden Gate Tour"** had to be cancelled due to the virus but the Garden Gate project members hope to start again next year and host a spectacular tour.

June 2 Meeting Preview

"Without Soil, There is No Garden"

Dr. Larry West was born and reared on cotton/cattle farm in south Arkansas near Arkadelphia. Larry received a BSA and MS from the University of Arkansas and a PhD. in soil science from Texas A&M University. His professional career included 20 years on the faculty at the University of Georgia and research positions with the USDA Agricultural Research Service and USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service.



After retirement in 2013, Larry and his wife, Marsha, returned to Fayetteville where they enjoy gardening, pottery, and sewing. Larry is a Fellow of the Soil Science Society of America and currently serves as a member of the Arkansas Professional Soil Classifiers Licensing Board. For our June 2 program, he will provide a refresher/primer on the basic concepts of managing the soil in your garden and the environmental consequences of improper soil management.

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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Send all newsletter submissions to Judy Smith or Mary McCully.

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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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