

Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • September 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."**

September Zoom Meeting

Our September 1 monthly meeting will be held at 6:30 p.m via Zoom. A link inviting you to participate will be sent out through Mail Chimp and through Colin's listserv.

Be sure to attend so we will have a quorum to vote for our 2021 Executive Board positions:

President – Kathryn Birkhead (bless her heart)
Vice President/Programs – Karen Hanna-Towne
Secretary – Kim Hughes
Treasurer – Wanda Gore
Assistant Treasurer – Jill King
At Large – Randy Butler
At Large – LaDeana Mullinix
At Large – Jim Sposato

So you can put faces with the names, here are the nominees:



President
Kathryn Birkhead



Vice President
Karen Hanna-Towne



Secretary
Kim Hughes



Treasurer
Wanda Gore



Assistant Treasurer



Member at Large

Jill King



Member at Large
LaDeana Mullinix

Randy Butler



Member at Large
Jim Sposato

The Bylaws Committee and the Executive Committee have determined we don't need to update or change bylaws this year.

We'll also have a slide show program presented by nature photographer Mike Martin on "Flora and Fauna of the Ozarks."

A native Arkansan, Mike Martin has been an avid nature and wildlife photographer for over 30 years. His photos have been published by state parks departments in Arkansas, California, Florida, the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, Chicago's Field Museum, and the Mississippi Wildlife Federation. A number of Martin's photos have also been included on Cornell University's "All About Birds" website, <https://www.allaboutbirds.org>



Taking Care of Business

We will vote on the following at our September 1 Zoom meeting.

August 2020 Meeting Minutes

July 2020 Treasurer's Report

From Your President

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

We've had some gloriously cool days in August, which is a delightful surprise. It means I haven't minded being outside to work.

The other day as I was dutifully raking up the diseased leaves under my oak tree, I started

thinking about when I had first realized that working in nature filled a part of my soul, and I know exactly when it was. I'd grown up with parents and aunts and uncles and a grandmother who loved flowers and working in the garden, but I honestly hadn't given it much mind until 2010. That was the year that Master Gardener Reuben Blood had managed to convince enough people in Springdale that we needed a community garden that it became a reality. (It's on McCollough Drive, close to the UPS office east of downtown, by the way.)



Reuben had started his campaign in late 2008, going to one city office and then another to talk up his idea, but he wasn't getting much traction. He was concerned with the nutritional needs of people in Springdale and knew that growing their own food would serve them well. I was working at the Jones Center at the time, and he came to talk to me about his idea and the reasoning behind it. We were getting ready to host a series of community conversations to listen to ideas about how to help Springdale, and I suggested to him that he come to be a part of those conversations, and if he could convince enough people in the group that it was a good idea, we'd get behind it and see what could happen. Well, he did. He came to the conversations, and he got people to listen to why it was a good idea. It took us a little while to find the right piece of city property, to figure out water and costs and a few other logistical concerns, but we held a groundbreaking in March 2010 and had plots ready for people to grow their own food that summer.

My father had died in February that year, and Mother was having hard time (as was I). We would go over to our plot at the garden in the evening and work there together, and it helped both of us. Even on nights that she didn't feel like going, I'd go over to water or pull weeds or just to check on our plants, and I would consistently get home feeling better than when I had gone.

It's still true today that being in the garden makes me feel better. I don't have a plot in the community garden anymore, but the seed had been planted, if you'll excuse the pun. If I'm in a stinking mood, I'll go out to weed or water or see if any butterflies are coming around, and I'll come back in feeling better. I am so grateful for gardening!

Pablo Neruda's "Ode to Tomatoes" has always delighted me and seems especially appropriate right now. Bear in mind when he talks about tomatoes in December that he was in the southern hemisphere.

Have a good month!

"Ode to Tomatoes" by Pablo Neruda

The street
filled with tomatoes,
midday,
summer,
light is
halved
like
a tomato,
its juice
runs
through the streets.
In December,
unabated,
the tomato
invades
the kitchen,
it enters at lunchtime,
takes
its ease
on countertops,
among glasses,
butter dishes,
blue saltcellars.
It sheds
its own light,
benign majesty.
Unfortunately, we must
murder it:

the knife
sinks
into living flesh,
red
viscera
a cool
sun,
profound,
inexhaustible,
populates the salads
of Chile,
happily, it is wed
to the clear onion,
and to celebrate the union
we
pour
oil,
essential
child of the olive,
onto its halved hemispheres,
pepper
adds
its fragrance,
salt, its magnetism;
it is the wedding
of the day,
parsley
hoists

its flag,
potatoes
bubble vigorously,
the aroma
of the roast
knocks
at the door,
it's time!
come on!
and, on
the table, at the midpoint
of summer,
the tomato,
star of earth, recurrent
and fertile
star,
displays
its convolutions,
its canals,
its remarkable amplitude
and abundance,
no pit,
no husk,
no leaves or thorns,
the tomato offers
its gift
of fiery color
and cool completeness.

Fall Training Class

COLIN MASSEY

Washington County Extension Agent, Agriculture/Horticulture

Regrettably, due to COVID-19, the Extension Office building is still not open to the public, and thus the state office has postponed/cancelled this year's in-person ZOOM trainings. We do not yet know if in-person trainings will be rescheduled.

The state office is allowing us to offer the online, self-paced training at the same cost (\$100) as the in-person training. Additionally, the online self-paced training has been moved to this fall and is now slated to begin by September 9 instead of in January. Trainees will have from September to December to complete the training at their own pace.

This is a good alternative to provide baseline horticulture knowledge from our experts. Since the training opens September 9, we are on a bit of a time crunch. The sooner applicants can complete the paperwork and let me know of their interest, the better. If you know anyone who would like to enroll in this training, it would be most helpful to have their application before August 31, so that I can get them entered into the system and work with our training committee. However, we will accept applications up to August 31, 2020.

I have also set up an online payment system. We can also accept checks, once applicants are interviewed and accepted into the course. This situation will place greater importance on mentor/mentee relationships. I hope many of you will throw your hat into the arena to help acclimate these new MG trainees.

Looking for Seedy People

DORIS CASSIDY

Chair, 2022 State Conference Decorating Committee



We are searching for seed collectors for the 2022 state conference. Every Master Gardener can be involved in the state conference by being a part of the decorating committee, providing you with safe MG hours. The goal is to fill the tiny luggage with seeds from Washington County MG gardens, or your project work if you do not have a garden, to be used as table favors. I have 400 little suitcases so I need lots of seed. Start now!

Seed Collecting Tips:

Harvest seed after the flowers fade and the seeds are brown and dry. Clip off seed heads. Rub seed heads with your fingers to loosen individual seeds and remove the loose chaff. Place in a container and label with name of flower and who it is from. Keep your seeds until you can give them to me.

Thank you in advance for your participation.

You're Worth More Than You Think!

From independentsector.org

"As of July 2020, the current estimated national value of each volunteer hour is \$27.20.

"Volunteers in the United States are 63 million strong and hold up the foundation of civil society. They help their neighbors, serve their communities, and provide their expertise. No matter what kind of volunteer work they do, they are contributing in invaluable ways. Nonprofits [such as WCMG] typically use the value of volunteer time to demonstrate the support they receive from their communities."

Please log your hours in a timely manner so we can show that even during a pandemic, Master Gardeners are going strong!

July Photo of the Month: "Annuals"



FIRST PLACE

"Caladium and Impatiens" by Ruth Cohoon



SECOND PLACE

"Dragonfly Kiss, Tuberose Bliss" by Trudy Carrigan (her first time to enter!)



THIRD PLACE

"Hibiscus" by Marilyn Misenhimer (another first-time entrant!)

My Journey

From Healing Gardens to Cancer and Back to Healing Gardens

Joyce Mendenhall

Let's face it, I am a "gardenholic," so when I was approached to be on the board for Healing Gardens of Northwest Arkansas I couldn't resist. I was already a two-time board member of the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO), a 21-year "lifetime" Master Gardener, and an all-around garden enthusiast who felt there could never be too many gardens in this world. Yes, I thought a healing garden located next to a cancer treatment center was a great idea, but it really hit home when I was diagnosed with stage 4 colon and liver cancer. This came after eight years of planning and working to establish a garden that patients, their families and caretakers, treatment center staff, and the general public could use to "get away" from the stress of dealing with cancer and contemplate their situation. I was now one of them!

I can tell you right now that if I didn't already have a home garden and connections to the BGO, I would be seeking another place to find peace and tranquility. The COVID-19 virus makes it impossible to be in close contact with friends and family who have been there for me throughout my cancer journey. I may have little control over the challenges of my daily life, but I do have choices about where I focus my attention. Instead of fixating on problems I can't solve, I can get my mind off them at least for a while by engaging in nature, whether it be physically doing garden projects like weeding or mowing, taking a walk in the woods, or simply sitting on my deck listening to the sounds of birds singing, the

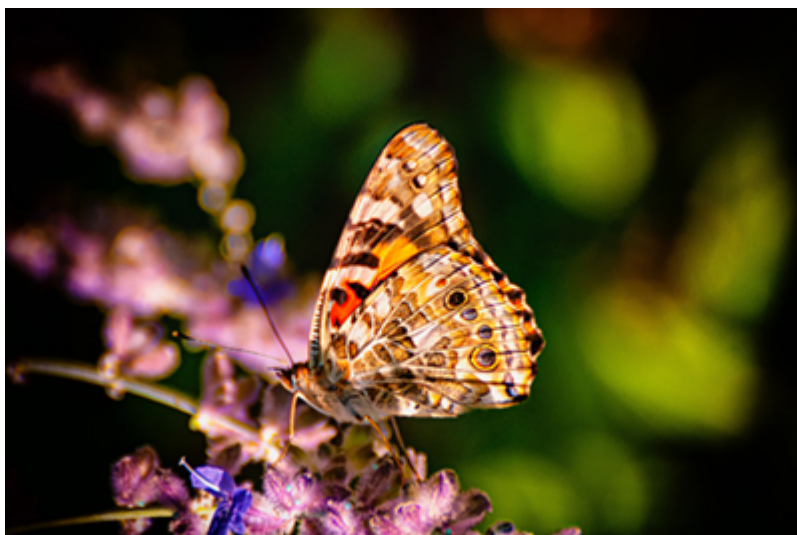
wind blowing through the trees, or water running in my fountain. I can watch the bees, butterflies, and hummingbirds as they fly from one place to another or the rabbits and squirrels as they play in the grass. Get grounded—go outdoors. Walk on grass or soil (not pavement), breathe deeply, engage your senses.



“The simple act of listening to birdsong or watching a wildflower blossom can remind us that nature is still here—and it is resilient.” Tiffany Francis, [Project Calm](#). Photo by [Joel Holland](#) on [Unsplash](#)

I want to encourage people who are diagnosed with cancer, going through cancer treatment, healing from cancer, or living with cancer, to view nature—and particularly gardens—as a resource in creating the healthiest and most balanced life possible. As the 15th century philosopher Paracelsus said, "The art of healing comes from nature." Nature works to "right" things. There are checks and balances for all sorts of things that can go wrong. For example: Too many aphids? Ladybugs to the rescue! Soil low in nitrogen? Plant legumes to fix nitrogen.

As a gardener dealing with cancer, I have learned to acknowledge the difficulties and the traumas, and to make every moment matter.



“Those who contemplate the beauty of the earth find reserves of strength that will endure as long as life lasts. There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after winter.” Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*. Photo by [Robert Thiemann](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Natural State Natives

MEL ZABECKI



Typha is the genus for the many versions of cattail found around the world and we have two species in Arkansas. Cattail was used for a surprising array of things in the past whereas today it is generally planted as a filter plant to combat water pollution or in riparian zones to minimize erosion.

Many parts of the cattail plant are edible. In the spring the shoots can be harvested, peeled, and eaten raw or cooked. The young flowers (before the “punks” form) can be steamed and eaten. Then, at the early “punk” stage, the extension above the actual punk holds the male pollen, which can be collected and used as a flour. Finally, the roots, which are rhizomes, are starchy and can be roasted or boiled. I wouldn’t encourage eating any parts of the plant unless you find it growing somewhere away from traffic and development. Don’t eat stuff out of a ditch! All of the plant parts are very high in nutrients and as with most plants, there were some medicinal uses including diarrhea (taken internally), and inflammation, and burns (external application).

The long leaves of the cattails made for useful fiber for making matts, baskets, sandals, dolls, and for roof thatching. The fluff or down from the flowers was used for insulating moccasins, wound dressing, and cushioning in cradleboards. That fluff is also a decent fire tinder! My absolute favorite example of prehistoric cattail use comes not from Arkansas, though we can’t rule out the possibility that Arkansas Indians made these, too, but from Lovelock Cave in Nevada. At least 1,000 years ago, folks crafted duck decoys out of cattails and tule and stuck duck feathers into the sides! I first learned about these when I saw

replicas at the Waterfowling Heritage Center (could you even guess something like that existed?!) at the Bass Pro in Memphis! With instructions from the internet, I've made a few of these but they were not fit for photos!

Circling back to the scientific name, *Typha angustifolia* and *Typha latifolia* both occur in this region (and even hybridize but result in sterile plants) but I'm not sure which one I've harvested here. The former is narrow-leafed and the latter is broad-leafed. So I guess I'm going to trek out and figure out the difference!

Just Us

JUDY SMITH

Poems by Carter Carrigan

Silence

Ever been in the high country where the wind whispers and moans.
It just howls till it enchants you with sweet whispers,
the songs of the sirens: "Come stay with us forever."

Ever been to a cavern, deep beneath the earth,
damp, cold, black, and water flowing,
trickling, bubbling, gurgling all about
where the rocks become enchanting,
the silence absorbing.

Ever spent time in a quiet corner
near your home where the trees,
or shadows, or hum of the city,
or the singing of the birds or bugs,
the shape shifting of the clouds, the cool wind,
and everything wonderful surrounds you.

These are the islands of silence and solitude that comfort us,
in times of change, times of need,
always seek the silence of the special haunts,
that offer magic and belief,
always seek the special places that offer such relief.

That Magnificent Tree

I met a most marvelous tree
limbs outstretched forever
stately trunk, fully leaved,
and graceful in the evening breeze.

She was swaying magically

as a plantation pecan tree
or old Louisiana live oak,
Swaying, rocking, floating
almost magically in the wind.

Bears Being Joyful

I watched a bear playing
hour upon hour
For no special reason
Just having fun

I don't often see
A bear being Joyful
but it made my life special
seeing this one.

Book Review

Dolores Stamps

CONTAINER AND FRAGRANT GARDENS by Peter Loewer, a 2020 publication from Houghton Mifflin. From the wonderful garden book collection at Springdale Public Library.

This book is a reference guide for enlivening garden space with containers other than just clay pots. It is also a reference to garden perfume from varied plants you may not have experienced. Growing plants in containers can extend your garden possibilities by bringing plants to the porch, deck or windowsill.

Loewer has a knack for "found" containers as fun as an old bicycle with a wire basket prepared with soft green moss and filled with succulents. Other mentioned planters are old crocks, wheelbarrows, coal buckets, and children's cast-off toys!

Containers require more frequent water in the Ozark hot summer, so groupings of three to five pots save steps and make a more interesting color/texture combination.

For fragrance gardens, Loewer spends a good deal of time encouraging roses—what better scent? But he invites you to try many other annuals and perennials to round out a fun new space in your garden.

Try this new book for your education hours or simply for a few new ideas.

Even with closing for coronavirus safety, the Springdale Public Library allows those with a Springdale library card to call 750-8180 to request a book to pick up from 10:00 a.m. to noon or 4:00 to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday. The Fayetteville Public Library and the Washington County Library System offer similar curbside service.

October Meeting Preview



Jane Maginot is an extension agent with the University of Arkansas System Cooperative Extension Service. Her responsibilities include outreach and education for the Northwest Arkansas Urban Stormwater Education program. Prior to coming to the extension service, Maginot worked in East Africa managing water access projects. Maginot attended Arcadia University where she earned a M.A. in international peace and conflict resolution with a focus in environmental conflict management.

Jane will talk about urban water issues and low impact development (LID) in residential landscapes. These methods and techniques are used to slow down, spread out, and soak in stormwater on-site creating a more environmentally friendly habitat for wildlife while protecting water quality.

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 Website

 UA Extension Service Website

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