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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • July 2023



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Having said all that, the *Garden Thyme* may be 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 your newsletter committee as we work so hard to provide you with a newsletter lovely to behold. **So, to view the *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 MEETING: Note the date change**

**Blackberry Research Highlights**

**Our July meeting is on July 11 due to the July 4 holiday.** We'll meet as usual at the Extension Office; we hope to also offer a Zoom option for attending the meeting. (Colin will be enjoying a well-deserved vacation in July, so a group of intrepid WCMGs are busy learning the ins and outs of conducting a Zoom meeting. It's not as easy as Colin makes it look.)

Our guest speaker is Zeb Gattis, senior horticulture major at the University of Arkansas. Zeb will discuss "Blackberry Selections Trial Research Highlights," the subject of his honors project.



A resident of Fort Smith, Zeb is spending his summer vacation as Colin Massey's intern. Zeb appreciates the many outreach programs provided by the Extension Service and is interested in extension work as a career.

## Taking Care of Business

**We will vote on the following items at our July 11 meeting.** Note: There are no June meeting minutes since there was no business meeting. (Who wants to conduct business at a picnic?)

May 2023 Meeting Minutes

April 2023 Treasurer's Report

May 2023 Treasurer's Report

## ALSO AT THE JULY MEETING

## Geri and Mariette's Wormapalooza



Photo by [sippakorn yamkasikorn](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**Geri Alvis and Mariette Spidel, AKA the Compost Queens, will host a worm adoption at our July 11 meeting.**

The worm adoption fee of \$15 includes:

- 1/4 pound of red wiggler worms and instructions
- A list of preferred worm food
- A how-to article on gathering worm castings

Pre-approval of worm adoption is required and can be arranged by sending Mariette an email expressing your interest in adopting vermicompost worms. Approved homes will be sent a PDF by email on how to prepare for your worms as you bring them home.

Joanne Olszewski's book, *Worms Eat My Garbage*, will be available for purchase at the adoption event.

To adopt your very own bouncing bundle of worm joy, or for more information, email [Mariette Spidel](#).

## From Your President

**JOANNE OLSZEWSKI**

What a gardening season this is. I have been eating out of my garden for many decades. Never have I seen so many pea pods, enough to freeze. It has been years since our hollyhocks bloomed. I have already dried mint, parsley, thyme, tarragon, and oregano. The onions have

been harvested and the garlic is waiting in the barn for braiding. Potatoes are out of the ground and the kale salad is good.

I didn't make it to the state Master Gardener conference but everyone I have spoken to had a good time. I did, however, go to the International Master Gardener Conference (IMGC) knowing that I would be freezing, pickling, and eating green beans when I returned.



The IMGC did not disappoint. One day we toured several urban farms. In addition to growing food in the city, each location includes a love of nature and goodwill toward other folks. Check out the websites for the [Kansas City Community Gardens](#) and [Cultivate KC](#). Although these gardens are non-profits two other farms on the urban farms tour are for-profit, but still focused on the Three Ps: People, Planet, and Prosperity. If you have a chance to visit the Kansas City area, go to the [Young Family Farm KC](#) to buy some vegetables and see how they revitalized a neighborhood. Last but not least, check out [Urbavore Urban Farm](#). They are practicing regenerative agriculture almost exclusively and sustainability is their way of life.

A major focus of the conference was the impact of climate change and its effects on gardening and agriculture. Many gardeners and farmers go by weather patterns to plant rather than using planting calendars. Scientific data has shown that using native plants mitigate water use and sequesters carbon.

Sustainability was also highlighted throughout the conference. Tilling was encouraged only for starting a garden in difficult soil conditions, and mulching was emphasized. Kansas State University Extension Service, the conference host, used sustainable products for our meals and awards were given for going green.

Have a safe and happy Fourth of July.

*Gardening adds years to your life and life to your years.*

—AUTHOR UNKNOWN

## WCMGs Were All Smiles at the State Conference





**Back row, from left: Lynette Terrell, Nancy Sloan, Regina Gabel. Front row: Paula Dutton, Shirley Durning, Jaylon Haley, Jan Hayes, Jane Bryant.**



**From left: Geri Alvis, Mariette Spidel, Kristi Campbell, Kathy Launder, Patsy Louk.**



**From left: Liz Hale, Judy Smith, Jayne Laster, Jane Bryant, Kathryn Birkhead.**

## **Congrats to Our Madison County MG Friends**

Our neighboring Master Gardeners in Madison County took home the trophies at the state conference a few weeks ago. Here are photos and project descriptions shared during the awards presentation.





**Madison County Master Gardeners Jim MacLean (right) and Darrel Johnson pick okra while discussing future garden plans. *Photo courtesy Madison County Master Gardeners***

**STATE MENTOR OF THE YEAR FOR SMALL COUNTIES: *Jim MacLean***

"Jim MacLean of Huntsville is a blessing to all new Master Gardeners. He truly makes gardening fun and enjoyable while he teaches you why we are doing what needs to be done to improve our garden community. We have been truly blessed this past year by having a mentor who chose to take the time to share and explain the how and why of gardening and along the way he made it fun and interesting during the learning process. He always greeted us at each of our monthly Master Gardener meetings ensuring that we were still energized and excited about our project. Jim MacLean is the finest mentor any new Master Gardener mentee could be paired with." —*Darrel Johnson, Madison County Master Gardener*



**Under the watchful eye of Madison County Master Gardener Linda MacLean, Taywin Berry waters plants in the Huntsville Elementary School Garden. Photo courtesy Madison County Master Gardeners**

**STATE EXCELLENCE IN EDUCATION FOR SMALL COUNTIES: *Huntsville Primary and Intermediate School Greenhouse and Garden and Summer Garden Club***

"The Huntsville Elementary School Garden got off to a good start. Madison County Master Gardeners adopted this garden as a sanctioned project a few years ago. Students K-5 attend garden class during the school year. For two years, the school garden has held a summer garden club where kids learn about many aspects of gardening. Projects have included making seed balls, making trellises, learning to weed a garden, making terrariums, filtering water, and helpful insects. This summer, lessons include building sunflower forts, learning about the value of worms, vegetable scrap gardening, growing potatoes in a jar, making solar ovens, and learning about erosion. A recent addition to the garden has been an outdoor classroom. Volunteers from the Madison County Master Garden Program include Tina Hankins, Susan Watkins, Penprapa Berry, and Linda MacLean. Karen Phillips is the garden educator."





Folks line up to receive fresh veggies from the Food Pantry Garden. *Photo courtesy Madison County Master Gardeners*

**STATE MASTER GARDENER PROJECT OF THE YEAR FOR SMALL COUNTIES:  
*Madison County Food Pantry Garden***

"The Food Pantry Garden is located at the Open Arms Food Pantry, a non-profit organization in Madison County and is a project sanctioned by the Madison County Master Gardeners. This garden specifically grows fresh produce to feed those in need of food. The Master Gardeners met with Nancy Dignan, Executive Director of the Open Arms Food Pantry, and a new partnership was planned. Madison County Master Gardeners started plants from seed to donate to the food pantry. Nancy was very complimentary concerning the work performed at the pantry garden by the Madison County Master Gardeners. Volunteers from the Madison County Master Gardeners are Debbie and Darrel Johnson and Jim MacLean."

## Natives Naturally

**KATHRYN BIRKHEAD**

*Note: In the July Garden Thyme that was sent out earlier today, the photo below was misidentified as depicting the fall fruit of a strawberry bush. In fact, the photo shows spring flowers, not fall fruit! We offer this corrected Garden Thyme with thanks to Kathryn Birkhead for gently pointing out our mistake.*



**Strawberry bush flowers. Photo by Kathryn Birkhead**

One of the great things about buying plants from the Master Naturalists at their sales is that you might get a bonus plant as well as the things you ordered. Several years ago, I got a strawberry bush as a bonus plant. I didn't know anything at all about it, but I stuck it in the ground in my back yard without any fanfare or soil preparation and figured if it made it, that would be great. Well, it has not just survived; it is thriving, despite my less than tender care. I enjoy what I'm seeing now that it's about three years old.

Here's what the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#) has to say about my unexpected gift: Its full name is *Euonymus americanus*. It tolerates clay soil, thank goodness, and will even grow around black walnuts. It grows in moist areas but doesn't demand much water, and it prefers partial shade. Deer apparently really enjoy it, so those of you who have to worry about that may not want to rush out to buy this. It will eventually be 4-6' tall with about that same spread.

Interestingly, according to the information in *Trees, Shrubs and Woody Vines of Arkansas*, it is native to the counties around us, but not here in Washington County. I'm staying with it anyway.

Although it's entirely possible that it has bloomed before and I simply missed it, this spring I noticed its flowers. It bloomed in early May with tiny flowers that are greenish-yellow to greenish-purple. What fascinates me is that the stem of the flower is so long that it makes it appear that the flower is in the middle of the leaf. I had to go back in to get my camera so I could take a long, close look at this unusual little thing.

[This photo of the fall fruit from the Missouri Botanical Garden website](#) shows what might be in store for me this fall. I'm eager to see what the future holds for my surprise present!

# Meet the Trainees

**OLIVIA HARRINGTON and LYNETTE TERRELL**

## **Carole Ball**

My interest in gardening came from a top-down direction. My grandfather, Alex, had a produce store in the small town of Spring Valley, Illinois. As a young teenager, my father, Jerry, worked for him hauling produce from Chicago. My mother, Leone, began helping the business when her brothers joined the military during WWII. When my parents married and moved to Rock Falls, IL, they opened their own produce company and distributed to local grocers and small-town grocery stores in about a 50-mile radius. Potatoes would arrive at the warehouse by the boxcar load. Watermelons filled the back of a semi-trailer and would be hand tossed to store on the dock. It was a marvelous place to explore. The banana cooler had a mild temperature and smelled so good. The fruit and vegetable cooler was chilly but filled with so many sweet and colorful things to sample. Fruits and vegetables were abundant in our snacks and meals and became favorites. As I grew older, I would help sack the potatoes and do other assigned tasks. I continued working at their business until I went away to university. In high school, I started experimenting with growing blueberries, a few vegetables, and flowers, and enjoyed watching plants grow. I am in a position now to begin experimenting more with fruits and vegetables, from planning to harvest.



After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison with a degree in comparative literature, I moved to Chicago and completed a Master of Science degree and became a nurse practitioner. I worked for 30 years as a cardiovascular nurse clinical specialist with the hospital's Department of Cardiac, Thoracic, and Vascular Surgery. I met my husband, John, a nephrologist, while working in the Surgical ICU. Our Chicago backyard did not have enough sun to grow vegetables, but we created a beautiful cottage garden of ornamentals over the years. He enjoys working with roses and has planted a lovely rose garden at our home in Fayetteville. I oversee our neighborhood organization's annual local garden walk. It was so much fun to be able to see urban backyard gardens and to get to know gardening neighbors in our community.

I became a Master Gardener in Chicago about 25 years ago but was unable to maintain the necessary membership requirements because of the very long hours at the hospital. My heart goes out to all MG Trainees and MGs who are working full-time and wish them good luck in fulfilling their required education and volunteer hours. When the opportunity came to apply to the Washington County in-person Master Gardener Program in February, I was delighted to be admitted into the Trainee Class. The Master Gardeners were so warm and welcoming and cheerful. The organization and class content were excellent. I was so happy to hear there was a mentoring program in place. I think that makes a huge difference for a good trainee experience.



After retiring from clinical work in January 2020, we made the move to Fayetteville in March. Our current "yard" has very large open spaces around the house. We are enjoying taking our time to choose plants that will thrive here.

My thanks to each and every one of you in the WCMG program. It has been a pleasure to meet so many interesting and talented people.

### **Carrie Gamble**

As a child, I was always fascinated by the beauty and intricacy of nature. I would spend hours exploring the outdoors and observing the different plants and animals that surrounded me. It was during these formative years that I developed a deep love and appreciation for gardening. My parents put me in a gardening class one summer, and it was an experience that had a profound impact on me. I can still remember the excitement I felt as I planted my first seeds and watched them sprout and grow into healthy, thriving plants.



What I remember the most from that summer was the sense of pride and accomplishment I felt when everything I planted grew to enormous sizes. I have had some kind of garden ever since that summer and I continue to cultivate my love of gardening. I have planted vegetable and herb gardens, tended to potted plants on my balcony, and experimented with flowers. I have lived more than half of my life in Italy—when I moved there, I quickly learned that having a vegetable garden was not just an option but was a requirement. My Italian neighbors were amazed that I didn't have a vegetable garden and they insisted that I start one right away. They shared their knowledge and expertise with me and taught me about all of the fruit trees I had on my property, how to can my crops, and about foraging for chestnuts, wild asparagus, herbs, and mushrooms in the woods and fields nearby.

When I moved to Northwest Arkansas four years ago, my sister mentioned that I should become a Master Gardener. That sparked a lot of interest in me and this year I was finally able to realize my dream.

Now, as I look to become a Master Gardener, I am excited to deepen my understanding of the science of gardening, to learn new techniques, and to learn about native plants and butterflies so that I can grow more beautiful and bountiful gardens. Most of all, I want to share my love of gardening with others, just as my gardening friends and neighbors did for me for all of those years. I believe that gardening has the power to bring people together, to foster a sense of community, and to promote health and well-being for both individuals and the environment. I hope to inspire others to discover the joys of gardening for themselves as well.

### **Jennifer Stewart**

Some of my earliest childhood memories are helping my grandmother take care of her garden. I loved to water her flowers with my little watering can and spent many happy hours

helping her tend to a tiny country vegetable plot. Life for me became busy over the years with school, work, marriage, and then welcoming my daughter. It wasn't until my little girl brought home a tiny tomato plant from preschool one day that I rediscovered a passion for gardening. She loved that little plant so much and gave it a name, "Kitty." I knew we had to keep Kitty the Tomato Plant alive at all costs.



Tending to Kitty and watching it grow with my daughter inspired me to get into vegetable gardening. We use containers and a raised bed to grow tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, lettuce, and more in the sunny areas of our small yard. In the shaded section, we have different varieties of hostas, along with hydrangeas, Lenten roses, coral bells, etc. But our absolute favorite things are the little tomato plants that shoot up like magic in the spring where we grew tomatoes the previous year. My daughter always says those are "Kitty's babies," and I love watching her joy as the cycle of life in the garden begins again.

## Gardening and Community Events

**PAM BUTLER**

**JULY 8, 3:00–4:00 p.m. SEDGES HAVE EDGES: CAREX SPECIES OF ARKANSAS .** Online event with Karen Willard. Hosted by Arkansas Native Plant Society and Ozark Chapter, Arkansas Native Plant Society. Free. [More information.](#)

**JULY 14, 6:00–8:00 p.m. WATERCOLOR LANDSCAPE.** Janet Huckabee Arkansas River Valley Nature Center, Fort Smith. Free. Pre-registration is required in advance by calling 501-710-6285.

**JULY 15, 10:00–11:00 a.m. PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP.** Compton Gardens, Bentonville. \$10. [Registration information.](#)

**JULY 15, 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. NATIVE PLANT COLLABORATIVE SERIES—EUREKA SPRINGS NATIVE PLANT PROJECT.** Highlander Room, Eureka Springs Community Center. Free. [More information.](#)

**JULY 15, 2:00–3:30 p.m. WHAT'S THAT TREE?** J. B. and Johnelle Hunt Nature Center, Springdale. Free. Registration not required. [More information.](#)

**JULY 17, 12:00–1:00 p.m. MASTER GARDENER MONDAY.** [Registration information.](#)

**JULY 18, 6:00–8:00 p.m. ANNUALS TO PERENNIALS.** Zoom. For new Master Gardeners and their mentors.

## Contact Information

The *Garden Thyme* email address is [wcmgnewsletter@gmail.com](mailto:wcmgnewsletter@gmail.com). Please use this address for submissions and for questions and comments specific to the newsletter. For other needs, please contact the appropriate officer or chairperson listed in your WCMG Member Resource Guide.

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*Banner photo of thyme courtesy [Lucy Meskill/Flickr.com](#).*



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