

HISTORY OF WASHINGTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS

In 1972, the Extension Farm Advisor in Snohomish County, Washington, could no longer handle the calls from the growing number of “urban” farmers in his area. A core group of interested gardeners were trained by the local Land Grant University Cooperative Extension office to meet the need. This was the beginning of the Master Gardener Program. Arkansas adopted the program in 1988 with four counties participating. Over half of the 75 counties in Arkansas now have Master Gardener programs. Today Master Gardeners exist in every state in the United States and six Canadian provinces.

In April 1991, 13 people completed the first Master Gardener Training Course offered by the Washington County Extension Service under the direction of Extension Agent Merle Gross. The first Master Gardener graduates included Audry Baltrush, Jack Firmin, Richard Hall, Harold Johnson, Pauline Keegan, Sue Madison, Gregory McDowell, Jim Miller, Jr., Sherry Morrison, David Richardson, Nancy Seiff, Mary Thomas, and Richard Walters. Their first volunteer projects included planting ornamentals around the Old Courthouse in Fayetteville, landscaping the Richardson Center’s homes in Springdale, producing several videotapes on gardening, and presenting a mini-course for the public. The following year (1992) the Washington County Master Gardener program added 27 new graduates...and the rest is history.

IMPORTANT EVENTS:

1991

- The Washington County Master Gardener program was established and the *Ask A Master* telephone line was open for business.
- Two projects were started: The Washington County Extension Office Grounds, located in an annex to the old Courthouse in Fayetteville, and the Richardson Center’s homes, located in Springdale.

1992

- A weekly local newspaper column called *Ask A Master* was started by Pauline Keegan.
- WCMGs received a federal grant from the Urban Reforestation Program to enable Master Gardeners to plant trees at all 41 Washington County public school grounds, produce a video of the project, and produce an educational pamphlet, “Planting Trees in Northwest Arkansas.” The project received a state Certificate of Appreciation from Arkansas Governor Jim Guy Tucker.
- Prairie Grove Battlefield Park and Prairie Grove Mock Park projects were started.

1993

- WCMGs received a grant through Arkansas Forestry Commission and Small Business Administration to be involved with the National Tree Planting Program at Arkansas State Police Troop 1 Headquarters on U.S. Hwy. 71, the Northwest Technical Institute on Hwy. 265, and at a local social service agency in Fayetteville.
- The first WCMG booth was started at the Washington County Fair.
- The first WCMG newsletter was published quarterly and was named *Garden Gadabout*.

1995

- WCMGs started the Fayetteville Tree Trail project to identify and label specimen trees of the area on the University campus and on the grounds of the Veterans Administration Hospital, with map and slides of individual trees. It included a video titled “Saving Trees during Construction.”

1995 *(continued)*

- **“The Tree Care and Awareness Project” received the first State Outstanding Master Gardener Project of the Year award at the first annual Statewide Master Gardener Conference held in Eureka Springs.**

1996

- A new Washington County Extension Service building was dedicated. The first Extension Office was housed in an annex to the Old Courthouse in Fayetteville, but moved to its current location at 2536 N. McConnell Road when the building was completed in late 1995.
- The second WCMG booth was held at the Washington County Fair.

1997

- Millie Bowman was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Washington County hosted the third annual State Master Gardener Conference in Fayetteville.
- Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks and WCMG joined in a cooperative agreement.
- WCMG newsletter *Garden Gadabout* began bi-monthly publications.
- Headquarters House project was sanctioned.

1998

- Janice Neighbor was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Master Composter Training program was started.
- The Compost Demonstration Site had its grand opening. It was built, in part, from state funds through a grant from the Four County Solid Waste District. The chairperson was Janice Ryan.
- Fayetteville Parks and Recreation project was sanctioned.

1999

- Janice Ryan was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- WCMG Website was started by WCMGs Marian and Michael Courtney.
- **WCMG Website was named the Washington County as well as the State Outstanding Project of the Year.**
- Compost Demonstration Site project was sanctioned.

2000

- **Joyce Mendenhall was named Washington County as well as State Master Gardener of the Year.**
- WCMG organization joined the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks for a \$100 fee.
- The first State MG Leadership Training Conference was held at the 4-H Center in Ferndale.
- The State Master Gardener www.uaex.edu/mastergardener website was started.
- Ready, Set, Grow (one-time annual) cooperative project was started at the Jones Center.

2001

- Pauline Keegan was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- WCMG *Garden Gadabout* newsletter name was changed to a quarterly *Garden Thyme*.

2002

- Betty Swope was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Joyce Mendenhall was appointed to the State Master Gardener Advisory Board.
- The first Advanced Master Gardener Training was held in the state.

2003

- John Bushkuhl was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Fayetteville Parks and Recreation project was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Joyce Mendenhall and Martha Ward received the Crystal Award of Excellence for Beautification and Community Involvement from then Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee.
- Janice Neighbor received an Arkansas Heritage Foundation grant of \$5,000 for the establishment of heritage gardens at the Prairie Grove Battlefield Park project.
- Washington County Extension Agent Merle Gross retired.
- Prairie Grove Mock Park project was re-sanctioned after a time of being inactive.
- Washington County Fair project was sanctioned.

2004

- John Borbas was named Washington County as well as second runner-up for State Master Gardener of the Year.
- **Jean Collins was named the first Washington County as well as the first State “Rookie” of the Year.**
- Headquarters House project was named the Washington County as well as second runner-up for State Project of the Year.
- Compost Education and Demonstration project received the Altrusa Club’s Environmental Award. Nancy Umiker, John Borbas, and Joyce Mendenhall were project leaders.
- Berni Kurz hired as the Washington County Extension Agent and leader of WCMG program.
- WCMG newsletter *Garden Thyme* began monthly publication.
- Elkins Library project was sanctioned.

2005

- Beverly Melton was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- **Mary Anderson was named Washington County as well as State “Rookie” of the Year.**
- Compost Demonstration Site was named Washington County Project of the Year and was named second runner-up for the State Project of the Year.
- Winslow Mayor Randy Jarnagan was named Washington County Friend of Master Gardeners.
- The first WCMG Volunteer Workbook was created and distributed to all WCMG members.
- “County 76” (advisory group) was started in the state.
- WCMGs received the Watershed Education and Environmental Stewardship Award in recognition of public outreach and education programs.
- Headquarters House project received the State American Red Cross and Keep America Beautiful awards.
- WCMGs purchased the Sensory Garden site for \$12,500 at BGO with funding support from an Exxon/Mobile Grant.
- Botanical Garden of the Ozarks and Winslow Beautification projects were sanctioned.

2006

- Nancy Umiker was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Ruth Chapman was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Fayetteville Parks and Recreation project was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- WCMGs started the Archives and Membership Committees.
- America in Bloom program was implemented in Fayetteville and became a sanctioned project.
- Betty Swope received the honor as “Distinguished Friend of the U of A Department of Horticulture.
- Nancy Umiker, Betty Swope, and Joyce Mendenhall received the Distinguished Service Award with the Keep Arkansas Beautiful Program, presented by First Lady Janet Huckabee.
- Devil’s Den and West Fork Library projects were sanctioned.

2007

- Colleen Brown was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Elaine Stern was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Rain Garden project was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- **The Garden Thyme newsletter was named State Master Gardener Newsletter of the Year.**
- WCMGs started a Mentoring program.

2008

- **Gail Pianalto was named Washington County as well as State Master Gardener of the Year.**
- Cindi Cope was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- **The Sensory Garden at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks was named Washington County as well as State Master Gardener Project of the Year.**
- WCMGs hosted the State Master Gardener Conference in Springdale. The keynote speaker was Roger Swain, former host of the TV program *Victory Garden*.
- The *Sensory Garden* and water feature were dedicated at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. The water feature, sculpted by Hank Kaminsky, was dedicated in honor of the late WCMG, Martha Barton.
- The “Yes, I Can” award was started to recognize WCMG members with a “can do” attitude. Vicki Knight and Martha Ward each received the first Washington County “Yes, I Can” award.
- *Garden Thyme* newsletter started sending copies electronically via WIMOFAR.
- The Junior Master Gardener Program (4-H) was started and became a sanctioned project.
- The Arkansas Air Museum and Fayetteville in Bloom projects were sanctioned.

2009

- Valerie Fletcher was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Marty Smith was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Junior Master Gardener project was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Dolores Stamps received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” award.
- WCMGs received the Arkansas Heritage Grant for \$3,500 for creating the Junior Master Gardener’s *Take a Walk on the Wild Side* garden and presenting a Heritage Day Program.
- WCMG organization received the *Organization of the Year* award from the Arkansas Recreation and Parks Department.
- Fayetteville City Hospital and West Fork Renewable Resource Center projects were sanctioned.
- WCMGs took responsibility for the Horticulture Building during the Washington County Fair.

2010

- Mary Crumley was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Robin Selman was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Fayetteville City Hospital was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Valerie Fletcher received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” award.
- County Agent, Berni Kurz, established a WCMG blog site to post statewide gardening information.
- The WCMG Endowment Fund was established to support scholarships and other WCMG horticultural interests.
- **Washington County Agent Berni Kurz was named State County Agent of the Year.**
- ***Garden Thyme* newsletter was named State Newsletter of the Year.**
- **Lesa Netherland, with Fayetteville City Parks Department, was named Washington County as well as State Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year.**

2011

- Jan Lefler was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Wendy Kozeny was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Headquarters House project was named Washington County Project of the Year.

2011 *(continued)*

- Lois Slusarek received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” award.
- WCMG “Trowel Award” was started to recognize WCMGs with 200+ hours of service annually.
- New permanent signage was provided to each WCMG sanctioned project.
- Education Outreach Committee was formed to integrate education into each WCMG project.
- Fayetteville Public Library project was sanctioned.

2012

- **Dian Holmes was named Washington County as well as State Master Gardener of the Year.**
- Jan Judy was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- West Fork Library was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Tanya Collins and Kitty Sanders each received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” award.
- State Master Gardener On-line Reporting System was started to record MG volunteer hours.
- State Master Gardeners started Lifetime-Plus (20-25-30) years of MG service awards.
- WCMGs adopted their Mission Statement.
- WCMG Education Outreach Committee was renamed Community Outreach Committee.
- Elizabeth Richardson Center and Shiloh Museum projects were sanctioned.

2013

- Lois Slusarek was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- **Beverly Didier was named Washington County as well as State “Rookie” of the Year.**
- Washington County Fair was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- **Fayetteville Perennial Garden Club was named Washington County as well as State Friend of Master Gardeners.**
- Dian Holmes was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Susan Gardner received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” Award.
- WCMGs established a Facebook page in collaboration with Community Outreach Committee.
- State Master Gardeners celebrated their 25th Birthday at P. Allen Smith’s Moss Mountain farm.
- The first annual State Master Gardener Appreciation Day was held at Garvan Gardens.
- Arkansas/Missouri Railroad Depot project was sanctioned.
- Fayetteville City Hospital and Fayetteville Public Library projects were de-sanctioned.

2014

- Gloria McIntosh was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- **Dani Dingman was named Washington County as well as State “Rookie” of the Year.**
- “Soil Detectives” for Community Outreach was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Becky Roark, with Illinois River Watershed Partnership (IRWP), was named Washington County Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Robin Selman was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Truman Stamps and Mary Beth Lohr (Rookie) each received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” Award.
- Washington County Master Composters, led by WCMG Stephen Skattebo, produced and starred in the video “*Compost Happens*” on YouTube and on the Arkansas Master Gardener website.
- Elkins Community Center and Community Outreach projects were sanctioned.
- West Fork Renewable Resource Center and Elizabeth Richardson Center projects were de-sanctioned.

2015

- Patsy Louk was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Geri Alvis was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- **“Soil Detectives” Lesson for Community Outreach was named the first Washington County as well as first State Excellence in Education (EIE) Award.**

2015 (Continued)

- **Washington County Extension Office Grounds was named Washington County as well as State Project of the Year.** *The project chairs presented their program at the 2016 State PNG Leadership Conference.*
- Doris Cassidy was named Washington County Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Martha Ward was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Judie Branson and Dawn Didier (Rookie) each received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” Award.
- WCMG projects were each provided “Master Gardeners at Work” signs to post on workdays.
- Garden Explorers (part of Junior MG Program) and Winslow Beautification projects were sanctioned.
- Devil’s Den and Fayetteville in Bloom projects were de-sanctioned.

2016

- Kitty Sanders was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Paula Dutton was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Lincoln Community Garden was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- “Springdale for Monarchs” was named Washington County Excellence in Education (EIE) Award of the Year.
- Lincoln Mayor Rob Hulse was named Washington County Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Geri Alvis was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Jan Hayes and Sara Hardin (Rookie) each received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” Award.
- WCMGs hosted the State Master Gardener Appreciation Day at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks.
- WCMGs started the WCMG website www.wcmgar.org.
- WCMGs hosted the Advanced Master Gardener Class on “Sustainability.”
- WCMG “Watering Can” award was introduced to recognize WCMGs who have been awarded the “Trowel” Award for four years. For the fifth year of qualifying for a trowel, the watering can will be awarded.
- Clinton House Museum and Lincoln Community Garden projects were sanctioned.

2017

- Carol Butler was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- **Neta Winston was named Washington County as well as State “Rookie” of the Year.**
- Elkins Community Center was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Judy Brittenum, with Washington County Historical Society, was named Washington County Organizational Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Virgil Pianalto was named Washington County Individual Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Gail Pianalto was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Jim and Linda MacLean and Debbie Gilmore (Rookie) each received the Washington County “Yes, I Can” Award.
- Patsy Louk was elected 2017 Vice President of State County 76 Leadership Team.
- Headquarters House sanctioned project celebrated “20 Years of WCMG Gardening” and was given a Proclamation plaque by the Washington County Historical Society.
- WCMGs hosted their first County 76-sponsored “Annuals to Perennials” Program for mentors and trainees across the state.
- The *Sensory Garden* and water feature at Botanical Garden of the Ozarks received WCMG funding to make necessary repairs in commemoration of BGO’s 10th birthday.
- Veterans Community Garden project was sanctioned.
- Susan Young was keynote speaker at the 2017 PNG Leadership Conference at Ferndale.
- Clinton House Museum, Prairie Grove Battlefield Park, and Fayetteville Parks projects were de-sanctioned.

2018

- Geraldine Alvis was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Doris Cassidy was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Shiloh Museum Gardens was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- Terry Gulley was named Washington County Individual Friend of Master Gardeners.
- Neta Winston was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Annette Pianalto and Mike Mohler (Rookie) each received the WCMG “Yes, I Can” Award.
- WCMGs used the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Science for special meetings including the Holiday dinner and Annual WCMG Awards program.
- WCMGs approved donating \$1000 to the new State Endowment Fund that was started as a continuation of Janet Carson’s legacy.
- The WCMG County Endowment Committee was appointed with Chairperson Dolores Stamps.
- WCMGs began participation in education night at “Terrific Tuesdays” at BGO.
- This was the second year of partnering with NWA Master Naturalists to have a plant sale at the September WCMG meeting.
- WCMGs hosted the County 76-sponsored “Annuals to Perennials” Program for mentors and trainees across the state.
- WCMGs hosted the County 76-sponsored Advanced Training Class on “Heirloom Gardening.”
- WCMG Community Outreach Project members completed a one-time landscaping project to renovate the entrance to Fayetteville’s historic Evergreen Cemetery.
- WCMGs organized a bus trip to P. Allen Smith’s Moss Mountain Farm to celebrate the 30th Birthday of Arkansas Master Gardeners and Janet Carson’s retirement. Over 50 members and guests attended including over 40 bus passengers.
- WCMGs added the “Assistant Treasurer” position to the 2019 WCMG Executive Committee.
- WCMGs began a formal orientation class for incoming WCMG Executive Committee members.
- Arkansas/Missouri RR Depot project was de-sanctioned.

2019

- Chris Bell was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Trudy Carrigan was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- VA Hospital (VHSO) Gardens was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- **Garden Explorers project was named Washington County as well as State Excellence in Education (EIE) Award of the Year.**
- Alexis Walker was named Washington County Individual Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year.
- Doris Cassidy was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- LaDeana Mullinex and James McGinty (Rookie) each received the WCMG “Yes, I Can” Award.
- Berni Kurz left as the Washington County Extension Office Staff Chair and director of WCMG, a position he held since 2004, and became the Arkansas Extension Consumer Horticulture Specialist in Little Rock.
- Katie Teague served as interim Washington County Extension Office Staff Chair and director of WCMG. Also in 2019, she was appointed Washington County Extension Office Staff Chair.
- Colin Massey, Washington County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Water Quality, was hired as Washington County Extension Agent for Agriculture and Horticulture and director of WCMG.
- Patsy Louk served as President of the County 76 Leadership Team.
- WCMG *Garden Thyme* newsletter reorganized with a new electronic format.
- Appleseed’s Pollinator Garden was approved as a sanctioned project.
- WCMGs partnered with NWA Master Naturalists for Master Naturalists' 3rd Annual Plant Sale.
- WCMGs hosted the County 76-sponsored “Annuals to Perennials” programs held statewide.
- WCMGs approved \$1500 for rental of AC unit for Washington County Fair Horticulture Building.
- Joyce Mendenhall was recognized by the National Cooperative Extension Support Staff Fraternity of the UA as the Ozark District and State Support Staff Member of the Year.
- Live video “Zoom” MG training and online MG training replaced WCMG training program.

2020

- Covid-19 Pandemic guidelines were implemented in March 2020 and WCMGs followed local and state mandates. The U of A Extension Service and Arkansas Master Gardeners halted group activities like gardening, meetings, etc. Additional CDC guidelines were implemented and some activities slowly resumed. On June 15, the Extension Service allowed some gardening with no more than 10 participants. All WCMG meetings were conducted remotely using Zoom. Some WCMG sanctioned projects/committees continued their activities and followed Covid-19 precautions.
- Truman Stamps was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Annie Moore was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Glen Robillard was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Linda Morrow and Elizabeth Hale (Rookie) each received the WCMG “Yes, I Can” Award.
- Susan Gardner received the Washington County Challenge of the Year Award. This award was developed by the State Office due to the challenging year Master Gardeners had in 2020 and was presented only for 2020.
- County Agent Colin Massey was nominated for the State County Agent of the Year Award.
- WCMG *Garden Thyme* newsletter was nominated for the State MG Newsletter of the Year Award.
- There was no Washington County Project of the Year nomination.
- There was no Excellence in Education (EIE) Award of the Year nomination.
- There was no Washington County Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year nomination.
- Patsy Louk served as President of the County 76 Leadership Team and will continue for 2021 and 2022.
- WCMG “Wheelbarrow” award was introduced to recognize WCMGs who have been awarded the “Watering Can” award for four years. For the fifth year of qualifying, the wheelbarrow pin will be received. These local lapel pin awards (Trowel, Watering Can, Wheelbarrow) recognize WCMG members who donated 200 or more volunteer hours to the organization.

2021

- WCMGs continued to follow local and state Covid-19 Pandemic guidelines and mandates. The U of A Extension Service reopened their offices and limited meeting spaces in June. WCMG meetings continued remotely using Zoom. Sanctioned projects and committees resumed their activities and followed Covid-19 precautions.
- Deadline for recording WCMG volunteer hours was changed to December 1 for both trainees and members.
- Susan Young was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Judy Cohea was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year.
- Headquarters House Historic Gardens was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- There was no Washington County Excellence in Education (EIE) Award of the Year.
- **Susan Adkins, Superintendent of Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park, was named Washington County as well as State Individual Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year.**
- There was no Washington County Business Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year.
- **County Agent Colin Massey was named Washington County as well as State County Agent of the Year.**
- Jim Sposato was named Washington County Mentor of the Year.
- Kathryn Birkhead, Betty Nichols, and Brandy Molloy each received the WCMG “Yes, I Can” Award.

2022

- WCMGs continued to follow local and state Covid-19 Pandemic guidelines. The U of A Extension Service reopened their offices on a limited basis initially and more fully as the year went on. WCMG meetings continued remotely using Zoom, and face-to-face gatherings were resumed in May for those who prefer in-person meetings.
- Washington County Master Gardeners hosted the State MG Conference in Springdale.
- WCMG website was extensively revamped over several months and was relaunched in March under the guidance of the Richland Group.
- WCMG Member Resource Guide, formerly known as the WCMG Workbook, was reorganized with a new electronic format on the wcmgar.org website.
- The State Extension office redesigned the State MG Recording of Volunteer Hours program.
- The inaugural WCMG Garden Gate Garden tour was held and 235 tickets were sold.
- The WCMG Endowment Fund reached a level to be fully endowed, which will allow the awarding of a scholarship. A scholarship committee was formed to oversee the development of criteria for it to be awarded.
- WCMGs founded an Ad-Hoc Survey Committee to gather opinions of WCMG members.
- WCMG founded an Ad-Hoc Committee for Plant Labels so that a data base can be created of plants at all the sanctioned projects.
- WCMGs founded a Memorial Committee that will recognize deceased WCMG members on the wcmgar.org website.
- LaDeana Mullinix was awarded 25 Years of Service pin.
- Several Washington County Master Gardeners were recognized for their contributions to other organizations:
 - Susan Young was recognized with a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Arkansas Historical Association.
 - Kitty Sanders received the Arkansas Master Naturalist of the Year award.
 - Ruth Cohoon was inducted into the U of A Sports Hall of Fame as the 1st Director of Women's Athletics. Her plaque is located at Gate 10.
 - Ruth Cohoon also received the Silver Cane Award from the Fayetteville Lions Club.
- County 76 appointed two WCMGs as Project Leaders - Patsy Louk for PNG Leadership Training and Elizabeth Hale for Recruitment, Retention, and Recognition.
- County 76 added a new annual MG award category to the state awards to recognize those individuals who play a vital mentor role in their county's mentoring program. Mimi Cox was recognized and awarded the inaugural Mimi Cox Arkansas Mentor of the Year Award.
- The Winslow Community Development project was de-sanctioned.
- Jayne Laster was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Kristi Campbell was named Washington County "Rookie" of the Year.
- Mike Cassidy, volunteer at Elkins, Washington County Fair, State MG Conference, was named Washington County Individual Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year.
- Patsy Louk received the WCMG "Yes, I Can" Award.
- Aileen Wilson received the Rookie "Yes, I Can" Award.
- There were no nominations for Washington County Project of the Year, Excellence in Education, Business Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year, or Mentor of the Year.

2023

- The WCMG Member Survey Committee, established in fall 2022, continued its efforts to evaluate strategies aimed at engaging current members, attracting, and retaining new ones, and ensuring WCMG remains an active part of the community while staying true to its mission. The committee conducted a field trip to Pulaski County to gain insights into how they foster engagement with current and new members. The findings were disseminated and shared with the Executive Committee and Project Committee leadership. The Busy Bee Award was adopted for roll out in 2024 to recognize and celebrate all members who contributed a minimum of 50 hours to sanctioned projects and committees. (continued next page)

2023 (continued)

- The WCMG “Yes, I Can” award name was changed to honor Joyce Mendenhall who initiated the award in 2008. Starting in 2023, the award was called the 'Joyce Mendenhall Yes, I Can Award'.
- First WCMG Annual Garden Gate Symposium, sponsored by proceeds from the 2022 Garden Gate Tour, offered to the public (community outreach) was held.
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- WCMG Label Committee established to provide public education by garden mapping, label making and markers, and maintaining a plant database on all sanctioned project gardens.
- First WCMG Swag Swap held at Annual WCMG Picnic.
- WCMG Community Outreach Activities: Plant Palooza (for Likewise group) at the Old Courthouse, and Hill Crest Towers (for Girl Scouts) to help with plant selections.
- Washington County Master Gardeners - In the News:
 - Chris Bell – Altrusa International Foundation
 - Tarsha Shepard – Bentonville Garden Club
 - Aileen Wilson – West Fork Public Library Garden
 - Carrie Gamble – Shiloh Museum of Ozark History Garden
 - Jane Bryant and Liz Hale served on West Fork City Council - drafted an ordinance to amend property maintenance code to allow for increased cultivation of wildflower meadows, pollinator gardens, orchards – the first municipal ordinance of its kind approved in Arkansas. Reported by KUAF news producer Jacqueline Froelich.
 - Doris Cassidy was interviewed by local TV about WCMGs and Washington County Fair activities.
- WCMG Nancy Sloan completed state Native Plants Survey.
- WCMG Jim Sposato led a committee to look for a larger WCMG meeting location.
- New WCMG Policy: Unfinished Trainee Hours was approved.
- New WCMG Policy: Non-sanctioned Hours - allowing up to 50 percent of volunteer hours to be done on non-sanctioned projects was approved.
- New WCMG Policy: State MG changes made for Advanced Training was implemented.
- New WCMG Policy: Guidelines for Recognition of Deceased WCMG Members was approved.
- New WCMG Bylaws: Out-of-State Membership Transfers was approved.
- New WCMG Bylaws: Revision of Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer duties was approved.
- New mandated state-wide Financial Guidelines with updated WCMG Reimbursement Policies and Procedures was implemented.
- Arkansas Master Gardener Program turned 35 years old.
- New SE US MG Training Manual available for Arkansas Master Gardeners for purchase.
- Delcina Cunico was awarded 25 Years of Service pin.
- **The Garden Thyme newsletter was named State Master Gardener Newsletter of the Year.**
- Mariette Spidel was named Washington County Master Gardener of the Year.
- Roxanne Gallup was named Washington County “Rookie” of the Year. **(2nd place for 2023 State Rookie of the Year award)**
- **Patsy Louk was named Washington County as well as State Mentor of the Year**
- Compost Demonstration Site was named Washington County Project of the Year.
- West Fork Gardens project was named Washington County Excellence in Education (EIE) of the Year. **(2nd place for 2023 State EIE Award)**
- **Gilbert Alvis, volunteer for Compost Demonstration Site was named Washington County as well as State Individual Friend of Master Gardeners winner.**
- The City of West Fork was named Washington County Organization Friend of Master Gardeners of the Year. **(2nd place for 2023 State Organization Friend of MG award)**
- Janice Walker and Geri Alvis received the WCMG’s Joyce Mendenhall “Yes, I Can” Award.
- Carrie Gamble and Gari James received the WCMG’s Joyce Mendenhall Rookie “Yes, I Can” Award.