

WASHINGTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS BUSINESS MEETING

August 5, 2025 Held at Good Shepherd Lutheran Church

Members present: 92

The meeting was called to order by President Alfi Anderson at 6:22 P.M. (according to her watch ☺) and otherwise at 6:37 P.M.

Vice-President Pam Butler introduced the guest speaker, Isabella Vaughn, a graduate student at the University of Arkansas, who spoke on the topic, "Cultivating a Fruitful Legacy: Fruit Breeding at the University of Arkansas. She talked with enthusiasm about her area of study on grapes and muscadines. Vaughn spoke about the aspects of manipulating genetics in plant breeding; the history of the fruit plant breeding program at the University of Arkansas and its impact on global marketing of improved varieties of blackberries and muscadines. She said it takes 10-15 years of research and breeding development for a new fruit variety to be released for marketing. Due to the long investment of time and energy, the University of Arkansas obtains a patent that is good for 20 years to bring income back into the program.

Business Meeting

Members recited the WCMG Mission Statement displayed on a slide.

The July WCMG Business Meeting Minutes were approved by the members with the ayes being unanimous. The July Business Meeting Minutes will be sent to the WCMG Archivist, Kimberly Hosey, by Carole Ball, Secretary.

The Treasurer's Reports from April, May and June were presented by each month in succession. The members unanimously approved the reports. The Treasurer's Report's will be sent to the WCMG Archivist, Kimberly Hosey, by Julie Murray, Treasurer.

At the September 2, 2025, WCMG Business Meeting, the 2026 WCMG Budget Proposal will be presented for membership approval. The members are urged to review the proposal in advance of the September meeting through emails sent on Constant Contact and the September edition of the Garden Thyme. In the proposal there will be an increase in dues from \$20 annually to \$30 annually with a late fee of \$35 if paid past the deadline. Jim

Sposato has offered to pay for dues for a member experiencing hardship. The annual budget meeting will be moved from September to November in 2026 and in following years. The change to a later month will make it easier for Sanctioned Project and Committee Chairs to assess the needs of their projects for the next year after the busy summer work season ends.

Sanctioned Project Reports:

Jim Sposato, Co-Chair, spoke about the structure and accomplishments of the Lincoln Community Garden Project. The Lincoln Community Garden has a motto: "You can't have a perfect day unless you can help someone who can't pay you back." Lincoln Community Garden volunteers honor and put into action the words of their motto. The project members are donating their large harvests of tomatoes, potatoes, green beans, and a myriad of other vegetables, to local food banks and distributing them to organizations that provide free vegetables to the local community. Jim acknowledged the WCMG crew members, the many community members who volunteer there, support groups who come out to help, and the school students who participate by working in the garden.

David Edwards, Co-Chair, gave an overview of the Compost Demonstration Site. He reported that 90% of the work done on the project site is required weeding and mulching to maintain a showcase for the different types of composting methods and a garden that are on display. The request last Fall to bring in bags of leaves for shredding rather than going into a landfill resulted in a drop-off of about 50-60 bags. Photos were shown of the MG crew shredding leaves and sifting to make compost. Vegetables grown on site are donated to the Trinity United Methodist Church in Fayetteville to use for their Wednesday food pantry/community meals.

Donilyn Rutherford, Co-Chair, reported on plans to renovate areas of the Washington County Extension Office gardens in preparation for being on the 2026 Garden Gate Tour. Most of the make over will take place in the back gardens with the creation of a new rose garden, tropical garden, and dry river rock bed. In the front, plants in beds are being reorganized. Grasses were planted in the median. The 4-Hers will have a space to plant an herb garden. The Garden Explorers project plan to plant Cosmos in a corner section of the back garden. There are only 6 MG volunteers working on this renovation project and having more helpers would be much appreciated.

Kathy Launder, Co-Chair, gave an update on the Washington County Fair project. The proceeds for items donated for the White Elephant Sale will be used to give small cash gifts and a memento for kids to acknowledge their accomplishments in winning the highest awards in the category of their exhibit entry. All MG volunteers who plan to work at the Fair must wear their name tag to gain entry to the back entrance parking lot near the Horticulture Building. Sign-up to work sheets for the Fair were set up near the meeting room entrance.

Kathy told the members that mentors are needed for 12 online WCMG Trainees who will begin their online course in September. Email Kathy Launder or Patsy Louk if you are willing to become a mentor.

The photo contest winners for August were announced. The theme for the September photo contest is "Native Gardens."

In the News:

The Northwest Arkansas Democrat-Gazette published an article on the Lincoln Community Garden on July 28, 2025. WCMGs, Judy Cohea and Teresa Sullivan, were photographed in the garden working with beets. Another photo highlighted the WCMG crew, City Council member, Justin Hopper, and City Clerk, Reilly Hopper, hard at work harvesting onions and potatoes in the rain.

Announcements:

Alfi introduced the concept of the Passport Project that is being developed and is projected to be ready by December 2025. The "passport" would contain pages with information for the 12 WCMG Sanctioned Project sites. The MG visiting/working at the project would be given a sticker/stamp at the completion of a yet-to-be- determined number of hours. The goal is to encourage MGs to check out other project sites and to have opportunities to meet other MG members. Once the passport book has been filled with all 12 sticker/stamps there will be some form of recognition/acknowledgement. More to come on this.

The Compost Demonstration crew was thanked setting up the meeting room.

The Botanical Garden of the Ozarks Sanctioned Project crew will be responsible for setting up the meeting room in September.

The meeting ended at 6:22 P.M. (according to Alfi's watch ☺) and 7:38 P.M. otherwise.

Respectfully submitted,

Carole Ball, Secretary