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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • February 2025



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FEBRUARY MEETING and ANNUAL AWARDS

Program: Building Soil Health

We hope to see you all at our February 4 meeting at 6:30 p.m. in the Alton Center at **Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2925 Old Missouri Road, Fayetteville**. It'll be a busy evening, with our annual awards program, recognition of the latest class of WCMG graduates, welcome of our newest crop of trainees, and a program by WCMG Rick Oliver.

Rick was born outside rural Elm Springs, Arkansas. Shortly after his birth, his parents and four siblings made a trek to California.



Upon returning to the area of his birth, Rick's grandmother introduced him to organic gardening in the late 1960s and early 1970s. She was a pioneer in the field having read several books by Rodale Press.

During years of pursuing the American dream, the desire to get dirt under his fingernails never left Rick. A few years ago he banned all commercial fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides on his residential lot, replacing them with Milorganite with his lawn spreader and stopping to pull up any weeds.

To improve his skills and to stay up on best practices in agriculture, in 2024 Rick became a Master Gardener trainee, not only increasing his learning through education but also through interaction with others who shared his love for the soil.

Rick participated in the [Milpa First Acre](#) program sponsored by Green Cover, The Nature Conservancy, and Syngenta Seeds. Milpa uses the "three sisters" farming approach as introduced by the Mayan Indians, planting a mixture of corn, squash, and beans to improve the soil and grow food. Rick gave away over 750 pounds of vegetables under the terms of the program and was able to produce 10 cubic yards of compost.

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on these items at our February 4 monthly business meeting. NOTE: We are in the process of updating the software used to create the treasurer's reports. Those reports will be presented for approval at a later time.

[December 2024 Meeting Minutes](#)

[January 2025 Meeting Minutes](#)

From Your President

ALFI ANDERSON

As we step into 2025, I'm thrilled to welcome each of you to what promises to be an exciting and fulfilling year in our gardens and our community. February may be cold, but it's a time of quiet preparation, both in the soil and in our hearts, for the growth ahead.

Even though the ground appears still, don't forget that nature is hard at work beneath the surface. The earth is quietly preparing for the burst of life that spring will bring. Just as the garden readies itself during these chilly months, so too can we take this time to reflect, plan, and nurture our connections with one another.



Let's use these winter days to dream about our gardens. Consider the seeds you'll sow this spring, the projects you'll undertake, and the beauty you'll create. And let's also think about

the seeds we plant in our relationships. A little kindness goes a long way, and it costs nothing to lend a smile or a helping hand.

I'm looking forward to seeing how we, as a community, grow together this year. Let's make it a super year—full of learning, laughter, and blooming friendships. Here's to new growth, in the ground and in our relationships

New Beginnings: Exciting Changes for Master Gardeners in Washington County

As the new year dawns, Washington County's Master Gardening program is buzzing with fresh opportunities and initiatives. It's the perfect time to celebrate growth, change, and excitement of what's to come. From celebrating soon to be graduates and trainees to establishing new roots in a fresh location, the year promises to be one of community, learning and friendship.

New Year, New Opportunities

The start of the year is always a time for reflection and goal setting. For the Master Gardener program, it's a chance to build on past successes and look forward to new endeavors. This year, the focus continues our mission "expanding our research-based information through demonstration and educational programs using horticulture best practices, strengthening our communities and families throughout Arkansas."

Celebrating Award Winners

We will be celebrating our WCMG awards program at the February 4 meeting. Please join us to cheer on the nominated winners! There will be light refreshment available.

Celebrating New Graduates

One of the most exciting moments for the program is recognizing the efforts of new Master Gardener graduates at the February meeting. After months of dedicated learning, these individuals are ready to bring their knowledge and enthusiasm to our community. Their commitment to gardening and community engagement ensures that Washington County sanctioned projects will flourish for years to come.

Welcoming New Trainees

Alongside the graduates, we're thrilled to welcome a new cohort of trainees. These passionate individuals are embarking on their journey to becoming certified Master Gardeners. Their fresh perspectives, and willingness to learn will inject new energy into the program, enriching the experience for everyone involved.

A New Location to Call Home

Change is in the air with our monthly meeting location! As you all know we have outgrown our meeting space at the Washington County Extension office. We are now meeting at [Good Shepherd Lutheran Church's Alton Center at 2925 Old Missouri Road in Fayetteville](#), except for March, June, and December:

- **March 4** membership meeting and sanctioned projects & committees fair—Thompson Hall in the Horticulture Building on the Washington County Fairgrounds, Fayetteville
- **June 3** membership meeting and potluck picnic—at a sanctioned project site to be determined
- **December 2** membership meeting and holiday potluck—Waldrip Hall at the Don

Growing New Friendships

Gardening has always been about more than just plants; it's about community. Our Master Gardening program offers countless opportunities to form lasting connections. Whether it's working alongside in the garden, serving on a committee, or educating the community, new friendships are sure to bloom.

Looking Ahead

Our Master Gardening Program in Washington County is poised for an incredible year of growth and transformation. With new graduates, trainees, a fresh location and countless opportunities for connection, 2025 is set to be a landmark year.

So, here's to new beginnings, fresh opportunities, and a vibrant community united by a shared passion for gardening. Let's dig in and make this a year to remember.

The Garden Gate Tour Needs You

DANNA GREAR

Garden Gate Tour Committee



James Fraley shares some backyard gardening tips with visitors at Ruthanne Hill's garden, a stop on the 2024 Garden Gate Tour. Photo by Susan Young

Attention Master Gardeners and trainees. The Garden Gate Tour committee is compiling a preliminary list of volunteers for our 2025 Tour, which is set for Saturday, June 14, and will feature eight lovely sites in southeast Fayetteville and Elkins.

Please let us know where you might best fit into this Awesome Annual Event:

- **Garden Buds.** Help the garden owners prepare for the big day (various times, March–early June).
- **3 Gardeners and a Truck.** Get signs, tents, tables, and chairs to and from the individual gardens on the day of the tour and possibly the day before (June 13–14).
- **Garden Greeters.** Volunteer at a garden to greet guests, check tickets, etc. (June 14).
- **Gardening University.** Lead or support the educational activity at one of the gardens (June 14).

If you are interested in volunteering in any capacity, please text or call Danna Grear (479-841-6402). If you are interested in participating in an educational activity, you can contact Ruthanne Hill (479-790-3382).

This is a great way to log some volunteer hours. Not only is the Garden Gate Tour a fundraiser for WCMG, but more importantly it is a way for us to educate and inspire home gardeners and for our organization to become better known in our community.

Congrats to the November 2024 Busy Bees



Busy Bee Awards

November 2024 Recipients:

Jane Bryant	Class of 2010
Jan Hayes	Class of 2001***
Michael Mohler	Class of 2018
LaDeana Mullinix	Class of 1997****
Sally Schoen	Class of 2023
Susan Snell	Class of 2022
Karen Takemoto	Class of 2021

*** Indicates Lifetime Plus 20 Member
**** Indicates Lifetime Plus 25 Member

A Note of Thanks

From Caroline Ford, our WCMG Scholarship recipient:

I'm going into my sophomore year at the University of Arkansas and

plan to graduate with Dale Bumpers College of Agricultural, Food, and Life Sciences. I left my hometown in Texas with the goals of getting my degree in horticulture and owning and operating my own nursery. Thank you for this amazing scholarship and for getting me one step closer to my end goal! I also intend to get my master's degree to have every tool I need to be successful in the future.



This scholarship is so important to me because being able to graduate debt-free will mean I can start putting money toward my nursery as soon as I can graduate! Thank you again for choosing me. I will make sure your investment does not go to waste.

Meet the Trainees

OLIVIA HARRINGTON and LYNETTE TERRELL

Debra Broyles

I have always been surrounded by family who love gardening. One of my aunts owned a nursery in Texas and developed new rose hybrids. My father loved to grow grapes, and my mother-in-law loved gardening! She considered gardening her exercise and stress reliever . . . totally understand that!



Part of my job involves hiring landscapers for real estate. I always enjoy adding landscaping but am at the mercy of what the landscaper suggests. I hope to evolve with my MG training and be able to design plans using native plants as the majority.

I have learned so much from the MG course already and cannot wait to get started!

James Harvey

I am a retiree living with my wife, Mary, in our home in Johnson. We moved here as retirees in 2020. Our son and his family, including our two granddaughters, also live here in Northwest Arkansas, as does one of our two daughters.



My wife and I have been avid gardeners for many years. We focused mostly on landscape gardening, with a small vegetable garden each year. We have now greatly expanded our vegetable gardening and have added berry vines and a very small orchard to our yard.

I grew up in Pennsylvania farm country and my father was an active gardener. In addition to my own desire to learn more about gardening, I am an active volunteer at the NWA Food Bank. The food bank has a teaching garden that provides fresh vegetables to those who are food insecure through their Feed Rogers Food Pantry. I plan to continue to support the Food Bank's garden and to use any new skills I acquire to assist them in their mission.

My other interests beyond gardening include making homebrewed beer and cider, and I am active in the two local home brewing clubs.

How to Make a Terrarium and Survive Winter

TALYA TATE BOERNER



Photo by Talya Tate Boerner

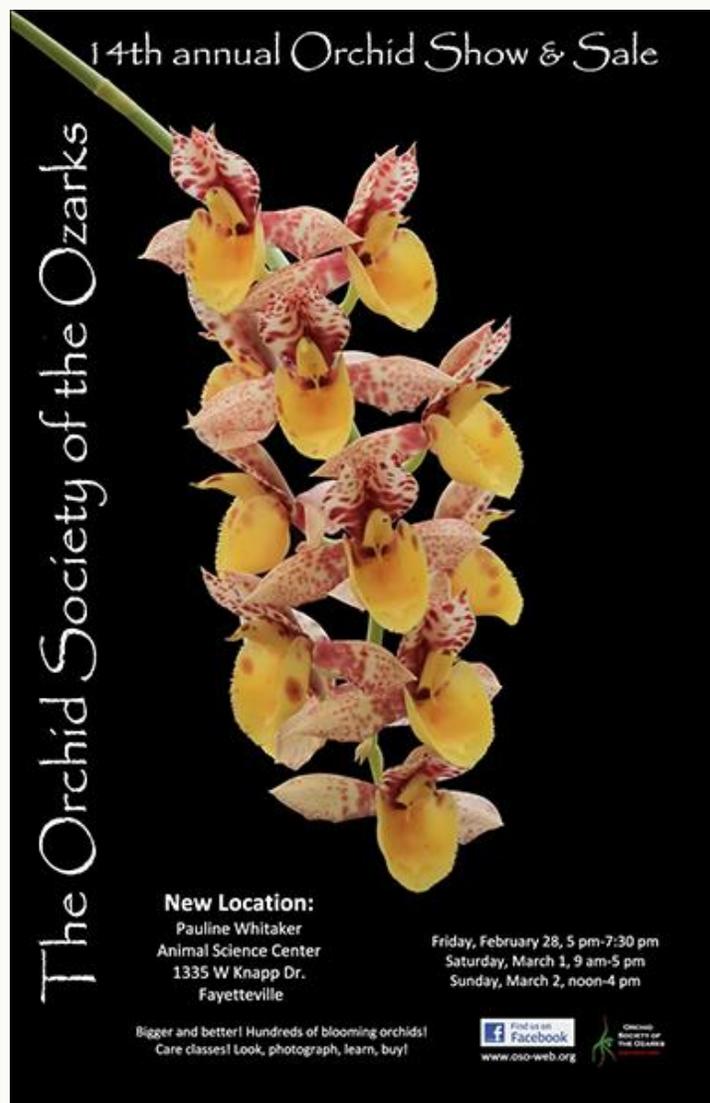
Yes, it may be cold outside, but we shall survive winter and not let our green thumbs get moldy. Can I get an amen?

Winter is the perfect time to tend to your house plants, divide/transplant those babies springing up in your pots, and create a terrarium. And if you don't have any houseplants (what?!), go buy some as soon as possible. Plants add life to your home and help ward off the winter doldrums. Plus there's that whole oxygen thing. Good stuff. [Click here for all the fun details!](#) (This link will take you to Talya's blog on her *Grace, Grits, and Gardening* website.)

14th Annual Orchid Show and Sale

STEVE MARAK

Orchid Society of the Ozarks



The 14th annual Orchid Show and Sale, held by the [Orchid Society of the Ozarks](#), is set for February 28–March 2 at the [Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center, 1335 W. Knapp, Fayetteville](#). This new location offers more space and better parking.

The program kicks off on Friday, February 28, from 5:00–7:30 p.m. The pre-sale is open to all on Friday and continues Saturday, March 1, 9:00 a.m.– 5:00 p.m., and Sunday, March 2, 12:00–4:00 p.m.

Admission is \$5 per adult (kids 12 and under free). Enjoy the blooming orchid displays, plants for sale, free classes, and information on orchid care.

If you are interested in joining the Orchid Society of the Ozarks at the show, a \$5 discount will be applied to your membership. Club meetings are usually on the third Sundays at 1:30 p.m. at Northwest Technical Institute in Springdale. The educational portion of these meetings can be counted toward Master Gardener education hours. [Here's a link to the Orchid Society of the Ozarks Facebook page](#).

COMPOST CORNER

Ways to Send Less to the Landfill

ARIANA TREADWAY Compost Demonstration Site Team



Photo by Nilo Velez from the [WordPress Photo Directory](#)

Cat Litter Options

If you have a cat, you may want to consider using pine pellets instead of clay or silica, which are not biodegradable, must be mined, and either sit in the landfill for a long time and/or never disintegrate. Pine pellets, or pelletized bedding, which are also used as bedding for horses and rabbits, easily biodegrade, keep odors at bay, and are comfortable for your kitty to use. In addition, they cost a fraction of what any of the other types of litter cost! Horse bedding pine pellets sell for dollars less per pound. Pelletized bedding is a safe, practically odorless, inexpensive, and environmentally friendly choice!

Recycling Pet Food and Litter Bags: Pet Supplies Plus Recycling Program

In partnership with TerraCycle®, Pet Supplies Plus provides a FREE recycling program for all brands of flexible plastic pet food, treat, and litter bag packaging, from ALL brands, across ALL species, purchased from ANY retailer. In Northwest Arkansas, you can drop off your empty bags in the collection bins at [Pet Supplies Plus store in Rogers at 4327 S. Pleasant Crossing Blvd. E.](#); phone 479-636-0526.

Leaves Wanted

David Edwards, the new chairperson of the WCMG Compost Demonstration Site project is asking for leaves to be brought to the site in bags over the winter. If you have an abundance of leaves in your yard they will be put to good use making slow compost this winter.

The bags can be plastic or paper. (Paper bags will be composted along with the leaves.) Please tie the bags tightly.

David has requested that you let him know when you will be dropping off bagged leaves at the Compost Demonstration Site. [Email David](#) or text 337-884-4795.

Set to the tune of "*Food, Glorious Food*" from the musical, *Oliver!*

Leaves, we do need leaves

Oak, birch, or maple

Bring them to the site

If you are able

If not then text me soon

I can get them later

Till the bins with sacks of leaves

The more the better

(repeat first stanza)

December Photo of the Month Contest: "Trellises in the Garden"



FIRST PLACE

"After the Rain" by Carol Sue Wooten



SECOND PLACE

"Climb On" by Geri Alvis



THIRD PLACE

"Just Beginning to Climb" by Aimee Payne

January Photo of the Month Contest: "Potpourri"



FIRST PLACE

"Color Me Coleus" by Roxanne Gallup



SECOND PLACE
"Blanket of Snow" by Carole Ball



THIRD PLACE

"Passionate Bee" by Linda Morrow

The February Photo of the Month Contest theme is "Flowers, flowers, flowers (not trees or shrubs, and either annuals and/or perennials)." Deadline for submission is February 15. Contest details are available on the [WCMG website](#).

Calling All Cornbread Makers



Image courtesy Alfi Anderson

The Washington County Extension Service's annual Farm Friends event is set for **Thursday, April 10, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m.** at the Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center in Fayetteville. This popular event introduces families and kids of all ages to farm life.

Free beans and cornbread are part of the experience. Yum! Geri Alvis is in charge of rounding up the cornbread, which WCMGs are always kind enough to bake and donate. Geri advises, "We prefer cornbread muffins because they are easier to hand out. If you would rather employ the pan method, please cut your cornbread into squares."

You can help ease Geri's mind by going ahead and letting her know now that you will provide cornbread. (We'll send reminders as the time draws nigh.) Contact Geri via [email](#) or call/text her at 479-409-3116.

You'll need to deliver your cornbread on April 10 to either the Extension Office by 4:30 p.m., or directly to the Pauline Whitaker Center, 1335 W. Knapp Drive. [Here's a map showing where the Pauline Whitaker Center is.](#) It's right close to the Extension Office.

The time you spend preparing the cornbread can be counted as sanctioned hours. Record your time under "Farm Friends."

Gardening and Community Events

PAM BUTLER

This calendar features events close to home. To stay in the know about MG and UADA gardening-related activities across Arkansas, [sign up for the state calendar of events](#) sent by the Extension Service headquarters in Little Rock.

FEBRUARY 1, 9:00 a.m.–2:30 p.m. ARKANSAS GARDENING SCHOOL. Botanical

Garden of the Ozarks. \$75. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 1, 1:00–2:30 p.m. WORDS OF WARMTH: VALENTINES FOR CLEAR CREEK MEMORY CARE. Fayetteville Public Library Art and Movement Room. Free. No registration. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 1, 1:00–3:00 p.m. HAPPY HOUR AND HYDRANGEAS. Eden's Flower Truck, 3959 N. Steele Blvd., Suite 132, Fayetteville. \$45. [Registration Information.](#)

FEBRUARY 1, 3:00–3:30 p.m. FUNGUS: FRIEND OR FOE? Devil's Den State Park sundial in front of Visitor Center. Free. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 4, 12:00–1:00 p.m. ARKANSAS DIAMOND PLANTS WITH RANDY FORST. Brown Bag Series hosted on Zoom by Hot Springs County MGs. Free. No registration. [Click this link on the meeting day to join via Zoom](#)

FEBRUARY 5, 6:00–8:00 p.m. BEER AND BLOSSOMS: DEEP HUES VALENTINE'S VASE. Bentonville Brewing Company and Common Dwellings. 901 SW14th, Bentonville. \$39. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 7, 14, 21, or 28, 9:00–10:00 a.m. NATURE JOURNALING . Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. Free. No registration. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 8, 9:00–10:30 a.m. OFF THE BOARDWALK TOURS . Osage Park, 799 16th Street, Bentonville. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 8, 9:00–11:00 a.m. BIRDS AND BREAKFAST . Hobbs State Park, Visitor Center. Free. No registration. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 8, 10:00–11:00 a.m. SEED STARTING 101 WITH SPROUTS KITCHEN GARDENS. White River Nursery. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 8, 12:30–2:30 p.m. WATERCOLOR FLORAL PAINTING WORKSHOP. Henzie's Art Studio, 101 Mail Street SE, Gravette, AR. \$35. Call 479-787-3307 to purchase tickets. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 8, 1:00–2:30 p.m. TULIPS & TEQUILA . Eden's Flower Truck, 3959 N. Steele Blvd., Suite 132, Fayetteville. \$45. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 11, 12:00–1:00 p.m. BEES FOR YOUR HOME WITH DR. JOHN ZAWISLAK. Brown Bag Series hosted on Zoom by Hot Springs County MGs. Free. No registration. [Click this link on the meeting day to join via Zoom](#)

FEBRUARY 13, 5:00–6:00 p.m. MERLIN BIRD ID LEARNING SESSION . Fayetteville Public Library, Ann Henry Board Room. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 14–16. GREAT AMERICAN BACKYARD BIRD COUNT . Devil's Den State Park Visitor Center. Free. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 15, 9:00 a.m. GREAT AMERICAN BACKYARD BIRD COUNT FIELD TRIP AT DEVIL'S DEN. Hosted by the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society and Devil's Den State Park. Meet at the lower Devil's Den Trailhead parking area on the south side of Lee Creek bridge. Free. RSVP by email to trips@nwarkaudubon.org. [For more information.](#)

FEBRUARY 15, 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. VALENTINE'S TERRARIUM WORKSHOP. Westwood Gardens (Wedington Drive location), Fayetteville. \$75. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 15, 5:30–6:30 p.m. WOODCOCKS AT WEDINGTON. Witness the “sky dance” of the American woodcock. Hosted by the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society. Lake Wedington Wildlife Management Area west of Fayetteville. Free. RSVP by email to trips@nwarkaudubon.org. [For more information.](#)

FEBRUARY 17, 12:00–1:00 p.m. MASTER GARDENER MONDAY. Zoom gardening presentation plus MG event updates with Randy Forst, UADA consumer horticulture/Master Gardener coordinator. Free. Registration not required. [Click this link on the meeting day to join via Zoom.](#)

FEBRUARY 18, 12:00–1:00 p.m. ROSES WITH CAROL SHOCKLEY. Brown Bag Series hosted on Zoom by Hot Springs County MGs. Free. No registration. [Click this link on the meeting day to join via Zoom.](#)

FEBRUARY 21–23. CRYPTOGAMIC MICROSCOPY WEEKEND WORKSHOP WITH KARRI MCCABE. Ozark Natural Science Center, 1905 Madison 1305, Huntsville. Ticket prices vary. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 22, 10:00 a.m. WINTER BOTANY WALK AT SMITH CREEK PRESERVE. With Jennifer Ogle and Andrew Ruegsegger of the UA Herbarium. The preserve is located near Boxley in Newton County. Free. No registration. [For more information.](#)

FEBRUARY 22, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. MEET THE EVERGREENS TABLETOP . Hobbs State Park Visitors Center. Free come and go event. No registration. [More information.](#)

FEBRUARY 22, 1:00–3:00 p.m. MOTHER & DAUGHTER FLORAL WORKSHOP . Eden's Flower Truck, 3959 North Steele Blvd., Suite 132, Fayetteville. \$45. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 22, 2:00–3:00 p.m. NATURE PHOTOGRAPHY . J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center, 3400 N. 40th St., Springdale. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 28–MARCH 2. ORCHID SOCIETY OF THE OZARKS SHOW AND SALE. See article in this newsletter.

Contact Information

The *Garden Thyme* email address is 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](#)



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WCMG website



**Washington County
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