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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • February 2026

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FEBRUARY MEETING

Annual Awards and More!



Photo by [Florian Cordier](#) on [Unsplash](#).

We hope to see you at our monthly meeting on **Tuesday, February 3, at 6:30 p.m.** at the Don Tyson Center for Agricultural Sciences, 1371 W. Altheimer Drive, Fayetteville. [Here's a map](#).

The evening will be chock full of good times with our annual awards program, recognition of the latest class of WCMG graduates, and a welcome to our newest crop of trainees.

As an added bonus to the evening, we'll be giving away seed packets donated to WCMG by the [NWA Food Bank](#) and [Baker Creek Heirloom Seeds](#). The seed packets came to us as unsorted boxes of flower and vegetable seeds. Randy and Pam Butler then enlisted the help of their granddaughters, Katie and Madi, to sort several boxes into vegetables and flowers. Thank you, Team Butler!

There are few caveats to the seed packet giveaway:

- If you wear your name tag, you'll be eligible for ten seed packets.
- If you don't wear your name tag, you'll be eligible for five seed packets.
- Once you have the allotted seed packets in your possession, you're welcome to swap amongst your WCMG buddies as you like. But please maintain decorum during the awards program.

Randy Butler and Susan Young will be managing the seed packet giveaway in hopes of keeping the thing from going off the rails.

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on these items at our February 3 monthly business meeting.

November 2025 Business Meeting Minutes

November 2025 Treasurer's Report

December 2025 Business Meeting Minutes

December 2025 Treasurer's Report

January 2026 Business Meeting Minutes

From Your President

PAM BUTLER

As I write my first President's article for the *Garden Thyme*, I am reminded of the changes I've seen in the past few weeks. The temperatures have fluctuated wildly from record highs to frozen lows. The grass has gone from solid brown to green patches in a sea of beige—yes, I know those are weeds, but I welcome them. The plants in the flower beds are awakening and pushing their green leaves and buds out of the soil. Tiny creeping phlox flowers shine among the leaves. The trees are budding. Our small group of December birds is growing in variety and number, while we watch from the window as they hop about in the yard, visit the bird feeders, and flit in the trees. I hope you'll enjoy a photo from my garden each month!



Many people think change is hard and even scary. Although some welcome change, others resist and avoid anything different. We, as Washington County Master Gardeners, are experiencing a wide variety of changes in this new year. We accept weather changes and work through whatever difficulty may occur from drought, freezing temperatures, or hail. We can also accept life changes in the same way. We can work through any problems we experience and keep moving forward.

While it may be difficult to make the adjustments to our old routines, we should be excited and looking forward to 2026. Washington County Master Gardeners are beginning a new year in a new meeting place. We may have mixed feelings about this, but we should continue to be unified in our purpose and our mission. As our program grows and evolves, we are maintaining some current activities and offering some new volunteer opportunities which may interest you.

The new Passport Program will allow us to sample different sanctioned projects and enjoy meeting and working alongside members we might not see otherwise. We will continue to recognize members who volunteer for 50 sanctioned project hours through the Busy Bee Awards. We are recording our monthly meetings to allow members, who can't attend in person, the opportunity to view the meeting later. The Community Outreach Committee is overseeing a series of free gardening classes, taught by our Master Gardener members, at the Fayetteville Public Library.

The new year promises many changes in our lives. Our Master Gardener program is no exception. I hope you will join me as I embrace the changes for the new year and view them as opportunities for growth. I ask that you, alongside our Officers and the Executive Board, will continue to look for ways to make our organization more unified, stronger, and better!



Flowers are already waking up in the Butler garden! *Photo by Pam Butler.*

Remember These Things in 2026



Photo by Ravi Shah/[flickr.com](https://www.flickr.com/photos/ravishah/).

HOTLINE TO THE PRESIDENT

President Pam Butler has created a presidential email address dedicated to WCMG-only business. Please email Pam at pambwcmg26@yahoo.com with your questions, comments, and observations.

PROGRAM'S PROGRESS

Mark your calendars for our 2026 monthly meeting dates and locations. Here are the details at present:

March 3. Thompson Hall, Washington County Fairgrounds. Program: Project Fair and "Tool Time" show-and-tell.

April 7. Extension Office auditorium. Program: "The Monarch Man on Milkweed" by WCMG Marty Powers.

May 5. Ozark Veterans' Healing Harvest Garden at the VA Medical Center, Fayetteville. Program: Tour of the Veterans' Garden by WCMG Steve Brizzi.

June 2. Extension Office Grounds and Compost Demonstration Site. Annual picnic; program TBA.

July 7. Extension Office auditorium. Program TBA.

August 4. Extension Office auditorium. Program TBA.

September 1. Extension Office auditorium. Program TBA.

October 6. Extension Office auditorium. Program TBA.

November 3. Extension Office auditorium. Program TBA.

STATE MG CONFERENCE

The state Master Gardener conference is set for June 2–4 and will be hosted by the Faulkner County Master Gardeners in Conway. Registration begins on February 16. The best way to stay up to date on the conference is to [sign up for the state calendar of events](#) sent by the Extension Service headquarters in Little Rock.

2026 Garden Gate Tour Update

DANNA GREAR

Garden Gate Tour Committee



"Welcome Garden," one of the locations on the 2026 Garden Gate Tour.

Photo courtesy of the homeowners.

The 2026 Garden Gate Tour Committee is busy with preparations for our annual tour scheduled for Saturday, June 6. We have chosen seven beautiful and unique residential gardens in central and west Fayetteville and the Extension Office sanctioned project. At the WCMG Project Fair on March 3 we will have details on volunteer opportunities for this year's tour. We will need help with garden prep during the weeks leading up to the tour as well as at the individual gardens on the day of the tour. Please consider signing up at the project fair. You can also text Danna Grear at (479) 841-6402 or [email Danna](#) if you are interested.



"Jardin Aceituna," one of the locations on the 2026 Garden Gate Tour.

Photo courtesy of the homeowner.

Meet the Trainees

LYNETTE TERRELL

Matthew Mabry

My name is Matt, and I moved to the Fayetteville area in 2021. After purchasing my home in 2022, I began rehabilitating the surrounding garden with a focus on native perennials, pollinator support, and year-round natural interest.

I am excited to be joining the Washington County Master Gardeners this year and to continue learning how to garden more intentionally and sustainably. When I am not in the garden, I enjoy reading, cooking, and spending quality time with my dog, Walter.



Sydney Rice

Hi everyone! I'm Sydney Rice, 27, and I work as an occupational therapist at Mercy Rehab Hospital in Rogers, where I help people get back to the activities that matter most to them—sometimes that even includes gardening. Outside of work, I'm usually hiking, rock hunting, walking my dog, Blaze, flowing through yoga, or cooking up big pots of soup and Cajun favorites.

My interest in gardening began during the COVID-19 pandemic, when I was craving more connection—to nature, to community, and to something tangible. What started as a growing houseplant collection quickly branched into vegetables, herbs, flowers, and container gardening. Along the way, I've become especially interested in therapeutic garden design and how gardens can

support people across different ages and abilities. Gardening sits right at the intersection of my personal interests and my professional background in occupational therapy. For my capstone research project, I studied school-based gardening programs and their impact on mental health and resilience in youth with adverse childhood experiences. That work, "Garden on the Go," was published in the journal *Children* in 2025.

I love the way gardening supports well-being, learning, and connection—its' one of my favorite forms of "therapy." I'm so excited to join the Master Gardeners, learn from this community, and contribute however I can to helping our spaces (and people) thrive!

Looking forward to growing alongside you all.

Our Garden Mission Statement

TALYA BOERNER



Image courtesy of Talya Boerner.

Hello to a New Gardening Year! A brand new year has me thinking about gardening goals, and I decided to jot down a few that are important to me. While doing this, I realized what I was really doing was writing a garden mission statement.

Yes, I do love a good mission statement. Old habits die hard (or don't die at all.) Business plans, year-end summaries, new budgets, spreadsheets, etc.—that was such a big part of my world once upon a time.

Still is, in a way.

Is that weird?

I don't think so. (And who cares, anyway?) I've reached the age of not worrying about being thought of as weird. [Click here to read more](#). (This link will take you to Talya's blog on her *Grace, Grits and Gardening* website.)

December Photo of the Month Contest: "Winter Gardens/Winter Berries"



FIRST PLACE

"Winter Stillness" by Leslie Bailey



SECOND PLACE

"Nature's Beauty" by Marguerite Abowitz



THIRD PLACE

"Dehydrating branches of a native beautyberry shrub" by Dolores Stamps

**January Photo of the Month Contest:
"Potpourri"**



FIRST PLACE

"Dew Drop Inn!" by Mary Sparks



SECOND PLACE



THIRD PLACE

"Can You See the Ent?" by Sarah Teague

For the 2026 photo contest, we have retained some old favorites for themes and added a couple of new ones. Mark your calendars to be ready for these themes in the coming months.

- February: Flowers, flowers, flowers (not trees or shrubs, but either annuals or perennials).
- March: Spring Bloomers
- April: Flowering Trees/Shrubs.

Did you know that you can access the themes for the whole year by going to the [Photo of the Month](#) page on our WCMG website? (Scroll down the page and click on the "View Monthly Themes" button.

When you're snowed in, do a search of your photos that are suitable for a future theme.

Questions? [Email Kitty Sanders](#), Website Committee chair.

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 2, 6:00 p.m. DYO FAIRY HOUSE. Pink Fern, Fayetteville. \$75. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 10–MARCH 21, 2:00–4:00 p.m. SEED TO SUPPER. Gardening class for beginners. Space is limited; please register only if you can attend all six classes. Northwest Arkansas Food Bank, 1604 Honeysuckle Street, Lowell. Free. Email becky.miller@nwafoodbank.org to register.

FEBRUARY 10, 17, and 24, 5:30–7:30 p.m. BEEKEEPING CLASSES. Fayetteville Public Library, Event Center. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 12 or 14, 6:00 p.m. COUPLES TERRARIUM WORKSHOP. Pink Fern, Fayetteville. \$125. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 12, 6:00–7:00 p.m. or FEBRUARY 14, 10:00–11:00 a.m. MERLIN BIRD ID LEARNING SESSION. Fayetteville Public Library, Ann Henry Board Room. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 13, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. RAIN GARDEN DESIGNS. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI). \$44 public/\$29 member. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 14, 2:00 p.m. BUILD YOUR OWN BIRD FEEDER. J.B. and Johnelle Hunt Family Ozark Highlands Nature Center, 3400 North 40th Street, Springdale. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 19, NOON. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: ONIONS. Zoom program by UADA extension agents. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 19, 6:00 p.m. MOUNTED PLANT WORKSHOP. Pink Fern, Fayetteville. \$70. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 21, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. SPONTANEOUS FLOWER ARRANGEMENTS WORKSHOP: MIXED MEDIA WORKSHOP. Beth Woessner Art, Studio 22, 1503 Taldo Loop, Tontitown. \$120. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 21, 11:00 a.m.–12:30 p.m. WINTER TREE ID HIKE. City of Fayetteville Parks and Recreation. Kessler Mountain Regional Park, 2600 W. Judge Cummings Road, Fayetteville. Free. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 25, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. MIGRATION MADNESS: DISCOVERING THE SEASON'S BIRDING MADNESS. With Lauren Eno for OLLI. \$40 public/\$25 member. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 25, 2:00–4:00 p.m. SPRING AWAKE! WAKING YOUR GARDEN UP FOR SPRING. With Megan Lankford for OLLI. \$40 public/\$25 member. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 26, 1:30–3:00 p.m. GARDENING IN A CHANGING CLIMATE: WOODY PLANTS. With Jennifer Ogle. Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Bentonville. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 26, 6:00 p.m. BEADED PLANT CRAFT NIGHT WITH FURNIBEADS. Pink Fern, Fayetteville. \$55. [Registration information.](#)

FEBRUARY 28, 9:00 a.m.–5:15 p.m. ARKANSAS GARDENING SCHOOL. Two different half-day sessions offered. \$75/session for members, \$90/session for nonmembers. Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. [Registration information.](#)

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.

NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

[Judy Smith](#), managing editor/submissions; [Mary McCully](#), editor/submissions and videos; [Pam Butler](#), reporter; [Lynette Terrell](#), reporter; [Susan Young](#), production assistant.

Send all newsletter submissions to Judy Smith or Mary McCully.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

[Pam Butler](#), president; [Rick Oliver](#), vice president; [Carole Ball](#), secretary; [Julie Murray](#), treasurer; [Caleb Israel](#), assistant treasurer. Members at large: [Mary McCully](#), [Judi Sartwell](#), [Steve Shearman](#). Ex officio: [Alfi Anderson](#), past president; [Colin Massey](#), Washington County extension agent for agriculture and horticulture.

Banner photo of thyme courtesy Lucy Meskill/flickr



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(private)



WCMG Facebook Page
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WCMG Website



WCEX Website

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