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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • August 2025

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## **AUGUST MEETING**

### **Cultivating a Fruitful Legacy: Fruit Breeding at the University of Arkansas**

**Hope to see you at our monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 5, at 6:30 p.m.,** in the air-conditioned comfort of Good Shepherd Lutheran Church, 2925 Old Missouri Road, Fayetteville. [Here's a map showing the location of Good Shepherd](#)

Our guest speaker is Isabella Vaughn, a graduate student studying horticulture at the University of Arkansas. She earned a bachelor's degree in horticulture at the University of Arkansas and is finishing her master's in muscadine breeding. In the Spring of 2025 she will begin studying for a Ph.D. in horticulture, shifting focus to blackberry breeding. Her overarching goal is to

develop improved grape, muscadine, and blackberry cultivars for growers and consumers.

Isabella grew up surrounded by Arkansas agriculture, inspired by her roots in 4-H, FFA, and her father's career as a weed scientist.



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## Taking Care of Business

**We will vote on these items at our August 5 monthly business meeting.**

July 2025 Business Meeting Minutes

April 2025 Treasurer's Report

May 2025 Treasurer's Report

June 2025 Treasurer's Report

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## From Your President

**ALFI ANDERSON**

### **Many Hands Make Light Work**

Last week, as I traveled across the state of Arkansas, I was reminded just how fortunate we are here in Washington County. In some counties across our state, the Master Gardener program doesn't even exist. In others, you may find only a single sanctioned project—just one.

Here in Washington County, we are truly blessed. Not only do we have a thriving Master Gardener organization, but we are home to multiple sanctioned projects that are growing and flourishing—thanks to you, our incredible members. Your dedication, time, and passion for gardening have transformed our county into a vibrant hub of learning, community service, and botanical beauty.



It takes a great deal of manpower, care, and consistency to keep these projects going, and our members continue to step up. However, some of our smaller projects could use a little extra help. They may not get as much attention, but they are just as valuable to our mission and our community. If you're looking for a new way to serve or want to lend a hand where it's needed most, we invite you to consider expanding your volunteer efforts into these areas. If you are

willing to help with these smaller projects, please reach out to [Nancy Sloan](#) or [Regina Gabel](#) and they will let you know where the needs are and get you connected.

One exciting way we're working to bring more support to all of our sanctioned projects is through the proposed WCMG Passport Program. This program will provide new ways to connect members with a variety of projects across the county. There will be some exciting developments coming down the pike soon—so stay tuned!

We also had a wonderful time recently visiting with our 2025 trainees and their mentors at the Annuals to Perennials gathering. A good time was had by all with a large turnout, and it was truly inspiring to see the future of our program coming together.

Now is the perfect time to start thinking ahead to next year—and thinking about becoming a mentor. Without our mentor program, we cannot have a Master Gardener program. Every new trainee must have a mentor to guide them through their first year. If you've ever considered being a mentor, we encourage you to take that step. It's one of the most meaningful ways to give back and ensure our organization continues to thrive.

As a reminder, we will be presenting our budget at our September meeting, so please be sure to look that over once it's shared.

I hope you're all staying cool in this heat, and please know how much I appreciate each and every one of you. Let's continue to be grateful not only for our gardens but also for one another—and let's keep growing together.

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## 2026 Slate of Officers

**We will vote on the following slate of officers at our September 2 annual meeting.**

President – Pam Butler

Vice President – Rick Oliver

Secretary – Carole Ball

Treasurer – Julie Murray

Assistant Treasurer – to be determined

Member at Large – Mary McCully (first year of two-year term)

Member at Large – Judi Sartwell (second year of two-year term)

Member at Large – Steve Shearman – (Class of 2025 representative for one-year term)

**Assistant Treasurer nominations will be taken from the floor at the September meeting.** If you are interested in the position, please read the job descriptions for Treasurer and Assistant Treasurer in the bylaws found in the Member Resource Guide on the [WCMG website](#) and contact [Liz Hale](#), chair of the Nominating Committee.

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## Last Call for White Elephants

**DORIS CASSIDY and KATHY LAUNDER**  
**Washington County Fair Project co-chairs**



Photo by Bec. on [flickr](#)

For our annual WCMG White Elephant Sale during the Washington County Fair, we are in need of the following items in good condition:

- Children's books, games, and toys
- Craft items such as beads, fabric, yarn, or supplies for any type of craft project
- Gardening items such as pots, tools, or any type of gardening paraphenalia you no longer use

We will still take any other items you currently have to give us. Drop off your donations at the Extension Office or bring them to our August 5 WCMG meeting.

Proceeds from the White Elephant Sale are used to give cash awards to the Youth Grand Champion and Reserve Champion winners for each category in the fair's Horticulture Division at the fair. In addition to the cash award, a small token gift is given to the youth in eight divisions. These awards provide the youth with a lasting memory of their achievement and encourages future interest in growing and exhibiting agriculture.

Questions? Email [Doris](#) or [Kathy](#). Thank you in advance for your assistance with this project.

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**Start Thinking About Those Annual Awards**



Photo by [Tingey Injury Law Firm](#) on [Unsplash](#)

**GERRI ALVIS and JAN LEFLER**  
**Awards Committee co-chairs**

The WCMG Awards Committee manages the WCMG awards and recognition activities. Award nomination requirements and guides are found on the [Washington County Master Gardeners website](#) in the Member Portal section. Prior WCMG award winners for all categories are listed in the WCMG Member Resource Guide in the Award Forms section. (This shows projects and/or individuals who are eligible for awards.)

Arkansas Extension Consumer Horticulture Educator Randy Forst says, "Master Gardeners truly make a difference in our communities, and it's important to recognize their hard work and the impacts they make all over the state."

The Arkansas Master Gardener County 76 Recruitment, Retention and Recognition (RRR) Project manages the Arkansas Master Gardener Awards program. State MG awards are presented at the annual Arkansas Master Gardener conference.

WCMG awards include:

- **Excellence in Education.** A WCMG project that demonstrates significant learning provided in a targeted audience of special groups and has been implemented for at least one full year. The project's total effort, scope, and measurable results are judged. It is open to all projects EXCEPT prior winners for Project of the Year or Excellence in Education (EIE) in the last five years.
- **Individual Friend of Master Gardeners .** A non-WCMG individual who has shown outstanding support of the WCMG program EXCEPT those who have won in the last five years.
- **Organization or Business Friend of Master Gardeners .** A non-Extension or non-WCMG business or organization which has shown outstanding support of the

WCMG program EXCEPT those who have won in the last five years.

- **Master Gardener of the Year** . A WCMG member who has made an exceptional contribution to the WCMG program, Extension Service, and county. All active WCMG members are eligible EXCEPT previous winners.
- **Project of the Year** . A sanctioned project that has shown exceptional contribution to the WCMG program, Extension Service, and county. Project's total effort, scope, and measurable results are judged. It is open to all projects EXCEPT prior winners for Project of the Year or Excellence in Education (EIE) in the last five years.
- **Rookie of the Year** . A first-year WCMG who has provided outstanding volunteer service to the WCMG program and/or Extension Service and the community. Eligible trainees who finished their MG classroom training and completed their first-year membership certification within the designated time frame.
- **Mimi Cox Mentor of the Year** . A WCMG member who has made outstanding mentoring efforts helping their assigned first-year WCMG, MG transfer, or reinstated WCMG member through their first year. All active WCMG members are eligible to be nominated EXCEPT previous winners.
- **Joyce Mendenhall "Yes, I Can" Award** . WCMG members and/or first-year WCMGs who clearly demonstrate a "can do" attitude and have shown outstanding support of the WCMG program. All nominations are eligible EXCEPT previous winners of MG of the Year, Rookie of the Year, Mentor of the Year, or Joyce Mendenhall "Yes, I Can" awards in the last five years.

**2025 WCMG award nominations are due before October 15, 2025.**

Start now making notes about contributions/achievements/measurable results against goals, etc., of individuals, teams, and projects all year long. Use statistics to track measurable results. Take action-oriented photos throughout the year and ID all in each photo and each person's role.

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## Helping Hands Needed

**NANCY SLOAN**

**Projects/Proposals Committee co-chair**



Photo by \*W\* on Flickr

The Projects/Proposals Committee often gets requests to sanction the gardens at various local organizations, but due to our limited capacity we are not able to sanction new ones at this time. Below are a few who recently have requested our help, and we have told them that our WCMG volunteers can work there and count it as non-sanctioned hours. If interested, please contact them to determine the best times to work there.

- [Clinton House Museum](#) (Fayetteville): Bailee King, 479-445-4840, [bailee@clintonhousemuseum.org](mailto:bailee@clintonhousemuseum.org)
- [Terra Studios](#) (near Elkins): Emma Fuston, 479-643-3185, [emma@terrastudios.com](mailto:emma@terrastudios.com)
- [Cobblestone Farms](#) (Fayetteville), 479-718-6624

Thank you for your service to our community.

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## Meet the Trainees

### **OLIVIA HARRINGTON and LYNETTE TERRELL**

#### **Rhonda Lovell**

I grew up on a wheat and cattle farm in western Oklahoma and come from a long line of professors and teachers. I retired in 2024 from my role as a corporate attorney, after twenty-one years with Farmers Insurance. My husband, Will Yearian, and I have been married for seventeen years. We have three

wonderful adult daughters and six incredible grandchildren.



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### **Mari Walters-Ford**

I will begin with a bold confession. Unlike many of my fellow trainees, I have historically spent little time in a garden. There were no grandparents who served as role models or sources of instruction or inspiration. No lessons on planting, harvesting, or preserving foods were passed down by earlier generations. Our parents raised four children and were self-employed in the grocery business. They were always working. Gardening could not be a priority.



When my sister, Carole, and I were in our mid-teens, we developed a keen interest in the relationship between food and health. This interest defined my career choices. I earned an MS degree in nutritional sciences, became a registered dietician/nutritionist, and thoroughly enjoyed my work for the City of Chicago as Nutrition Coordinator and Training Unit Manager.

When I was in graduate school I fell head-over-heels in love with ballroom dancing. The attraction was so strong that I began to teach couples dancing in the evenings and on weekends. After 22 years and much career satisfaction, I left behind my City of Chicago job and, along with my husband, Ron (a chemical engineer and MBA grad), designed and opened an 8,000-square-foot ballroom dance studio on the near-north side of Chicago. Our previous work had prepared us with the skill sets required to offer this beautiful and healing facility to the dance community and to the world. The universe was calling us. It was game on!

When you own your own business, your work-life balance becomes paramount, and our lives were no exception. To ease the demands, I began taking yoga classes at a Chicago athletic club. I found yoga to be helpful on many levels. My belief in yoga's healing benefits has grown, and last year I completed a 200-hour training program to become a certified yoga teacher. I now teach yoga part-time at a local yoga center.

One thing that my tenure as a dietician/nutritionist, ballroom dance teacher/studio owner, and yoga instructor have in common is my interest in promoting the health and well-being of communities. Prioritizing the well-being of communities is the same goal that I see among the many dedicated and talented Master Gardeners in Washington County. So even though our time spent in a garden might differ, our hearts are united, and with my fellow Master Gardeners I feel at home.

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# July Photo of the Month Contest: "Perennial Flowers"



**FIRST PLACE**

**"Taking the Long View" by Carole Ball**

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**SECOND PLACE**  
**"Breakfast!" by Ruth Cohoon**

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The August Photo of the Month contest theme is "Native Gardens." Deadline to enter is August 15. Contest details are available on the [WCMG website](#).

[Here's a link to the 2025 photo contest themes.](#)

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## COMPOST CORNER

### Trench Composting: A Simple Method of Maximizing Kitchen Scraps

**MARIETTE SPIDEL**  
WCMG Master Composter



**This is what successful trench composting looks like. *Photo by Mariette Spidel.***

Most gardeners know food scraps contain nutrients that can be used to improve garden soil. The most common way of handling kitchen scraps is adding them to a traditional compost pile, but a less well-known composting method also works very well: pit or trench composting. It's one of the simplest methods of handling smaller quantities of food waste without a

compost pile.

Traditional compost piles require a good level of oxygen for aerobic microorganisms to do their work. Trench composting is an anaerobic process, utilizing a different set of microorganisms that are active even with less than 5% oxygen. The activity of worms and other larger soil organisms also help break down organic material. Trench composting is an excellent way to increase worm populations in your garden.

One of the great benefits of trench composting—no turning a compost pile! But you do need to dig a new trench when the old one is full.

### **Creating Your Trench Compost Site**

To get started trench composting all you need to do is dig a hole. If space is limited, start with a hole about 12-15 inches deep and 8-10 inches wide. You can also dig a longer trench, 12-15 inches deep if your space allows.

But where will you put it? The vegetable garden is certainly a good place to start. You could locate your holes or trenches randomly throughout the vegetable garden as you need a new one or you could develop a system. Locate holes in even-numbered walkways in even years and odd-numbered walkways in odd years.

Another example of trench composting is a simple three-year rotation. Incorporate kitchen waste, cover crops, or yard trimmings in path-making. In the first season a trench is dug, filled with food wastes, and covered. At the same time, another row is used to grow crops and a third is used as a path. In the second year the fertile soil of the former compost trench is used to grow crops, the former crop row is used as a path, and the path is dug as a new trench. After a third year of rotation, the cycle starts over again. This form of composting keeps the garden perpetually fertile with a small organizational effort.

You can also locate smaller composting holes around the dripline of trees or shrubs. Minimizing hole size keeps tree root damage to a minimum. Or use open spots in ornamental planting beds as you divide and relocate perennials, or in fallow areas in the annual flower garden.

To fill the compost holes, cut or chop compost materials into small pieces, place them in the hole, and mix them with soil. Fill the trench until it is full enough to allow backfilling with at least 8 inches of soil. If your compost materials are dry, add moisture before backfilling. Dig, fill, and you're done. No additional maintenance of the compost trenches is needed. Just dig a new trench for your next batch of kitchen waste. Depending on soil temperature, the number of microorganisms in the soil, and the carbon content of the wastes, decomposition will occur in one month to one year.

### **Materials for Trench Composting**

Waste fruit and vegetables, peelings, coffee grounds, eggshells, bakery products, and many other leftovers can be safely composted using proper methods.

Don't use meat, bones, or fatty foods such as cheese and salad dressing for trench composting. They have a high potential to attract wildlife, rodents, dogs, cats, and flies.

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## 2025 Annuals to Perennials WCMG Watch Party



**Mentors and mentees at the recent Annuals to Perennials event included (from left) mentor Laura Winburn with mentee Rhonda Lovell, and mentee Kim Coslett with mentor Patsy Louk. Photo by Geri Alvis.**

On July 10, thirty-eight Class of 2025 trainees and mentors gathered together at the Washington County Extension office to participate in the Washington County watch party for the 2025 Annuals to Perennials event. Annuals to Perennials is held annually to honor new Master Gardener trainees and their mentors.

The room buzzed with lively conversation while everyone enjoyed food and photo opportunities. Attendees were treated to an excellent Zoom presentation by Joe Lamp'l, one of the country's most recognized and trusted personalities in gardening and green living. He is the creator and Emmy-winning host of public television's *Growing a Greener World*. His talk, "Digging Deeper: Five Things Smart Gardeners Know That Others Don't," was informative and inspiring to trainees and mentors alike.

If you are interested in participating in the Annuals to Perennials event next year, volunteer to be a mentor for next year's training class. Mentors are an important part of the success of the Master Gardener program.

Contact Patsy Louk or Kathy Launder if you're interested in volunteering as a mentor.

- Patsy: [pjlouk@gmail.com](mailto:pjlouk@gmail.com) or 479-841-9865
- Kathy: [gardenurse55@outlook.com](mailto:gardenurse55@outlook.com) or 479-856-2712



Enjoying a noontime meal at the Annuals to Perennials event are (from left) Randy Butler, Pam Butler, Rhonda Lovell, and Kim Coslett. *Photo by Patsy Louk.*

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**Congrats to 2025's First Hive of Busy Bees!**



**Image of "a color cartoon of several busy and friendly bees"  
created by Google Gemini 2.5, 2025.**

The Busy Bee Award program was started in 2024 by the WCMG Executive Committee to recognize WCMG members and trainees when they record their first 50 sanctioned project or committee hours each year. (Non-sanctioned or education hours are not considered for this award.) From April through December, qualifying WCMG members or trainees receive a Busy Bee lapel pin at monthly WCMG membership meetings.

### **BUSY BEE AWARDS, JANUARY – MARCH 2025**

*(Name – hours recorded – first active year)*

Geri Alvis – 85 – 2015

Alfi Anderson – 181.5 – 2021

Carole Ball – 137.5 – 2023

Linda Bennett-Smith – 99 – 2022

Pam Butler – 104.25 – 2019

Kristi Campbell – 235 – 2022

David Edwards – 150.25 – 2024

Carrie Gamble – 79.5 – 2023

Liz Hale – 251.25 – 2021

Karen Hanna-Towne – 142.25 – 2019

Ruthanne Hill – 195.25 – 2018

Kathy Launder – 220.25 – 2007

Jan Lefler – 132 – 2008

Patsy Louk – 150.25 – 2015

Julie Murray – 321.75 – 2020

Jim Sposato – 217.25 – 2013

## Simple Summer Salad

**TALYA TATE BOERNER**



**Image courtesy of Talya Tate Boerner.**

Certain flavors are happy together. One enhances the other. This simple summer salad does just that. The combination of only a few ingredients sing. Try it, you'll like it, even if you're one of those people who doesn't appreciate the under appreciated radish. [Click here](#) for the ingredients and details. (This link will take you to Talya's blog on her *Grace, Grits and Gardening* website.)

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## Book Review

**ANITA BUKEY**

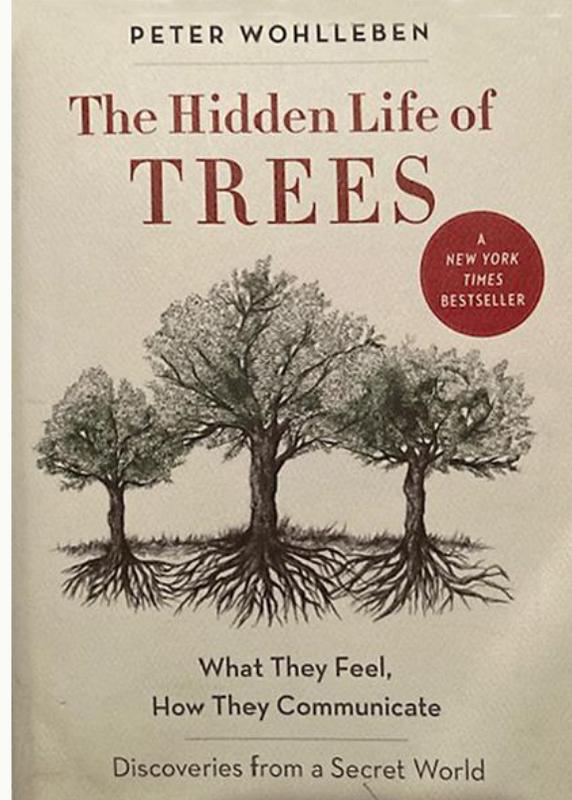


Photo by Anita Bukey.

## **THE HIDDEN LIFE OF TREES**

By Peter Wohlleben

Greystone Books, 2016

Peter Wohlleben, the author of this fascinating book, is a forest manager in the Eifel mountains in Germany. As he walked with forest visitors, he began to pay attention to bizarre and unusual characteristics of trees, leading him to the conclusion that trees experience pain, have memories, and defend their families. They travel, and communicate with each other by olfactory, visual, and electrical signals. In thirty-six short chapters we learn that beeches, spruce, and oaks feel pain when they are nibbled on by a creature. Willows produce a defensive compound similar to aspirin. They rely on insects for pollination. The rate of photosynthesis is the same for all trees; a damaged tree is helped by its neighbor. Trees have maternal instincts. They are linked to other trees in the forest through fungal connections. Trees pass on their legacy to the next generation and exert influence in bringing up the next generation unless felled by strong winds, lightning, disease, or another tree falling against them. Lack of water is harder for a tree to endure than hunger. Vibrations occur in the trunk when the flow of water from roots to the leaves is interrupted. Is this a cry for help? With a stethoscope the vibrations can be heard. A mature beech exhales hundreds of gallons of water every day. As with people, trees lose body mass as they age.

Wohlleben defines a tree as "a woody plant with a dominant trunk from which branches grow." Otherwise it is classified as a shrub. Shedding leaves and growing new ones depends on temperature and how long the days are. Beeches start growing when they perceive light for at least thirteen hours a day. They have a kind of solar cell which receives light waves. Tree trunks also register light. Tall trees like beeches, firs, and spruces soak up to 97% of the light. Ponderosa pines and redwoods have evolved thick bark to protect their cambium. Beeches live between 400 to 500 years but may be felled by insects, fungi, bacteria, or

viruses. Some trees keep hidden energy reserves called phytoncides which contain antibiotic properties. If a tree is attacked by an aggressive fungi, its cambium will die but its roots can still pump water to the crown. In short, trees have a pharmacy at their disposal.

Trees are amazing. They can learn, communicate, interact with each other, heal themselves, travel, and form families. Earth is home to more than three trillion trees, more than stars in the universe. They supply almost one-third of the planet's oxygen.

Now, don't you feel that you should run outside and hug a tree, then come back inside and read this book?

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## 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.*

**AUGUST 1–31. YAYOI KUSAMA FLOWERS** . Crystal Bridges, Orchard Trail. Free. [For more information](#).

**AUGUST 2, 12:00–5:00 p.m. FIRST ANNUAL TOMATO FESTIVAL**. Ozark Folkways, 22733 N. Highway 71, Winslow. \$10. [For more information](#).

**AUGUST 5, 9:00–11:30 a.m. CAVE SPRINGS RAIN GARDEN VOLUNTEER DAY** . Illinois River Watershed Partnership, 221 S. Main Street, Cave Springs. [Registration information](#).

**AUGUST 9, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. SHOREBIRDS AT KIBLER BOTTOMS & FROG BAYOU WMA**. Alma. Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society. Group limited to 20 people. [RSVP by email to \[trips@nwarkaudubon.org\]\(mailto:trips@nwarkaudubon.org\)](#). [For more information](#).

**AUGUST 16, 8:40–11:00 a.m. LAKE FAYETTEVILLE EXPLORATION: ACCESSIBLE TRAIL ADVENTURES**. Ozark Natural Science Center@ Lake Fayetteville. By donation. [Registration information](#).

**AUGUST 16, 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. CREATING A NATURAL GARDEN WITH CLAUDIA VILATO**. Fayetteville Public Library. Walker Community Room. Free. [For more information](#).

**AUGUST 18, 12:00–1:00 p.m. MASTER GARDENER MONDAY** . Zoom gardening program plus Master Gardener event updates with Randy Forst, UADA consumer horticulture/Master Gardener coordinator. Free. Registration not required. [Email Randy for the Zoom link OR sign up for the calendar of events](#) sent out by the Extension Service headquarters in Little Rock.

**AUGUST 21, 9:00–11:00 a.m. SPRING CREEK VOLUNTEER DAY** . Illinois River Watershed Partnership at Luther George Park, 300 Park Street, Springdale. [For more information](#).

**AUGUST 21, 12:00–1:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: CARROTS** . Zoom program by UADA extension agents and staff. Free. [Registration information](#).

**AUGUST 23, 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. OZARK BUG CRAWL**. Historic Cane Hill, 14389 Hwy 45, Cane Hill. Explore the creeping, crawling, floating, and fluttering life of Cane Hill!

## 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.

### NEWSLETTER COMMITTEE

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

Send all newsletter submissions to Judy Smith or Mary McCully.

### EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

[Alfi Anderson](#), president; [Pam Butler](#), vice president; [Carole Ball](#), secretary; [Julie Murray](#), treasurer; [Stephanie McGuire](#), assistant treasurer. Members at large: [Rick Oliver](#), [Marty Powers](#), [Judi Sartwell](#). Ex officio: [Liz Hale](#), past president; [Colin Massey](#), Washington County extension agent for agriculture and horticulture.

*Banner photo of thyme courtesy [Lucy Meskill/flickr](#)*

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(public)



WCMG Facebook Group  
(private)



WCMG Instagram



WCMG website



Washington County  
Extension Service website

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