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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • April 2026

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## **IMPORTANT REMINDERS**

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  - **Garden Thyme is best viewed in your browser (instead of viewing it within your email).** Just click on the link at the top of this page that says "View this newsletter in your browser."
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## **APRIL MEETING**

### **Monarchs and Milkweed with Marty**



Our April guest speaker is WCMG Marty Powers, seen here with one of his favorite native trees, the Ozark chinquapin.

**The April 7 WCMG meeting is at the Washington County Extension Office at 6:30 p.m.** Our guest speaker is Marty Powers, a longtime Washington County Master Gardener, presenting “Monarch Butterflies and Milkweed.”

Marty is widely known for his dedication to pollinator education and habitat restoration, earning him the nickname “Mr. Monarch” for his passionate advocacy on behalf of monarch butterflies.

For seventeen years, Marty managed the two-acre grounds at the Shiloh Museum of Ozark History in Springdale, Arkansas, where he also served as a beloved project leader for the Washington County Master Gardeners. During his time there, he established thriving monarch habitats and gave away thousands of milkweed plants to support Arkansas’s monarch population. His work gained national recognition, including a feature on The Weather Channel, and he founded the popular “Monarch Flight Festival” in downtown Springdale.

Before his work in horticulture, Marty served for seventeen years with the Fayetteville Fire Department, rising to the rank of Captain. During his service, he helped develop the DAYSHIFT program for burn survivors. In 1995, he was honored for rescuing a six-week-old baby from a burning apartment.

Marty often describes himself as having a “mild obsession” with monarch butterflies. In his presentation, he will share his unique journey from firefighter to educator, inspiring others—especially younger generations—to support pollinators by planting milkweed and creating habitat for these remarkable insects.

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## Taking Care of Business

**We will vote on these items at our April 7 monthly business meeting.**

March 2026 Business Meeting  
Minutes

February 2026 Treasurer's  
Report

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## From Your President

**PAM BUTLER**

*March comes in like a lamb and goes out like a lion.* Have you ever wondered why we have so many sayings about the weather and gardening that have been handed down through generations? March is a volatile and unpredictable month. Perhaps if it’s sunny and calm at the beginning of the month, we will be wishing for the rain that storms often bring by the end of the month. And maybe if it comes in like a lion with storms, our hope is that it will go out like a lamb with sunny and gentle weather, which makes our gardens grow.



*April showers bring May flowers.* The familiar joke that May flowers bring Pilgrims still makes us smile, but we truly depend on the spring rains in April to

provide our plants with much-needed water after a long winter's sleep. Those gentle April showers prepare our gardens for the flowers we enjoy in May.

I'm sure you have heard (and probably said) old-fashioned comments like these that you remember from your childhood or that you have heard someone say. Some sayings are funny to us, and some are actually rooted in science. I want to share a few of the more common seasonal and weather-related planting myths and practices that I have heard.

One old saying tells us to plant above-ground crops when the oak tree leaves are the size of a mouse or squirrel ear. Another reminds us that when the pecan trees start to bud, it's time to plant. One more signal is that when dogwoods bloom, winter is done.

Did you know that planting peppers when you are angry makes them hotter, or that plants given to you grow better than those you buy yourself? Some people say that speaking positively to your plants or playing music to them helps them flourish.

Several old wives' tales are associated with planting potatoes. One tradition is to plant potatoes and peas on St. Patrick's Day. Another saying cautions to wait until Good Friday to plant potatoes. A third suggests planting potatoes as soon as the grass begins to green up. All of these methods wait until the ground is somewhat warmer and the soil is more workable to plant your potato crop. So, is there a bit of science behind these examples of advice for planting potatoes?

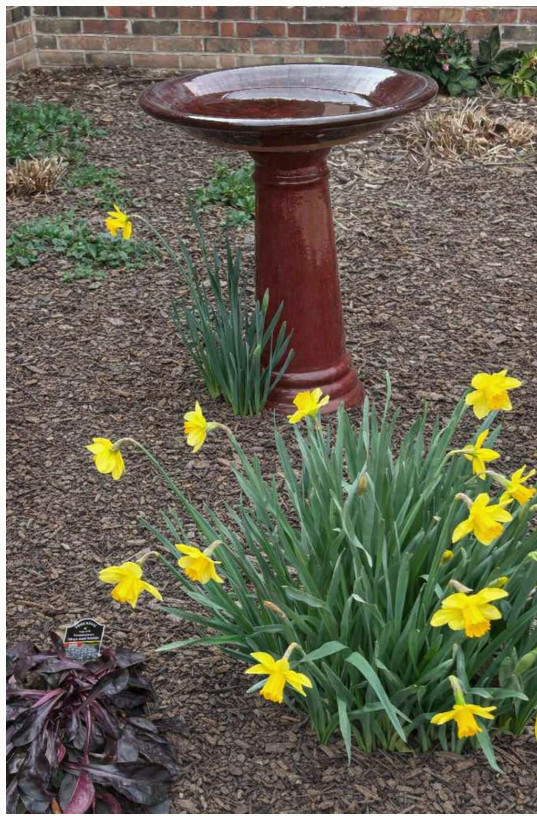
For generations, farmers used the almanac as a guide to planting according to the phases of the moon. They planted above-ground crops when the moon was waxing and below-ground crops when the moon was waning. Supposedly, the above-ground crops produced more leaves, fruit, and vegetables when planted during a waxing moon period, while below ground crops flourished when planted under the waning moon phase and produced better root vegetables.

Gardeners through the years have relied on wives' tales and past experiences to guide their efforts, sometimes with success and sometimes with disappointing results. Many of the old ways actually were based on observation and early science. Some, however, were simply stories and sayings that drew on experience and remembrances of years past, which were repeated through generations of gardeners.

As Master Gardeners, we are taught to use scientific methods that are research-based with predictable results gained through trials and experimentation. Even though we have access to documented methods that give us the best possible results in our gardens, it's fun to remember how farmers through the years relied on folk advice and old wives' tales to plant their gardens. And just to be safe, don't plant peppers when you're angry.

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***March in Pam's Garden***



**Pam reports, "The daffodils were blooming on March 1 when I made this photo. But when March growled and bit into them with the sudden freeze, it also cracked our birdbath."**



**"This picture is with the new birdbath on March 24. Google says birds like brown better than red, so all is well."**



**LYNNE BELL**

**Garden Gate Tour Committee**

### **Volunteer Training**

Our first training session is **Tuesday, April 7, at 5:30 p.m.** at the Washington County Extension Office (just before the MG meeting). A second training date will be announced soon.

### **We Need Your Help!**

We are still looking for volunteers for the following roles:

- **Tour Day, Saturday, June 6.** Choose a morning, afternoon, or full-day shift.
  - *Full-day:* We'll provide lunch!
  - *Half-day:* You'll receive a free Garden Gate Tour admission ticket.
  - *Bonus:* All Saturday volunteers are invited to an exclusive "**Sneak Peek**" tour on **Friday, June 5.**
- **Prep Crew:** Help us get the gardens tour-ready! Various shifts and locations are available in the weeks leading up to the event.

Interested? Please [email Lynne Bell](#) with your availability.

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## **WCMG TV Stars!**



**WCMGs Caleb Israel (left) and Nicholas Sammer** discuss spring garden tips with KFSM "5News This Morning" co-anchors Tiffany Lee (far right) and Jo Ellison. *Photo by Kelly Chaney.*

Caleb Israel and Nicholas Sammer appeared on KFSM on March 11 for both the 7:45 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. segments. They were also part of a TikTok post for the TV station. They shared information about spring planting best practices, how to get free soil tests from the Extension Service, and how to get answers by contacting WCMG's "Ask a Master" volunteers. The Extension Service phone number was displayed on screen during the interview!

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## Helping Out at FPL



**Fayetteville Public Library (FPL) staff and WCMGs team up to prep the library's raised beds for plantings of herbs and flowers.** From left: FPL librarian Melissa Ewing, WCMG Lynette Terrell, WCMG Kelly Chaney, FPL chef Amon Easley, FPL librarian Nicole Norelli, FPL librarian Forrest Beck (kneeling in front). *Photo courtesy Nicole Norelli/Fayetteville Public Library.*

WCMG's Community Outreach Committee (chaired by Kelly Chaney) recently responded to a request from the Fayetteville Public Library to help refresh the raised beds in "The Glade" area of the library campus. Old plants were removed, and new straw and soil were added. Later in the spring, more soil will be added, and herbs and flowers will be planted to be used by the library for cooking classes and by Handshake, the restaurant located at the library.

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## 2026 Garden Gate Tour Update

**JUDY SMITH**

Our 2026 Garden Gate Tour is Saturday, June 6, 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., rain or shine, and features seven Fayetteville gardens plus our projects at the Cooperative Extension Service Office. Tickets for \$20 will go on sale in mid-April with a credit card on the [Garden Gate Tour](#) webpage through June 6 and with cash or check at the Extension Office, 2536 N. McConnell Drive, Fayetteville, on June 4, 3:00–5:00 p.m.; June 5, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m.; and June 6, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m.

Until the tour, each month in the *Garden Thyme* we will feature two gardens that are on the tour, so you can get a sneak peek into what awaits us on tour day.

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**The "O-Fish-All" Oasis, one of the locations on the 2026 Garden Gate Tour.**

*Photo courtesy of the homeowners.*

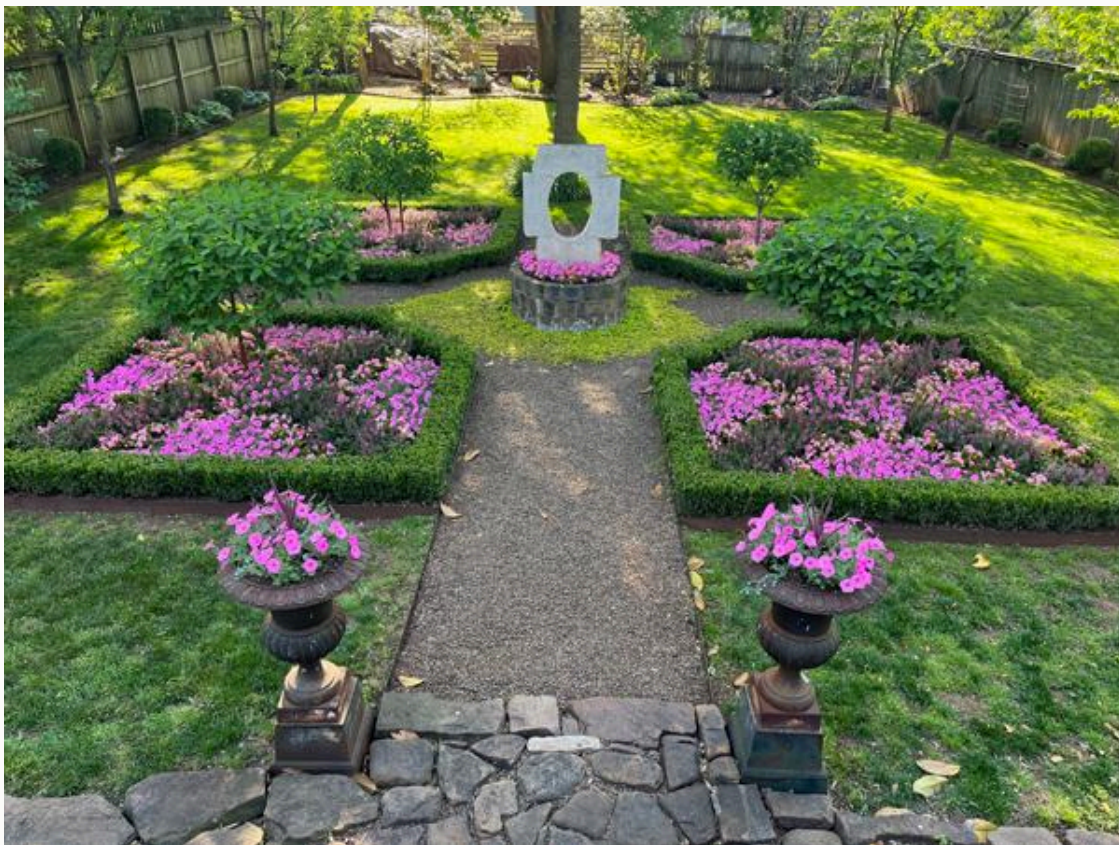
**The "O-Fish-All" Oasis** owners have enjoyed their urban oasis in the wonderful Wilson Park neighborhood for the last eleven years. With four children and seven grandchildren all living within two blocks of each other, it was important to create an outdoor area with personal, serene, and relaxing details for all ages to enjoy.

They describe their gardens as an eclectic, compact, and verdant small space. The area prioritizes the views from chairs on the wrap-around porch, where so much family time is spent. With Wilson Park only a block away, the family chose to emphasize plants and flowers over playground equipment.

Adding to what was existing, they used familiar, hardy plants to create a more "grounded" and sustainable sanctuary. The garden is a masterclass in using reliable favorites to create a sense of calm. It leans on soft textures (lamb's ears) and nostalgic scents (lilacs) to turn a simple yard into a secluded escape.

Large clusters of hydrangeas provide cloud-like blooms in the summer, while hostas fill the shady corners and stone wells. The crape myrtle provides a centerpiece to the garden and welcomes a variety of bird friends. Native coneflowers and black-eyed Susans add pops of cheerful yellow, attracting butterflies and bees that add a hum to the "O-Fish-All" Oasis.

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**A Window Without Walls, one of the locations on the 2026 Garden Gate Tour.**

*Photo courtesy of the homeowners.*

**A Window Without Walls** is an extension of the owners' home and lifestyle. Inspiration comes from the French gardens of the Loire Valley. The garden path on the south side is an experiment with perennials in sun and shade. French garden antiques are tucked in here and there that recall various adventures in France—a nineteenth-century iron pump with a gargoyle spout, a hand-carved stone fragment adorned with pomegranates, garden tiles from a French convent, a carved stone chapel from Normandy. Haphazard planting along the path leads to the formal French parterre garden, a “window without walls.” Miniature manicured boxwoods define the four parterres filled with colorful annuals that change every year. The stone window in the center came from a manor house in Normandy and is the lighted centerpiece of the garden.

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## Meet the Trainees

**LYNETTE TERRELL**

### **Katie Altland**

I've lived in Lincoln on and off since 2019, when I moved here to complete my MBA at the University of Arkansas. What began as a temporary chapter quickly became home, rooted in both family history and a growing love for Northwest Arkansas.

My love of gardening comes honestly—I've been blessed with a green thumb passed down through the women in my family. I live in Great Aunt Ruth's home, just next door to Granny's house. In between the two houses, Granny had a beautiful rose garden that she cared for with incredible patience and pride. Today, only two of those original roses remain, and I'm doing my best to coax

them back to their former glory. My mother—now a Master Gardener in Oregon with a beautiful rose garden of her own—is always generous with advice and ideas for my flower beds.

While flowers will always have my heart, vegetable gardening has been steadily winning me over thanks to the Lincoln Community Garden. There's something special about growing food alongside neighbors and giving away all the produce to our community.

Outside the garden, I love cooking and experimenting with new recipes or trying new restaurants. The only rule in my kitchen: cilantro and rosemary are to be avoided.



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### **Marlene Craig**

My love for gardening perhaps began with my mother. I grew up in the city, in New Jersey, across the Hudson River from Manhattan (light years away from Arkansas). We lived downstairs from my aunt and uncle in a rowhouse connected to all the other rowhouses on the block. Out the front door was concrete, but we had a small backyard, and my mom was able to cram quite a few lovely flowering plants in there.

After graduating from Rutgers University, I would have houseplants and a small vegetable garden no matter where I lived.



When I met my husband, we moved to northeast Oklahoma and bought a house. Finally, I had lots of room to do as I pleased, but also had lots to learn, with a different soil, different weather, topography, native plants, etc. These were the pre-internet days, so I learned as much as I could from the *Mother Earth News*, publications from Rodale Press, the neighbors, and just walking the property observing and listening, in between raising two children.

In 2006, we bought property south of Fayetteville between Greenland and West Fork and built a house. The learning process began again (and is still ongoing), but this time there is so much more information at our fingertips! I am building pollinator-friendly flower beds filled with perennials and native plants. I love the challenge of planting for blooms in each month, with different colors, textures, heights, and bloom times. I also love being outside on a warm morning with my hands in the soil, listening to the birds sing. There is no better place to be!

When not outside gardening (which isn't often), you'll find me on the couch reading with my two little dachshund babies, cooking up something inviting, walking on the Razorback Greenway, or traveling.

I can't wait to improve and build on my gardening knowledge, with all the resources the Master Gardener program has to offer, plus working on-site and exchanging ideas with all of our fellow Master Gardeners.

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### **Amber Stewart**

Hello! My name is Amber Stewart. I've been married to Evan for over 17 years, and we have two sons, ages 11 and 8, and a very sweet golden retriever. We live in Fayetteville and are so thankful to call Northwest Arkansas home.



I love to cook and love to make things with depth of flavor. My cooking journey led me to growing lots of herbs in pots to support my flavor profile ingredient needs. I've also always loved to grow flowers in pots. The last 5 years, however, my love for indoor plants and outdoors plants has definitely expanded. We moved to a house with more windows, which allowed me to expand my indoor plant selections. Our backyard has lots of flower beds that have increased my curiosity and depth.

My grandparents had acres of gardens in Scranton, Arkansas, when I was growing up. My grandparents obviously modeled hard work and love of nature, but I do wish that I could have learned more from them. The sweet memories of walking down the garden paths have definitely led me to join Master Gardeners. My mother-in-law is also a Master Gardener in Baxter County. I have learned much from her.

I'm also an avid reader (especially non-fiction), and I love to travel. Last spring break, our family, including my in-laws, was able to travel to Ecuador and the Galapagos Islands. We were able to bird and see lots of beautiful fauna.

I have a master's in social work degree from the University of Arkansas, and I worked as a mental health therapist with children before quitting to stay home with our boys. I have a passion for attachment and child development and justice. I am currently working with a free legal aid clinic that is held once a month at Genesis Church.

My husband and I have also recently bought a franchise called Water Babies NWA. We will provide swimming lessons for babies, toddlers, and children. I have been working on getting my lifeguard certification training as well.

I am very excited to be part of the Master Gardeners and look forward to all of the learning and training for years to come 😊.

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### **Robert White**

Hello, I'm Robert White.

My first love of gardening started with my grandmother, who managed to grow a lot of food in her yard. She always had corn, peas, squash, peaches, pecans, figs, and other delights. She was a wonderful cook as well. Her garden included butterbean tents, creeping compost, and corn from seeds that had spent time on the International Space Station.



Later, I married a girl who was also interested in vegetable gardening, and we started with a couple of raised beds. Patricia and I have learned a few garden tricks in our 44 years of marriage and have gardened in multiple locations in several states. We have also raised three of our own children and fostered a few more along the way.

My career in the food industry brought us to Springdale about 25 years ago, and we found an acre of ground to indulge our gardening habit. Since the beginning of the 21st century, we have branched out into more ornamental gardening, although our vegetable garden is still quite productive. In 2021, we added a small greenhouse for the purpose of starting garden plants early in spring. It turned out to be good for other purposes as well.

A few years back, I retired from my “day job” to free up time for things like gardening, bicycling, traveling, playing with my grandchildren, and volunteering. At about that time, we needed advice on berries we were growing and Washington County Extension Agent Colin Massey came out to our place. He mentioned the Master Gardener program, so I applied, and, after some time on the waiting list, here I am.

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## March Photo of the Month Contest: "Spring Bloomers"



**FIRST PLACE**

**"Peaches and Cream" by Delcina Cunico**

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**SECOND PLACE**

**"Spring Tulips at Garvan Woodland Gardens" by Colleen McCarthy**

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**THIRD PLACE**

**"One of Many" by Marguerite Abowitz**

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The April photo contest theme is "Flowering Trees/Shrubs." Deadline to enter is April 15. Contest details are available on the [Photo of the Month Competition](#) webpage. Questions? Email [wcmgphotos@gmail.com](mailto:wcmgphotos@gmail.com).

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## By the Numbers through March 15

MGs recording hours: 124

Hours on committee work: 819

Hours on projects: 1,325.5

Hours on education: 1,159

Non-sanctioned hours: 96.5

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## Gardening and Community Events

*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.*

**APRIL 1, 1:00 p.m. ALL ABOUT CHINQUAPINS.** Prairie Grove Battlefield State Park. Free. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 4, 9:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. HIKING WITH THE URBAN FORESTER.** Sponsored by City of Fayetteville. Meet at Lake Fayetteville parking lot, 4607 N. Crossover Road. Free; registration required. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 4, 12:00–4:00 p.m. VEGETABLE FERMENTATION WORKSHOP.** Ozark Natural Science Center@Kessler Mountain, 1725 Smoke House Trail, Fayetteville. \$40. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 4, 1:30–3:00 p.m. A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO NATIVE PLANT LANDSCAPING.** Sponsored by Wild Ones Ozark Chapter. Fayetteville Public Library Walker Community Room. Free. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 9, 10:30–12:30 a.m. SPRING TINY VASES AND WREATHS.** Presented by WCMG Susan Caple Gardner. Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI), Fayetteville. \$45 OLLI member/\$60 non-member. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 11, 10:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. WASTE TO WONDER: ECO-GARDENING WORKSHOP.** Devil's Den State Park. \$15. Registration required by April 8. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 11, 2:30–4:30 p.m. PLANT CARE 101.** Presented by Lindsey Neely, owner of Pink Fern. Southern Food Company, 3575 W. Wedington Drive, Fayetteville. \$35. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 12, 11:00 a.m.–12:00 p.m. WILDFLOWER WONDER HIKE.** Devil's Den State Park. Free. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 13–17. DR. COMPTON NATIVE TREE & PLANT SALE.** Sponsored by Peel Compton Foundation. Compton Gardens Maintenance Office, 407 NE B Street, Bentonville. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 13, 6:30–7:30 p.m. BUTTERFLY GARDENING.** Presented by WCMG and NWA Master Naturalist Kitty Sanders. Free. Springdale Public Library, 405 S. Pleasant Street. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 11, 8:40–11:00 a.m. EARTH DAY EPHEMERALS WILDFLOWER WALK.** Presented by Ozark Natural Science Center @Lake Fayetteville. 599 E. Lakeview Drive, Springdale. Suggested donation \$10/adult. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 18, 10:00–11:30 a.m. INVASIVE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP.** Sponsored by Peel Compton Foundation. Osage Park, 700 SW 16th Street, Bentonville. \$20. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 18, 1:00–4:00 p.m. BOTANICAL SHADOW BOXES WITH JOHN FORD.** Ozark Folkways, 22733 N. Highway 71, Winslow. \$25. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 21, 6:00–7:30 p.m. "GIMME GREEN" & "BEAVERS WITHOUT BORDERS" FILM SCREENINGS.** Fayetteville Public Library Walker Community Room. Free. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 22, 9:00 a.m.–5:00 p.m. EARTH DAY CELEBRATION.** Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO), Fayetteville. Free for BGO members; \$7 for nonmembers. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 23, 6:00–7:30 p.m. "KISS THE GROUND" FILM SCREENING.** Fayetteville Public Library Walker Community Room. Free. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 28, 12:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: EDAMAME.** Zoom program by UADA extension agents. Free. [Registration information.](#)

**APRIL 24, 5:00–8:00 p.m. BGO MEMBERS-ONLY PLANT SALE.** Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, Fayetteville. [For more information.](#)

**APRIL 25, 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. BGO PLANT SALE.** Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, Fayetteville. Free; includes free admission to BGO. [For more information.](#)

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# 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.

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[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

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*Banner photo of thyme courtesy Lucy Meskill/flickr*



**WCMG Facebook Group**  
(private)



**WCMG Facebook Page**  
(public)



**WCMG Instagram**



**WCMG Website**



**WCEX Website**

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