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Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • May 2026

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MAY MEETING

Veterans Healing Harvest Garden Tour

STEVE SHEARMAN

Vice President



If you haven't yet visited the Veterans Healing Harvest Garden on the VA campus (1100 N. College Avenue, Fayetteville), this is the perfect opportunity.

This remarkable garden is a powerful example of what's possible when civic and government partners come together. What began in 2015 with just three raised beds has grown into a nationally recognized therapeutic garden featuring 16 beds, pollinator areas, accessible walkways, seating, irrigation, lighting, and more. To date, the garden has produced over 1,200 pounds of fresh food for food-insecure veterans while also serving as a place of healing and connection.

Join us on Tuesday, May 5, at 6:30 p.m. for the WCMG May monthly meeting, hosted by the Master Gardeners who volunteer at the site. We'll gather outdoors on the beautiful, historic VA grounds, just off the elliptical drive near the "Avenue of Flags" in front of Building 1.

The evening will begin promptly at 6:30 p.m. on the grassy area behind the Garden. We'll hear from Steve Brizzi, a veteran Master Gardener whose leadership helped transform this project into a model for veteran wellness and was recently recognized as the 2026 WCMG Project of the Year. After brief remarks, we will break into smaller groups for guided tours inside the garden.

Handicap-accessible parking is available in Lot "I" (on the map, colored green), 20 feet from the Garden entrance. Volunteers will be stationed at the Garden and parking entrances to provide directions and assist those who need handicap assistance entering the Garden. Please note: Restrooms are in nearby buildings and require a short walk across the grass to access.

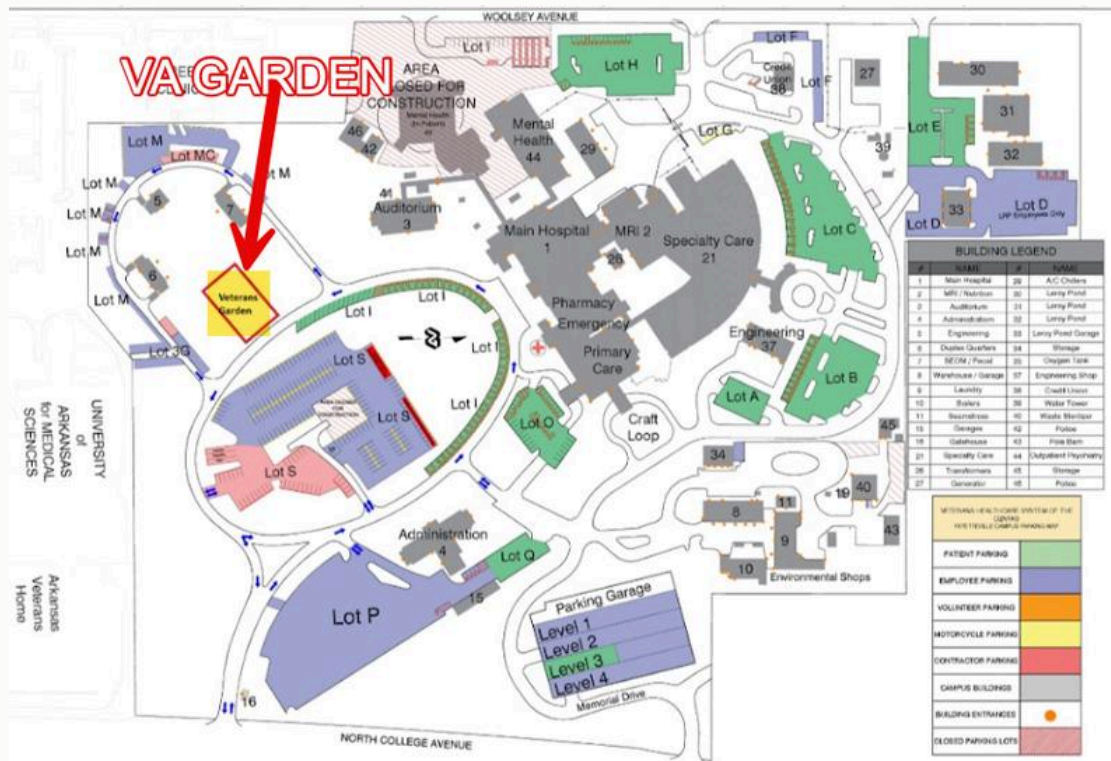
We expect to wrap up by 8:00 p.m.

What to bring:

- Your own lawn chair(s)
- Comfortable walking shoes

- Light coat or jacket—it gets windy on the hill.

A map of the VA grounds is included below, with the garden highlighted in yellow. [Click here to view an enlarged version of the map.](#)



Taking Care of Business

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

April 2026 Business Meeting Minutes

March 2026 Treasurer's Report

From Your President

PAM BUTLER

Many of us remember the storm of May 18, 2025, with a mixture of awe and dismay. The freak hailstorm seemed endless, but in actuality only lasted 20 minutes. As we watched the hail pile up, we were disbelieving and disheartened at the destruction we witnessed. The storm, which was unlike anything we had ever seen, left behind piles of hail and broken and battered trees and plants. The damage to houses and vehicles was indescribable.

When it was over, and we stepped outside, the ground was covered with hail pellets. What had been green grass, now appeared to be covered with snow. The tree trunks and limbs were pitted with severe hail damage. The green leafy tree canopies now were tattered and torn. Our



beautiful vegetable garden, plants, and flowers were demolished to ground level and covered with inches of hail. All the roofs in our neighborhood sustained enough damage to warrant a replacement. A few days later when the hail had melted, we found birds that had been killed in the hailstorm.

Our roof was replaced while we waited patiently to see if the trees and plants would recover. At that time, we had no idea which plants would survive. The non-native plants did not come back, while our native perennials bounced back within a few weeks. The native perennials grew back, bloomed, and forgivingly flourished as if we had cut them back on purpose. Coneflowers, daisies, bee balm, and milkweed were soon supplying butterflies and bees with nectar and pollen.

It was necessary to replant our vegetables and annuals, and we enjoyed our later-than-usual flowers and crops. Our trees were damaged severely on the western side, due to the hail coming in from the west and blowing sideways into the trunks and branches with gale force winds. The trees did not ever regain their original shape and appeared one-sided. We trimmed broken limbs and pruned as best we could.

As we anxiously awaited spring this year to see how our trees and plants would recover from the hailstorm of the century, these battered and bruised plants and trees were quietly regaining strength and rebounding from the storm. The beaten-up bark of our small new native pawpaw and witch hazel trees caused them to die back to the roots, and we were ready to replace them. However, as spring arrived early this year, they are sending up green shoots and are putting back out from their roots. So, of course, we'll give them another year to grow.

We have discovered from actual experience that native plants are tough enough to survive six inches of hail in May. We often tell others about the hardiness of natives and the recoverability of perennials. Now we have some additional information to share. We can absolutely say, without a doubt, that our native perennial plants are strong and resilient enough to take whatever weather comes their way.

Through this storm, we learned patience as we waited to see what plants survived. We watched as our beloved hardy garden favorites pushed up new leaves from the roots, grew, and bloomed. These natives showed resilience and hardiness through weather that demolished lesser plants. It seems that Master Gardeners are very much like our native perennials. We're strong and resilient survivors of life's many storms. We weather the uncertainties of life and bounce back to become better than we were. We, like our native plants, rely on our inner resilience to keep us thriving while bending to the winds of life and becoming stronger because of the storm.

May 2025 Hailstorm in Pam's Garden



Spring 2026 in Pam's Garden



By the Numbers

February 15, 2026

of MGs reporting: 106

Sanctioned hours for committee work: 539

Sanctioned hours for project work: 567.25

Total sanctioned hours: 1106.25

Non-sanctioned hours: 27.5

Education hours: 730.5

March 15, 2026

of MGs reporting: 123

Sanctioned hours for committee work: 819

Sanctioned hours for project work: 1325.5

Total sanctioned hours: 2144.5

Non-sanctioned hours: 96.5

Education hours: 1159

April 15, 2026

of MGs reporting: 135

Sanctioned hours for committee work: 993.75

Sanctioned hours for project work: 2864.25

Total sanctioned hours: 3858

Non-sanctioned hours: 192

Education hours: 1831.5

A SMALL HABIT THAT MAKES A BIG DIFFERENCE

STEVE SHEARMAN

Vice President

Dear Washington County Master Gardeners,

Thank you for the time, energy, and care you give to our community. Every plant tended, every question answered, and every hour volunteered matters—and so does recording those hours.

Many of you already make it a habit to log your hours the same day. That simple step helps keep everything running smoothly. Others wait a few days, weeks, or longer—which is completely understandable in the flow of busy lives. Still, timely reporting is more important than it might seem.

When hours are entered regularly, they become more than a record—they become a real-time picture of our organization's health. Accurate daily and weekly reporting helps the Board and Sanctioned Project leaders see what's working and what may need attention. It tells us whether trainees are finding their way into projects, whether our programs are engaging, and whether our projects are getting the support they need.

Without up-to-date information, it's much harder to:

- Understand participation trends
- Identify gaps in volunteer support
- Evaluate training and communication effectiveness
- Ensure projects are well-staffed and thriving

On a personal level, entering your hours promptly also helps you keep an accurate record of your own contributions—something to be proud of and reflect on throughout the year.

The bottom line is simple: timely reporting helps WCMG stay strong, responsive, and effective for both our volunteers and our community.

If you can, please make it a habit to enter your volunteer and training hours the same day—or as soon as possible after your activity. It's a small action with a big impact.

Thank you for all that you do to make Washington County greener and stronger.

Warmly,
Steve

2026 Garden Gate Tour: So Much to Talk About!



Our 2026 Garden Gate Tour is Saturday, June 6, 9:00 to 4:00, rain or shine and features seven Fayetteville gardens plus our projects at the Cooperative Extension Service Office. Tickets for \$20 are on sale with credit card at the [Garden Gate Tour webpage](#) through June 6 and with cash or check at the Extension Office 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.

TOUR VOLUNTEER REMINDERS

LYNNE BELL

Garden Gate Tour Committee

Our next volunteer training session is Monday, June 1, 5:30– 6:30 p.m. (To get a complimentary ticket for tour day, you must attend one of the training meetings).

We are still seeking volunteers to help our hosts prepare their beautiful gardens for the upcoming tour! Your hands-on help is greatly appreciated. To join us, [please click here to sign up](#) or text Lynne Bell at 479-601-5752.

EDUCATION FUN AT THE TOUR

RUTHANNE HILL

Garden Gate Tour Committee

While the gardens and plants are undoubtedly the star of our annual Garden Gate Tour, education has always been a vital part of the day. Garden education showcases the Master Gardener program and helps the Cooperative Extension Service fulfill its mission to the community. The tour committee is excited to present 12 education stations at the 2026 event.

The Washington County Extension Office will be "Education Central" this year, packed with stations indoors and out. Inside, Extension Staff is filling the conference room with a "Round Robin" of activities that include soil testing, water quality, food preservation and more! Bring the lid to your canner and they'll test the seal. Ticket holders who make their way to every station in the conference room may enter to win a rain barrel or a rain gauge. In the conference room, volunteers will be teaching how to exhibit flowers and vegetables at the County Fair. Volunteers from the **Wings on the Edge** will explain soil box blocking then let participants try using a soil blocking tool. The **Compost Facility** will be open with volunteers on site ready to answer questions about composting. In the South parking lot, Master Gardener volunteers will be building two raised garden beds and visitors can lend a hand. Ticket holders who'd like to have one of the beds can enter a drawing to win one. Winners will be contacted at the end of the day and take their new garden bed home Saturday evening or Sunday.

Ask a Master will be at one of the home gardens! Every gardener has questions so volunteers from Ask a Master will be ready to answer them. Finally, back by popular demand, **the Northwest Arkansas Beekeepers Association will be at one of the home gardens** to talk about beekeeping and the importance of bees in general.

Educational opportunities abound at the 2026 Garden Gate Tour for gardeners at every level and every interest. Add to that the chance to win garden related items and even a new raised garden bed, and those who attend are in for a fabulous day.

GARDEN HIGHLIGHTS

JUDY SMITH



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

Photo courtesy of the homeowner.

Fresh Start lives up to its name! The homeowner purchased this, his first home, in 2025. He fell in love with this special place because of its proximity to Wilson Park, the tree-filled lot, and the unique design not seen in today's newly built homes.

One thing that was missing was landscaping. There were amazing trees and a few misplaced shrubs, but there was not much thought put into the front and back yard. A call to his mom (a Master Gardener) and the landscape design process began—a fresh start.

After removing plants, redrawing the beds, doing a soil test with the Washington County Extension Office, adding amendments, selecting over 150 plants, placing and planting the new plants, the garden was moving in the right direction. The new landscape, although very young, adds so much to the character of the home. Shade gardens feature a variety of ferns, heucheras, hostas, and astilbes so there is always something to enjoy. The backyard continues shade gardening with an added feature of a hugelkultur bed. There is a little sun on the east side for a variety of native plants. With a new landscape, remember, "First year they sleep, second year they creep, third year they leap."



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

Photo courtesy of the homeowners.

Jardin Aceituna ("Olive Garden" in Spanish) arose from a dream. The homeowners mused, "What if we could shield ourselves from the road and create natural paradise for the bees and butterflies, the birds and bunnies, and of course, people." From basic ten years ago to beautiful today, Jardin Aceituna is proof that any urban/suburban yard can become a life-filled space of color and texture. Relying on both native and non-native plants, the owners created a deer-proof enclosed vegetable garden, then moved on to further reduce lawn in the backyard by planting a wildscape for fireflies. After seeing how inspiring this bit of variety was not only to adults, but also to children at play, the couple killed all the lawn east of the sidewalk and replaced it with a native prairie—which has vigorously persisted, despite complaints from a few neighbors and the City of Fayetteville. Taking the rabbit's-eye view philosophy, the garden aims to fill all available space with plants, using "green mulch" as ground cover, opting for rhizomatous and re-seeding perennials, and over-seeding with colorful annuals for spontaneous drifts that change year to year.

Meet the Trainees

LYNETTE TERRELL

Noel Morris

As I have completed the course classwork, I truly feel like I know just enough to be dangerous at this point.

My first gardening experience was in Harrison, Arkansas, my hometown, when I talked my dad into approaching the man that owned a vacant lot next to our home about making a garden. So, Dad hired a man with a horse and plow to turn the field. Needless to say, I learned quickly that planting

was a lot more fun than keeping the weeds at bay. Many years later, I still have the same issue. When Sandy and I first moved to the "country" we had a large garden and were looking for people that wanted squash.

Over the years, I have developed a brown thumb, so I got interested in Master Gardeners because I am tired of killing flowers and plants. I have learned so much already and in fact, I mentioned to my son who is just "down the hill," that we should look into bees. My birthday was last week and they got me two hives of bees to be picked up in May. So now I am in the process of obtaining the actual hives and other equipment we will need as I try to keep out of the way of their stingers. We will at least have some pollinators. I hope there will be things for them to work on.



I have been involved in Springdale Rotary for over 30 years, having held most all of the positions of leadership. More than 20 years ago, we started a wheelchair project and have made a trip each year to give the chairs to children and adults that do not have mobility. Life changing event! In fact, we just returned from Mexico and worked there with a center for disabled children.

I am looking forward to being as active as an old guy can be. (I have retired twice). Maybe it will stick this time.

April Photo of the Month Contest: "Flowering Trees/Shrubs"



FIRST PLACE

"Welcome Spring" by Marguerite Abowitz



SECOND PLACE
"Singing in the Spring" by Michael Whitehead



THIRD PLACE
"The Fragrance of Joy and Love" by Carole Ball

The May photo contest theme is "Critters in the Garden." Deadline to enter is May 15. Contest details are available on the [Photo of the Month Competition](#) webpage. Questions? Email wcmgphotos@gmail.com.

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.

May 1, 8:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. and May 2, 8:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m. BENTON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE. 2602 SW D Street, Bentonville. [For more information.](#)

May 1, 5:00–8:00 p.m. and May 2, 8:30 a.m.–12:00 p.m. MADISON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE. Watson Primary School, 314 N. Gaskill Street, Huntsville. [For more information.](#)

May 1, 6:00 p.m. MAY KITCHEN TABLE DINNER. Apple Seeds Inc., Fayetteville. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 2, 8:40–11:00 a.m. WANDERING THROUGH WILDFLOWERS HIKE. Ozark Natural Science Center, 1905 Madison 1305, Huntsville. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 2, 9:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. PLANTAPALOOZA PLANT SALE. Tulsa Garden Center at Woodward Park. [For more information.](#)

May 2, 10:00 a.m. PLANT PROPAGATION WORKSHOP. The Learning Fields at Chaffee Crossing, Fort Smith. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 2, 10:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. SPRING NATIVE PLANT SALE. By Wild Ones Ozark Chapter. GoatLab Brewery, Lowell. [For more information.](#)

May 2, 1:30–2:30 p.m. WILDFLOWER HIKE. Hobbs State Park, Rogers. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 7, 10:00 a.m. COMPANION CROPS FOR HOME GARDENING. With Sebastian County Extension Agent Zeb Gattis. The Fields at Chaffee Crossing, Fort Smith. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 7, 12:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: STRAWBERRIES. Zoom program by UADA extension agents. Free. [Registration information.](#)

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May 7, 6:00 p.m. TERRARIUM WORKSHOP. By Pink Fern. Walton Arts Center, Fayetteville. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 9, 9:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. MADISON COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS PLANT SALE. Kingston Square, Kingston. [For more information.](#)

May 9, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. "TULSA HEART & SOIL" 75th ANNUAL GARDEN TOUR. Sponsored by the Tulsa Garden Club. \$. [For more information.](#)

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May 9, 11:00 a.m.–2:00 p.m. RAIN GARDEN DESIGN WORKSHOP. By Illinois River Watershed Partnership and Beaver Watershed Alliance. Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center, Fayetteville. Free. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 14, 5:30–7:00 p.m. PEEL IN BLOOM: A FLORAL EVENING FOR MOM. Learn about the art of floral arranging. Peel Museum and Botanical Garden, Bentonville. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 14, 6:00–7:30 p.m. PLANT CARE 101. Pink Fern, Fayetteville. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 15, 10:00 a.m. LAWN TURF AND NATIVE GRASSES WORKSHOP. With Sebastian County Extension Agent Zeb Gattis. The Fields at Chaffee Crossing, Fort Smith. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 16–17. ORCHID KICKS ON ROUTE 66. Tulsa Orchid Society Show and Sale. Tulsa Garden Center at Woodward Park. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 16–17. 33rd ANNUAL WILDLIFE HABITAT GARDEN TOUR AND PLANT SALE. Sponsored by the Tulsa Audubon Society. \$. [For more information.](#)

May 16, 9:00–11:00 a.m. NATIVE GARDEN TOUR: DOWNTOWN ROGERS. With NWA Master Naturalist Phyllis Stair. Hosted by Wild Ones Ozark Chapter. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 19, 5:00–8:30 p.m. CHEFS IN THE GARDEN. Botanical Garden of the Ozarks. \$. Registration required. [For more information.](#)

May 23, 3:00–4:00 p.m. WHAT'S BLOOMING AT THE BATTLEFIELD? Guided plant ID hike. Prairie Grove Battlefield Historic State Park. Free. [For more information.](#)

May 24, 1:00–1:45 p.m. FUNGUS AMONG US HIKE. Devil's Den State Park. Free. [For more 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.

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