



Washington County Master Gardeners Newsletter • September 2026

IMPORTANT REMINDERS

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SEPTEMBER MEETING

I Planted It. It Grew! Now What Do I Do?

We hope to see you at our next WCMG monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 1, at 6:30 p.m. at the Washington County Extension Office. Our guest speaker is WCMG Mary Loftus.

We have all been there: your garden is producing faster than you can eat, leaving you wondering, "It grew—now what do I do?" Join us for the Washington County Master Gardeners monthly membership meeting to discover the answers!

Mary Loftus knows exactly what to do and how to do it. She is a retired NICU nurse, lifelong gardener, farmer, and dedicated home food preservation educator. As a Lifetime member of Washington County Master Gardeners (Class of 2002) and a Certified Master Canner, Mary brings decades of trusted expertise to our community.

Her impressive background includes serving as superintendent of the Youth Home Economics Food Preservation Division at the Washington County Fair, acting



as an official fair judge, and instructing the Fair Judging School.

Alongside her family, Mary owns and operates [Mashie Farms](#). She is deeply passionate about empowering communities through safe, research-based home food preservation. Mary's ultimate philosophy? *"Safely canned foods are love in a mason jar."* Come learn!

Taking Care of Business

We will vote on these items at our September 1 monthly business meeting.

August 2026 Business Meeting
Minutes

July 2026 Treasurer's Report

From Your President

PAM BUTLER

Fall Flowers for Pollinators' Pleasure

Kitty's program about monarch migration last month started me wondering if we have nectar plants in our garden here at the end of August. It seems questionable since we've had such high temperatures and so little rain at our house. I walked around our yard taking photos of our flowers to include in my message this month. The plants I found still blooming were more numerous than I had imagined. The blooms are smaller and fewer on many of them compared to earlier when we had more abundant rain.



I was pleasantly surprised to see how many golden colored flowers we have blooming. They seem to give some happiness to the browns and greens. The caterpillars are munching away on our rue, spicebush, passion vine, milkweed, parsley, and pipevine plants. These plants contribute to the greenery in our garden.

Some plants love the heat and thrive in the sun and the 100° weather, while others fade away and die. We have several asters which aren't blooming yet and goldenrods with buds that are not quite opened, so I feel confident we'll still have bloomers for the monarchs as they migrate through.

We have watered our plants several times a week to keep them growing and blooming. But it's just not quite the same as a good soaking rain with cooler temperatures and clouds to give some much-needed shade. And, as I'm sure you know, the potted plants need daily watering.

The flowers in our garden come from a wide variety of plants including some cultivars, but most are natives. Some of these are preferred by pollinators, and some are ignored by pollinators. Some are filled with tiny bees and skippers. Some are more attractive to larger butterflies and bees. It's important to have a mix of sizes, shapes, and colors to attract a wide variety of pollinators.

I am happy with the number and variety of flowers I found in my walk through our garden. Hopefully, with the plants which are currently flowering and the expected blooms from the asters

and the goldenrods, we'll still have plenty of nectar for the migrating butterflies to continue with their journey and pollen for the native bees to continue with their pollinating duties!

Scenes from Pam's Garden



Garden Phlox



Orange Coneflower



Zinnia and Black-eyed Susan



Hoary Skullcap and Primrose

Nominating Committee chair

The WCMG Nominating Committee, consisting of Alfi Anderson, Doris Cassidy, and Darielle James, is pleased to present the 2027 Executive Committee slate of nominees. After interviewing and carefully evaluating each candidate, the committee unanimously selected a slate of dedicated volunteers who will provide strong, collaborative leadership for our program. The proposed slate has also been approved by the Executive Committee.

Additional nominations will be accepted in writing through August 28. No nominations will be accepted after that date to allow time to prepare the ballot for the election at the **September 1 membership meeting**. Written nominations should be emailed to [Alfi Anderson](#).

The Nominating Committee thanks each nominee for their willingness to serve and encourages all members to participate in the election.

The Nominees

Steve Shearman
President



Kristi Campbell
Vice President



Jan Lefler
Secretary



Caleb Israel
Treasurer



Calinda Green
Assistant Treasurer



Kim Coslett
Member at Large



Susie McKinney



Michael Whitehead



Pam Butler

Awards Nominations Due Before October 15

LIZ HALE and JAN LEFLER

Awards Committee co-chairs

All Washington County Master Gardeners are encouraged to nominate individuals and projects for 2026 award recognition. Award nomination forms and guidelines are found in the Member Portal section of our [WCMG website](#). Please review the document listing all prior winners for WCMGs who qualify for nomination as well as other qualifying details.

Give yourself time to read the nomination criteria, gather information and lots of action images, draft the nomination, check it for errors and word counts, etc., to ensure your nomination qualifies.

WCMG Awards Categories

- Master Gardener of the Year
- Rookie of the Year
- Mimi Cox Mentor of the Year
- Project of the Year
- Excellence in Education Project of the Year
- Individual Friend of Master Gardeners
- Organization or Business Friend of Master Gardeners
- Joyce Mendenhall "Yes, I Can" Award

Questions? Email [Jan Lefler](#) or [Liz Hale](#). Let's ensure Washington County Master Gardeners are represented and recognized.

Welcome to Luther George Park!

KATHRYN BIRKHEAD

Project chair



Aerial view of Luther George Park in downtown Springdale. *Photo courtesy of the Walton Family Foundation.*

This newly-sanctioned project is in the heart of downtown Springdale. While Luther George Park has been around for decades, it's only in the past few years that it has been expanded and improved. Located at 300 Park Street, a block south of East Emma, Luther George features a unique pavilion for concerts and events, a skate park, a playground, and paved paths throughout the park, with flower beds everywhere you look. This park only has two full-time staff members, so they are delighted to have our help.

The focus in this park is on native plants, and there is one particular bed, the Ozark Bed, that is restricted to plants that are native to this area. There will also be a new bed soon. Master Naturalists have raised plants for a pollinator garden that they will install in the fall, and Master Gardeners will help care for it. Besides all that, the Monarch Flight Festival will be held here on September 19.



The "Ozark Bed" with the performance pavilion in the distance, two distinctive features at Luther George Park. *Photo by Kathryn Birkhead.*

Because the gardens have only been planted for two years, they are still very much a work in progress. Some beds are better established than others, so there's still a lot of open space to be filled in. Come join us! Our work is scheduled for Wednesdays from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., but please note that the extremely hot days we've had lately have caused us to vary our schedule. [Email Kathryn Birkhead](#) or call/text (479) 445-2163 if you'd like to learn more or be added to the mailing list.



Volunteer Hours Summary

STEVE SHEARMAN

Vice President

How about those volunteer hours! From July 15 through August 15, total volunteer hours for committees, sanctioned and non-sanctioned projects, and educational hours increased by an impressive **30%**.

That growth is especially remarkable considering the summer heat. With average daily highs above 95°F in July and reaching more than 100°F in August, we might have expected volunteer participation to decline. Instead, **sanctioned project hours increased by 22%**! Thank you to everyone who adjusted schedules, started earlier, and continued working to advance our mission.

We are pleased to welcome two new sanctioned projects that are now accumulating volunteer hours: **Drake Field Terminal** and **Luther George Park**.

Shout out to several teams that have recorded substantial increases during this reporting period:

- **Finance Committee** – 1,375% increase
- **Washington County Fair** sanctioned project – 443% increase
- **Nominating Committee** – 97% increase

Your dedication, flexibility, and willingness to serve— even during the hottest days of summer—are sincerely appreciated. Your efforts are visible, valued, and truly make a difference across Washington County.

2026 Total Cumulative Hours from July to August

- Committees: 2,291.7 (28% increase)
- Sanctioned projects: 9,239.5 (22% increase)
- Non-sanctioned projects: 535.25 (26% increase)
- Education: 5,205.75 (30% increase)

Meet the Trainees

LYNETTE TERRELL

Sharon Keen

Growing up in Florida, I spent countless hours helping my mother and grandmother tend their flower gardens. Those are some of my fondest memories. My mother always kept fresh-cut flowers on the dining room table, and today I continue that tradition by keeping a bud vase by my husband's chair and fresh flowers on our dining room table. Every bouquet reminds me of the women who first nurtured my love of gardening.

Five years ago, my husband and I moved from Sarasota, Florida, to Northwest Arkansas to be closer to our daughter and son-in-law. While I was excited about being near family, I quickly

realized that gardening here was going to be a whole new adventure. Different grasses, rocky soil, and four distinct seasons were a far cry from the gardening I had known in Florida.

Knowing how much I enjoyed working in the yard, my daughter encouraged me to enroll in the Washington County Master Gardener program. It turned out to be one of the best decisions I've ever made.

The Master Gardener program has taught me so much about gardening in Arkansas, but what has meant the most are the people. From my very first classes to volunteering at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks, I have been surrounded by knowledgeable, friendly people who are always willing to answer questions and share their experience. Every volunteer shift leaves me with new ideas, new knowledge, and gratitude for the friendships I've made through Washington County Master Gardeners.

One of the highlights of my Master Gardener journey has been discovering the importance of pollinators. After attending a butterfly workshop, I developed a new appreciation for bees and butterflies and began adding pollinator-friendly plants and watering stations to my flower beds. Watching my garden come alive with pollinators has been incredibly rewarding.

Living in Arkansas has also given me a new appreciation for the changing seasons. I never experienced four distinct seasons in Florida, and now I look forward to each one. Fall, especially, is breathtaking in Northwest Arkansas, and every season brings new beauty and new opportunities to learn.

I'm so thankful my daughter encouraged me to become a Master Gardener. The program has expanded my gardening knowledge, connected me with an amazing community of volunteers, and helped me discover the unique beauty of gardening in Northwest Arkansas. Most of all, it has reminded me that no matter where you plant your roots, a love of gardening—and the friendships it grows—can make anywhere feel like home.



Yi Liang

My journey of gardening is not very long, and I don't have much to brag about. I do not have memories of gardens of grandparents. All I can remember were several pots of plants, i.e. jasmine, purple heart, Christmas cactus, etc., in my parents' home in Beijing, on a south facing balcony on a high-rise building.

I fell in love with nature and gardens after our move to North America some 30 years ago. We frequently embark on hiking trails close by or national park adventures across the states. As I contemplated retirement, joining the Master Gardeners became a no-brainer.

I enjoy learning; gardening and nature are joyful to learn, and one can never be bored. I can't describe the magical feeling of the first season after burying hundreds of bulbs of crocus and



daffodils in November and waiting for the signs of sprouting in the spring. It's also interesting to notice that given different sun allowance and/or soil condition, the same plants could bloom in weeks apart or not bloom at all.

I have done many years of vegetable gardening, which allowed me so much appreciation for farmers who are at the mercy of not only the shivering and the sweat, but also the agony of seeing grazers mowing your garden and treating it as their own buffet, leaving the gardener sadly harvesting the "seconds" afterwards. But co-existing with grazers taught me resilience by exploring innovative ways of protecting and shielding—all in all, how to be smarter.

I enjoy working at Headquarters House and interacting with many dedicated and knowledgeable fellow gardeners. I look forward to learning more about all the intricacies of plants, of which many critters depend on and are equally depended upon.

August Photo of the Month Contest: "Native Gardens"



FIRST PLACE TIE

"Colorful Tapestry" by Marguerite Abowitz



FIRST PLACE TIE
"Cardinal Flower, Yum" by Kitty Sanders



SECOND PLACE

The September photo contest theme is "Cut flowers/arrangements from my garden." Deadline to enter is September 15. Contest details are available on the [Photo of the Month Competition](#) webpage. Questions? Email wcmgphotos@gmail.com.

Book Review

ANITA BUKEY

The Invention of Nature by Andrea Wulfs

Alexander von Humboldt, the most famous scientist of the 19th century, was born 257 years ago in Berlin to a wealthy Prussia family. Andrea Wulfs' biography of Humboldt, *The Invention of Nature*, gives readers a detailed account of his travels through three continents as he collected specimens of plants, animals, and rocks.

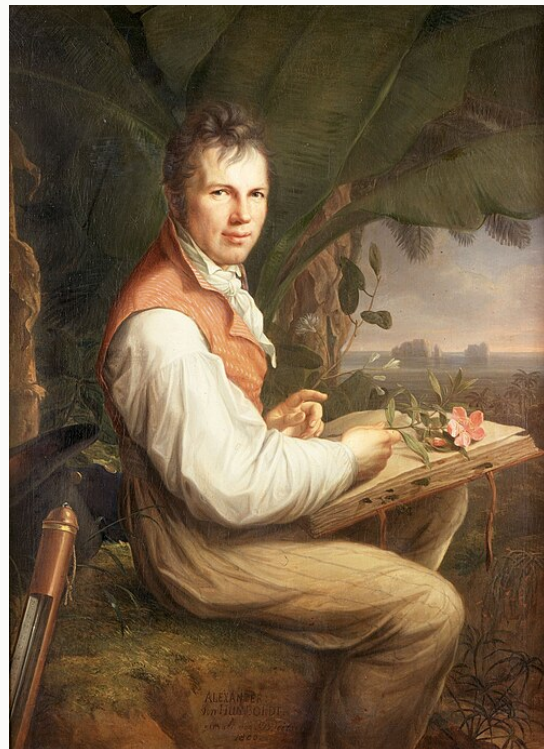
Small, frail, and sickly as a child with fits of loneliness and depression, Humboldt forced himself to learn three languages, and climb into inactive volcanoes and up mountains while dragging heavy instruments and equipment to measure his collections.

Comparison became his primary means of understanding nature. He did not plan to keep his specimens, but felt it was important to share them with other scientists. His real purpose was to discover how all the forces of nature were interrelated and intertwined. He saw nature as a global force, with corresponding climate zones across continents. He was the first to explain the dangers of deforestation and harmful human-induced climate change. He was the first to explain the fundamental functions of the forest for the ecosystem and the climate: the trees' ability to store water and to enrich the atmosphere with moisture.

During his travels, Humboldt discovered the idea of "keystone" species—those essential for an ecosystem—and he used them for comparison with other plants.

He assembled data from some 60,000 plant species, 6,000 which were new to European botanists. He needed these to make sense of nature as a unified whole. Again and again his thoughts returned to nature as a complex web of life, and also to man's place within it.

As much as he was forever connecting and relating everything in the natural world, Humboldt was one-dimensional in his personal life. He was driven, almost frantic, as he traveled from one country to another, eager to discover new forms of life.



With all of this information, Humboldt turned to writing essays and books explaining relationships between plants, climate, and geography.

The Invention of Nature is nearly 400 pages long, but Master Gardeners will not regret time spent reading this book.

Portrait of Alexander von Humboldt by Friedrich Georg Weitsch, 1806. [Courtesy Wikimedia Commons.](#)

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.

\$ = fee charged.

Sep. 1, 12:00–1:00 p.m. GROW YOUR OWN GROCERIES: FALL GREENS. Zoom program by UADA extension agents. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 6, 9:00 a.m. HIKING THROUGH THE CONSERVATION OF THE OZARK CHINQUAPIN TREE. Also on Sep. 28. Lake Fort Smith State Park, 15458 Shepherd Springs Road, Mountainburg. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 12, 9:00 a.m.–3:00 p.m. ARKANSAS INSECT FESTIVAL. Pauline Whitaker Animal Science Center, 1335 W. Knapp Drive, Fayetteville. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 13, 12:00–3:00 p.m. NATIVE PLANT AND POLLINATOR PARTY. Sponsored by Okies for Monarchs. Floyd Norris Park, 400 N. Muskogee Avenue, Tahlequah, OK. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 16, 6:00 p.m. FROM LAWN TO MEADOW. Webinar with Sara Weaner Cooper, owner of New Directions in the American Landscape. Sponsored by Ozark Wild Ones. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 19. MONARCH FLIGHT FESTIVAL. Luther George Park, 300 Park Street, Springdale. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 22–25. DR. COMPTON NATIVE TREE AND PLANT SALE. Compton Gardens Maintenance Building, 407 NE B Street, Bentonville. Free to attend. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 22, 5:30–7:00 p.m. NATIVE AND INVASIVE MANAGEMENT. Workshop with Cody George, ecological horticulturist for Native Restoration and Management. Compton Gardens and Arboretum, Bentonville. Free; registration requested. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 25, 5:30–6:00 p.m. SEED COLLECTING. Peel Museum and Botanical Garden, Bentonville. Free; registration requested. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 26, 10:00 a.m.–4:00 p.m. NWA PLANT FESTIVAL. Gather Bentonville, 3105 NE 11th Street, Bentonville. Free. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 26, 10:00–11:30 a.m. INVASIVE MANAGEMENT WORKSHOP. Osage Park, Bentonville. \$. [For more information.](#)

Sep. 26, 11:00 a.m. CREATING A NATURAL GARDEN. With Claudia Vilato, owner of WILD Integrated Landscape Design. Fayetteville Public Library. 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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