

PATHWAYS

Spring 2023

Sandra L Ledbetter, Cherokee Co MGA

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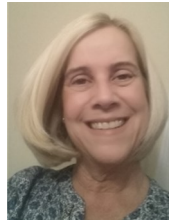


AMGA Website

alabamamga.org

AMGA PRESIDENT

Devonne Ellis



Happy Spring, everyone! I want to thank Tuscaloosa Master Gardeners for their amazing Conference. Thank you, Wanda Smith, and Dan Sutton, for your leadership in moving your team forward for a wonderful experience on the Alabama campus. Baldwin County Master Gardeners are busy preparing for the 2024 Conference, which will also be fun. Autauga County will be following in 2025—more information to come.

Since the beginning of the year, I have been seeding and up potting annuals along with my coworkers, Leticia and Jeff Avera, for our Wiregrass Master Gardeners Plant Sale. Plant sales are always the best time to talk with people about plants and other gardening chores. I love growing Zinnias, coleus, Salvia, and petunias, just to name a few. Have you ever grown Pumpkin on a stick, Gomphrena or Rudbeckias? They are all very easy from seed. Our Plant Sale is held on the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens grounds. If you haven't been there, please come and visit. They have a butterfly house opening on April 1. Our Plant Sale was in the middle of April.

After the Plant Sale, my group is determined to improve our nursery area, especially now that we have a new sprinkler system. We will redo our pot rack to make a better way to access the pots for our plants. Projects are fun when you work as a team.

I am blessed to have a wonderful board for my term as President. Thank you all for this opportunity to serve and keep our group moving forward. Thanks to Myra and the past Board Members for their help. I hope you continue to be present in AC meetings and Conferences.

All the flowers of all the tomorrows are in the seeds of today.

AMGA PAST PRESIDENT

Myra Lassere

Let the Gardening begin! As we look ahead to days that are bright and sunny, the warmer and longer days of spring and summer, it's a season we all look forward to; new garden innovations, new plants and new gardening friends.

With the changing of seasons, the AMGA Board has changed as I write my farewell. There are new faces and new friends to meet and make. The new Spring Intern Classes are nearing an end so be sure to introduce yourself and be there for guidance through the years.

I hope all enjoyed the 2023 Conference in Tuscaloosa and that you are planning to attend the 2024 Conference to be held in Baldwin County.

I am grateful and appreciative of the trust you have placed in me and I am truly humbled by the experience. I thank the AMGA BOD and those who served during my term of office and I thank the members of AMGA for the wholehearted support you gave me.

Looking forward to new beginnings as I journey forward. I bid you a fond adieu and will see y'all around.

To Garden is to believe in tomorrow. Myra

AMGA ADVISORY COUNCIL

Debbie Boutelier

2023 is off to a great start! With the installation of new association officers at the end of 2022, there has been a significant turnover in the attendees to the Advisory Council for 2023. Introductions were made at the February meeting all around. It was great to meet the new members and we look forward to gathering new ideas and learning from each of our associations.

The council began work on several new projects with one kickoff activity. Statistics that were compiled from 2022 were shared and the associations were challenged to tell the rest of the story – what activities made a difference in the communities and who was impacted by the work of Alabama Master Gardeners. This story will be shared as it is developed. Reporting over 204,000 volunteer hours for 2022 equates to some really good chapters in the overall story. Stay tuned to hear the story!

One of the challenges that came from previous discussions was the need for good tax information so that the local associations could make an informed decision about whether or not to apply for non-profit status or to incorporate. Several months were spent researching the issues and gathering up-to-date information to share with the local associations. The culmination of this effort was a tax workshop that was offered via Zoom for any interested associations. The workshop was well attended and was recorded for those that could not attend or for those that wanted to hear the information a second time.

The next Advisory Council meeting will be held on May 2, 2023, at 10:00 am. The meeting is being held at Petals from the Past in Jemison, Alabama which is a very central location in the state and a haven for gardeners. All are welcome to attend.

AMGA AWARDS

Lyn Webb, Chair

Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteers were really working hard in 2022!

Billy McDaniel has filled many orders for Reach for the Stars program this year. He received requests for ninety-four Bronze, forty-five Silver, and sixty-three Gold Stars. That is not even counting the number of recycled stars in your local group. We received orders for forty-seven Gold, thirty-three Platinum Badges, plus twenty-two Advanced Stars.

The Awards Committee recently met for a working lunch, and boy was there work to be done! We had many newsletter entries for the Sixty-one and above AMGA members category. These newsletters afforded us so much information on the activities that are going on in the state. We also evaluated the nominations for the Mary Lou McNabb Master Gardener of the Year award and talk about some tough competition. We saw firsthand that there are some truly dedicated people in our state.

Those awards, along with Top Hours of the Year, Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award, and the Gary Murry Outstanding Service and Dedication Award were presented at our state conference in Tuscaloosa, April 4, 2023.

Thank you to the wonderful members of this year's awards committee, Dee Hubbert, Rod Penuel, Dottye Pierce, Amanda Redman, and Carol Williams. They were all a joy to work with.

See you in Tuscaloosa!

AMGA MEMBERSHIP

Mary Howe, Chair

AMGA dues have been deposited for 1,240 members through the end of February, which means dues are still required for a number of members. There are also 146 lifetime members identified in Dues Tracker, increasing the total active and lifetime AMGA membership to 1,386 for 2023.

Attention is needed in the identification of lifetime members in Dues Tracker. There are several instances where lifetime members are being reported as paying dues or whose status is not being reported correctly. Certified Master Gardeners become lifetime AMGA members by receiving the Mary Lou McNabb Master Gardener of the Year or the Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Awards. Reporting 10,000 volunteer hours also confers Lifetime Membership recognition for the member. After the awardees are recognized at the annual business meeting and conference, their status in Dues Tracker should be changed to show "Lifetime." Lifetime membership can also be obtained by certified Master Gardeners paying a one-time fee of \$150. Members purchasing a lifetime membership should have their status in Dues Tracker changed to "Lifetime" when the payment is sent to the AMGA Treasurer. Lifetime members do not have an annual dues payment obligation, but should continue to be reported in Dues Tracker with a Lifetime status.

Requests for Dues Tracker access or questions regarding membership should be directed to mary.howe67@gmail.com, as the amgamembership@gmail.com address does not appear to be operating correctly at this time.

AMGA NEWSLETTER

Patricia Peoples – Terri Scheffler

Wow – what a conference we had in Tuscaloosa! It was nice to see old friends and mingle with all the Master Gardeners throughout the state.

I have a request that will simplify our job as editors. When you send your article for the summer edition, please write out your association's name in the subject line. You probably don't realize how many associations start with C, L, or M – it gets confusing, especially if you are searching for a county that begins with one of those letters. Similarly, if your article was accidentally overlooked this time, please forgive us. We have had a few hiccups with this edition. Terri and I have both been sick, but...the mail must go on.

On page five, there is a picture of the first master gardener class in Alabama. If you recognize anyone in that photo, please send the number (on photo) corresponding with the name to me, amganewsletter@gmail.com

I hope you had a chance to meet our new AMGA Board of Directors. Each one of them are here to help your association and to work along with the Advisory Council. Please plan to visit the Advisory Council. They meet quarterly and take your problems to the AMGA BOD.

Until next time – get out and get dirty playing in the soil, getting your gardens in top-notch shape.

AMGA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Sondra Henley, Chair

The Nominating Committee is that committee that helps to promote and fill AMGA vacant positions. If you are interested in working at the state level, please see someone on the committee. We need dedicated members who want the best for their counties and for the statewide association. Doc Scheffler (Jackson County), Sondra Henley (Autauga County), and our third member, which is not known while writing this article, will be at the Advisory Council meetings, the AMGA Board meetings and can easily be reached through our emails. Be sure you write "Nominating Committee" in the subject line. We are approachable and want to hear who you are and what you are interested in. We hope to meet you soon!

AMGA PROJECT FUNDING

Sheila Bolen

2023 Funding has come to a close. It was a record-breaking year, with 14 applications received. Grant requests totaled \$17,771.50, with \$9,247.50 awarded at AMGA's State Conference in Tuscaloosa. The following associations were recipients of Project Funding Grants:

Capital City - \$692.22
Cullman County - \$1,075.00
East Central Alabama - \$1,779.60
Jefferson County - \$1,213.92
Marshall County - \$1,596.00
Pike County - \$1,191.99
Shoals MGA - \$698.00
Tallapoosa County - \$1,000.00

Many congratulations to all recipients!

January 2024 seems like a long time away; however, it's never too soon to start thinking of a Project Funding project your association can apply for. Make sure you have read and are familiar with all the Guidelines and Criteria, as these are strictly followed by the committee. This fall, there will be an in-service on applying for a PF Grant, the application form, which is being modified, and the submission process. This will be held at the fall Advisory Council Meeting. I promise it will be educational and alleviate some of the application frustrations. Just remember - you can't receive funds if you don't apply!

Apply! Apply! Apply!

AMGA RECORDS AND RETENTION

Michael Thomason, Chair

Garden Pathways

Editors

1989 – 1993 Tony Glover
1993 – 1995 Dave Williams
1995 – 1997 Mary Beth Musgrove
1999 – 2000 David McElroy
2000 – 2003 Liz Duthie
2004 – 2009 Brenda Tapp
2009 – 2010 Kim Boone
2010 – 2015 Ona Garwood
2015 – 2023 Patricia Peoples

Pathways

Pathways name change was board approved on December 6, 2016.

Website and Newsletter committees were placed under the Communications Committee as subcommittees on March 15, 2015. Board approval at that time.

2021 — Terri Scheffler appointed Apprentice

Note: We know for certain that Tony Glover initiated the First newsletter. In the time period starting in 1993 to 2000, the meeting minutes requests individuals to submit an article or information for the newsletter to a particular individual. I listed that individual. It is really sketchy from 1995 to 2000.

I do have hard copies of the newsletter from 2000 – 2009 and some from 2014 – the present.

AMGA SPEAKERS' BUREAU

Susan Hagen, Chair

The Speakers' Bureau continues to grow, but additional Master Gardeners are desired for wider state coverage. Those speakers already listed are receiving invitations to speak from local associations and from other gardening and civic groups. Remember, the decision to accept an invitation is entirely the decision of the Master Gardener speaker. The Bureau is a rich resource for local association program chairs and a great outreach facilitator for Master Gardeners wanting to share their knowledge, hints, and gardening hacks.

The list and the form for requesting inclusion on the Bureau list can be found on the AMGA webpage: <https://alabamamga.org/amga-speakers-bureau/>

AMGA Treasurer Sunita Graves

Completion of the 2022 Financial Report for the Alabama Master Gardeners Association (AMGA) and a subsequent financial audit on January 30, 2023, indicate that the organization is in sound financial standing. The following financial documents were published in the 2023 AMGA Conference Brochure: Balance Sheet as of December 31, 2022, A Statement of Revenue and Expense for 2022, along with the 2022 Audit Report by the Audit Committee. Our budget was approved at the AMGA Board meeting on March 7, 2023.

AMGA is proud to have exceeded its goal of the Auburn Graduate Endowment. Now we have embarked on a new contractual Corporate Gift Commitment of \$200,000.00 over a period of five years for the Naming of the Green Pathway in the Transformation Garden at Auburn University. Members of the AMGA should be proud that we have fulfilled slightly more than the budgeted amount of \$40,000.00 in 2022 toward the Transformation Garden Project through personal and local Master Gardener Association contributions. As treasurer, I want to encourage county Master Gardener associations to contribute to this new endeavor.

It has been a delightful learning experience as treasurer. I certainly developed friendships with many county treasurers, who shared personal anecdotes with me. Thanks to treasurers who sent in dues with special stationery and/or seasonal greeting cards with contact information and words of encouragement and appreciation.

As my tenure as AMGA treasurer comes to an end, I want to thank the former treasurer Roger Clark for his help and guidance and the other Master Gardeners who helped me through my term. Please welcome the new treasurer, Cecilia Adams (Morgan County.) Cecilia has been so helpful to me as the AMGA Assistant treasurer. Welcome also to Regina Ford (Etowah County) as the new AMGA Assistant treasurer.



First master gardeners class in Alabama. Class of 1981. Photo provided by Brenda Tapp. Do you recognize anyone? If so, please let me know - amganewsletter@gmail.com

NOTE: Two of the students are still MGs and members of Master Gardeners of North Alabama.

WHY A STRATEGIC PLAN?

To grow a stronger program! As shared before now, Alabama Extension's new Director, Mike Phillips, is asking all Extension teams to look at our programs with fresh eyes, recognize our changes over time, celebrate our successes, and plan with the purpose for the future. I see value here too and appreciate Dr. Phillips' support.

Charting a plan is based on input that describes our values, principles, and priorities. Combining these, we create areas for action and goals. Having a sturdy plan gives a statewide program a common path while at the same time supporting creativity. A plan also helps us consider the possibilities – prepare for possible challenges and opportunities.

Much thought, time, sweat, and tears are being invested in the process of developing a strategic plan for the Master Gardener Program. We know that...

Alabama MGs most enjoy activities that are hands-on and allow for problem-solving
MGs value the program's social connections
MGs perceive gardening to have a positive effect on the quality of life and feelings of self-worth
Learning, serving, and helping are recurring themes.

Here are some interesting comments from the recent surveys.

- Gardens are necessary
- Protecting the earth
- Teaching people to grow food
- Planting seeds with children
- Practical applications of knowledge
- Access to research-based information
- Getting back to the soil
- Horticulture advocates

And there's more! Find our current activity summaries in the Master Gardener Service Report.

<https://www.acesagmg.site/> - See "Strategic Assessment"

https://aub.ie/ACES_MG_Update20220328 - A video presentation of the 2020/2021 MG survey (starts at the 30-minute mark). This link is also found in the file, "Summaries – MG surveys, winter 2020/2021 and....."

Stay tuned for more files to post in the coming weeks

Yes, this is a long and winding path to reach our end goal, a strategic plan for the MG Program. Everyone's input is valued and giving it all the respect it is due takes time.

Thank you for every effort that supports Extension. Go, team!

Kerry





Blount County Master Gardeners' Fall Conference October 12, 2023 (4 CEUs)

Registration: 8:00-8:45 a.m.	Locust Fork Baptist Church
Opening Session: 8:45 a.m.	30580 AL-79,
Cost: \$35, including lunch & snacks	Locust Fork, AL35097

- 9:00 a.m.— Kira Sims, Waste Not, Want Not: tips from a thrifty gardener**
- 10:00 a.m.— Hayes Jackson, The Fantastic Life of a Plant Collector...
a look into the pleasures and perils of never having enough plants**
- 11:00-11:30 a.m.—Jason Powell's plant rundown**
- 11:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—lunch and plant sales**
- 12:30 p.m.— Lucy Edwards, Gardening: life's unexpected blessings**
- 1:30 p.m.— Dani Carroll, Taking the Garden Back: having more by doing it better**

all featured speakers are Alabama Extension agents

For information, contact Sherilyn Osborne, 205-382-0791 (leave a message) or sherilynosborne@bellsouth.net



Registration form, please print

Name: _____

Address: _____

City / State / Zip: _____

Email / Phone #: _____

Make \$35 registration fee check payable to Blount County Master Gardener Association. Mail to Sherilyn Osborne, P.O. Box 13, Locust Fork, Alabama, 35097

HAPPENINGS

Spring 2023

Sandra L Ledbetter, Cherokee Co MGA

AUTAUGA CO MGA

Sondra Henley

After working with Chilton County for many years, I am fortunate to work and be associated with another outstanding AMGA association. Moving to Prattville, I am associated with Autauga and could not be prouder. We are sooooo busy! Raising 1,500 pounds of produce for the Autauga Interfaith Care Center was a war with rain, temperatures, insects and lots of sweating! This worthy project helps feed fresh produce to the needy in our community.

The Prattvillage Garden is a historical garden, circa 1840, kept primed with lots of tender loving care. The old chapel, and the plants that bloom, give the garden its magic each month.

Our Pollinator Beds are our newest project to feed and protect our important garden guests. These beds are located at the Demonstration Garden and the Prattvillage Garden.

Our annual Spring Plant Sale is the last Saturday in April.

We are excited to begin to plan for the April 3-5, 2025, AMGA Annual Conference and Business Meeting. We will host this conference at the First Baptist Church of Prattville. Lots of details to come!



Wisteria in Prattvillage, Prattville, AL. Photograph by Sondra Henley

BALDWIN CO MGA

Mary Calvin

Baldwin County Master Gardeners are always busiest in the spring. We started the year with a new event, celebrating National Seed Swap Day at the Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo. We provided six speakers, planting and growing advice, and seeds for native plant pollinator gardens and for vegetable gardens. We provided help at six Arbor Day events, four on the same day! In March we hold Tuesday Evening Workshops, kicking them off with "John Kitch" tomatoes grown by Elmer Vick. Elmer honors his late mentor with this annual project and a donation of over \$1,600 to the USA Mitchell Cancer Research Center. Elmer and other Master Gardeners grew over 250 milkweed plants to welcome the Monarchs on their spring migration. Some of the plants already had eggs on them by the time they were given away. Providence Hospital's Festival of Flowers is our biggest outreach event with a Zen theme this year. The intern class is

going well, and the 11 interns are showing up at our meetings and helping out at the greenhouses and outreach events. The April 13-15 plant sale at Weeks Bay will take all of us working together. It's a long week but lots of fun, spending time with old friends and new friends and learning about all the plants.



Arbor Day at Bay Minette volunteers were Mary Calvin, Julian Walthall, Susan Palmer, Don Richerson, Beverly Villafana, George Donchez, Linda Bizzell and Fran Posey. Not pictured: Ed Pickle. Photographer: unknown.

BLOUNT CO MGA

Irene Latham

Blount County Master Gardeners
Celebrate thirtieth Anniversary

BCMGA devoted its February meeting to thirty years of gardening service to the community. In a program presented by former BCMGA President Susan Hagen, the group explored our history, beginning with the first class of fifteen interns who began training with extension agent Dan Porch on February 2, 1993.

By 1995 the group developed the necessary bylaws and was able to add "Association" to their name. Early projects included the beautification of the historic Easley Covered Bridge and the service at Blount County Fair—a role the group continued through the fair's final run in 2019. Another long-running project has been the beautification of Palisades Park, including constructing a gazebo, bridge and installing an arboretum.

Fundraising projects successful over the years, including a cookbook, annual plant sale, and since 2002, the popular fall gardening conference. Participation in the Palisades Park Christmas Lights has resulted in the group consistently being awarded the top prize in the civic group category and, in 2014, the top Overall prize.

In 2016 the group welcomed Bethany O'Rear as association coordinator. Many varied service projects over the decades have benefitted local

organizations, including Blount County Education Foundation, RSVP-Positive Maturity, The Children's Center, Olive Branch Home, Magnolia House, and others.

After meeting at the Frank Green Building and since at The Little Brick Church, Oneonta, the group is looking forward to the completion of the Extension Office in Cleveland, scheduled to open in August 2023. BCMGA members will start this new chapter by welcoming its twenty-second class of interns.



Founding BCMGA members (L to R), Carolyn Vest, Wendy Irich, Matharee Boles, and agent Dan Porch 1996. Photographer: unknown.

CALHOUN CO MGA

Tom Gilbert

The fifth annual Spring Garden Symposium was held on Thursday, March 16, 2023, at the Longleaf Event Center in Anniston. This year's speakers included Encore Azalea breeder, Mr. Buddy Lee; the Atlanta Botanical Gardens' Horticulturalist, Ozzie Johnson; Tennessee nursery owner Robert Wilson; and several extension agents.

The Calhoun County Master Gardeners continue to pursue enhanced Greenhouse technology. Under the direction and training of Mr. Richard Atkinson, the large, two-bay greenhouse at Cane Creek has been augmented with state-of-the-art hydroponics systems. The hydroponics facilities include an integrated system with timers, heaters, LED grow lights, nutrient pumps, and several enclosures to ensure proper growth conditions. Cameras and sensors provide a watchful eye on the systems and plants when the gardeners are not on site. Mr. Atkinson has volunteered hundreds of hours and contributed a significant array of resources to make this effort successful. This summer, the Cane Creek

Greenhouse will host training and educational opportunities for hydroponics and technology in horticulture.

Future Events:

- The Longleaf Botanical Gardens (LBG) will conduct a plant sale on Friday and Saturday, April 28-29, 2023, from 9 am – 1 pm at LBG, 920 Museum Drive, Anniston, AL 36206.
- The Earth Day Field Trip for Calhoun County fourth Graders will be held April 24-25 at the Cane Creek Community Gardens.



Cane Creek Greenhouse. Photograph by Teri Gilbert

CAPITOL CITY MGA

Mary Eleanor Hines

We ended 2022 with a delicious Christmas dinner and a fun and profitable silent auction. Following these activities, officers for 2023 were installed.

After an unusually cold winter snap for zone 8, we are seeing what plants survived with the current spring temperatures. We are delighted to find that in our home gardens as well as in the CCMGA project gardens, new growth appears daily.

Intern graduation was held on January 24, 2023. There were 14 graduates, five of whom received top honors of over 100 volunteer hours each. These working hours contributed to the community as much as \$30,000 in volunteer work.

Our Lunch and Learn program continues to be very successful with an interesting slate of speakers set for 2023. Also, the Montgomery Botanical Gardens began the year on March 4 with an educational workshop on Pruning in the Wisdom Wood area with over 45 persons in attendance.

Member Mike Forster applied for an Alabama Master Gardner Association grant for a new projector. We just learned that we will be granted this award at the conference in Tuscaloosa. It will benefit many

programs in the future.

Our request for a 501(c)(3) is a slow, ongoing process, but we will eventually be successful.

On March 8 CCMGA visited the American Village near Montevallo AL to view the beautiful tulips. The trip was followed with a visit to Petals from the Past for lunch and a talk by Jason Powell.



A visit to American Village to enjoy the tulips. Sharon Watford and Charlene Thomas. .Photo by Anne Carr

CHEROKEE CO MGA

Bill Holland

A lot of people look at the first of the year as the dreariest time of the year. Nothing is blooming (not even the early daffodils and hellebores.) The outside just seems to be a brown/gray landscape with nothing of interest. In Cherokee County, that is far from being accurate – especially during odd-numbered years. Our Association has elected new officers. We are in the process of having them take over their roles, bringing fresh ideas around what has been done and what can be done.

We eagerly look at all the service projects we have planned for the year. Some are ones that we have done for years, so they need a fresh twist. Others are new, and we need to make sure that we have new leaders working with these projects. This is an exciting time – we are not focusing on the dreary outdoors but are thinking of the possibilities for the new year.

Our annual plant sales are just around the corner – mid to late April. We have plants that need to be trimmed or dug so they can be sold. We have seeds that need to be planted and tended. All the up-potting and tending takes considerable time, but the results are always very rewarding.

We find the new year exciting. It is full of opportunities and challenges. In just a few short weeks, we will be back doing what we really enjoy – working in our gardens.



Centre Middle School Greenhouse. Photographer: Bill Holland.

CHILTON CO MGA

Kerry Rush

After ending 2022 with a well-attended Christmas luncheon and gift swap (over 60 attendees) the Chilton County Master Gardeners began 2023 with several volunteer opportunities. Members were instrumental with the registration process and meal preparation for the twenty-eighth Annual Alabama Beekeepers Symposium, held February 4, at the Jeff State Community College campus. That same evening, Master Gardeners participated in the organization, set-up and characterization of *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* at the annual Jemison Library Fairy Tale event. Later in February and in cooperation with the Chilton County 4-H After-School Program, Master Gardeners were the lead facilitators for the children's construction and assembly of Blue Bird houses.

The January, February, and March membership meetings were highlighted with guest speakers who gave presentations on nutritional education programs and local food assistant opportunities, container gardening, and growing natives. The February membership meeting, designated as CCMGA's annual awards recognition, saw a total of 21 members and interns receive one or more awards for volunteer hours, CEU hours, Help Line hours, Service Project of the Year, and Master Gardener of the Year.

Coming up, the CCMGA has several volunteer and outreach opportunities that include participation in "Water Fest 2023." This event is a cooperative water-

education program for all Chilton County Schools fourth graders. April 22 brings the association's annual Plant Sale at Goose Pond Park, and throughout April and May "Ask-a-Master Gardener" will be available at multiple local Farm Center and Equipment Sales businesses.



Putting on "The Tale of Peter Rabbit" at the Jemison Library Fairy Tale event: (L-R) Jane Rabey, Cheryl and Ron Herbster. Photographer: unknown

CULLMAN CO MGA

Ellen Hall

This quarter we are celebrating *growth*. In January, we "grew" our MG group with the certification of 11 interns from the 2022 MG class, celebrated at a brunch with their mentors. Most of whom are now a very active part of our association; we have the same hope for the new 2023 class that began in February.

We have grown in responsibilities and partnerships. In 2022, Cullman CEC Kira Sims introduced the idea of a MG class project to move the interns forward to fulfilling their volunteer hours required for certification; weeding and path clearing and general cleanup at the Wildflower Garden at Sportsman Lake was chosen. As they worked, often alongside veteran MGs, bigger ideas took root, leading to proposals for pressure washing and repainting the entrance arbor and even replacing damaged footbridges. CCMGA provided some funding and through a partnership with the Cullman Area Technology Academy's Carpentry and Construction students and their instructor, Mike Burkett, and some heavy equipment from Cullman County, two bridges were installed this quarter. Other community

volunteer groups assisted last fall with painting the arbor. We congratulate our 2022 class on their vision and perseverance.

There is a Native Azalea and Wildflower Sale scheduled for March 25 (8:00-3:00) at the Wildflower Garden to "grow" some funds for the garden.

Our Spring Plant Sale to be held at the North Alabama Agriplex on April 21-22 (hours, Friday noon - 5:00, Saturday 10:00 - 3:00)



Newly certified MGs from the 2022 class, pictured with CEC Kira Sims on the right. Photographer: Unknown

DEKALB COUNTY MGA

Donna Elrod

DeKalb County Master Gardeners are very excited that they were chosen as host for the Spring 2023 Master Gardener class. We have five new interns, one from Etowah, one from Calhoun, and three from DeKalb Counties, under the watchful eye of Brian Brown (EXT Agent). Welcome, ALL!

Here are some of our volunteer opportunities going on this spring – be sure to enter those hours!

DeSoto Park - native plant area March 14, 9:30 am.

Dedication to our very own Stanley Sims will be held at this area on April 14, 10:00 am.

ARC garden - March 18, 12:00 pm; maintenance on raised beds.

Annual Plant Sale - April 7, setup / April 8, day of Sale (everyone invited.)

Tornado Memorial - Rainsville, AL. the twelfth anniversary of the tornado outbreak will be at the end of April. The date will be announced soon.

Happy Gardening!

EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Sheila Bolen

2023 started with a bang for East Central Alabama MGA. At our initial meeting in January, we set plans in motion for most of 2023. February's meeting was a presentation from Alabama Power on Shoreline Vegetation. Since our area is full of Lake Wedowee, it was an eye-opening and educational presentation. We highly recommend associations with a lot of lake in their area investigate this. On March 1. we gathered at the Outdoor Education Center (OEC) at Handley High School in Roanoke and Dani Carroll instructed us in blueberry pruning. The OEC has close to 40 blueberry bushes that, per the Superintendent of Schools, were planted in 2014 and have not been pruned since. It was a great hands-on learning experience. Our Annual Spring Plant Sale will be held on May 6.



Blueberry Pruning - Back row: L to R Steve Burns, Lee Culver, Marty Culver, Susan Reynolds, Jack Bolen, Vickie Stapler, Martha Burnett, Dani Carroll, Front row: L to R Vicki Craig, Mrs. Burns, Beth Gurkin, Sarah Partin, Sheila Bolen. Picture taken by Mr. Greg Foster, Superintendent of Schools.

ETOWAH CO MGA

Carol B. Link

At an Etowah County Master Gardener Association meeting in 2022, members voted to sell the association's property located at the rear of 3200 West Meighan Blvd. To prepare for the sale of the property, one last greenhouse sale was conducted on the property. On Thursday, November 10, the association had a private plant sale for members only. On Friday and Saturday, November 11-12, the gates were opened to the public. The fall sale was a success.

Prior to the property sale, the association's four greenhouses, plus the two small storage buildings, tools, office furnishings, office equipment, memorabilia, association records, and the remainder of the plants had to be removed. All of this was accomplished before the scheduled sale date. Three greenhouses and the two outbuildings were sold to individuals, and everything else was removed from the property before the December sale date. A group of hardworking Master Gardeners cleaned up the property and building and left the place in excellent condition.

The fourth Greenhouse was moved and erected at Nocalula Falls, which will be Etowah County Master Gardener Association's new home. The Association is working with the City of Gadsden to build a brand-new greenhouse with funds from a possible Federal grant.

ECMGA members have worked with *Habitat for Humanity* for years, landscaping each newly built home. MG Angela Whorton volunteered to coordinate future landscaping projects for *Habitat for Humanity*. She will prepare a new landscaping design for all new Habitat for Humanity homes in Gadsden in 2023.



A group of ECMGA volunteers work with *Wendy Van Hooten Volunteers* to build raised gardens for the Twelfth Street Community Garden in Gadsden. Photographer unknown

JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

Hello to all from wet but warmer Jackson County.

Update! We are finalizing the selection of a recipient for our \$1,000.00 scholarship.

The Christmas Party on December 1, 2022, turned out to be a really enjoyable evening. We had plenty of good food and friendship. Again, two or three people livened up the gift-giving (Dirty Santa) by having to pick another gift several times.

The Senior Expo returned on January 26, 2023, and was enjoyed by a good turnout from the public and our volunteers. We got to talk about Master Gardeners, and door prizes were given out also.

On February 25, 2023, the JCMGA assisted the Scottsboro Tree Commission and Alabama Forestry

Service with their annual Arbor Day tree giveaway. We helped prep the trees for pickup. There were lots of trees to choose from and for the first time in a very long time, they were all given away.

We enjoyed Bonnie Gardner's discussion on "Starting Seeds at Home" for our March 2, 2023 meeting at the Jackson County Senior Center in Scottsboro. Many thanks to Bonnie for coming in the rain.

Jackson County Master Gardener Stacey Woods conducted a Lunch and Learn at the Scottsboro Public Library on March 8, 2023. She discussed options and ways to improve "Container Gardening, Porches, etc."

We are working on our annual plant sale at the Jackson County Senior Center parking lot on April 29, 2023. Come see what we end up with. Busy, busy, busy!

JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Fletcher Harvey

Following a truly horrendous winter and recent sporadic Arctic blasts, Spring is making a valiant attempt at a welcomed comeback! Many plants that appeared destined for that big compost pile in the sky are budding and blooming, thus proving that our gurus that preached patience and non-pruning were correct.

Jefferson County Master Gardeners have been treated to some excellent presentations. In January, Steve Bender took time off from his duties at Southern Living Magazine to give us a "Not-so-grumpy" rundown on some of his favorite garden myths.

In February, our ACES Agent, Bethany O'Rear, was keynote speaker at our potluck awards luncheon and gave a spirited talk on "what it means to be a Master Gardener." Special congratulations go to Betty Anderson, who received her ruby in recognition of more than 4,700 volunteer hours!

In March, we welcomed herpetologist Jimmy Stiles and his "friends," who gave a wonderful hands-on (but supervised) presentation on Alabama snakes and their importance in our ecosystem, especially in the area of

rodent control. His talk was informative and serious but not without humor and fun. For the record, no one bit or got bitten!



Jimmy Stiles is assisted by a scarlet king snake and their audience of master gardeners and friends. Photographer: Fletcher Harvey.

"In the spring, at the end of the day, you should smell like dirt."

Margaret Atwood

"Image: Freepik.com". This cover has been designed using assets from Freepik.com

LEE CO MGA

Charlot Ritenbaugh and Shelley Aistrup

Since 2015, Lee MGA has sponsored 4-6 \$1,000 grants for local groups who have educationally based, horticultural projects in mind. Grant recipients set educational goals and detail the steps that will be taken to fulfill the project. Grants have varied over time, with a common thread being producing fresh food, teaching gardening techniques, and promoting healthy lifestyles. A short description of past and current recipients follows.

In 2020, Campus Dining at Auburn University (a self-supporting business) of AU provided fresh produce from a Community Garden Adopt a Plot program for food-insecure students and employees. In addition, donations were made to other hunger relief organizations, including Campus Kitchen and the Food Bank of East Alabama. The Auburn Tree Commission

and Chewacla Invasive Plant Working Group focused on helping citizens identify and remove invasives from the community by purchasing tools to aid this process. In Opelika, Nourish Wellness Foundation has a raised-bed garden project at the Darden Wellness Center Culinary Herb Gardening Project to promote healthy habits. The Davis Arboretum added new signage to identify oak trees in their collection. At Loachapoka Elementary School, the STEM teacher is creating an improved courtyard environment for students, complete with greenery, flowering plants, and a lettuce-growing container garden.

The very best part of the grant program is when recipients attend the November meeting and share their project's successes. The stories they share with us are so inspiring. This is the best part of our labors as Master Gardeners in the county we call home...Lee County, Alabama.

LIMESTONE CO MGA

Soozi Pline

Growing! That seems to be our theme here in Limestone County. We were happy to welcome and certify more than 12 interns as Master Gardeners in Limestone County in December 2022. Thanks to several dedicated MG volunteers, our community charity garden delivered 1300 pounds of fresh produce last Fall for the Limestone County food distribution centers. Due to our growth, we've been expanding our Greenhouse work areas this winter, which includes not only strengthening its infrastructure but also accommodating growth needs for our additional Fall Plant Sale, which began in 2022. We had lots of fun with group field trips and creating a float for the Athens Holiday parade (see photo).

Looking ahead, Limestone County will be hosting our annual Spring Plant sale this year on April 15, as well as continuing many community projects underway, including the Athens Public Library and school garden projects. Turnout continues strong for

"Gettin' Dirty at the Library," the educational seminars we offer monthly to the public. Many of our MGs are joining the Extension's monthly "Plant ID," "Smart Yards," and Helpline Training seminars. We're also supporting the Extension with its new irrigated garden being developed in east Limestone County. Coming up in June, we are excited for our third annual Home Garden Tour in Athens!



LCMG parade float preps, Dec 22. Photo credit: Cyndi Langel

MARSHALL CO MGA

Jo Druen

Announcing Marshall County Master Gardener of the Year: JD Swartzlander (c. 2000).

Additionally, JD will be awarded the Silver Pin with Emerald Stone by the Alabama Master Gardeners for over 6,000 volunteer hours. He has also served Marshall County as a 4-H Volunteer for many years. JD was on the Board of Directors of CASA of Marshall County until he retired just a few short years ago.

Congratulations, JD! You are such an inspiration.

Also happening in 2022, George Darling (c.2014) and Jo Druen (c.2019) shared volunteer of the year 2022

with each performing over 350 hours of volunteer service. Colleen Hunkapillar (c. 2019) was awarded her Gold Star for over 1,000 hours. Congratulations to all.



JD Swartzlander. Photographer: Jo Druen

Master Gardeners of North Alabama

Barbara Stansky

MGNA has been very active this quarter in reaching out to the community with a variety of workshops and presentations throughout the county. The Newcomers and Beginners Garden Series presented at the Madison library met every Tuesday in February and covered a variety of topics for those that might be new to this area and unfamiliar with our soils and growing zones. These events have generated much interest and resulted in many requests for more presentations. The Workshop Committee and the Speaker's Bureau are up for the task!

The Spring Home and Garden show returned to the Von Braun Center this year and MGNA participated with an *Ask a Master Gardener* table. There were 300 seed packets given away to attendees and the event was a great opportunity to promote the April plant sale. The Greenhouse Committee is working hard preparing for the plant sale on April 14 and 15 at the Agribition Center in Huntsville. The Ask a Master Gardener program is very active throughout the community this spring. All of our

committees and members are glad to be able to provide outreach for the community.



Extension Agent Rhonda Britton instructs community members on pH Testing at the Madison Library. Photo by Janet Boothe

MORGAN CO MGA

Julia Chenault

In addition to taking care of three greenhouses full of plants, readying them for our Annual Plant Sale on April 15-16, the Morgan County Master Gardeners Association has been active in our community at various venues. Several members recently gave talks at the four-week gardening series at the Somerville Public Library. A group planted bucketsful of tulips and did some rose bush pruning at the Point Mallard Prayer Chapel in January. Other members have been involved in renovating St. John's Episcopal Church's Common Ground community garden and ongoing maintenance. Old raised beds were pulled out and new ones were installed along with new plants. Another group helped secure funding to revamp a garden for butterflies at the Austinville Elementary School. They are continuing to work with the school to install raised beds for a new outdoor classroom. We continue to set up a booth at the Decatur-Morgan County Farmers Market weekly during the harvest months and at the monthly special events at the Market. We sell a few plants but our real goal in being a part of the Market is exposure to the community and a resource for home gardeners. Our association also sponsors monthly Lunch & Learn events that are free to the community. Speakers

share a variety of gardening topics as well as other environmental interests. MCMGA, currently with paid memberships of 75 and five honorary members, continues to grow with the addition of new interns each year.



Master Gardener Becky Laremore at the Decatur-Morgan County Farmers Market in February. Photographer: Master Gardener Dayna Blankenship.

PIKE CO MGA

Nell Haigh

Pike County Master Gardeners hit the ground running in 2023. We adjusted to December weather challenges, assisted with the Troy University Naturalist Club Arbor Day Tree giveaway, decorated tables for the Pike County Treasure Forest Chapter business meeting, planned and prepared for the total renovation of the educational Herb Garden at the Pioneer Museum of Alabama, and labeled and handed out 1000 tree seedlings furnished to the county by the State Forestry Commission Nursery.

The February meeting brought David Koon, Regional County Agent, who spoke on Starting Seeds for spring/summer planting. Several community guests attended our meeting and expressed interest in becoming involved in the Master Gardener fall classes.

Upcoming events include clearing, rebuilding and replanting the Pioneer Museum Herb Garden, publishing educational brochures for the garden and establishing new perennial, pollinator and cotton gardens on the museum grounds to enhance the dog-trot and tenant houses on the property.

Members will tour greenhouses and present funds to

the Goshen High School Vocational Agriculture program in late March. Our annual plant sale takes place the last full weekend of April at TroyFest and is the main fundraiser for PCMG.



L-R; Pike County Master Gardeners Kaye Jinright, Gwen Threadgill, June Moore, Robert Griffin, Samantha Earnest, Sue Fraley, Judy Russell, Leigh Calk, Nell Haigh. Photographer Clark Harris

SHELBY CO MGA

Kate Vogel

The Shelby County Master Gardeners began the year by helping host a retirement reception for Nelson Wynn, our much-loved Extension Agent. It was a great time of fellowship and well wishes. We visited with people from around the state, looked back at old pictures and awards he received, and celebrated a great working career. We wish him wonderful times ahead.

Also in January, Vice-President Elizabeth York gave a presentation on the Grow More, Give More program. We were happy to welcome Lynn Webb, AMGA Board member, to the meeting.

Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was better known as a gardener than a poet during her lifetime. In February, Jason Kirby, Archivist of the Birmingham Botanical Gardens, spoke about the gardens of Emily Dickinson. Jason walked us through the seasons of Amherst, Massachusetts (Spring, Summer & Autumn) to highlight the flowers that inspired Emily to write her collection of almost two thousand poems.

At the March meeting, member Deb Elliott gave a very informative talk on pruning to help us get ready for spring. Later in March, members met at the Seed-to-Table Garden in Montevallo for two workdays to ready our raised beds for spring planting.



Nelson Wynn's retirement. Left to right- Regional Extension Agents Nelson Wynn, Angela Treadaway, and Alabama Cooperative Extension System Director Mike Phillips. Photographer unknown

April prepares her green traffic light and the world thinks Go.

Christopher Morley

SHOALS MASTER GARDENERS

Lisa Maples

You would think the first quarter of the year would be quiet, but then you wouldn't be a Master Gardener. Most years, this time is spent planning, pouring over seed catalogs, and graphing bedding designs. This year has been spent researching and fretting over the flash freeze results. A lot of our time is spent inspecting for greening up, green underbark (how far back on the plant, please not too far!) and watching for new perennials peeping back up. We have done our best to reassure our neighbors to watch and wait. Most of them aren't willing to baby the finicky stuff we gravitate to (and lost this Christmas), so we sound very wise in our advice. Right now, our gardens are proving the hardiness of the right plant and right place choices and rewarding us with new growth. May it continue.

Meanwhile, we wait. This is probably the hardest part, but we are familiar with this.

We learn. Our extension agents are providing us with countless opportunities to attend both zoom and in-person classes. There is a multitude of class opportunities shared across social media.

ST CLAIR CO MGA

Pam Garrison

At our January meeting, we began signing up for the various committees of our association. It gave us a chance to talk more to each other and make decisions about which committee fit us best. It was nice to be joined by a few of the new interns at this meeting and more of them attended the February meeting. Growing our numbers with these new members who have joined our association is exciting.

Our speaker for February was Devonne Ellis, AMGA Vice President. She brought a tray of seedlings and shared her seed-starting tips for success. Devonne

TALLAPOOSA CO MGA

Calvin Johnson

Nearly two dozen Tallapoosa County MGs potted 500 small Oak trees to be given to the public at River Bank, Alexander City, on Arbor Day, March 4, 2023. Spirits ran high as the "Work Day" began early in hopes of filling their flatbed trailer before a predicted rain began. "Mission accomplished," reported Jennifer Gregory, project organizer, as the new class of 15 or more Interns united with experienced MGs to beat the weather and tag and sort eight different varieties of oaks with identifying colorful tapes. The benefits? The first lucky 200-300 people to arrive March 4 at River Bank on Hwy 280, Alexander City, received one or two free oak trees for transplanting into their yards. There will be new trees in neighborhoods, lots of shade, nutrients for the soil and enjoyment of their beauty!

We volunteer. Projects are going on as this weather presents. Interns are stepping up into positions that benefit their organizations.

We contribute. Gardening comes from our hearts and soul.



Working jointly with local gardening groups. Back row – Paula Kelly, Cynthia Kershaw, Sally McGuire, Michael Wilson, Dwight James, Alan Nix. Front row – Lynne Buchanan, Joh Norton, Wray Dillard, Candy Parkhurst. Photo by Karen Crowe, Colbert County Extension Coordinator

also shared photos of her favorite annuals and some of those were very unusual. She stayed with us for our business meeting and her input was most helpful.

After the meeting, a number of us gathered to do our yearly pruning of plants for Moody City Hall. It is time for all of us to be pruning roses and fruit trees. I have always left my perennials unpruned through the winter to provide food and shelter for the birds. Now, I will have to get those plants pruned and ready for the new growing season.

Our annual plant sale was held in the middle of April and is always a good time to meet many of our fellow gardeners in our community.



(L to R) Tallapoosa Co MG Jennifer Gregory and Intern Nancy Woodward pot Oak trees for Arbor Day Giveaway. Photographer: Calvin Johnson.

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

By the time you read this, the 2023 AMGA Annual Conference in Tuscaloosa would have already taken place! We had almost 300 in attendance to hear a great mix of speakers! Dr. Doug Phillips of the Emmy Award-winning television series *Discovering Alabama* and Felder Rushing - who has published several garden-related books. Other speakers were Col. (ret) Duane Lamb (landscape design at the University), Vince Wallace (advantages of honey bees), Dr. Andy Coleman (Urban Turtle Project), Dr. Larry Davenport (botany), Dr. R. Scot Duncan (Alabama's biodiversity), Patrick Thompson (native azaleas) and more!!! Start planning now to attend the 2024 meeting hosted by Baldwin County MG at the Daphne Civic Center on April 22-24, 2024.



WIREFRASS MGA

Kelly Bexey

Jan Shirley, Wiregrass Master Gardeners' President, recently spoke at the Arbor Day celebration at the local Dothan Area Botanical Gardens. A Live Oak tree was awarded and planted in honor of the Wiregrass Master Gardeners. The following is an excerpt from Jan's speech.

"The MG program has a long history in this country. It started in Washington State 50 years ago and has since spread throughout the United States. The program in Alabama started in 1981 and was initiated here in the Wiregrass in 1988 by Reafield Vester, an Extension county agent. In the second year of the program, Mr. Vester was teaching the Master Gardener classes when an Intern who had visited many botanical gardens asked him, "Why don't we have a botanical garden here in Dothan?" He said, "Because no one has ever tried." And she asked, "Why don't you?" He formed a steering committee that included MGs....and the rest is history."

This year's Lunch and Learn program has been well received with programs such as All About Butterflies, Residential Turf, Kokedama, Stings & Bites, Managing Residential Water Issues, Toxic Plants to Pets, Peanut Pod Blasting, Gardening with Chickens, and Soil Biology.



Jan Shirley, Wiregrass MGA President, spoke at the Arbor Day celebration at the Dothan Botanical Gardens. Photographer: Sue McCabe

*Spring is the time of the year,
when it is summer in the sun and winter in the shade.*

Pathways
Spring
2023



**ALABAMA MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION**
alabamamga.org

Editor: Patricia Peoples
LEE CO. MGA
C: 205-377-7760
amganewsletter@gmail.com

Apprentice:
Terri Scheffler
JACKSON CO
MGA

Copy Editor:
Patricia Patty
CALHOUN CO
MGA

Proofreader:
Carolyn Wade
MGNA

State Advisor Kerry Smith
State Master Gardeners
Program Coordinator
334-844-3036
Cell 334-329-1051
smithkp@auburn.edu



Got Questions



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