

PATHWAYS

SPRING 2024

Courtesy of Pexels

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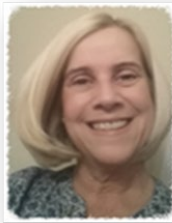
AMGA Website

alabamamga.org



AMGA PRESIDENT

Devonne Ellis



Hello Spring! With spring knocking on the door, I am seeding annuals for my local association plant sale. This happens to be a very busy time for Master Gardeners across the state. Besides my local plant sale, I enjoy going to other Master Gardener sales. I hope I get a chance to visit some plant sales I haven't been to this spring.

Are you registered for the AMGA Conference in Daphne this year? I am excited to do a workshop on Kokedama. I hope you are signed up for tours, workshops, or both. The conference is the best time to visit with Master Gardeners from across the state. Don't forget the business meeting during the conference. It is a wonderful time to see the workings of the AMGA Board. I am very fortunate to have the best board.

Spring is a time of year when we have interns helping in our greenhouse in the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens and Landmark Park. Having interns working in different areas helps them decide where to focus their volunteer efforts. We encourage them to try all the areas of volunteering. This ensures they find a place that works for them. I find that when a volunteer selects where they like to work, you keep a volunteer longer with your group. Of course, there are times when it takes all of us to work together on a project.

I encourage you to come to our Advisory Council meetings. Our next meeting is May 7th. Bring a carload with you. It is fun having a packed room. We need your association to be represented at these meetings. Bring your ideas to the AC meeting. Until I see you at the Conference and/or the Advisory Council meeting, I hope your spring is a fun one.

I grow plants between the weeds,
Devonne

AMGA VICE PRESIDENT

Debbie Boutelier



Early spring is the time of year that I love to hate. I love the rebirth of all the garden favorites. I hate the ongoing winter cleanup. Just when I think I'm making headway in the cleanup, another spring storm comes and sets me back two steps. Since I leave all of my perennial stalks and fall leaf debris for the pollinators and other wildlife, it is now time to face the music and race to get ready for spring. I am careful as I cut back the spent foliage stalks, and it does my heart good to see the empty seed pods that have nourished the birds and other wildlife through this cold and bleak period. I always check the cut foliage to make sure I'm not removing any insect egg sacs. If I find one, I'll place it in a safer location so that the insects or spiders have a chance to hatch.

I love, love, love the rebirth of the garden. The dandelions are blooming, and I love their sunny faces. The native bees love them too! The buds on the trees are starting to explode which means it's pollen season! Oh, how I enjoy the promises and hope of the new garden rebirth. My hope for you this new gardening season is to view the garden through the eyes of our native pollinators and plant what they need to flourish in your garden for you to enjoy.

I hope you have registered for the 2024 AMGA State Conference and Business Meeting. The conference planning committee is working so hard on pulling together the last-minute details to host all of us in April. I look forward to seeing everyone there: visiting with old friends and making new gardening friends. That's one of the best parts of the conference. The other is soaking in all of the wonderful educational speakers, enjoying the tours, workshops and the silent auction. Information on the upcoming conferences will also be available. See you in Daphne!

Always remember that time began in a garden!

Debbie



April 22-24 2024

AMGA Annual Conference and Board Meeting

May 7, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

The AMGA Advisory Council Meeting

Petals from the Past 16034 County Road 29, Jemison, Alabama

June 4, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm

AMGA Board Meeting

First Baptist Church, 138 S. Washington St., Prattville Alabama

(Site of 2025 AMGA Conference)

June 15 Summer Pathways articles due

Oct 3, 8:30 am - 3:30 pm

Blount County Master Gardeners' Fall Conference

AMGA AWARDS

Julie Conrey, Chair

Thank you to Dottye Pierce, Amanda Redman, Jim Harris and Tanys Waldron for serving on the 2024 Awards Committee. Each gave of their time and experience this year to help award deserving EMG newsletters, Extension Master Gardeners, and others throughout the state at this year's conference.

Thank you to everyone who nominated either a newsletter or an individual for recognition at this year's conference. Your care and concern for our local associations are deeply touching to all of us who reviewed your nominations. Based on what we read, the Extension Master Gardener program throughout Alabama is strong and has deep ties to the communities that support it. We hope to see many of you at the AMGA conference next month in Baldwin County.

AMGA MEMBERSHIP

Rose McCauley, Chair

AMGA membership reported at the Board Meeting on March 5th was 1,204. This is a very disappointing number. We have received dues from only 22 associations. If your association has not forwarded your 2024 AMGA dues payment, please do so as soon as possible.

We are experiencing an unusually large number (over 200) of member duplicates in the Service Report and Dues Tracker. Apparently, entries are being made manually in Dues Tracker before the member has registered in the Service Report. All of these duplicate entries will need to be corrected before we will have an accurate count of our membership. Please remember Dues Tracker gets its information from the Service Report, so it is extremely important for that registration to occur first and ONLY once.

Any changes or edits need to be completed on the original registration form.

I am available at jrmprat@charter.net if you need Dues Tracker help or have questions regarding membership.

AMGA NEWSLETTER

Patricia Peoples and Terri Scheffler, co-editors

Sheila Bolen, apprentice

We're looking forward to the conference, will we see you there? If you are, we're looking forward to seeing you again, or meeting you for the first time!

A change is coming to the Newsletter – to increase its' efficiency, we're going to split it into sections, starting in the upcoming Summer issue. You'll select either *Pathways* (for State Officer/Board/Committee/ACES information) or *Happenings* (for Local association information). In the Winter edition, *Conference Info* will also appear as a choice to give you the registration, agenda, and other conference information that we've always furnished. We hope this change improves performance for you and offers some growth opportunities for us!

AMGA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Sondra Henley, Chair

It is with pleasure that your Nominating Team completed their job of finding candidates for vacated positions. Since this is a statewide endeavor, it is important that you remember the Nominating Committee always needs your input on who you think would be a good candidate. We look for commitment to their Local MGA and interests in state objectives. The Nominating Committee members are always approachable and interested in your suggestions. Please send the name of the nominee, why you are nominating them, and your name and contact information.

This information will be passed along to the next Nominating Chair for potential placement(s).

AMGA PROJECT FUNDING

Sherilyn Osborne, Chair

Thanks to all AMGAs who helped to spread the word. Six local MG organizations applied for funding for special projects. All six will be funded for 2024. Projects will be presented at the AMGA Conference and checks will be awarded! Hopefully, more locals will apply for funding next year!

Thank you for your support! Kate Vogel, Ginny Holland, Mary Howe, and Sherilyn Osborne, Chair, Projects Funding Committee.

AMGA SPEAKERS' BUREAU

Susan Hagen, Chair

The AMGA Speakers' Bureau has a short report for this edition of Pathways, but it is an important one: "The bureau is working." That's a direct statement from one of our speakers who has been contacted several times for presentations. Another Extension Master Gardener from one of our local associations reports using the Bureau to find speakers for his meetings. With over 40 topics listed and 17 speakers willing to offer programs, including during the Lunch and Learn series, the Speakers' Bureau facilitates finding qualified presenters for local Extension Master Gardener groups, and for civic and educational organizations.

For Extension Master Gardeners completing Advanced Certification, the Bureau also provides a venue to advertise their in-depth specialty and fulfill their required public presentations. Interested speakers, program planners, and those working toward Advanced Certification can visit

<https://alabamamga.org/amga-speakers-bureau/>.

AMGA TRANSFORMATION GARDEN

Roger Clarke, Chair

The Transformation Garden continues to grow. Construction of all the infrastructure is well along.

The AMGA committee on naming the walkway presented its top three names to the Board of Directors. The name will be officially announced at this year's conference.

Thanks to many County Master Gardener Associations, and some fine individual Master Gardeners support, we have raised over \$165,000 toward our pledge. Look for some special recognition of contributors at the conference in Daphne in April.

We need all Master Gardener Associations to support the Transformation Garden – please give what you can – every dollar helps. It would mean a great deal to me as chair of the Transformation Garden Committee to be involved in the purchase of the naming rights and complete funding our pledge. I hope to be the last contributor to complete the pledge. With your help, that could be this year.

And remember, I would love to come and speak in person at your membership meeting or via Zoom at your board meeting to bring you up to date on the garden, why I think it is the best thing for agriculture in Alabama in a century, and answer questions. Just send me an email at roger1944clarke@gmail.com and we can set it all up.

AMGA TREASURER

Cecilia Adams

The completion of the 2023 Financial Report for the Alabama Master Gardener Association (AMGA) and a subsequent financial audit on February 8, 2024, indicate that the organization is in sound financial standing. Financial documents will be included in the 2024 AMGA Conference Brochure.

To date, we have received \$22,325 in generous contributions from the local associations and many personal donations in memory of friends, family and fellow Master Gardeners. In addition, AMGA has donated its initial pledge of \$40,000, as well as profit from 2022 and 2023 Conferences and three Fall Seminars, to help fulfill our commitment to the naming rights of the Transformation Garden pathway.

Please remember when you send these donations to include the Auburn Gift Commitment Form <https://alabamamga.org/gift-commitment-form-for-the-alabama-master-gardeners-association-greenway-path-at-the-auburn-university-transformation-garden/>.

Any money for AMGA should be sent to:

Cecilia Adams, Treasurer
PO Box 3031
Decatur, AL 35603

Checks should be made out to AMGA and the purpose of the check in the "FOR" line. Any additional information in a note with the check is appreciated. When sending money to AMGA, please include your contact information in case there are questions.

Many thanks to all who have supported me these first nine months. It has been a learning experience. I could not have done it without all of you.

2023

ALABAMA EXTENSION

MASTER GARDENER IMPACT

Home horticulture activities benefit human health, community economics, environmental stewardship, and local food. **Alabama Extension Master Gardeners** are trained volunteers who use research-based horticulture to improve communities. After 40 years, this program remains popular and relevant today. The **Extension Home Grounds team** and numerous community partners agree that these volunteers are priceless.

Community value in volunteer hours and philanthropy =

\$11M



Veggie transplants donated = **14,261**



Contacts through teaching gardens, workshops, helplines, and Ask EMG =

243,487

Grow More, Give More donations =

27,398 lbs.

Contacts through civic events and community projects = **102,700**

Total face-to-face public contacts = **346,187**



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2024 AMGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND BUSINESS MEETING

Joni Trusty Euler

The 2024 AMGA State Conference is almost here! Your hosts – Baldwin County Master Gardeners - are putting the final touches on the plethora of details to make sure attendees have an enjoyable experience. The dates are April 22-24 in Daphne, AL. From informative tours and hands-on workshops to dynamic speakers, the opportunity to implement new ideas/techniques in your own gardening paradise are plentiful. Don't overpack – on-site shopping includes a variety of vendors and great silent auction items. You will want to leave room for those “must-have” purchases. Thank you for supporting this conference and we look forward to seeing you in “Paradise Found.”

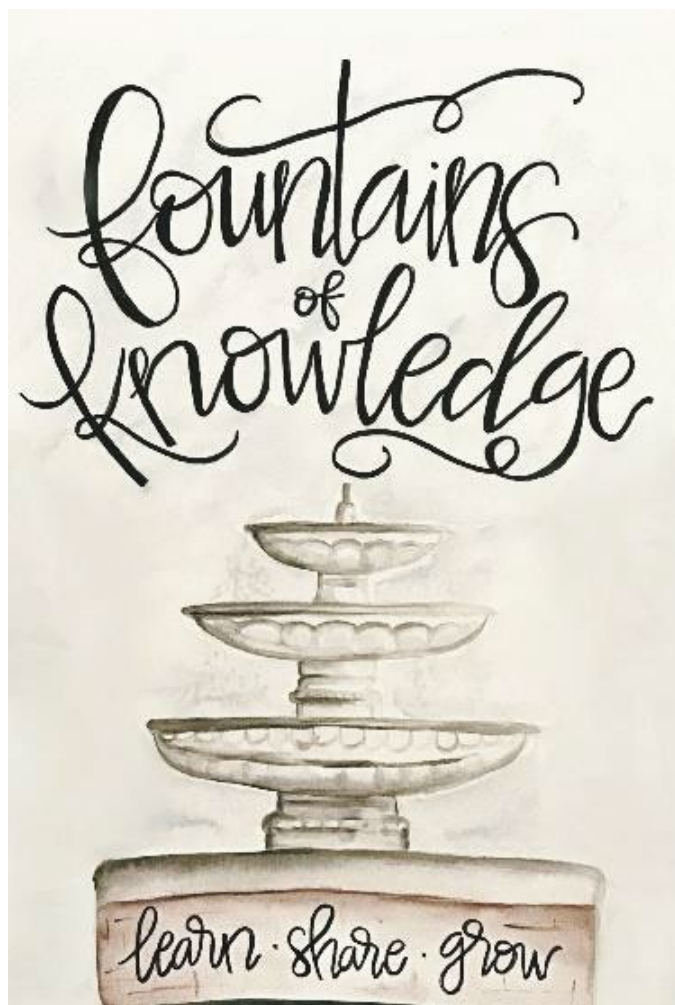


AMGA 2025 ANNUAL MEETING AND CONFERENCE

Sondra Henley

President Truman said: "It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit."

That's the attitude of our conference team. We worked for three hours on March 4th discussing and taking suggestions. No one got mad, no one took anything personally. We worked together. But we got things done! And we know where we are going and what needs to be accomplished. That's such a blessing. If your county is considering hosting a conference, make sure you can work together, listen to each other and respect that others can have an opinion, although you may disagree. Take a break, table it for a while and let everyone think over what they have heard. Space and respect will help you come to a decision quicker than pushing for a decision. Autauga County is excited as we see our conference unfolding, that we have secured speakers that you may not have heard and are developing ideas to help you want to stay through the entire conference. You don't want to miss it!



Where the Natives Have Gone



Blount County Master Gardeners' Fall Conference October 3, 2024 (4 CEUs)

Locust Fork Baptist Church
30580 AL-79, Locust Fork, AL 35097

8:30 a.m.— Registration

9:00 a.m.— Brian Keener, UWA Cahaba Biodiversity Center and Alabama Plant Atlas

10:00 a.m.— Jason Powell, Native Plants for the Home Landscape

11:00 a.m.-12:30 p.m.—lunch and shopping with Jason

12:30 p.m.— Keith Turney, Natives at the Birmingham Botanical Gardens

1:30 p.m.— Soozie Pline, Natives in the Home Yard

**Cost: \$40, including lunch by Lulu's – chicken or pork barbeque and sides
(please note vegetarian preference on registration form)**

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 #: _____

Vegetarian requirement: _____

Make \$40 registration fee check payable to Blount County Master Gardener Association.
Mail to Sherilyn Osborne, P.O. Box 13, Locust Fork, Alabama, 35097

HAPPENINGS

SPRING 2024

Courtesy of Pexels

AUTAUGA COUNTY MGA

Nancy Waggoner

The importance of continuing education that confirms, enhances, and updates the research-based horticultural information Master Gardeners must possess as teachers and mentors in the community cannot be understated. With that in mind, ACMGA has chosen program speakers with a variety of areas of expertise.

ACMGA program presenters and topics in 2023 were: Cathy Maddox, CCMGA, Montgomery Botanical Gardens; Denise Brown, Autauga Interfaith Care Center, AICC in the Community; Albert Striplin, ACMGA, Camelias; Sandy Cauthen, Massage Therapist, Gardening Ergonomics; Lynn Dickenson, ACES Regional Agent, Phenology; Anthony Yarbrough, ACMGA, Transformation Garden; Deborah Boutelier, ACMGA, Gardens of the South; and Betty Hall, Prattville Director of Parks and Recreation, Tracking the Eastern Bluebird.

Year 2024 speakers to date:
Deborah Boutelier, ACMGA, The Potager Garden;

Betsy Smith, PhD, CCMGA, Open the Gift of Herbs. Betsy will be a speaker at the 2025 AMGA Conference., Coming up : Carole Borowski, LCMGA, Cover Crops for the Home Garden; Randy Burkhalter, owner, Prattville Farm Center, Beyond the Farm; Merchandise for the Home Gardener; Wesley Anderson, PhD, Assistant Professor and Extension Specialist, Auburn University, Protecting Garden Plants from Wildlife; Jane McCarthy, Horticulturalist, ACMGA, Flower Arranging; Glenn Huovinen, ACMGA, Grow Bag Gardening and Nate Taylor, Arborist and owner of Taylor Tree Services, Trimming Trees in the Landscape.



Open the Gift of Herbs. Betsy Smith, PhD.
Photographer: Susan Clapp



Free download Pink Flower Cartoon

“We can complain because rose bushes have thorns or rejoice because thorn bushes have roses.” Abraham Lincoln

BALDWIN COUNTY MGA

Don L Richerson, MD

Ready or not, spring has sprung in South Alabama and for the Baldwin County Master Gardeners that means it's time to roll up our sleeves. In January, we started the year with a full Intern Class of 20 future enthusiastic Extension Master Gardeners. For the first time, the Interns elected one of their own to be an ex officio member of the BCMG Board of Directors. In February and March, we served at 7 community Arbor Day tree giveaways throughout the county. Thousands of trees were distributed to hundreds of residents and helped jumpstart our 2024 Volunteering opportunities. We also helped Bay Minette and Gulf Shores with their Plant and Seed Swap projects. Elmer Vick spearheaded the "John Kitch" tomato project, and we raised a substantial contribution for the USA Mitchell Cancer Research Center selling the tomato plants. What's not exciting about that! The Spring Plant Sale Committee has the greenhouses full of quality plants for our sale

April 4-6 and we look forward to having all of you come to our "Paradise Found" AMGA Conference at the Daphne Civic Center from April 22-24, 2024. Our resourceful Steering Committee has planned and assured it to be among the very best in Master Gardener conferences. Their request for "all hands on deck" has energized the club and we can't wait to see you and learn with you in late April. Happy Gardening this year from your BCMG colleagues.



Arbor Day at Bay Minette with Interns/Volunteers
Photographer: unknown.

BLOUNT COUNTY MGA

Irene Latham

Blount County 2023 Master Gardener interns chose as their special project to refurbish the grounds surrounding the gazebo and covered bridge at Palisades Park. Built and dedicated in 1999, the gazebo was designed by Norman McAnnally and made possible by the fundraising efforts of Blount County Master Gardeners. The bridge was added in 2000. With assistance from Bethany O'Rear, interns made decisions about which plants to keep (daylilies!) and which to remove (wild nandina and Mondo grass). Interns performed general maintenance tasks, including cleaning out pebbles and fallen leaves before adding interest to the garden by planting new plants: Dwarf Panicle Hydrangea (Bobo® hydrangea), Coral bells (Firefly and Indian Summer Splashberry), Ajuga Reptans, Flowering Cabbage, Autumn Ferns, and donated Sedum and Hosta. The team freshened up the wooden garden sign by sanding and re-staining it. In the sign bed, they added trailing rosemary, white pansies and yellow snapdragons. For a seasonal touch, they

attached autumn leaf garland and bows to the fence along the walkway between the gazebo and bridge. After mulching the beds with pine straw and setting up a watering schedule, the group congratulated themselves on a job well done. Thanks to the efforts of these dedicated gardeners, the gazebo, bridge, and surrounding gardens will continue to provide beauty and enjoyment to those visiting Palisades Park.



Blount County EMG Interns hard at work.
Photographer: Susan Hagen

CALHOUN COUNTY MGA

Teri Gilbert

After a mild winter perusing seed catalogs, here we are at the beginning of the spring and summer gardening seasons! Along with dreaming of the perfect vegetable garden, Calhoun County Master Gardeners have been looking ahead at ways to improve our home grounds. We are fortunate to have 17 acres to maintain. Cane Creek Community Gardens is the primary Calhoun County site for Extension training and education.

The Cane Creek Community Gardens also includes a two-bay greenhouse that was in need of some renovation. We improved the greenhouse's evaporative cooler system, which provides climate control for a variety of plants sold to the public by Master Gardener volunteers.

Aside from traditional greenhouse methodologies, with the leadership of Master Gardener Richard Atkinson, Master Gardener volunteers pursue innovative Greenhouse technology with hydroponic germination tables, timers, heaters, LED grow lights, nutrient pumps, and enclosures to ensure proper growth conditions.

The greenhouse, managed by MG Linda Gunnoe, is also used to educate Master Gardeners and Interns, as well as public school students during Earth Days. The greenhouse systems are now fully operational and help provide enhanced opportunities for education and outreach programs by Master Gardener volunteers. Future plans include educational opportunities for horticulture hydroponics with a focus on Alabama native plants.

Our 2024 Lunch and Learn Program begins April 24 at Cane Creek Gardens. They are held the fourth Wednesday of each month from Noon to 1pm and are free to the public. Bring your lunch and enjoy our informative programs!



Greenhouse Extension Master Gardener Volunteers
Photographer: Teri Gilbert

CAPITAL CITY MGA

Mary Eleanor Hines

We ended 2023 with a delicious Christmas luncheon and a successful Silent Auction, from which we made \$1,307. Many members received awards, and the 2024 CCMGA officers were then installed. In January, 2024 we began our meetings in a former venue, Frazer Church.

To begin the year our January meeting is all business with no program. We currently have 117 members with 8 emeritus members. Our current Intern class of 12 people is being held at the County Extension Office. Hopefully, these 12 will become active members upon their graduation. Part of their learning is working with the Helpline program which now operates year-round.

Our education chairman held a sellout workshop, Hive to Honey, in February with another workshop on Kokedama coming in mid-March. There are five more educational workshops scheduled during the year.

After not having a plant sale in five years, we are planning one for this spring in our same reliable venue as in the past. It remains to be our greatest source of funds and a financial help to our five projects: Montgomery Botanical Gardens, Lillie's Garden, Shakespeare Garden, EAT (Educate, Act, Transform) South and Rose-Morris House Garden. Plants donated by the membership are held and nurtured in the MBG greenhouse before the sale.

We continue to have a raffle at each monthly meeting. It can amount to as much as \$28.00 each meeting. Winners are then required to bring an item to be raffled at the following month. It's a fun way to add to our treasury.



Kokodema Workshop. L-R: Janelle Gibbs, Sherry McGilberry
Photographer: Mary Eleanor Hines

CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Cindy Augustine

The Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association (CAMGA) recently participated in the Mardi Gras parade in Wetumpka, AL, on February 10th. The float decorations, designed and created by Projects chair Rebecca Ridley and her team, incorporated the Winter Wonderland theme of the parade with decorations representing the change from Winter to Spring and the key role of pollinators. Many of the float riders dressed as butterflies. Walkers alongside the float passed out seed packets as the float riders tossed out Mardi Gras beads to the large crowd. The Order of Cimarron, who sponsors the parade, awarded CAMGA's float with the first annual "Best Overall Entry" trophy! CAMGA members were surprised, excited, and honored to receive this award!

Currently, CAMGA members are propagating new plants and making plans for our annual Plant Sale, which will be held on Saturday, May 4, 2024, at the Elmore County Cooperative Extension Office, located at 340 Queen Ann Road in Wetumpka. If you're in the area, be sure to stop by and purchase one or more of the many plants for sale.



Mardi Gras Float. On float L-R Rebecca Ridley (top), Kayin Dunn, Terry Chambliss, Darlene Dixon Branyon; on ground left to right, Sherri Davidson, Cindy Augustine, Alex Hill, Kelly Lafreniere, Wiley Johnson, and Michelle Sharpton. Photographer: Unknown.

CHEROKEE COUNTY

Bill Holland

My belief is that gardeners do not have a favorite season. They enjoy all the seasons with the challenges and rewards associated with each. That is how I feel about late winter / early spring. Most everything in the garden is brown – waiting for the sun to coax them out (except for the daffodils!!) The great thing about this time of the year for me is the planning and expectations. What can be done to improve our garden? What plants have we tried that are just not working? What are the new varieties that are just coming to market? What are we going to do differently in our garden?

Being able to do this level of planning with the expectation that our garden will surpass what it has been in the past is one of the many fun parts of our activities at this time of the year. We have not had to face the reality that some of the new varieties just do not perform as advertised. Nor have we had to deal with

the inevitable weeds that invade some of our best beds. Lastly, the hot July / August sun has not come into play.

At this time, hope springs (intentional pun) eternal. Our garden is going to be wonderful. All the new plants are going to take our garden to the next level. Rain will come at exactly the time when it is most needed. If we did not feel that way, we would not be gardeners!!



Center City Park Committee L to R around table: Becky McMichen, Doug Ford, Susan Beavers, Ginny Holland, Bill Holland, Deb Sanden, Ginny Wilson, Gene Wilson. Photographer: Sandra Ledbetter.

CHILTON COUNTY MGA

Kerry Rush

The Chilton County MG Association closed out a successful 2023 with its annual Christmas celebration luncheon and “Dirty Santa” gift exchange. A total of 45 participants enjoyed beautifully decorated tables, fellowship, and fun while “stealing” several of this year’s favored items, a local nursery gift card and an assortment of birdhouses/feeders. The association also celebrated the certification of three new Master Gardeners!

2024 brought renewals, changes and newbies in leadership roles, and plans for the new year are well underway. Our Spring 2024 intern class has begun, and we look forward to their project work of identifying and labeling plants and creating a maintenance schedule for our Demonstration Garden. The CCMGA monthly meetings have provided very interesting and knowledgeable programs by guests Debbie Boutelier (Potager Gardens), Elizabeth York (Cool Weather Vegetable Gardening), and Wayne Barger (Local Flora and Conservation). A few winter volunteer opportunities have included the annual ACES Beekeepers

Symposium and the educational program “Water Fest 2024”. The dedication of the association’s new Shade House and its first official education and community service project, combined for a great celebration. Coming up, the CCMGA’s main focus is its annual Plant Sale (April 13; rain date April 20) located at Goose Pond Park in Clanton. Our dedicated maintenance of the Demonstration Garden, the Extension Office Beds, and the landscape watering at the Clanton Recreation Center has started back and we look forward to the warm weather and bountiful plantings!



Chilton County EMGs at Grand Opening of new COWACO Grant Shade Garden. Photographer: Diane Clapp.

CLAYBANK MGA

Debi Breedlove

For those of us in South Alabama the beginning of spring seems to be everywhere, and the Claybank Master Gardeners (Dale County) have been busy getting ready to enjoy some spring days outdoors!

The group began two new projects last year which will continue this year – designing and constructing a Pollinator Garden and Sensory Garden at Vivian B. Adams School (an educational facility for special needs children and adults) and an abandoned parking lot planting bed at the Ozark Post Office. There are also plans for a spring Plant Sale – something the group has not done since pre-Covid.

One of the first projects this season was to plan and plant a Grow More/Give More Garden

for the neighbor that lives by the Autry Community Center in Ozark.



Grow More/Give More Garden Planting. Janet Shinaberry (second from right) to her left Dee Gilbert. Megan Jones, right, home grounds agent. Unidentified citizens who came to help. Photographer: Unknown

CULLMAN COUNTY MGA

Ellen Hall

We began our year with updates, including new officers, a review of our bylaws and training for the Service Reporting system changes. We also updated our MG roster with the certification of 7 new EMGs from the 2023 class; mentors and interns celebrated at a luncheon Feb. 1.

On the garden front, there was a Potting Party to plant up the wildflower seedlings EMG Brad Mitchell had started for the Wildflower and Native Azalea sale to be held on March 23. The Demonstration Garden and Rain Garden have gotten some attention with workdays to tackle those pesky winter weeds that seem to pop up fully grown just as the perennials are waking up for the spring; both of these gardens have some big projects coming up with irrigation systems replacement in the Demo Garden and deck repair/replacement in the Rain Garden. Hard work is ongoing in the Wildflower Garden with

gravel being spread and packed on the paths to make it handicap accessible and finishing up the benches and handicap ramp on the new deck that is to be made available as an outdoor classroom. On March 10, Rachel Dawsey (EMG and director of the North Alabama Agriplex) met with some of us in the WFG to identify and label the Spring ephemerals currently in bloom.

We are also preparing for our Spring Plant Sale to be held at the North Alabama Agriplex April 19-20.



Labeling wildflowers. EMGs Sonya Boyd, Rachel Dawsey, Deb Spradlin. Photographer: Ellen Hall

EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Sheila Bolen

2024 is off and running. At our January meeting Lee Kelly gave a presentation on Trees of Randolph County, utilizing leaves, bark, and height as some of the points for identification. In February, Sheila Bolen gave a presentation on Angel's Trumpet. Who knew they are considered extinct in their native setting! March will find us touring the vineyards at Five Points Farm in Five Points, AL. April is a tour of Aldridge Gardens, May 4 our plant sale and on May 6 a tour of Recreative Natives Nursery in Cropwell. It will then be time for a summer break! In the midst of all this, our membership dedicates their "extra" time to the School of Blooms at Wedowee Elementary School. The five ladies pictured, and all the other volunteers, are the heart and soul of the gardens and outdoor classroom. It is through their dedication the School of Blooms is the success it is.



School of Blooms Bird Sanctuary. Back row: EMGs Stephanie Yates, Martha Burnett, Susan Reynolds, Cheryl Smith. Front: EMG Valerie Morris, School of Blooms Director

JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

I do believe Spring has sprung here. Oh, the urge to plant something, anything!

We started off 2024 by visiting with a lot of those that attended the annual Jackson County Senior Expo this year. Just letting them know about us. Our Chemical Applicators Workshop held January 23, 2024, was a success. We even added a little money to our coffers.

At our February meeting we heard about pruning from Janet Booth. Later in February we did our usual prep job for the Jackson County Tree Commission/Forest Service Arbor Day tree giveaway which was held February 24, 2024. All 2010 assorted trees that were available were given away in record time.

Our March 7 meeting brought us Jeff Bennett, from Bennett's Nurseries. Jeff

presented a plethora of information on "All About Hydrangeas" and he answered a LOT of questions afterwards.

May's meeting will have Chris Schultz covering "Compost." May 4 we'll be hosting our annual Spring Plant Sale at Jackson County Park in the Jackson County Senior Center parking lot, starting at 9:00 AM. We're working to have a wide variety of plants and maybe other gardening products available.

Meaghanne Thompson, REA, will be presenting "Reading the Nutrition Label: An Essential Tool for Diabetes Control" at our June 6, 2024, meeting. Meaghanne will be providing a recipe tasting. Sounds interesting! Our meetings are held at the Jackson County Senior Center at 9:00 am.

Wishing all a prosperous planting and harvesting season.

JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Amy Weis

March has been a busy month for Jefferson County Master Gardeners. We held our first in-person training on the new Service Report; our Board mingled with the 2024 interns over lunch at their new training location, the Jones Valley Teaching Farm, in downtown Birmingham; and most recently, we were delighted and honored to host Kerry Smith and Jordan Mosely at our Members Meeting! Kerry & Jordan gave a wonderful presentation on the Transformation Garden in advance of our scheduled tour there this coming May. Several of the AMGA Board members including Devonne Ellis, Lyn Webb, Roger Clarke, and Phyllis Clay were in attendance as well. They all got to sit in on a Board & Leadership Meeting afterward and joined us for lunch in the Birmingham Botanical Gardens Cafe. We are looking forward to having a large contingent at the State Conference this year!



JCMGA Members Meeting. EMGs Roger Clarke, Amy Weis. Kerry Smith, State Master Gardener Program Coordinator. Photographer, Patricia Putnam

LAWRENCE COUNTY MGA

Dena Morris

Our Lawrence County Master Gardeners have been busy supporting our ongoing projects. East Lawrence Elementary School is close to being accredited with the Alabama Wildlife Federation. To assist, we will be moving and adding plants into their frog bog, sensory and pollinator beds. Our Lawrence County Signature School Program and Junior Master Gardeners completed their fishpond and successfully managed their new habitat through the winter storms. The Junior Master Gardeners Program currently has 40 students on track to receive their JMG certification in May 2024. February's lesson was Pollination and our elementary students enjoyed pollinating the cucumbers and tomatoes in their hydroponics tower. March will find us sharing information on Habitats in the Garden and we will be teaching the JMGs how to build a "Bug Box".

In March, REA Jayne Luetzow and LCMG members will conduct a Pruning Workshop at the Lawrence County Library. Members are also looking forward to our May Plant Sale. We are planting seeds, propagating plants and dividing perennials from our yards and scheduling workdays to prepare for the sale.



First grader Fayeth Hood hand pollinates cucumbers at Lawrence County Signature School hydroponics tower during a recent Junior MG class. Photo by Susan Steele.

LEE COUNTY MGA

Shelley Aistrup

Gardening with senior citizens is a new focus of ACES. LCMGA is joining this effort under the leadership of Regional Extension Agent Dani Carroll, intern Joan Jacob, and new EMG Lynne Peer. In Lee County, the project will be called Senior Center Garden Club and will feature quarterly programs at Summer Village Azalea Place. The first event on February 12 featured a program, Birding from my Window, by Hal Smith, owner of Wild Birds Unlimited. Future programs will be held in May and August and will include more plant/gardening projects. If all goes well, additional senior living sites will be added.

In cooperation with Nemophily Natives, a local native plant nursery, EMG volunteers will distribute *Asclepias tuberosa* milkweed seedlings to visitors to our booths at Garden in the Park and local Farmers Markets. Information about pollinators, especially Monarch butterflies, will also be shared. Those receiving a plant will be asked to

provide their email address so that we may contact them in late summer to learn if the plants survived and whether butterflies visited the plantings. We will also encourage those planting milkweed seedlings to avoid using a commercial pesticide service on their yard.



Seniors at Azalea Place. L to R: Joe Spooner, EMG Patricia Peoples, EMG Christie Thomley. Photographer: Lynne Peer.

MARSHALL CO MGA

Jo Druen

Like anything else, the garden needed a long winter rest. Pictured is the garden under black plastic for weed control, cover crop of Cereal Rye to thwart nematodes, and raised beds producing onions and kale during the cold months.

There is no down time for gardeners, EVER!!! Marshall County Master Gardeners gathered in mid-January to start planning for the crops of 2024. A sample of what will be planted is as follows:

- Denver beets
- Small tiara cabbage
- Silver queen corn
- Summer dance cucumber
- Rattlesnake green beans

- Clemson Okra
- Tomato:
 - o Big beef
 - o Whopper
- Black beauty eggplant

Scattered somewhere throughout the garden will be Marigolds (usually around the tomatoes to help deter insects) and Zinnias (to attract pollinators). It's going to be a busy season, however, MCMGs are up for the task.



Winterized Garden. Photographer: Jo Druen

MORGAN CO MGA

Julia Chennault

We've had a busy winter at our three greenhouses, working and enjoying each other's company and overcoming challenges of bitter cold and periods of no running water. Every inch of space possible, including the floor under our plant-laden tables, is utilized for plants. Talented members recently built some under-table dollies to make it easier to pull out those plants for easy access. Maintenance of structures and plants, as well as plant propagation, are ongoing weekly endeavors, and we are lucky to have many members and interns pitching in. Some "sneak peek" videos were recently posted to social media to let the public see some of the offerings that will be available at our annual plant sale April 13-14 at Point Mallard Park in Decatur. In addition to all the greenhouse plants, loads are brought in for the sale from many of our home gardens and greenhouses. We continue to be a community presence with monthly plant donations to local hospice patients, programs at the Somerville Library and our monthly Lunch and Learn, and a booth

at our farmer's market. We just finished a weekend of outreach at the home and garden show where close to 600 of the approximately 1,800 attendees stopped to talk to us. Children and adults alike enjoyed getting their pictures taken in front of the butterfly wings. We gave away 400 bags of milkweed seed and information on monarchs, as well as other gardening information furnished by our Extension Service.



Linda Russell, MCMGA, during set-up of our booth at the recent Morgan County Homebuilders Association's Home & Garden Show at Ingall's Harbor in Decatur. Photographer: Aileen Russell, MCMGA.

PIKE CO MGA

Buriece Gracey

The Pike County Master Gardeners had an eventful start to 2024. In January, we learned how to use the new service hours system. In February, we welcomed Jason Powell from Petals From The Past, who both educated and entertained us and our guests. The meeting also gave all attendees the opportunity to take new plants home!

The Pike County Chapter of the Alabama TREASURE Forest Association, the Alabama Forestry Commission, and the Pike County Master Gardeners teamed up to distribute over 900 free trees to the community. The Alabama Forestry Commission provided the trees, while the giveaway was organized and executed by volunteers from the other two organizations.

The Pioneer Museum's landscape project also saw some exciting developments with the addition of seven new shrubs. Several Master Gardeners carefully placed and planted early bloomers to enhance the landscape during cooler months by adding pops of color and excitement.

Additionally, several Master Gardeners recently toured Rex Lumber. The Troy location is the newest of four in the Southeast. Rex Lumber has been manufacturing forest products since the 1920's and is a proud leader in the softwood lumber industry.



EMGs Team Up to Give Away Trees. (L-R) EMGs Nell Haigh, Amy Baker, Jane Stroud, Sue Fraley, Buriece Gracey, Leigh Calk, Judy Russell, Robert Griffin, June Moore, Samantha Rouse, Havard Folmar, Jackie Meggison, Abby Peters (Pike County Extension Coordinator), Sharon Lawrence, and Kaye Jinright. Photographer: Cathy Jorgensen

SHELBY CO MGA

Kate Vogel

The speaker at the Shelby County Master Gardener's February meeting was member Trisha Williams, who explained how to enter volunteer hours in the new recording system.

At the March meeting, Lee County Master Gardener Diana Fortner spoke on design, site preparation, and plant selection for creating a moon garden in the home landscape.

The Mary Ellen Estes Senior Community Center at Heardmont Park received a grant from Shelby County Senior Programs to design and construct raised garden beds with irrigation. SCMGA Interns and members helped plan and oversee the installation of raised beds, filled containers with amended soil, and

planted native Alabama plants in the border rock garden or vegetables and herbs in the container gardens. Members have also been at the Grace Klein Community in Chelsea to help oversee improvements that include building a compost area, preparing for wildflower/seeding, putting down weed block, mulching, building a platform for water tote/irrigation and finalizing beds for planting.

Project coordinator Dennis Stanek is spearheading a project to help Bibb County Extension Coordinator Michelle Giddens implement a grant from the Alabama Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils for Brierfield Ironworks Historic Park in Bibb County. Native plants are to be installed at eight buildings at the park.

SHOALS MGA

Dwight James

Two things signal Spring in Northwest Alabama like nothing else, and that is daffodils and Tulip Poplar trees in full bloom.

After a record year in 2023 of projects, both ongoing and as well as new ones completed, 2024 is getting off to a great start with upcoming projects as well as a new addition to the Shoals Extension Master Gardener's arsenal, a 1,500 sq. ft. commercial greenhouse. What started as a casual conversation with a fellow Kiwanian at lunch one Tuesday in December of 2023 about the need for our group to have a place to inventory, divide and pot up plants, as well as grow off plants for our annual plant sale, has resulted in the SMG partnering with the Arc of the Shoals in Tuscumbia (formerly Hope Haven School). We have taken over their 20-year-old commercial greenhouse, which was never used as a formal greenhouse but more for a storage facility, and it is equipped with electricity, lights, exhaust fans, water, permanent plant tables as well as movable potting tables. Imagine our delight when over 20 Extension Master Gardeners showed up for a formal workday to clean out, clean up, organize pots and cabinets and prepare for the inventorying of plants for our upcoming plant sale! Under the very capable leadership of our Project Chair, Michael Wilson, this older "new to us" greenhouse is beginning to bear the fruits of our labor with several varieties of

perennials, as well as annuals already inventoried and under the watchful eye of Linda Brewer and Pam Arias.

Our upcoming annual Plant Sale will be held at the Florence-Lauderdale Farmers Market on Friday and Saturday, April 26-27th. Our very capable plant sale Chairwoman, Pam Arias, is rallying her troops in preparing for the sale. Whether digging, dividing or plant sitting to assure quality growth, she is in constant contact to maintain our plants health for our success in April!

As Springtime morphs from cool nights to pollen filled days, we are all eager to plant, tend and harvest. As gardeners we all look forward to the journey, as well as the end results.



Shoals Extension Master Gardeners at their greenhouse.
Photographer: Jean Buffler

ST. CLAIR CO MGA

Pam Garrison

At each January Extension Master Gardener meeting, we make signup sheets available that describe each committee and the responsibilities they require. This lets the new members decide where they would like to be involved. These committees gather in small groups and discuss plans for the new year. It is a great way for us to visit and brainstorm about what's to come.

This planning has led to a number of events where we have worked in our county. One of our members gave a presentation at Springville Library; two others did a seed-starting demonstration at the Ashville Library. These were both well attended, which gives the Extension Master Gardener program wider recognition.

One ongoing project we have done each year is pruning the fruit garden at Williams Intermediate School. Quite often, the students can come out to observe us and help stack the pruned materials. This year, we brought some fertilizer for the plants and left it with the science teacher. She plans to have the children put it out before the next rain. The kids all get so excited to hear about the plants and tell us about watching them through the year. This project is encouraging future gardeners.

The Reality Check program also takes place this time of year. Eighth grade students participate to learn fiscal responsibility. A number of our members have enjoyed volunteering at this event at several of the area schools.

TALLAPOOSA CO MGA

Calvin Johnson

Tallapoosa County MGA finished December and filled the early part of 2024 with a plethora of activities and programs that included a Community Christmas Tree decorating contest in Dadeville's Pennington Park, thanks to Charlotte LaVerne and her elves who lit up the park with new ideas and themes! Best of all, we graduated seven new Interns on December 15th, growing our group once again.

In January, we had a great start with Alabama Cooperative Extension Service Coordinator Kerry Smith as our speaker. She explained the new volunteer hours program and how it would be implemented. The Q&A period included a hands-on period on the actual website!

In March, our Leadership Team planned for interesting speakers and projects to draw new members and scores of residents to the hardwood tree Spring Giveaway along a main traffic artery (Hwy 280). About 400 early bird members of the public received 1,500 hardwood tree starter pots of Red Maple trees, Sycamores, Southern Wax Myrtles, and others. EMGs were on hand to instruct the new tree owners on how to best nurture their seedlings and where to plant them after the trees had been assured of a healthy base

root system in their starter pots. Many thanks to Alabama Power for their \$1,500 grant to purchase the seedlings!

The Team also participated in a Spring Cleanup & Bush Trimming Day back on Feb 14th, President's Day, at the Tallapoosa County Court House, now an annual event. There is more in store as 2024 progresses, so stay tuned!



'Mommy, it is bigger Than !!' Tree giveaway on TCMGA Arbor Day; young man is member of public who walked in to receive his free Magnolia tree. Photographer: Calvin Johnson

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

With Spring around the corner, we are preparing for our Pass Along Plant Sale scheduled for April 26-27. There was good attendance on our Seed Starter days while getting plants ready for the sale. Our Extension Master Gardener group is also assisting a couple of Community Charity Gardens in upcoming projects. With our assistance, Stillman Community Garden is preparing to install 100' of T-Frame trellises for vertical growing to increase yields, and Jeremiah's Garden is planning an Open House in May to increase community awareness and involvement. Refreshing our Education Garden adjacent to the Extension Office is also underway.



Seed Starter Day, March 2, 2024 (L-R): EMGs Sailaja Reddy, Jeanie Gray, Gypsy Kee, Elaine Elmore, Elizabeth Wynn, Fran Duncan, Less Duncan, Karen Silliman, Andrea Harrison. Photographer: Wanda Smith

WIREFRASS MGA

Kelly Bexley

The last few months have been busy for the Wiregrass Extension Master Gardeners. We participated in the January seed swap; held our annual pruning workshop at Landmark Park; taught Living History classes at Landmark; and re-covered a donated 12x16 greenhouse, to name a few of our projects. We also welcomed eighteen Interns and had a successful Job Fair where they learned about volunteer opportunities, and where we all put names to faces. They are already volunteering their time and hands to help make our upcoming plant sale successful.

The Junior Extension Master Gardener classes started in January. At the end of the course, ten students proudly shared with their families what they learned during the eight-week class. Each student received a Junior Extension Master Gardener pin and certificate.

With our annual spring plant sale coming up the weekend after Easter, all our Plant Parents are busier than normal. Our greenhouse is bursting with annuals, perennials, houseplants, veggies, herbs, and

bulbs. The nursery is also overflowing with more of the same, as the weather warms and plants are moved outside. If you are in the Dothan area, we would love for you to stop by the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens to visit with us in our greenhouse.



Junior EMGs Chloe Bartlett, Luke Bartlett, Natalie Brosseau, Bristol Elliott, Rowdy Elliott, Anna Grace Skelton, Sophia Skelton, Makenlee Upchurch, Emily Jean Walter, Lucas Whitney. Photographer: Jan Shirley



Courtesy of Pexels



ALABAMA
MASTER
GARDENERS
ASSOCIATION

alabamamga.org

Editor: Patricia Peoples
Lee CO. MGA
205-377-7760

Co-Editor: Terri Scheffler
Jackson CO MGA
803-257-7007

Apprentice: Sheila Bolen
East Central MGA

Copy Editor: Patricia Patty
Calhoun CO MGA

Proofreader: Carolyn
Wade MGNA

State Advisor

Kerry Smith
State EMG

Program Coord
334-844-3036

Cell 334-329-1051

smithkp@auburn.edu



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1-877-252-4769



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you
at
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NEXT ARTICLE FOR PATHWAYS DUE JUNE 15, 2024

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Caroline Etheriedge
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