

HAPPENINGS



SUMMER 2024

Courtesy of Pexels

AUTAUGA COUNTY MGA

Sondra Henley

Where do I start? We had a great 2024 AMGA Conference in Daphne. Many ACMGA members attended. Our 2025 Conference Table was visited by many of the attendees where they participated in a drawing for the tabletop hummingbird fountain. We encouraged everyone to come to Prattville next year! (Insider information: there will be a second tabletop hummingbird fountain in the Silent Auction room!)

Then as soon as we returned home, we went right into the preparations for the Annual Plant Sale. And what a success it was because of all the preparations that had gone into it before the conference. Our membership worked hard at plant digs, potting, labeling and being encouraging and knowledgeable as we met the community that day. We had a record number of participants and a record plant sale!

BALDWIN COUNTY MGA

Don Richerson

Following a productive Spring 2024, the Baldwin County Master Gardeners are looking forward to the summer. After the successful Spring Plant Sale and hosting the AMGA Conference in Daphne, both in April, we have not slowed down. In May, we hosted the first joint meeting of the Mobile and Baldwin County Master Gardeners in Spanish Fort. Plus, we found ourselves busy with gardening chores and several BCMG sanctioned projects. What a glorious Spring we had!

Our Intern Class of 2024 has raised the bar with the amount of volunteerism and enthusiasm exhibited by the class as a whole. We are expecting the class to be fully certified at our July Awards Luncheon. Following the July luncheon, we will welcome the founder of the Alabama Coastal Birdfest to speak at our August meeting. Dr. John Borom has been educating Baldwin CO

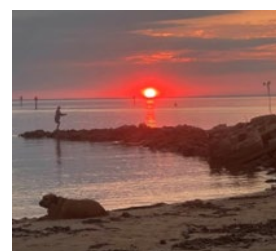
The new owners of Prattville, Danny and Tyler Strock, are remodeling the chapel to give it more historic accuracy. The wooden steps have been replaced with cement and faced with stone. A reservation company has taken over scheduling the venues held in the garden. The Prattville team will continue to work on Tuesday mornings to maintain the garden. We hope you will visit it when you come to the conference in 2025.



Fountains of Knowledge table at 2024 conference.
L-R: Rose McCauley, Cheri Cook, Lanell Tatum,
Sondra Henley, Photographer: Susan Clapp

residents on many subjects from his long association with Coastal Community College and the South Alabama Land Trust. Since 2004 Birdfest has attracted thousands of enthusiasts to Baldwin County and raised over \$100,000. These resources have helped preserve and protect vital coastal wildlife habitats and increased awareness of the great biological diversity of the Alabama Gulf Coast.

And, of course, we are all busy in our gardens and yards. I wish weeds were more friendly, the birds would stop eating my caterpillars and all of you have the best gardens in decades.



Fly Creek Sunset. Photographer: Dr. John Borom.

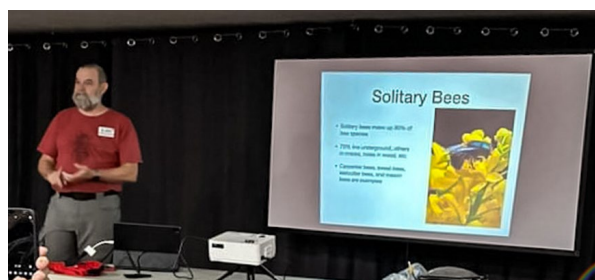
BLOUNT COUNTY MGA

Dee Scott

We are well into a spectacular blooming Spring season here in Blount County and the Master Gardeners are as busy as bees this time of year! The big news was the Annual Plant Sale, held on April 20 at the old Railroad Depot, in Oneonta, Alabama. Vicki Peoples, Blount County Master Gardener's President declared it a resounding success and quite profitable fund-raising effort. The considerable efforts of our Master Gardener members who worked tirelessly promoting and planning the sale, cultivating, and caring for the plants which they contributed to the sale, creating crafts and baked goods donated to the sale, and last, but not least, working exceedingly hard during the sale made every aspect of this incredible accomplishment possible.

Also happening this season is the kickoff of Blount County Master Gardener's Lunch and Learn series. An integral part of the mission of the Alabama Master Gardeners Association, "...to assist and support the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service in its education program". Our Lunch and

and Learn series, created through the efforts of Bethany O'Rear, Regional Extension Agent and Susan Hagen, Advanced Master Gardener, and presented by volunteer Blount County Master Gardeners, certainly meet this criterion. These sessions, consisting of informational talks supporting the Alabama Cooperative Extension community outreach programs, are being presented at convenient locations across Blount County, bringing good solid gardening information to the community during their lunch hour. They have been very well attended and garnered many compliments from the communities in which they were held.



Jeff Scott, Master Gardener. Photographer unknown.

CALHOUN COUNTY MGA

Teri Gilbert

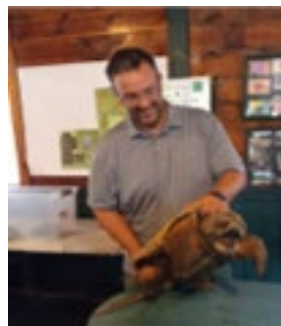
Our Master Gardeners are keeping busy maintaining the demonstration gardens at Cane Creek Gardens. Those who were not able to attend the April State Conference in Daphne volunteered for Earth Days at Cane Creek. Area 4th graders were treated to a fun day of activities centered around Earth Day. What a joy to watch the children learn about nature and all its wonder!

At the State Conference we were awarded a grant of \$1,353. These funds were used for reimbursing the work that was done to improve the Coolant System in the Sherron Pritchett Greenhouse. Thanks to our Treasurer Tom Gilbert for submitting a winning grant.

Master Gardener Charlotte Hand has chaired a Travel Committee for our Master Gardeners to visit area gardens. The first trip took us to Birmingham Botanical Gardens. Our next adventure will take us to Arlington Antebellum Home and Gardens.

Longleaf Botanical Gardens is offering the public many interesting gardening programs and

workshops throughout the year. Visit www.exploreamag.org (Anniston Museums and Gardens). Our first Lunch and Learn Program was presented by Dr. Andrew Coleman. He discussed turtle diversity in Alabama and brought several varieties of turtles. Bring your lunch and join us at noon on the 4th Wednesday of each month through September at Cane Creek Gardens, 77 Justice Ave., Ft. McClellan, AL. The program for July 24 is "Venomous Snakes of Alabama", a topic all gardeners are interested in learning more about!



Dr. Andrew Coleman showing an Alabama Alligator Turtle. Photographer: Tom Gilbert

CAPITOL CITY MGA

Mary Eleanor Hines

This time period being one of the busiest of the year, the chairman of one of our projects, Lilly's Garden, reported that 83 fourth grade students from Dalraida School were taught about the parts of different plants. They also experienced hands-on planting in raised beds. It was a great learning experience for young gardening minds.

On June 12, at Petals from the Past, our education chairman, Janell Diggs (new member-at-large on the AMGA Board,) announced a class was taught by Jason Powell on propagating roses. Forty people signed up for this welcomed seminar. It was so successful that another class of the same will be offered again in the future.

At the conference in April our member, Anne Carr, was awarded a ruby star for 4,000 hours of service and gold badges were awarded to two other CCMGA members.

Our biggest Spring event was our plant sale.

There was excellent participation by the membership in the planning and preparation for this sale. Our EAT (Education, Act, Transform) South chairman planted and donated 1000 vegetable and herb plants for the sale. There were 2634 plants in ten categories that were provided for the sale. It netted approximately \$4,000. A tentative date and plans are already in place for the 2025 plant sale.



Rose Propagation Class. L -R: Martha Howard, Dale Shepherd. Photographer: Mallory Kelley

CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Cynthia Augustine

Central Alabama Master Gardeners have had a busy few months. April saw CAMGA participate in the City of Wetumpka's Earth Day celebration. Valuable information was passed out and many plants were swapped. Also, in April was CAMGA's field trip to view the Vertical and Transformation Gardens, Rooftop Garden, and the Davis Arboretum at Auburn University. Participants had a fantastic trip and learned great information about these programs at Auburn University.

May's activities included CAMGA's annual plant sale on May 4. People turned out in large numbers for the sale, with many lined up before the sale even began. CAMGA had its best plant sale to date with an abundance of plants, vendors, and people making it all come together. Also in May, CAMGA was notified that it has been awarded its 501(c)3 status! President Kelly Lafreniere provided a

cake celebrating this achievement at the May meeting. CAMGA continues to have great attendance at its Lunch and Learn sessions each month. In addition, CAMGA has been conducting public education programs for the community as well. The next public education program on plant propagation will be on June 22 at the County Extension Office in Wetumpka.



Celebrating becoming a 501(c)3 with committee members, L-R: Rhona Watson, Sherri Davidson, Cindy Augustine, Kelly Lafreniere, not pictured Anida Wishnietsk. Photographer: Leslie Bingham.

CHEAHA MGA

Debby Mathews

Being the inquisitive gardeners we are, the Cheaha Master Gardeners took a short field trip for the program portion of our April meeting. We went to see what a mobile citrus grove looks like and how it works! Our hosts were Dennis and Tammy Wisener of Heflin. Dennis is a local banker and he had given me some juicy and impressive grapefruit from their "grove" last summer when I stopped at the bank one day. Following that I arranged for us to visit their home and grove. What makes it mobile is that all their trees are grown in large pots that are moved on hand trucks into their garage when temperatures drop to merit moving. Dennis even demonstrated the moving of these trees for us. Other citrus they grow include key lime, tangerine, and Meyer lemon. They also grow miniature pomegranates. Of course, we had to know where he got the best deal on pots.

Contact me if you want that tip!

For May our major project was our annual plant sale featuring plants we propagate for the sale. Then for June and the summer months our project is growing vegetables in our 8-raised bed demo garden for HEARTS, our local charitable organization. This year's crops include tomatoes, bell peppers, squash, zucchini, beans, okra, and cucumbers. Last year we donated about 300 pounds of produce, and we hope to give more this year! Our garden is part of the Heflin Community Garden that we introduced at the Community Garden Expo in 2023.



Dennis Weisner moving a grapefruit tree.
Photographer: Debby Mathews

CHEROKEE COUNTY MGA

Bill Holland

One of the rewarding things about this time of the year is that a lot of the hard work associated with our gardens has been completed. We have refreshed plants and beds that needed help, swapped out plants and areas that just were not working, and given our plants a good feeding.

We are now ready for the summer and enjoying the fruits of our labor. We are hopeful that the rain will come when needed and that the heat will not be overly oppressive. Either way, we will deal with whatever Mother Nature gives us.

Our Cherokee County Master Gardener service projects are in full swing. Downtown pots, landscape and plants all look their best. The hard work required to make these areas look great is essentially complete (other than dealing with whatever summer brings).

Spring Sales were a huge success thanks to the hard work of all our members. We made countless contacts at the Centre, Leesburg and

Little River Canyon sales. Our greenhouse proved to be "almost sufficient" to handle the volume and meet our needs.

The 21st Century program at Centre Middle School has shut down for the school year. The kids learned lots about plants, propagating, yard art and just all the joys of working in their garden. Many thanks to all our volunteers who helped with this program.

All the activities that we completed as a team help underscore why we chose to be Master Gardeners.



CCMG members working on Memorial Garden in Centre City Park. L-R: Tillie Morgan, Gene Wilson, Ginny Holland, Bill Holland, Elaine Gregg, Susan Beavers. Photographer: Ginny Wilson

CHILTON COUNTY MGA

Kerry Rush

With all wheels in motion (organization, publication, and dedication) the CCMGA 2024 Spring Plant Sale was a tremendous success and plans for next year are well underway! Spring also brought the group's annual Plant Swap meeting. This event was at the beautiful old home place of member Judy Cobb, located in Coosa County. The weather could not have been better for this beautiful setting! Other monthly meetings included guest speaker, Dianna Fortner, presenting her Advanced Master Gardener service project, "The Making of a Moon Garden."

Our June meeting's topic focused on an update of our association's Conservation Group. Formed in May 2023, one of the CG's mission statement components is *"To promote education and awareness of native plant species growing in, or around, Chilton County"*. To fulfill that component, the CG has created a presentation template for use in community educational and awareness settings. Complete with corresponding photos,

topics include native, non-native, and invasive plants. Endangered or at-risk plants are discussed, and the three foci plants of our CG are included along with an extensive list of resources that support the group's goals. We are certainly pleased with the excitement and engagement this newly formed group has brought to our association! Along with our multiple community volunteer maintenances commitments, an update to our newly built Shade Structure includes the addition of water and electricity. Moving forward, our group will continue to organize "field trips" to visit our members' homes and gardens!



Chilton County Master Gardeners.
Photographer: Audrey Giles

CULLMAN COUNTY MGA

Ellen Hall

It has been a busy spring for our EMGs, with not one, but two successful plant sales; we held a native azalea and wildflower sale in March and our spring MG plant sale in April. The April sale was held the weekend immediately preceding the AMGA Conference in Daphne; Holly Hirsbrunner was in charge of the sale but that didn't stop her from attending the conference with me.

We held our May meeting outdoors under a pavilion at Sportsman Lake Park; the change of venue was due to a scheduling conflict, but it was a beautiful day for an interesting program by Jessie Douglas from Quail Forever. Our June meeting was combined with our Awards Dinner where we brought delicious food and recognized the achievements of our EMGs, presenting five Bronze stars, two Silver stars, eight Gold stars, and one Gold badge.

Several workdays have been called and well

attended for maintenance in our Rain Garden and Demonstration Garden.

Power of Produce is back on the calendar with the seasonal opening of the farmer's market in Cullman. CCMGA is one of several organizations that rotate Saturdays to bring a produce-based treat to children who get POP Bucks to spend on a produce item in the market.

The heat (90s) arrived this week in Cullman, so it feels like summertime. May the local watermelons produce well so we can all enjoy the best of the season!



L-R: Marilyn Williams, Felicia Roberts at Power of Produce table at Cullman Festhalle Farmers Market. Photographer: Ellen Hall

DeKALB COUNTY MGA

Donna Elrod

DeKalb County Master Gardeners have just had the honor of being featured in the June issue of Dekalb Living magazine, published by Southern Torch, a locally owned newspaper/news media outlet. The article, written by Ms. Marla Ballard, highlights several of our ongoing projects in the community, such as the Tornado Memorial located at the Rainsville Civic Center, honoring the thirty-five victims from the April 27, 2011 tornados, which ravaged our area.

Our largest fundraising project, our annual plant sale, which is held each year in April at the VFW Fairgrounds in Fort Payne, is very nicely exhibited in the article by Ms. Ballard. She also describes how to become a MG volunteer and the joys of being a MG volunteer as told by the members. Our plant sale theme, "Pass Along Plants", was an enormous success and many thanks go to EVERYONE who did and do support the Master Gardeners.

EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Sheila Bolen

What a busy spring East Central has had! On April 10 a group of us visited Aldridge Gardens where David Doggett gave us a guided tour of the grounds. David never fails to give an educational and enjoyable presentation.

Eight of our members plus two spouses attended the AMGA conference and came home with new ideas and incentives for projects and tours. Congratulations to Cheryl Smith and Susan Reynolds for earning their Gold Badges! Well done ladies!

Our plant sale was a success despite the 3" of rain we received the night before! The mud and wet conditions at Kiwanis Park did not deter our dedicated customers and for that we say, "Thank you!"

Two days after our plant sale a group of us toured Recreative Natives, a native plant nursery on Lake Logan Martin. What a place for a nursery! Another educational and enjoyable tour.

Ralph Sanchez, ECAMGA member and beekeeper, brought his observation hive to

our May 13 meeting (which was open to the public) and gave a presentation on beekeeping. Ralph has been a beekeeper for many years and maintains over 40 hives. Ralph also took his observation hive to Wedowee Elementary School and did a presentation for students there.

June 3 will find our group touring the gardens of Lee and Marty Culver, also on a lake! Gotta love living in lake country! Lee will also talk on his hypertufa projects.



L-R: Susan Reynolds and Martha Burnett show off their Kokodema moss ball plants at the conference. Photographer unknown.

JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

On the second of May we watched Chris Schultz demonstrate how he makes his own Compost. He's been doing it for at least 10 years, so it must be good. And he sells it!

Meaghanne Thompson, Regional Extension Agent from Centre, AL, did a fine job explaining "Reading the Nutrition Label: An Essential Tool for Diabetes Control", on June 6. She also provided a Spinach Yogurt Dip recipe for tasting.

What a great variety of plants at our annual Spring Plant Sale in Jackson County Senior Center's parking lot. We thank Bonnie Plants for their generous donation of vegetables and herbs which added greatly to our own. We broke our old record for sales too.

Our ice cream social at Gorham's Bluff was held at 5:00 PM on July 11.

Coming: Jackson County Fair, September 10-14. Volunteer time for prep is Sept 6 and 7.

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Jackson, MGNA, and Limestone County Master Gardeners tour Elk Wood Manor with owners Mark & Leslie. Photographer: Mark Ardin.

JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Fletcher Harvey

The poet asked, "what is so rare as a day in....?" He said, " June," but more than two dozen Jefferson County Master Gardeners had their special day late in May when we convened in the "loveliest village" for a special tour of Auburn's Transformation Garden organized by Dr. Desmond Layne, Head of the Horticulture Department, and his staff. We were shown the aeroponic vertical gardening as well as the raised beds, currently sporting lovely plantings of marigolds and zinnias.

Among the highlights of the tour was the enthusiasm of our guides, students and staff in the Horticulture Department. They obviously take great pride in where they are and what they're doing.

Following a delightful lunch at Arricia Cucina, the Italian-inspired restaurant in the Laurel Hotel, we were then put in the hands of Dr. David Martin from the Department of

Hospitality Management who conducted an in-depth tour of the Rane Culinary Institute and its roof-top garden with its breathtaking view of downtown Auburn and the University campus. The Institute, with its world-class kitchens and classrooms is far more than a cooking school. Tony and Libba Rane would be very proud. We, as Alabamians, certainly were!



Jefferson County MGs at Transformation Garden
Photographer: unknown student with borrowed phone.

LAWRENCE COUNTY MGA

Dena Morris

We have so much to share and celebrate! We held plant sales in four different locations during the month of May with great success and lots of hard work from all involved! We've started plans for the 2025 plant sale with our newly elected president Wanda Birge. In the coming month we are excited to assist with Grow More, Give More pop-up garden build and setup for Town Creek Library located in Town Creek, AL.

LCMGA was blessed with a 2024 Project Funding Grant from AMGA during the 2023 state conference and we'll be working on the next phase of the Learning Garden at Lawrence County Signature School (LCSS) over the summer.

Not all has been work for LCMGA. Many enjoyed a field trip to Camp McDowell in Nauvoo, AL, and a fun presentation by Allyson Shabel on "Growing Mushrooms."

We were pleased to have 40 students

enrolled in the LCSS Junior Master Gardener program taught by Master Gardeners Judy Ramos and Susan Steele. Twenty-seven students completed the classes and received Junior Master Gardener awards during Awards Day.

We have more exciting news to share as our very own Ms. Rosielene Carpenter was one of three recipients of the Fred Evans ACES Intern of the Year.



Congratulations, Rosielene Carpenter. Job well done! L-R: Jayne Luetzlow, Rosielene Carpenter. Photographer: Marti Johnson

LEE COUNTY MGA

Shelley Aistrup

At the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail (CDWT), the Lee County Master Gardeners created a "Fairy Gardens for Healthy & Sustainable Communities" exhibit. The displays were designed to encourage visitors to Opelika's annual Garden in the Park celebration to walk the trail and visit displays sharing information about community, environment, and preservation. The exhibits were as follows: #1 Frogs are Our Friends, #2 Ants on Parade, #3 We Love Leaf Litter, #4 Clean Water Matters, #5 Natural Fertilizer, #6 Mushrooms are Toadstools, #7 Why We Need Bugs, #8 Save the Bees, #9 How Many Caterpillars Can You Eat?, #10 Ladybugs Bring Us Luck, #11 Can you carry your house on your back? A Snail Can! and #12 Invite a Bluebird. The more than 100 visitors who visited the trail were given a brochure outlining each of the exhibits and were invited to decorate painted rocks to add to the displays. In addition to the exhibits, more than

eight handmade fairy houses created by Master Gardeners and Rocky Brook Potters of Opelika were featured. The CDWT is a native garden featuring native azaleas, wildflowers, ferns, and more. The trail is paved with red rock and includes benches, signage, and plant identification labels. This public garden in Opelika's Municipal Park is open to the public every day of the week from sunrise to sundown. We hope that visitors to our area will stop by and visit this hidden gem.



Save the Bees! A CDWT fairy nature trail exhibit. Photographer unknown.

LIMESTONE COUNTY MGA

Bobbi McFadden

On January 23, 2019, when the staff and students toured the new \$59 Million state-of-the-art Athens High School, located in Athens, Alabama, they were thrilled with many aspects of it including an acre-sized courtyard showcasing outdoor classrooms and art displays. Five years later, school administrators, teachers and students requested help designing and planting this space.

Inspired by the school colors - Black and Gold - and a soon to be installed statue of the school Mascot - the Golden Eagle - Limestone County Master Gardeners Denita McElyea, Kathy Cook, Soozie Pline, and Marcy Smith are working with AHS instructor Terah Jones and student members of extracurricular activities to embellish the area with plants that pop with these school colors.

This joint team will add black pots and urns to bring the black to the space and golden colored shrubs and perennials to place

in the pots along with a few shrubby beds. The students also asked for pink flowers, annuals, to provide contrast along with the existing pink-blooming cherry trees.

Planning began in the fall of 2023 with AHS principal Willie Moore and LCMGs Mike Carver and Soozie Pline. A grant application for plant material expenses was submitted to the Alabama Master Gardeners Association in winter 2023. Thanks to a generous \$1000 grant from AMGA and in-kind plant donations from local Athens nurseries, this Alabama community project will be a success! Boots on the ground designing and planting is scheduled from March through May 2024.



Athens High School. Photographer unknown.

What is a weed? A plant whose virtues have never been discovered.

-Ralph Waldo Emerson

stock.xchng/MCMCS

MARSHALL CO MGA Jo Druen

Marshall County Master Gardeners have the honor and privilege of having our very own beekeeper, Jeff Scott. Jeff became a Master Gardener in 2023 and has already made many contributions to the Marshall County Master Gardeners, not only as a gardener, but as an Apiarist. He has given informative talks to the Marshall County Master Gardeners monthly meeting and Blount County MG Lunch and Learn series on “Native Bees and Beekeeping.” Recently, Jeff was able to provide four hives to Grown by Grace Farms (a family-owned farm in Marshall County) to assist with pollination of a newly developed area of the farm. Jeff also tends the bees at the Huntsville Botanical Garden and the Restoration Nursery for the Friends of the Locust Fork River. Jeff is

always willing to assist with Bee knowledge and resources.



MG Jeff Scott, (2023), Owner of Rainbow's End Apiary. Photographer: Jo Druen.

MOBILE CO MGA

Cindy Findlay

Mobile County Master Gardeners (MCMG) have been busy since March! We participated in three large events: The Festival of Flowers, The Mobile Botanical Gardens’ “Plantasia” plant sale, and our Second Annual Spring Festival.

In April, many MCMGs attended the AMGA Annual Conference, this year hosted by Baldwin County Master Gardeners (BCMG) at the Daphne Civic Center, just across Mobile Bay. Some of our MCMGs also helped at the Conference.

In May, we teamed up again with our neighbors, the BCMGs, for a joint meeting where Jarrod Jones, the Regional Director of the Gulf Coast Research & Extension Center, presented the history and purpose of the Center and its importance to local and Alabama agriculture.

We also keep busy manning an “Ask a Master Gardener” table at Market in the Park, a farmers’ market, in downtown Mobile every Saturday, April 6–July 6, a tradition in Mobile.

MCMG’s Speakers Bureau has kept a busy schedule providing Bellingrath Gardens and our Mobile Public Libraries with speakers for

gardening topics. Thanks to MCMGs Alice Marty, Barbara Boone, Karen Ruckert, Emily Arellano, and Bill Fink. What a great team to present for us!

Jumping into the summer, we have our Mentor training in June for our fall intern class, that begins in August. Our outdoor activities are curtailed in July because of the extreme heat; however, our MCMGs still keep our DREAM Garden at the Auburn Extension Center watered twice a day.



Mary Ann Days, MCMG, harvesting from our Demonstration Garden, which goes straight to our local food bank. Photographer: Jack LeCroy

MORGAN CO MGA

Julia Chennault

Our annual two-day plant sale in April was a huge success. A change of venue was challenging, but everything went fine under the "big tops." At Saturday's opening, 260 people were waiting in line to shop! Of our 6,050 plants, we sold 5,715, including 1,260 natives, and we counted about 2,000 total customers. Greenhouse work is ongoing, but now at a much less hectic pace. We are planning our first Fall sale on September 21 in the courtyard garden of Hospice of the Valley in Decatur.

Several of us experimented with winter sowing earlier this year and will present a program on the results, with attendees planting a milk jug, at our November 15 Lunch & Learn. L&L programs are offered to the community at no charge monthly, except in December and January. Subject matter is generally garden-related, but other nature topics are sometimes scheduled.

At our regular May meeting, representatives of two of our grant recipients (a high school FFA program and an elementary school establishing a garden on new property) spoke to us about how they used the funds. We especially enjoyed

hearing from a couple of FFA students about their experiences on their garden project, which included getting certified to drive a skid-steer loader!

We continue to be a community presence with monthly plant donations to local hospice patients, programs at the Somerville Library, and a booth at our farmer's market. We also have field trips throughout the warmer months that are fun and informational.



(L - R): Austyn Randolph and Chesney Taylor (Hartselle High School), Kim Johnson (Crestline Elementary School), Blaine Johnson (Hartselle High School), and Theresea Goode (MCMGA). Photographer: Norris Johnston (MCMGA)

PIKE CO MGA

Buriece Gracey

The Pike County Master Gardeners have been busy this spring, with their efforts focused on the 2024 plant sale. They dedicated countless hours to growing, transplanting, and preparing hundreds of plants for the event, that was held at Troy Fest. In addition to their gardening endeavors, the Master Gardeners also gathered to create pressed-flower sun catcher kits and bookmarks, using the gifts of nature in a creative way. These items were a huge success among visitors. Another highlight of the event was the handcrafted pollinator drinking fountains made from dishware and the colorful pollinator poles constructed from glass beads. Overall, this year's plant sale was one of the best yet.

Continuing their commitment to supporting the Pioneer Museum of Alabama, the Master Gardeners volunteered at the Thunder on Three Notch event. This two-day event showcased living history, with skilled artisans and craftsmen dressed in period clothing, bringing their crafts to life. The event also

featured a reenactment of two battles fought during the Civil War, adding to the historical ambiance.

Looking ahead, the Master Gardeners are excited about a new project they started in June. Throughout the summer months, they will be providing fresh-cut flowers to a local nursing home on a weekly basis. Their goal is to bring joy to the residents by sharing the beauty of their flowers.



2024 Plant Sale. (L-R) Master Gardeners Jane Stroud, Judy Russell, and Nell Haig work the plant sale booth at Troy Fest. Photographer: Unknown

SHELBY CO MGA

Kate Vogel

June 1 was SCMGA's first-ever plant sale at Helena's Farmers Market, and June 13 was our second at Heardmont Park's Senior Center Community Festival. Kerry Smith, State MG Program Coordinator, and Devonne Ellis, AMGA President, attended our June 14 meeting. Jefferson County MG Richard Cybulsky spoke on "Shade Gardening."

Capitol City MG Henry Lewis presented "Square Foot Gardening" at our May 10 meeting. On May 21, member Lary Kronk led our inaugural Lunch and Learn on "How to Grow Tomatoes".

Karen Mitchell, Jefferson County MG, spoke about "Container Gardening" at our April 12 meeting. In April, several members attended the State AMGA Conference in Daphne where SCMGA was honored for our Gardeners' Gab, which won

SHOALS MGA

Dwight James

The Shoals Master Gardeners welcome Makahla Holloway, our new Regional Home Grounds Extension Agent. Makahla hit the ground running, as many of us had the opportunity to meet her at a recent Alabama Nursery and Landscaping conference held at the Coliseum in Florence. We look forward to working with her on future projects.

The 2024 Plant Sale is now in the books, and what a plant sale it was! April 26th and 27th weather was outstanding, the crowds were excellent, and all the energy and effort put forth by everyone resulted in record sales for the Shoals Master Gardeners. This year also marked our first year to inventory, divide, and grow plants in our new (old) greenhouse. After a season under our belts, we are continuing to make minor adjustments and routine maintenance to the greenhouse and look forward to it becoming a valuable asset to our group and creating value to our plant inventory.

As soon as the clock expired on our annual plant sale, our project chair, Michael Wilson, was ready to kick off our 2024 Projects with 3 projects already scheduled and now completed

the newsletter award and a \$100 check and certificate. Heidee Vansant, our longtime editor, did a fantastic job.

Volunteers assisted Bibb County Extension Coordinator Michele Giddens in landscaping one of the cabins at our Brierfield Ironworks Park workday April 16 and two more at our April 27 workday. This was funded by a grant from the Alabama Association of Resource Conservation and Development Councils.

Members helped with Grow More Give More Pop Ups at the Alabaster Senior Center and Wilsonville Library, and continue to help with growing, harvesting, and distributing fresh produce at Manna Farms ministry. SCMGA and Extension manned a booth at the Shelby County Retirees' Spring Picnic April 24, to advertise what Extension has to offer and to pass out flyers for the next Master Gardener class.

and more on the way. One of those projects was a local Habitat for Humanity house where we performed the design, layout, and installation of the landscaping, as well as guidance on lawn sowing and seeding.

As Spring gives way to summer, we look forward to upcoming projects, garden tours, and our continued progress with our greenhouse and its improvements. Summer 2024 is shaping up to be the best ever!



Shoals Extension Master Gardeners working with Habitat for Humanity. Photographer: Jacqueline Broder

ST. CLAIR CO MGA

Pam Garrison

This Spring, our members participated in the “Reality Check” program in conjunction with the St. Clair County Schools and the Extension system. Middle school students learned how to manage life after graduation. A miniature city is set up in the gym and the “offices” are manned by adult volunteers. The students choose a career and then are told their salary, as well as their marital status and if they have any children. They learn about buying a car, renting a house, getting insurance, paying utilities, etc. This program is a real eye-opener for the kids and a great way to volunteer in the community.

On May 15, four of our members, Marianne Landman, Cherie Hoffman, Carolyn Pennington, and Pam Garrison worked on sprucing up the Moody Welcome sign. They

replaced the pansies with a red, white, and blue Patriotic theme using angelonia, blue daze, vinca, and salvia. The existing shrubs were pruned, fertilized, and the American flags were placed in the pots. The finished product made the sign ready for the summer season.

On June 12 two members, Brenda Preston and Danny Norman, volunteered at the Pell City Farmers Market. A St. Clair County Master Gardener booth was set up, and information was provided about the August classes.

The Regional Extension Agent, Angela Treadaway, presented a workshop titled “Jamming with Strawberries” with several of us in attendance. It was a “berry” well organized and “jamming” good time!

TALLAPOOSA CO MGA

Calvin Johnson

To kick off the year, Kerry Smith gave us a detailed explanation on how to log hours under the new program. In February, we heard avid Dadeville arborist, Tom Campbell, explain his hobby—trees! We later “experienced” an awesome Callaway Gardens tour. Next, we learned how to install/monitor/control a backyard drip or sprinkle irrigation system for plants and vegetables, thanks to Dani Carroll, Regional Extension Agent. In May, Rip Weaver, former Executive Director of Aldridge Gardens (Birmingham), gave a landscape architect expert’s description of how to propagate, grow and landscape with hydrangea varieties in their Alabama gardens. He kept fifty members/guests busy examining a large selection of hydrangea specimens he cultivated in a home garden. Samples and cuttings were donated. The group welcomed his advice on what might be going wrong in their own hydrangea gardens because of issues related to soil, temperature, drainage, improper location, pruning techniques and pest infestation. Our lessons learned included such key points as

(a) Hydrangea buds form on old vine stalk growth, (b) Prune before January to prevent killing off new buds, (c) Hydrangea roots are shallow and root in loosely tilled clay-based soils just as well as mixtures of potting soil and sand, (d) Protect plants during freezing weather, and (e) Soil pH determines the bloom’s color which one may control with the addition of lime. In a new initiative, we invited the public to several meetings as an outreach effort and a way to meet and recruit new members.



Rip Weaver Displays Hydrangea. Photographer: Calvin Johnson

TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

During June, Tuscaloosa County MGA members were invited to two local but diverse tours which were both educational and enjoyable. Jason Fleishman, incoming president of the MS/AL Daylily Society, introduced us to the many aspects of daylilies, as they were at peak bloom. Hybridizing and propagation techniques were taught to the group.

In another presentation and tour, Martin Blair (Underground Forest Mushroom Farm) introduced us to his high-tech mushroom farm in downtown Tuscaloosa where several mushroom varieties and microgreens are grown and processed for both farmer's market and commercial clients.

Planning is underway for our Fall Plant Sale to be held in October. Our Master Gardener group is also continuing to assist local Community Charity Gardens and Hospice of West Alabama.

Refreshing our Education Garden adjacent to the Extension Office is also underway as the garden transitions from Spring to Summer crops and continues to foster interest in passersby.



Martin Blair presentation to Tuscaloosa MGs.
Photographer: Dan Sutton

WIREGRASS MGA

Kelley Bexley

Fourteen WMGA members attended the State Conference in Daphne, and we all brought home nuggets of information to share. We also brought home three awards: Jo Termotto received the AMGA Intern of the Year Award; Kelly Bexley received the 2023 AMGA Outstanding Newsletter Award for "The Garden Plot"; and we were awarded a grant to complete setting up a greenhouse donated by one of our members! Next year we hope even more WMGA members will attend the conference in Prattville!

Before the heat really settled in, two of our MGs opened their gardens for tours. Sara Jo Adams has cultivated flowers for many years and has strived for the cottage garden look, with daylilies, hydrangeas, cone flowers, roses, Japanese maples, gloriosa lilies and much more – including a raised-bed vegetable garden. Jeanne Murphy hybridizes beautiful daylilies, but her garden also boasts so much more, including hostas, Texas Sage, coreopsis, iris, fruit trees, roses, and a vegetable garden. Both gardens are beautifully maintained and landscaped.

Following our very successful spring plant sale in April, WMGA has stayed active with monthly Lunch and Learn programs, participation in Go

Garden Day at the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens, Spring Farm Day at Landmark Park, volunteering at the Help Desk, all the while planning and planting for our annual fall plant sale in October. This summer will find us teaching classes to kids at Aunt Katie's Community Garden and Landmark Park. Best wishes to all for a good summer!



L-R: MG's Jan Shirley, Phyllis Poole, Linda Cantlin, Devonne Ellis, Judy Gobble, Faye Carnley, Charm Russler, Sara Jo Adams, Sue McCabe, Helen-Sue Kemp, Darryl Rigsby, Susan Rigsby, Linda Isley. (not pictured Rita Moore).

Photographer: Kelly Bexley



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Courtesy of Pexels

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