

ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2025

The AMGA Advisory council met on February 4, 2025 at Petals from the Past, Jemison, Alabama.

Chairman Skeeter (Edwin) Sims called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone. Thirty associations were represented. Minutes from the November 5, 2024 meeting were approved.

President's Report

Devonne Ellis welcomed everyone and thanked the representatives and guests for attending.

Vice President's Report

Debbie Boutelier presented to the membership the Alabama Master Gardeners' badge wallet which will be given to each person who registers for the AMGA State Conference. The first name badge is free but there will be a charge for a replacement.

Debbie recognized the chairpersons for the upcoming conferences to give a report.

- 2025 AMGA Conference, April 3-5 at First Baptist Church Prattville.

Sondra Henley the general chairperson introduced her co-chairs: Jane Bosin—Communications and Finance and Rose McCauley, Speakers. Amy Richardson, Silent Auction chairperson requested associations to send in their silent auction items as quickly as possible. There will be sufficient parking for the conference.

- 2026 Conference, May 6-8, 2026, Westin Hotel, Huntsville
"Gardening to the Moon and Back" is the theme.

Several speakers have been secured: Doug Tallamy, Melinda Myers, and Harvey Cotten.

- 2027 Conference Birmingham

The committee has begun the process of securing venues.

Extension Update

Kerry Smith

- Members were reminded to sign the Memorandum of Understanding as quickly as possible. 300 more Master Gardeners reported hours in 2024. There are 72 more interns participating in the spring class than in last year's spring class.
- Search for Excellence Projects have been received and will be judged by the end of the month.
- There are still issues with Dues Tracker and the Service Report. The major issue is multiple accounts for the same person.

****Correction to Minutes from Kerry**

The actual difference between our number of 2024 reporting volunteers and 2023 is this 2023—275 intern EMGVs . 1,427 certified EMGVs. Total=_ 1702.

2024—281 interns EMGVs. 1501 EMGVs . Total= 1782. Overall increase of 5%

Round Table Discussion

The members participated in three round table discussions:

1. Retention/Recruitment/Reach the next generation of MGs
2. Fundraising for LMGA besides plant sales
3. Grow More/Give More, School Gardens, Community Gardens

After three 15-minute discussion sessions for each group the moderators presented information from the groups.

- **Retention/Recruitment/Reach the Next generation of MGs**

Retention

- Send cards to members throughout the year – for special occasions, just to say Hey, Happy EMG Anniversary, we miss you, or whatever you decide
- Call members when they miss the monthly meeting several months – How are you? Can we help you with anything? Miss you, etc.
- Offer a carpool to members – for vol. activities and monthly meetings
- Find methods to make monthly meetings as time efficient as possible
- Have food (of course we do!) – but this can take on new creative ideas, like monthly or seasonal themes – celebrate birthdays – change the placement of the food/social time on the agenda – This month is “opposite day”, our food will be at the end, instead of the beginning of mtg
- Celebrate accomplishments each month or quarterly – most hours, above-and-beyond, major accomplishments, etc.
- Schedule meeting times and project work days at different times of day – a set schedule for some to be daytime and others to be weekend (proj’s) or nighttime (monthly mtg)
- Invite senior members to be monthly meeting speakers – 15 min. is fine – doesn’t have to be an hour
- Find a variety of activities that accommodate all members’ abilities – an advisor at the project when they’re no longer able to “pull weeds” – offer demonstrations at plant sales, like propagation or repotting indoor plants – etc.
- Discuss co-hosting an appreciation luncheon with your Extension Office – celebrate various accomplishments from the previous year – celebrate unique teamwork – 10+ years of activity – etc. --- K.I.S, make these an easy lift. Appreciations need not be overly complicated.

Recruitment

- Recruit all year! – at all your public facing activities, your projects, gardens, education events, civic festivals, etc., etc.
- Keep a call-back list and call the interested folks when it’s time to register – we have a predictable schedule for registration now – help advertise this schedule and prepare potential interns for June and November

-Schedule “help days” at the Extension Office, library, or other central location to assist future interns during registration season – some need computer help, either don’t have one or are less experienced – work with Extension to organize these.

-Create late afternoon or weekend activities so all interns can complete certification requirements – make sure you know the most current requirements for intern certification

-Mentor interns – again, need not be complicated – make sure the Extension Agent is part of developing these strategies

-Where possible, partner with neighboring MGAs and County Offices to support intern training in a centralized location. Having it in the same location each time makes marketing easier and less confusing for potential interns.

(repeat of several suggestions under “Retention” – the principles are similar)

- **Fundraising**

-Notecards with photos of flowers (members yards or ___)

Photo contest for best pictures to put on notecards, entry fee

Autauga sells theirs 3/\$5

Use photos for calendars

-Christmas Greenery - members collect greenery from their homes or woods

Swags, wreaths, garland, etc. are made

Foundation wreaths are ordered from ??? (Mobile or Baldwin)

-Garden Tours - Lee County has had success

Another county put the addresses of the GT on fans and they were checked off/punched

Focus on a plant in each garden and have them for sale with plant info

-Christmas Home Tours

-Fall Fest

-Bulb Sales

-Member sale to member - make list of what is for sale, members contact other members and buy from them on a set day to pick up and pay. This was done during COVID and was a success for Autauga and Chilton

-Partner with community restaurants

Chicken Salad Chick partnered with Autauga within a certain time limit, receipts were collected and 3% was given to ACMGA

Other counties have success with pizza, sandwich, etc.

MG information was set up on a table, MG there to greet and say thank you

-White Elephant Swap

-Raffles

-Auctions

-Bake Sales (Cottage Law course)

-Vendor Booths at Craft Fairs and conference

- **Grow More Give More**

-GMGM – How do we engage with local communities for community gardens? School Gardens? Teaching others how to grow their own produce? fruit?

-Common theme – difficulty getting community to respond to offerings, workshops, etc.

Community gardens – offer topics that fit your demographics

--Plant Sales - have demonstrations, offer soil testing, garden tool sharpening (only garden tools), etc. Get kids involved - one LMGA offers \$1 vouchers to kids – they can pick out plants started in paper cups, etc.

-Sensory and pollinator gardens for special needs population

-Ozark, AL – an underserved area – filled in public swimming pool and made a garden area – they hold demonstrations there – trouble getting community to respond.

-Libraries – get them involved – make sure they have pamphlets, etc. with information about AMGA and your local association.

-Leave pamphlets in Co-ops, local nurseries.

-4 H – see if there are any horticultural aspects to get involved in with the kids.

Ask A Master Gardener at farmer’s markets, community events, fairs, etc.

Announcements:

Skeeter reminded the associations to get their dues in. Only 23 of 32 associations have sent in dues. Please send the dues to Cecilia Adams, treasurer.

Sherilyn Osborne announced flyers were available for the Blount County Fall Conference, October 2. The flyer will be placed on the AMGA website.

Sheila Bolen, editor of the newsletter, stated there have been staff changes. She is looking for someone to proofread Happenings/Pathways. There are also new guidelines that will be distributed to the associations’ presidents and Pathways reporters.

Kate Vogel, Project Funding chair, reported only two requests were sent for projects funding. The committee will meet after the meeting to review the requests.

Dena Morris displayed a new merchandizing product: an AMGA spiral notebook. If interested contact Dena.

Julie Conrey, member of the Funding Committee, stated the committee is trying to determine how and if it can spend AMGA funds to incentivize associations. The committee is seeking two members from smaller associations for input. If you are interested in serving on the committee, please contact Julie at 314-799-8500.

The Advisory Council May 6 meeting will be at the **Jemison Municipal Center, 14 Padgett Lane, Jemison** at 10 a.m.

The meeting adjourned.

Cynthia Kershaw
Advisory Council Secretary

NOTICE for Silent Auction Items

Please contact Amy Richardson at atr2280@gmail.com to know what items are coming for the Silent Auction. She would appreciate it if you can deliver the items before the conference.

If your association would like to support the silent auction by donating money, most associations typically contribute around \$100. Please send your donation to Cecilia Adams, the AMGA Treasurer, and make the check payable to AMGA.

Please send checks to

PO BOX 3129

Decatur AL 35602

Thank you

Cecilia Adams