

# HAPPENINGS

Spring 2026

## AUTAUGA COUNTY MGA

Rose McCauley

On February 21, fitting with the Arbor Day Foundation mission, Autauga County Master Gardeners Association (ACMGA) met in the Pratt Park pavilion building and started bundling and labeling tree seedlings to be given away to members of the community. Thirteen varieties such as Pawpaw, Catalpa, Elderberry, Redbud, Bald Cypress and Wax Myrtle were prepared in bundles of two. The tree giveaway opened at 8:00am and the eager citizens started browsing and selecting young saplings to take home and plant. ACMGA members were there and discussed tree varieties, planting, care and offered information about the Master Gardeners program. At 9:15, as if on cue, pouring rain arrived as a sign of the important relationship between water and trees. The rain stopped and customers continued “shopping” for trees. ACMGA enjoyed a very pleasant and successful Arbor Day.

On February 24, ACMGA members participated in the 2026 Autauga County Water Festival. This year’s theme was ‘Water: Nature’s Gift!’ More than 600 fourth graders attended and learned about water stewardship. The classroom

stations were: “A Drop in the Bucket” highlighting how we need to conserve water; “The Incredible Journey” describing the movement of water within the water cycle; and “Edible Aquifer.” Here the students learned about aquifers and created one out of edible ingredients which they enjoyed eating after class! ACMGA has had a busy start to 2026.



Arbor Day tree give away. Front L-R: Rose McCauley, Bill Gillespie (Prattville Mayor) Back L-R: Unknown, Logan Hicks (Autauga Forestry), Chris Wood (City Urban Management).  
Photographer: Unknown.



## BALDWIN COUNTY MGA

Deborah Marriott

Baldwin County Master Gardeners Association (BCMGA) completed a very busy and productive quarter. On January 29, Regional Extension Agent Carmen Flammini and Intern Class Coordinator Anita O'Connor, mentors, BCMGA Board Members and extension personnel welcomed 19 new interns at an introductory breakfast; the course continues through April.

Our recent monthly meetings included a January 14 presentation on Longleaf Pines by Ryan Peek of the Alabama Forestry Commission, and a February 11 Program/Project Fair at Graham Creek Nature Preserve. Members explored approximately 30 county-wide projects. BCMGA volunteers also assisted with seven local Arbor Day events. Our March 11 monthly meeting featured Kip McConnell from Plant Development Services, a division of Flowerwood Nurseries in Loxley. Kip shared information on camellias and the development of new summer blooming hybridized varieties, "Early Surprise" and "Early Celebration," to be released in spring of 2027.

Additionally, March is providing opportunities for the public to attend weekly spring workshops. "Tuesdays with Master Gardeners" began on March 5th at 6:00pm. These workshops culminate with a full day workshop on azaleas. "Azaleas 101 Workshop" will be held on March 24, 8:30am-3:00pm at the Baldwin County Coliseum in Robertsdale.

April brings our annual spring plant sale April 9, 10 and 11, 9am-4pm at Weeks Bay Reserve in Fairhope. A plethora of additional Master Gardener volunteer activities occurred during the first quarter of 2026.



BCMGA class of spring 2026 interns.

Photographer: Kay Smith



## BLOUNT COUNTY MGA

Susan Hagen

2026 is the third year in Blount County Master Gardeners Association's (BCMGA) one-of-a-kind Lunch and Learn program. It is one-of-a-kind because it does not take place at one set venue, but in a different county municipality from noon to 1 pm on the third Wednesday of each month, February through November. The motivation for this circuit rider pattern is to take information about Master Gardeners and Extension to as many areas of the county as possible. Topics are as varied as the venues. They include, for example, T-cup gardens, growing zinnias, basic floral arrangement, garden Haiku, and winter seed starting. Moreover, all presenters are Blount County Master Gardeners. We were pleased to share this outreach and research-based information mission to a broader audience during the recent Alabama Public Television "Spotlight on AG" episode.

On March 5, BCMGA partnered with Blount County Natural Resources Planning Committee to help the

Alabama Forestry Commission distribute 1,200 free seedlings to 200 people in advance of Arbor Day in April. The program was so successful that coordinated plans are already underway for another tree giveaway at the Blount County Multipurpose Center early March 2027.

Currently BCMGA members are engaged in seed starting and potting in preparation for the association's April 18 plant sale in the breezeway of the Multipurpose Center, 8 am to 1 pm, 6700 County Highway 1, Cleveland, AL.



Participants at BCMGA hosted March 18 Lunch and Learn floral design workshop.

Photographer: Susan Hagen

## CALHOUN COUNTY MGA

Tim Kaylor

Spring has sprung, and it's time to get busy ripping out and cleaning up the old dead stuff and installing the fresh, new living stuff. That's just what our Calhoun County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) team and Cane Creek Community Garden (CCCG) team have been busy doing. With the help of the greenhouse team sowing seeds, pruning and cleaning up their plants and the 12 newly graduated interns putting into practice what they learned, our home grounds and greenhouse are looking impressive. The old saying, and I'm paraphrasing here, "it takes a village," has never been truer than it is in these times. We're blessed to have a willing and resolute Executive Committee, location representatives and MG members moving our association forward.

At our April, May and June CCMGA meetings, we'll learn about: "Why to Incorporate Herbs into Your Landscape," "Finding Garden

Gold in Alpaca Poop Mountain" and "Four Seasons Gardening." Our May plant sale provides our members and community with vegetable seedlings, shrubs, trees and flowering plants and income for projects. At our "Lunch and Learn" meetings (April, May, June), which are open to the community, we'll learn about "Hydroponics-Leafy Green Production and the Future of Supplementing Conventional Agriculture," "Sampson's Strength Ranch" and "Gardening with Native Plants and Natural Amendments."

CCMGA continues to support the Hobson City Community Garden project. We're looking forward to enjoying the benefits and rewards of our association's efforts.

Until next time, God bless you all!



CCMGA 2026 Intern MGs. Photographer: Tim Kaylor

## CAPITAL CITY MGA

Henry Lucas

2025 closed on a strong note for the Capital City Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA), and 2026 is already shaping up to be just as successful. One of the first signs of the new gardening season can be seen across Montgomery, where more than 1,000 daffodils planted by CCMGA volunteers are now in bloom. These cheerful early flowers are brightening beds and along walkways at the Montgomery Botanical Gardens, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Lilly's Garden, and the Rose-Morris House garden in Old Alabama Town, providing a beautiful start to the spring season.

Our Lunch & Learn series began the year with unexpectedly high attendance. The enthusiasm for these programs reflects the community's growing interest in gardening and horticulture. CCMGA's Education Committee has organized an outstanding lineup of classes for the year. The first two sessions, The Art of Tussie-Mussie and the Master Floral Designer Workshop & Floral Bar, were well received.

In May, we look forward to hosting the Floral Fiesta in a Pot Container Workshop, which promises to be another engaging and creative event.

Behind the scenes, CCMGA members are busy preparing for one of our biggest events of the year, our annual plant sale on April 1. Volunteers have been hard at work dividing plants, potting seedlings, and preparing a wide variety of garden favorites for the community.

With spring arriving and so many activities underway, CCMGA is excited for another year of gardening, education, and service to the River Region.



Daffodils CCMGA planted, at Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Blount Cultural Park.

Photographer: Karen Weber

## CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Kelly Lafreniere

Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association (CAMGA) has been busy with Wetumpka's annual Mardi Gras Parade. Every year CAMGA enters a themed float to celebrate with the community and advertise our annual plant sale. This year's theme was 'Sun, Sand and Surf'. We all dressed for a New Orleans Beach party with our colorful hats and caftans and won the Edward Bloom Award, given by The Order of Cimarron, a community organization that hosts the Mardi Gras Parade and Festival every year. The award embodies the spirit of the community showcasing creativity, high energy and standout participants in the parade, a "Big Fish in our Small Pond." It was a wonderful way to connect with the community and recruit new CAMGA

Interns. It was also a great way to advertise our annual CAMGA plant sale that will be held on Saturday, May 2, at the Elmore County Extension Center, rain or shine, in a large barn and arena.

Happy Spring everyone!



CAMGA Mardi Gras float.  
Photographer: Steve Lafreniere



## CHEROKEE COUNTY MGA

Doug Ford

Seasons are changing and Cherokee County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) is ready to get outside. We've been involved in wintertime activities with 4-H and 21st Century, new county courthouse and city hall landscape consultations, planning sessions for service to the community, and increasing enrollment in our association.

Our association has partnered with the local 4-H for several years. The new director of 4-H has exploded the student participation numbers in the past year. CCMGA has committed to fund 4-H camp and student leadership programs. We are very excited about what is happening in the 4-H program and are proud of our partnership with them.

Cherokee County has a new courthouse, and the city of Centre is building a new city hall. Both governing groups have sought the input of CCMGA to ensure proper installation of plants and irrigation systems. The courthouse garden is planted and ready for spring. The city hall

landscape will be the showcase of the entire county. Many thanks to Cherokee County Commission and the Centre City Council for recognizing the value of our Master Gardener Association. This is the beginning of a long and beautiful relationship.

CCMGA continues with plans for the new season. Top priority is the spring plant sales at Centre and Leesburg on April 11 and April 18, respectively.

Spring is awakening! Let's get to gardening!!



CCMGA VP Barry Kerr inspects plants for new Cherokee County Courthouse.  
Photographer: Patti Ford

## CHILTON COUNTY MGA

Donald Jones

The Alabama canebrake pitcher plant (*Sarracenia alabamensis*) is designated as an endangered species (U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service). According to the Alabama Forestry Commission, in 2023 the plant can only be found in eleven sites in two central Alabama counties: Chilton and Autauga. Like all pitcher plants, the Alabama canebrake is carnivorous, trapping and digesting insects in its tubular leaf. The tube is 8-16 inches tall in the spring and may be curved in shaded conditions. The flower is maroon and droops from a two-foot-tall stalk, appearing April through June. Summer leaves are also tubular and may be up to 27 inches long. They are light green and covered with white hair. (Alabama Forestry Commission, ACPPI2202022).

Chilton County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) has been working to preserve a local site for the past several years. The Conservation Committee has adopted the project to protect current sites and work with other agencies to promote growth. Fortunately, the site landowner has

taken steps to prevent future development or hazards to the environment. The recent discovery of new plant clusters in a wider geographical area is rewarding. Clearing of undergrowth, controlled burns by the Forest Service, and careful attention to location privacy are all strategies to preserve the endangered plant. Propagation of seeds is currently underway, and plans are set to include the beloved species in the CCMGA Demonstration Garden at Chilton Research and Extension Center.



CCMGA members work to preserve the Alabama canebrake pitcher plant in Chilton County. L-R: Clem Clapp, John Higginbotham, Hugh Nichols, Skip Coulter, Sonja Johnson.  
Photographer: Hugh Nichols



## COFFEE COUNTY MGA

Kowanda McBride

2026 is off to a great start for the Coffee County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA)! Our Program Chair, Leslie Olson, launched a new monthly talk called "Grow Your Garden," which focuses on what gardeners should be doing each month to keep their gardens thriving. These presentations are held at the Enterprise Public Library, where CCMGA has recently set up a brand-new seed library for the community to enjoy. We're excited to say the Elba Public Library will soon have a seed library as well.

CCMGA volunteers have been busy hosting Ask-A-Master Gardener at the Lowe's Garden Center, helping local gardeners get

answers to their questions and offering practical gardening advice.



CCMGA members L-R: Kowanda McBride, Leslie Olson, Ed Springer, Brenda Evans, Maggie Sickler packaging seeds for seed library at Enterprise Public Library. Photographer: Extension agent Emily Wismer.

## CULLMAN COUNTY MGA

Ellen Hall

Our new year began with planning and planting for plant sales. At least 20 Cullman County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) members and interns met in early January for a seed starting event; more than 1000 seeds were sown into seed trays which were sent home with CCMGA members who were prepared to care for them until the February "potting party" where they were transplanted into larger pots.

We have adopted a new committee-based structure for our plant sales this year, with specialized teams focusing on key areas, including grow teams, plant sale logistics, communication, inventory and labeling, public relations and finance. We're looking forward to testing this new approach with the upcoming native azalea and wildflower sales March 21 and the spring plant sale April 17-18.



## DEKALB COUNTY MGA

Sharon Guebert

As spring is springing, Dekalb County Master Gardeners Association (DCMGA) is catching up on our *Happenings* information. We had five interns who successfully graduated and are now certified active members! Many volunteer hours for interns and members were fulfilled by working at the annual VFW Fair in Fort Payne, registering the many different projects, flowers, vegetables and food that were submitted by the participants. FUN!

In January we had a presentation from DCMGA member Stanley Sims on "Backyard Garden with Herb Spiral." It involved a lot of planning and hard work on his part, and the completed project was beautiful and inspiring to all.

At February's presentation Vanessa Roberts, Dekalb County Extension Director, highlighted the many services and projects her office supports, and we welcomed new Home Horticulture Extension Agent Jason Somerville. DCMGA also recognized five members for their dedication to our association: one with a bronze star, three with gold stars and one with a platinum badge.

Our plant sale was on March 21, and it was wildly successful for our team!

Multiple workdays will be scheduled this spring for the Mentone Arts Center, Moon Lake and St. Joseph's Gardens, as well as The Women's Center in Fort Payne and the Native Plant Area at Desoto State Park. Our organization regularly maintains the Tornado Memorial Garden in Rainsville, AL.

On April 25 we will host a 15-year remembrance event to honor the 35 individuals who lost their lives in the tornadoes.

Check out our Facebook page: DEKALB COUNTY ALABAMA MASTER GARDENERS.

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/1168091745397817>



DCMGA Members L-R: Mary MacMichael, Karen Graves, Susan Barrett, Donna Elrod, Stanley Sims.  
Photographer: Sharon Guebert

## EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Susan Turner

On February 27th East Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association (ECAMGA) joined with the Cooperative Extension System and Alabama Power Company for a community program on water quality. One key takeaway was that water flows into the lake, and it's our responsibility to keep the water clean.

Crystal White, Real Estate Specialist for Alabama Power, shared the history and statistics about R.L. Harris Lake. She discussed the guidelines for residential shoreline permitting, as well as erosion and lake runoff. She was joined by Adam Hanvey.

Dr. Brian Brown, Regional Extension Agent, showed us how to plant and transplant trees, with visuals of damage to trees, and how to avoid these damages.

Susan Urquhart, ECAMGA member, explained the Alabama Water Watch (AWW) program. The mission of AWW is to improve both water quality and water policy through citizen monitoring and action via water chemical and

bacteriological testing and stream monitoring for major state river basins.

Dani Carroll, Regional Extension Agent, discussed smart landscaping for reduced pesticide use, as well as various native plants that will enhance our lake properties.

Thanks to Lorie Teal and Susan Urquhart for their efforts to make this meeting a huge success.



ECAMGA members and presenters at 'Landscapes to Protect Alabama Waters' presentation.

Photographer: unknown.



## JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

Jackson County Master Gardeners Association (JCMGA) is charging full steam ahead for spring. Are you ready?

At our December 15 meeting we held our annual Christmas party, Dirty Santa and swearing in of our 2026 officers and board members. We ate well and had a good time.

Our January meeting got us thinking. Guest speaker Stacy Tanner discussed how she plants a lot of things and strives to use all the plant in her Waste Not - Want Not philosophy.

February had us jetting off to Australia and New Zealand. Jackson County Extension Coordinator, Matt Webb, showed pictures of his tour and explained their agricultural practices. One was total cattle management by cell phone! February 28 found us busy prepping hundreds of tree seedlings for the Scottsboro Arbor Day tree seedling giveaway. Only a few oak trees were left.

March 5, Regional Forager, Ethan Blevins, gave us a demonstration on inoculation of logs for growing fungi.

Jackson County Extension office has moved to 205 Liberty Lane, Scottsboro, AL. and the Scottsboro Library is starting a Seed Library Project. Contact them at <https://www.scottsborolibrary.org/> for more information.

April 11 is our spring plant sale. You can find us in the Jackson County Senior Center parking lot from 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. There will be a wide range of plants including some Bonnie Plants.

Our May meeting date has been changed to May 14 so it doesn't interfere with members attending the state conference in Huntsville. Check out our Facebook page [https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=alabama\\_jcmga](https://www.facebook.com/search/top?q=alabama_jcmga)

## LAWRENCE COUNTY MGA

Phyllis LeMay

Lawrence County Master Gardeners (LCMGA) have been busy this winter preparing for our upcoming spring plant sales. Our Bernice Miller Iris Preservation rhizome sale is scheduled for March 21 at the Moulton Lions Club building. We will be on site from 9 a.m. - 1 p.m. In addition, thanks to Anna Mullican and Gerie Biffele (Bernice Miller's granddaughter), we're taking pre-sale orders. Anna crafted our sale flyer, and Gerie created a photograph database of all the rhizomes included in the sale. Both have been published on social media and in local news media.

Several LCMGA members have been busy propagating and seed-starting plants for our two other plant sales. As a result, our greenhouse is teeming with ferns, native plants,

bedding plants, and hanging baskets that will go on sale April 25, from 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. at the Lions Club building.

Our final plant sale will be at the 2026 Strawberry Festival, which we are happy to be co-sponsoring this year. The festival, which each year draws thousands of strawberry lovers to Moulton, will be held at the Park and Rec Center on May 1 and May 2. We will be open for business from 8 a.m. - 4 p.m. both days or until the festival closes.

Finally, we want to thank Hartselle Water Works for gifting a greenhouse to our association. We are in the process of installing it and are excited about the potential uses another greenhouse provides.



## LEE COUNTY MGA

Shelley Aistrup

Lee County Master Gardeners Association (LCMGA) is helping local gardens flourish through their Seed Donation Project, a community initiative that places free, high-quality seeds directly into the hands of residents before the planting season ends. Generous support from Lowe's Home Improvement in Opelika and Ace Hardware of Auburn has made it possible to distribute seeds across Lee County through accessible community hubs, including the Auburn High School Future Farmers of America Seed Library, Auburn Public Library Seed Library, and Russell County Library Seed Library. By making seeds available in schools and libraries, the project reaches students, families, beginning gardeners, and residents who may not otherwise have the resources to start a garden. Seeds are also distributed at

educational events, workshops, and farmers markets, including OGrow's Seed Starting Workshops, Opelika Library Plant Rescue Workshops, and the Auburn Ag Heritage and City Market and Opelika OGrow's Community Farmers Markets. These events provide hands-on instruction in seed starting, plant care, and home gardening, ensuring recipients gain both the supplies and the knowledge needed for success. The Seed Donation Project aims to remove cost barriers, expand access to fresh food, beautify neighborhoods, and cultivate lifelong gardening skills. More than simply distributing seeds, the project is strengthening community connections and empowering residents to grow their own food. LCMGA encourages everyone to pick up a packet, prepare the soil, and join in growing Lee County, one garden at a time.

## LIMESTONE COUNTY MGA

Tabatha Fiacco

Spring is quickly approaching, and we are in the deep end of the pool getting ready for our annual spring plant sale. So much preparation goes into a one-day event, but it takes a lot more than one day to plan for it. After the plant sale is over and everyone catches their breath, the planning process starts again. Which leads me to ask, why is the State Conference being held in the spring when we are busy with plant sales? Why not during the heat of the summer when we want to stay indoors?

We are having great success with our monthly educational programs that are open to the public: Gettin' Dirty at the Library (presentation), Talkin' Dirty at the Library (a podcast), and Saturday Smarts (workshops). Gettin' Dirty is held before our monthly meeting, Talkin' Dirty is produced afterwards, and Saturday Smarts, is held on a Saturday.

The weekend after our plant sale, we will be participating in the Earth Day Expo at

Athens State University. This is an excellent opportunity to reach more people, share our knowledge, educate them about Extension, and get more people interested in becoming Master Gardeners. Then we get one free weekend before the AMGA State Conference. I look forward to meeting you all there and hope you enjoy all The Rocket City has to offer.



LCMGA member Betty Patterson leading a workshop on building mason bee houses.

Photographer: Tabatha Fiacco



## MARSHALL COUNTY MGA

Jo Dureen

As the gardening year 2025 closes, Marshall County Master Gardeners Association (MCMGA) would like to shout out our thanks to the following MCMGA associates for their outstanding contribution to the gardening community:

Bronze Star: Roger Newman, Elaine Thomas, Michelle Bailey, Gina Decker, Jane Jinright; Gold Star: Harold Johnson; Gold Badge: Nikki Johnson; Platinum Badge: Jane Stanton; Ruby Pin: George Darling; Intern of the Year: Michelle Bailey; Top Volunteer Hours for 2025: Elaine Benzio Hild with 476 hours;

Master Gardener of the Year: Jenny Estes .

During the January 2026 MCMGA meeting we were reminded of the service and devotion to the Master Gardener program by individuals who have led MCMGA by example. Total Years of Volunteer Service: Jenny Estes: 35 years; Dixie Martin: 32 years; J D Swartzlander: 25 years; Annette Swartzlander: 25 years; Betty Graham: 24 years; Wilma Tanner: 22 years; Ceceila Pullen: 16 years.

We gardeners and community applaud and thank them for their dedication and leadership.

## MASTER GARDENERS of WALKER COUNTY

London Perry

Master Gardeners of Walker County (MGWC) continue to cultivate community connections and horticultural expertise across the county. We have two new Master Gardeners: Amber Elswick and Zan Brock. MGs Mary Sanders and Kelli Bell received their "Reach for the Stars" pins.

At a recent MGWC program, Kara Osborne delivered an engaging and practical presentation titled "Sow It Begins," focused on the rewarding art of raising plants from seed. Attendees learned the essentials of successful seed starting, covering seed selection, proper soil mixes, germination techniques, lighting requirements, and transplant timing. Her approachable style and hands-on tips gave beginners and experienced gardeners the confidence to grow their gardens from scratch — saving money and expanding their plant variety options. Kara's presentation focused on the upcoming plant sale.

Mark your calendars for the Master Gardeners of Walker County's annual plant sale on Saturday, April 11, from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. Held at 1501 North Airport Road in Jasper, this event is the perfect opportunity to stock up for the spring season. Shoppers will find vegetables, herbs, perennials, flowers, houseplants, and ferns — all grown by MGWC members. Whether you are planting a kitchen garden, refreshing your flower beds, or hunting for that perfect houseplant, this sale has something for you. Arrive early for the best selection!



MGWC President Sandra Courington with new Master Gardener Amber Elswick.  
Photographer: Unknown



## MOBILE COUNTY MGA

Cindy Findlay

What a beautiful beginning to spring we have had in Mobile County! All the busy work we did in January and February for our March and April activities is beginning to show the fruits of our labor. But alas, our work is not done! Mobile County Master Gardeners Association (MCMGA) has many irons in the fire this spring.

We are most excited about our new adventure, "2026 Tour of Gardens" May 15, 16 & 17. We saw a void for the past few years of this event, so who better to show off our gardens than Master Gardeners? We've been working hard for the past year on this event, and it's been all-hands-on-deck. For more information check our website <https://www.mobilecountymastergardeners.org>

MCMGA's Dream Garden is located at the Mobile County Extension office and is one of the gardens on our tour this year. Mobile

County Extension Agent Jack Lecroy had a vision of a Dream Garden, so he initiated a five-year Strategic Goal committee. The committee began the processes for improvement in both short- and long-term goals and objectives. Jack pushes our boundaries in the best possible way. The work is ongoing and the worker bees in the Dream Garden have been in full force.

Our fourth annual Spring Festival was a success. Look for more information and pictures in the summer *Happenings*!



Bill Fink, MCMGA member, in Dream Garden preparing for presentation on potato planting and growing. Photographer: Unknown

## MORGAN COUNTY MGA

Julia Chenault

Morgan County Master Gardeners Association (MCMGA) is preparing for our spring plant sale on April 11-12. Always fun! Always challenging!

Many of our members have been heavily involved with planning for the state conference to be held in Huntsville, May 6-8.

We make monthly, seasonal donations to Hospice of the Valley for their patients. In December, Susan Kingsley, our MG liaison, created cute snowmen from tiny gourds.

In February, 259 people stopped by our booth at the Greater Morgan County Builders Association Home and Garden Show for free seed packets, as well as gardening and MG information. This is an annual event with attendance this year topping 1700.

We plan to continue hosting a monthly Ask-A-Master Gardener booth at our local farmer's market. The ACES materials are always well received.

The first of 10 Lunch and Learn programs for 2026 was "Easy Winter Sowing" presented by member Aileen Russell. Attendees planted

seeds in milk jugs and took them home to watch them grow.

The director at WaterWorks Center for Environmental Education (green learning center for all ages) received a grant for native milkweed plants for use in a joint project with MCMGA. Norris Johnston, MCMGA member, has submitted a request to Project Funding for funds to add hardscape. If granted in May, we will lay out walking path borders, add stepping stones, and finish them off with pea gravel.



MCMGA Greenhouse Co-Chairman, Pam Price, with items for our booth at Greater Morgan County Builders Association Home and Garden Show.

Photographer: Rita Baker



## PIKE COUNTY MGA

Sandy Brown

Spring is here, and Pike County Master Gardeners Association (PCMGA) is busy with their shovels. Along with working in our gardens, we're staying actively engaged in learning and helping others in our community. Our Lunch and Learn programs have expanded our knowledge about cultivating native plants. We're looking forward to learning more about Terra Cotta, a new nursery that has recently opened in Troy. In April, we're eager to learn about growing pecan trees in our area. May's Lunch and Learn will be especially fun as our topic will be "butterflies."

At the end of February, we hosted a tree giveaway followed by a tree planting and dedication at the Troy Recreation Center. The tree planting was held in remembrance of our beloved and esteemed Pike County Master Gardener, the late Dr. David Dye. In February

we assisted the Treasure Forest organization by helping decorate for their annual banquet.

Looking ahead, we're excited about preparations for our TroyFest plant sale, which will be held Saturday, April 25, in downtown Troy. We hope to see many members of the community there!



PCMGA members at Tree Planting/Dedication for Dr. David Dye. L-R: Beth Stubblefield, Debbie Loyd, June Moore, Robert Griffin, Buriece Gracey, Judy Dye.

Photographer: Cathy Jorgensen

## SHELBY COUNTY MGA

Kathy Hagood

Winter was far from dormant at Shelby County Master Gardeners Association (SCMGA). 16 gleaming new garden beds were raised during the new community gardens workday on February 21 at the Church at Cahaba Bend. SCMGA members Dolores Davis and Elizabeth York provided assistance with Elizabeth York serving as consultant.

2025 intern project lead Johnnie Brown met with Owens House staff for an update on the Owens House sensory garden. Fencing is complete and a curving pathway is planned. Another site update is slated for April. The goal is for interns to provide consultation on plantings for planned raised beds. The garden will serve as a therapeutic haven for abused children.

Two groups of SCMGA members manned MG booths at the Alabaster and Hoover Arbor Days March 7, providing attendees with information on gardening and planting trees. Contact

information was taken from attendees who said they were interested in joining the 2026 intern class this summer.

January's monthly meeting program had a different spin as SCMGA member Karen Jensen got rave reviews for dressing the part for her presentation on "How George Washington's Trip to Barbados Enabled Us to Win the War." Our first president also became a dedicated horticulturalist and landscape designer who transformed Mount Vernon's acreage into a botanical showpiece.



SCMGA members manning our Master Gardener booth at Alabaster Arbor Day March 7. L-R: Barbara Williams, Marisa Masters, Pam Dyer, Julie Adams.

Photographer: Karen Jensen



## SHOALS MGA

Sally McGuire

Our sleepy plant friends may be dormant, but Shoals Master Gardeners Association (SMGA) is not. We're gearing up for our annual plant sale in April. Sue West has already scheduled four plant digs and potting parties at the greenhouse, and many others are starting seeds at their homes. Our plant sale chairperson, Pam Arias, is ordering plants and overseeing every detail of our sale. Pam has created a well-oiled machine.

We've also been blessed with a great group of interns this year. They have been tremendously helpful at plant digs and potting parties. It's always fun to have our newbies join in, and it's a great way to get to know each other.

Donna Walthall spearheaded a project for fifth graders at Wilson Elementary School. Students learned about terrariums and then created a terrarium to take home. The week before the project, the interns and SMGA met at the Lauderdale County Extension

barn to measure ingredients and place them in sealable bags so things would go smoothly for the students. We're looking forward to helping another school, Forest Hills Elementary School, develop their outdoor classroom and to teaching a few lessons.

Elaine Sutton, SMGA member, lined up a much-needed cleanup day at the Lauderdale County Extension office.

In March we attended the Florence Urban Forestry and Horticultural Conference. This conference always has great speakers with a wealth of knowledge, and we don't have to travel far, which makes us all happy.



SMGA members at Florence Urban Forestry and Horticulture Conference.

Photographer: Unknown

## St. CLAIR COUNTY MGA

Pam Garrison

St. Clair Master Gardeners Association (SCMGA) is busy this time of year digging, dividing, and growing plants for our sale April 10 and 11. It has been challenging with the fickle weather. 80 degrees, followed by 50 degrees and possible frost. We all work at our homes and yards to get this done and somehow it comes together for the sale.

The Ragland Public Library sent us a proposal to plan and build two raised bed pollinator gardens for the library. We decided to help with this project and think it will be a great educational tool for the community. Odenville Public Library has also reached out for help with two raised bed pollinator gardens for their location. It is great to be able

to assist in these community projects. We will encourage them to participate in the Pollinator Count.

At our February 26 meeting Doris Slappey, who is in her 80s, spoke on seed starting. Doris, who is quite energetic and witty, has been gardening for many years at the same location, teaching her children and grandchildren the joys and benefits of gardening. Doris has kept meticulous records of her gardens, the successes and the not so successful and those records have provided a wealth of experience and information she is happy to share. She even brought materials for all in attendance to make paper pots for seed starting.



## TALLAPOOSA COUNTY MGA

Calvin Johnson

Tallapoosa County Master Gardeners Association's first quarter has been booming with activities and plans for Dadeville area community service events, including plant sales and free trees to replenish those lost.

We installed our 2026 Leadership Team and set a date for a major plant sale on Saturday, March 28, 9am-2pm. In addition to plant vendors, there will be a tree giveaway, thanks to a generous donation by Alabama Power Company. There will be hundreds of free tree seedlings such as dogwoods, maples and Meyer lemons. Master Gardeners with individual expertise on each variety will discuss the proper planting and care to ensure success of buyers' tree restoration efforts. Remember: oak trees will grow to be huge, so plan ahead!

In January, our monthly speaker, Bridgett Thornell, CEO of Lake Martin Area Chamber of Commerce, discussed her efforts to draw visitors and new investors into this vast

resource of recreation, employment and investment. February was equally interesting as we learned what to plant, and when, to produce prolific nectar bearing shrubs, flowers and trees. The authority was beekeeper Caden Merrill, who allowed us to sample and buy jars of various types of honey from some 60 hives he maintains in the area. We remember how many thousands of bees service one hive, and we are aware of the immense importance we place on nature to complete and protect this cycle of life that feeds us. Happy Gardening!



TCMGA Leadership Team L-R: Don Parrish, Sharon Whitehead, Rita Smith, Teenie Hutchison, Debbie Nascimbini, Kathy Loftus. Photographer: Shane Harris

## TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

At our January 20 meeting we were honored to have Janell Diggs from Capital City (Montgomery) Master Gardeners speak to us on the advantages of attracting purple martin birds to the landscape and encouraging their presence. Plastic gourds are now marketed with cleanout ports and other features specifically for the health and care of purple martins. Her favorite brand is Troyer.

In our February meeting, Laurie Presley of Freedom Farm foster care facility, discussed the need for safe havens for children in special need. The long-term plan is to have this become a fully functioning farm with the capacity of up to 100 foster children. Currently, the farm has horses, mules, dogs, and pigs, with chickens coming soon. Poultry and food crops will be raised in a large garden area enclosed by an eight-foot chain link fence. They

have asked for our assistance with planning and implementing the garden area as well as assistance in building a nature trail. In addition to the garden area, the recently built playground will have plantings of blueberries and strawberries which will be convenient to the nearby houses.

Judith Rives was our guest speaker in March. She led a class on cooking with herbs and preparing various flavored vinegars. We're eager to try some of her recipes.



TCMGA member Judith Rives.  
Photographer: Dan Sutton



## WIREGRASS MGA

Jan Shirley

It's that time of the year when the Wiregrass Master Gardeners Association (WMGA) heads into one of our busiest times preparing for our annual spring plant sale March 27-28. Our greenhouse is bursting with perennials, annuals, vegetables - all seeded at the beginning of the year - as well as houseplants and tender bulbs. Herbs are growing in our smaller greenhouse, and the nursery is greening up with trees, shrubs and hardy bulbs. We welcomed 13 interns to the 2026 spring class with a job fair where they learned about opportunities available for them to earn volunteer hours necessary for certification. Along with our Master Gardeners the interns participated in a pruning workshop at Landmark Park. We are excited to not only have their help but also to learn from them.

Our Junior Master Gardener program will see 13 youngsters completing the Wildlife Gardener course at the end of March.

Our teachers have so much fun growing one child at a time.

The monthly Lunch and Learn program this quarter will feature topics on houseplants, vegetable seed starting, raised bed gardening, garden budgeting, and insect ID.

WMGA is looking forward to our plant sale, teaching kids this summer at Aunt Katie's Community Garden, attending the AMGA state conference, planning the 2028 state conference, as well as spending some time in our own gardens - always learning, always sharing.



L-R: Wiregrass MGs Jeff and Leticia Avera in WMGA greenhouse. Photographer: Jan Shirley

# Happenings

Spring 2026



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Got Questions?



We've Got Answers



## NEXT ARTICLE FOR HAPPENINGS DUE JUNE 15, 2026

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#### 2027 JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Katherine Ennis

#### 2028 WIREGRASS MGA

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Coordinator TBA

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