

HAPPENINGS

Summer 2026

Autauga County MGA

Sondra Henley

Autauga County has experienced significant success this spring at our local Home Depot in Prattville. We staffed a three-foot table with numerous handouts at the Plant Department entrance. These Saturday hours provide our interns and members who work with an opportunity to gain more volunteer hours. We are present from April through June and from September to November. So far, we have made more than 255 contacts, averaging 28 each Saturday, with an average of three individuals per Saturday expressing interest in more information about the Master Gardener class.

We've shared the Helpline Number, the Vegetable Planting Guide, and details about the tri-county Lunch and Learn and have engaged in conversations about various gardening concerns.

One Saturday, we spoke with a woman who is

eager to retire so she can take the course. She mentioned her 90+ year-old mother, who could grow anything. We encouraged her to talk to her mother and document everything she did in growing vegetables and flowers to preserve that knowledge.

Additionally, we ensure that newcomers to Alabama receive an information card featuring pictures of poisonous plants in the area. Some people even take two of them!



ACMGA sign at Home Depot. Photographer unknown



*My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view.
~H. Fred Dale*

BALDWIN COUNTY MGA

Deb Marriott

Spring in Baldwin County involved getting to know new members, a variety of active community projects, field trips, and numerous membership growth opportunities. The plant sale was held at Weeks Bay in Fairhope, Alabama April 9-11 and was a tremendous success. A major focus was placed on native plants and providing information to the public on pollinators and the importance of natives in our gardens.

Intern class presentations were held on April 30. 17 interns received certificates for exceptional presentations. Many of these interns will become Speakers Bureau presenters in the future. Interns meeting volunteer hours and new member requirements will receive their official name badges and possibly even receive stars at

the Baldwin County Master Gardeners Awards Luncheon on July 8 at the Civic Center in Foley.

Sixteen members attended the AMGA 2026 Conference in Huntsville. Baldwin County Master Gardener Extension Agent Carmen Flammini was the recipient of the 2026 Gary Murray Award for her dedication and service! It is a well-deserved award, and we are very proud of her in Baldwin County.

In June, Kids Nature Days will be held in Robertsedale and Bay Minnette. These events allow families to participate in a kid's summer day camp. This year the camp focus is on soil. The camp is open to children aged 6-13 years old accompanied by an adult. Baldwin County Extension and Extension Master Gardeners provide this hands-on event to encourage kids and families to explore nature.



BLOUNT COUNTY MGA

Lisa McIntyre

Blount County Master Gardeners (BCMGA) have enjoyed a productive and rewarding spring season filled with education, community service, and gardening success.

In April we hosted our annual plant sale, which proved to be one of our most successful. Community members turned out to purchase a wide variety of plants, including vegetables, herbs, flowers, and native species. The sale not only provided local gardeners with quality plants and expert advice but also generated important funding to support outreach efforts.

11 members of BCMGA attended the Alabama Master Gardener State Conference in May. Members enjoyed the activities of the conference as well as a little shopping time together.

Our popular Lunch and Learn programs continue monthly at a variety of locations throughout the county. These programs provide members and guests with opportunities to hear from knowledgeable speakers on a variety of

gardening topics while enjoying fellowship with other gardening enthusiasts. Our monthly meetings remain an important part of BCMGA's commitment to lifelong learning and community engagement.

Meanwhile, members have been working hard at preparing and planting the community garden in Oneonta. The garden will contribute fresh produce to the Grow More Give More campaign. We look forward to donating surplus fruits and vegetables to those in need. Through these efforts BCMGA continues to make a positive impact by promoting gardening education, community service, and local food security.



BCMGA President Donna Avery. Photographer Lisa McIntyre

BUTLER COUNTY MGA

Linda Jarzyniecki

Butler County Extension Master Gardeners Association (BTCEMGA) has been busier than expected since formally founded on January 1, 2026. Our fourteen members worked on many projects including growing and harvesting vegetables for more than 95 inmates at the Butler County Jail Kitchen Garden. Four EMGs work weekly with some who are housed in the facility. Three more EMGs have developed and continue to maintain the pollinator garden at Crowne Nursing Home. Three other EMGs planted and continue to maintain the pollinator garden at Southside Baptist Church.

BTCEMGA members worked with pre-K and second grade students in the raised beds at W.O. Parmer Elementary School in Greenville. All our membership spent hours removing years of invasive plants from the abandoned Stanley Greenhouse (built in 1969) preparing it for the city horticulture director to use.

Our biggest accomplishment was helping the City of Georgiana beautify the city through Thriving Communities funds from Auburn University. This was completed in time for their

annual Hank Williams Festival. Bill Taylor donated reclaimed roofing tin which he and John Taylor made into planters around the pavilion pylons. We helped the city choose appropriate plants for the pavilion as well as choosing concrete pots to fill with plants for locations on Main Street.

Working with Extension Director, Sharlean Briggs, we completed an immense amount of beautification in three weeks. Five members attended AMGA conference in Huntsville and our Lunch and Learns are well attended. What else can I say but Happy Planting!



Butler MGA members at Georgiana Pavillion
Photographer: Melanie Stonestreet



CALHOUN COUNTY MGA

Deidre Giddy

Calhoun County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) remains steadfast in our efforts at Cane Creek Community Gardens, our primary operational base. A delegation of nine representatives recently attended the annual AMGA conference in Huntsville, where Skeeter Sims received the prestigious Mary Lou McNabb Award in recognition of his enduring dedication. We also extend our gratitude to Madge Sims for her oversight of our volunteer records. Furthermore, CCMGA has finalized critical greenhouse enhancements ahead of the 2027 season, made possible by an AMGA Project Funding grant. These improvements include a complete reconstruction of the evaporative cooling system and essential structural work. Additionally, we installed a winterization enclosure, a strategic upgrade that allows for year-round cultivation and extended growing periods.

Cane Creek serves as a vital hub for community engagement and education. During Earth Day celebrations in Calhoun County, the gardens hosted the 40th annual field trip, an event that brings together hundreds of local fourth graders to learn about recycling, wildlife conservation, and agriculture through interactive stations.

Community members continue to utilize the garden's raised beds to cultivate their own food. Originally constructed in 2008, these beds underwent necessary refurbishments. With the help of an ACES grant, we replaced the soil and completed structural repairs, ensuring the beds are ready for the months ahead.

Finally, CCMGA is proud to announce its new membership with The Community Foundation of Northeast Alabama. Serving as our fiscal sponsor, the foundation will help CCMGA attract operational funding by allowing donations to be tax-deductible.

CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Kelly Lafreniere

Central Alabama Master Gardeners Association had another successful plant sale this year on Saturday, May 2. We sold a variety of plants to the community who were lined up before we opened the doors. In addition to educating the public on many different types of plants such as natives, perennials and herbs, we doubled our sales from last year.

The interns were instrumental, as were the members, in propagating plants, in addition to organizing and setting up the sale itself. We always have so much fun and look forward to this fundraiser every year. This year, for

the first time, we sold material items related to gardening such as pots, garden art and garden statues donated from our membership. The public loved it!



L: Mary McCroan, a customer at our plant sale. The line was long before we opened. Photographer: Rebecca Ridley



CHEROKEE COUNTY MGA

Doug Ford

Cherokee County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA) has had a rip-roaring spring accomplishing many projects and attending the state conference in Huntsville. We closed out the 21st Century program school year with Centre middle schoolers who learned so much from our EMG volunteers. Their raised bed vegetable garden looks fabulous. Centre's Main Street containers are eye-popping, and Centre City Park and the Leesburg Town Hall are looking especially good with CCMGA footprints all around.

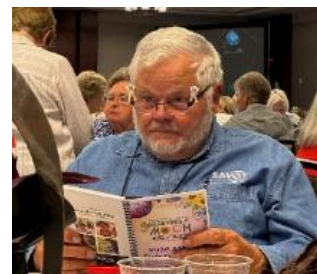
Capping our efforts this spring was our annual spring plant sales in Centre and Leesburg. Probate Judge and County Commission President Tim Burgess recognized CCMGA for their assistance in the landscaping process at the newly constructed Cherokee County Courthouse. "Gardening to the Moon and Back" was icing on our volunteer cake.

As the high temperature days of summer move in, our projects will be cooling down.

However, gardening continues at the middle school greenhouse in Centre under the guidance of our association president Debbie Foley. We are in a slowdown mode, but the future is always in mind.

CCMGA is making a concerted effort to surpass the 250-pounds-of-vegetables goal set for the Grow More, Give More project. Home gardens and the raised beds at our middle school greenhouse will make all the necessary contributions.

Have a safe and green summer.



CCMGA member Leonard Gandy At AMGA conference. Photographer: Patti Ford

CHILTON COUNTY NGA

Donald Jones

For a few seasons, the Chilton County Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA), in partnership with the Chilton County Alabama 4-H program, envisioned a mutual goal of establishing a Junior Master Gardener Program. This year it happened.

Pat Farmer, longtime leader in CCMGA said, "It took a fair amount of planning and work." But after the 8-week session concluded she added, "It was worth every bit of work to see these young folks be inspired toward learning and witnessing their excitement doing the hands-on lessons." Krystal Vaith, Chilton 4-H Extension Agent said, "I'm grateful to have access to the environmental science resources 4-H provides to promote life-long skills in gardening, as well as for our future generation to learn how to deliver service to the community."

Twelve students from the local Special Programming for Achievement Network (SPAN) were the target audience. The faculty

incorporated the associated material into their curriculum. Chilton County EMGs provided the instruction and guided the corresponding lab experiences. Topics such as container gardening, seed starting, herbs, soil characteristics, ecology, pests/diseases, and more were covered. All participants graduated with a certificate of completion.

Future goals include providing feedback from the first session to incorporate improvements. The proposed target audience for the next Junior Master Gardener class is seventh graders in one of the local middle schools.



Chilton County Junior Master Gardeners learn about composting. Photographer: Sonja Johnson



COFFEE COUNTY MGA

Kowanda McBride

Coffee County Master Gardeners (CCMGA) have enjoyed a busy and rewarding spring filled with community outreach, education, and service projects that support our mission of sharing research-based gardening information throughout Coffee County.

In April, MGs participated in the annual Piney Woods Art Festival, where we hosted a children's flower pounding art activity. Young participants used fresh flowers and leaves to create colorful botanical prints, providing a fun and creative way to connect with nature.

Spring also brought another successful plant sale at the Enterprise Farmers Market. Thanks to generous plant donations from members and strong community support, the sale raised funds that help support educational programs, community projects, and future Master Gardener activities.

CCMGA also participated in Peak of the Season at the Enterprise Farmers Market. We shared gardening information and answered questions

from local residents. These events provide opportunities to connect with the public and promote gardening throughout our community.

One of the highlights of the season was an interactive presentation on growing pumpkins presented by EMG Leslie Olson. Participants learned about variety selection, planting techniques, pest management, and harvesting while enjoying hands-on learning activities.

Another exciting project was the installation of bee garden beds at Enterprise State Community College. These pollinator-friendly plantings will provide habitat and forage for bees, butterflies, and other beneficial insects while serving as an educational resource for students and visitors.



Artwork from Piney Woods Art Festival. Photographer: Kowanda McBride

CULLMAN COUNTY MGA

Ellen Hall

In early June, we held our Awards Dinner where we acknowledged recipients of six Bronze Stars, three Silver Stars, one Gold Star and two Gold Badges for cumulative hours logged as of December 31, 2025. Everyone brought a dish and we enjoyed a delicious meal.

With two successful spring plant sales behind us, we are excited to begin planning for our fall sale since we will have a new resource available to us this year. We have the opportunity to partner with the Fair Board of the Cullman Lions Club to utilize a brand-new greenhouse which was constructed in early June at the fairgrounds. We will work with the Fair Board to enhance the educational agricultural aspect of the county fair with expanded exhibits, flower shows and more. In exchange, we will have access to the greenhouse for growing plants for our sale and for educational purposes. The greenhouse team has begun the

construction of tables for growing and displaying plants.

Our demonstration garden, rain garden and wildflower garden have all benefited from workdays to weed, plant and address issues. Everything is beautiful for the beginning of summer, thanks to hard work and abundant recent rainfall.



EMG Holly Hirsbrunner reviews results of workday in the rain garden at the Agriplex. Photographer: Ellen Hall



DEKALB COUNTY MGA

Sharon Guebert

DeKalb County Master Gardeners Association (DCMGA) hosted our annual plant sale on March 21 and what a success it was! Our selection of native plants was a HUGE hit, along with the herbs and many other plants provided by our team.

Congratulations to Stanley Sims who earned a Platinum Badge in recognition of the many volunteer hours he has dedicated as a Master Gardener. Stanley's dedication, hard work, and passion for gardening have made a positive impact on our community.

DCMGA successfully launched our new local newsletter!

In April, Darryl Patton presented an informative program on "Herbal Remedies with Native Plants." We enjoyed learning the benefits and practical uses of native plants. On April 25, DCMGA supported a 15-year commemorative memorial program in Rainsville, honoring those who lost their lives during the devastating tornadoes of 2011.

Our May presentation featured Dan Spaulding, who shared his expertise in "Ferns of Alabama – A New Look." It was an engaging and informative

session highlighting ferns found throughout our region. Several members attended the state conference and returned with valuable information and insights to share.

Our recent workdays have been full of meaningful service—garden clean-up at the Women's Care Center, The Moon Lake Garden, the Tornado Memorial, assisting a local member with plants for the sale, and hosting a gardening workshop at a local church.

We are looking forward to our summer programs including a field trip to a local daylily farm and a Lunch and Learn for the community in August.



Stanley Sims, Platinum Name Badge May 2026. Photographer: Sharon Guebert

EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA

Susan Turner

East Central Alabama Master Gardeners has had three very enlightening speakers this spring. In March Elizabeth York, Shelby County MG, presented a program about dahlias. She educated us on how to care for dahlias year-round.

Our April meeting featured Jami Johnson, Lee County MG and President of the Auburn Rose Society, who talked to us about her favorite plant—the rose! She described characteristics she looks for in a rose and the options of planting in a container or in ground. She brought a collection of fresh roses from her garden.

Dianna Fortner, Lee County MGA, gave a presentation on “The Making of a Moon Garden” at our May meeting. We enjoyed the beauty of her moon garden and appreciated the list of plants and a breakdown of the expenses involved in establishing a moon garden.

10 ECAMGA members attended the state conference in Huntsville. We had fun learning

and renewing friendships! Thank you, Limestone, MGNA, and Morgan County Master Gardeners. Job very well done!

At our April meeting we awarded Bronze Stars to Claudette Brown and Susan Urquhart; Silver Stars to Sarah Partin and Susan Turner; a Gold Star to Lee Culver, and Valerie Morris, received a Platinum Badge.

We finished the school year in the School of Blooms Garden with kindergarteners harvesting onions and first graders harvesting potatoes. We had break-out sessions on windsocks, making a nature bracelet, and identifying animal tracks. We look forward to resuming classes in the fall.



Jami Johnson, Lee County MG, giving presentation on Roses. Photographer: Sheila Bolen

JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

On May 3, 2026, we lost our current Vice-President. John Richard Horning of Scottsboro was known as a public servant, for his keen eye for photography, as a master woodworker and a loving family man. We greatly miss him and hold the family in our thoughts and prayers.

The Scottsboro Library 'Seed Library Project' is alive and doing great with a good selection of seeds.

Jackson County EMG Wilma Brockett presented an update on the current status and plans for our butterfly habitat and on host plant raised beds at our April meeting. The need for more host plants was stressed.

Our spring plant sale on April 11 resulted in a nice addition to our funds. We thank Bonnie Plants for the generous donation of vegetables and herbs. We enjoyed a much-needed update on “Herbicides” given by Graham Farm and Nature Center Director, Themika Sims, at our May 14 meeting.

June 4 was “Tools, Timing, and Techniques for Proper Pruning” with Marshall County Extension Agent, Jason Somerville.

Upcoming activities include:

- July 2, our association's annual ice cream social @ Shannon Hansen's home
- Composting workshop at Scottsboro Library July 20 with Chris Schultz
- Workshop, TBA, planned for October 17 at 11 am at the Scottsboro Library.

As a reminder the Extension office moved to 205 Liberty Lane, Scottsboro. Follow us on Facebook: alabama_jcmga



Butterfly Habitat built by EMG John Horning in Jackson County Park at the lily garden. Photographer: Wilma Brockett

JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Mary Hendley

What a great day at the 2026 Salsa Showdown benefitting Sidewalk Film! Jefferson County Master Gardeners were spread across three tables distributing plants with the theme of salsa - tomatoes, peppers, jalapeños and other vegetables. Volunteers distributed more than 600 plants! In addition, they talked to people about the Master Gardener program and showed them how to get on the list for classes. Volunteers interacted with more than 500 individuals!



L-R Standing: Angie Amin, Johnnie Brown, Kimberly Dials, Jessyca McKnight, Gloria Jackson, Vickie Jones. Seated: 2026 Intern Gregory Herrin. Photographer: Mary Hendley

2027 Conference hosted by Jefferson County MGA. Watch for more details.

LEE COUNTY MGA

Shelley Aistrup

Summer brings longer days, warmer temperatures, thunderstorms, and much to do in the garden. Lee County Extension Master Gardeners are enjoying the beautiful summer days in their own gardens and are also working towards the Alabama Extension mission of sharing research based horticultural information with the public. At Auburn's CityFest and Opelika's Garden in the Park, these two community events allow LCMGA to set up a tent and table to answer horticultural questions, share Grow More Give More cards on how to grow cucumbers, squash, and tomatoes, encourage others to join the Extension Master Gardener ranks, and listen to a variety of gardening stories. Three local Farmers Markets at OGrows in Opelika on the courthouse square, Town Creek Market at Town Creek Park in Auburn, and Ag Heritage

Market on Auburn University's campus allows Lee County Extension Master Gardeners to continue this work from May through August. Each market occurs on a different day of the week and reaches a different segment of the county's population. If you happen to be in Lee County on a market day, stop by and say hello!



L to R: Joan Jacobs, Russ Chesser, Lori Arthurs, Kaye Clothiaux, and Linda Heavlin.
Photographer unknown

LIMESTONE COUNTY MGA

Tabatha Fiacco

- ✓ Plant sale
- ✓ AMGA State Conference
- ✓ North Alabama Native Plant Symposium

Now it's time to take a knee and catch our breath. Since schools are out for the summer, our Saturdays are kept busy at the local farmers market, and we're resting before we dive into preparing for our fall plant sale (smaller version of our spring plant sale).

That sums up what has happened, what will be happening, and now we would like to share some helpful information.

Google Workspace offers free accounts for 501c3 non-profit organizations; you must apply and wait to be approved.

<https://www.google.com/nonprofits/>

Microsoft also has a similar program that gives you the basic MS 365 online suite (includes Word, Excel, PowerPoint, MS Teams, and more) for up to three hundred users for no charge. You must apply and wait to be approved.

<https://www.microsoft.com/enus/nonprofits/microsoft-365>

Both programs allow you to easily collaborate, store

documents, and create forms, including surveys and sign-up sheets. If your organization already has a URL (web site) then you will be able to create personalized email addresses (i.e., newsletter@xxxx, president@xxxx, treasurer@xxxx). No more updating email addresses when people transition out of their roles or sharing your personal email addresses.

CANVA also offers a free account for 501c3 non-profits. You must apply and wait to be approved. <https://www.canva.com/help/canva-for-nonprofits/>

Zoom does offer discounted rates of up to 50% for non-profits. You will need to apply online for the discount.

https://support.zoom.com/hc/en/article?id=zm_kb&sysparm_article=KB0080298



Plant Diagnostic Lab tour – attended by MGs from Limestone MGA, MGNA, and Jefferson MGA. Photographer: Tabatha Fiacco



MARSHALL COUNTY MGA

Jo Dureen

In April the Marshall County Master Gardeners Association (MCMGA) set up a booth at Volunteer Days in the Marshall County Retired Seniors Volunteer Program building. The goal was to educate the public about the volunteer opportunities within the community and to make the community aware of the volunteers who are willing and able to assist.

April was busy at the CASA garden. The City of Guntersville delivered three trucks of mulch to help us and a MCMGA member made multiple trips with his truck and trailer loaded with mulch. By the first week of May potatoes, cabbage (planted twice as some critter chomped the first planting to the ground), onions, beans, tomatoes and corn (already knee high by mid-May) were planted. Lettuce is already being harvested and donated to Temporary Emergency Service of Arab (TSEA). MCMGA donates tons of produce to CASA, Caring Hearts, TESA and others in need. In 2025 the garden produced 7,628 pounds that were donated to the community.

The funds from MCMGA's annual plant sale will go toward sponsoring children to attend 4H camp in June. They will also be used to offer a scholarship to a qualified Marshall County High School senior who plans to seek further education in the agricultural/horticultural field.

Several MCMGA members attended the AMGA conference in Huntsville. There were so many tours and workshops to choose from. Attendees will use their newfound knowledge to improve our gardening experiences.



MCMGA member JD Swartzlander, Senior Garden Advisor, in CASA Garden
Photo by Jo Dureen

MEMBER-at-LARGE (Conecuh County)

Edward Pate

Challenge the Face of Hunger in Alabama

When we think of hunger, we may picture distant places. Yet hunger is close to home. Its face may be a senior neighbor who doesn't want to "be a bother," a student who can't focus because of an empty stomach, or a breadwinner suddenly out of work because of injury, cutbacks, or AI. The Alabamians behind these faces live with food insecurity, which the Alabama Department of Public Health defines as not having consistent access to enough nutritious food. In February 2026, the Department reported that 17% of Alabama adults and 23% of children—almost 1 in 4—face food insecurity.

Grow More, Give More, an Alabama Extension program begun in response to COVID, works to reduce hunger by encouraging home gardeners to share extra produce with people in need. This summer, as part of America's 250th anniversary, the program is sponsoring the 250 Pound Challenge. Each Alabama county is encouraged to donate 250 pounds of fresh

produce between Memorial Day and Labor Day. Record donations via this special link: <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/grow-more-give-more/grow-more-give-more-250-pound-challenge/>

As fruits and vegetables come in this summer, remember the many faces of hunger: families who live far from full-service grocery stores, children without school meals during summer break, and households struggling with inflation and transportation costs. Hunger isn't always visible, but it is present across Alabama.

Donating surplus produce—even a few pounds—makes a real difference. Through the 250 Pound Challenge, neighbors can help neighbors and challenge the face of hunger in Alabama.



MOBILE COUNTY MGA

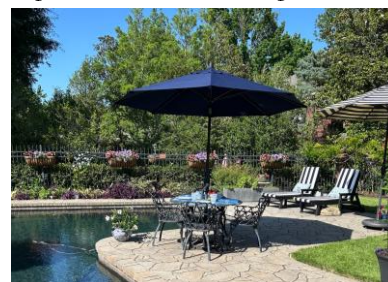
Cindy Findlay

Our fourth Annual Spring Festival was held the last weekend in March. This year we worked with Mary G. Montgomery High School Agricultural Department to cultivate our vegetables, seeds and plants in their greenhouse, and they turned out amazing. We again partnered with Mobile Botanical Gardens to have the event at the gardens. Since it is an educational event, short vignettes were presented by Mobile County Master Gardeners Association (MCMGA) members on various topics. Each year we are growing and learning! Plan on coming down!

MCMGA member, Jane Finley, identified the need in our area for a garden tour. Jane presented this need to MCMGA, then took on the role as leader for our first Tour of Gardens. Eight of the gardens on the tour were MCMGA member gardens, one was a public garden, and one was our DREAM garden at the Extension office. This process began early in 2025. We had monthly meetings to

help us get the homeowners' and our DREAM garden in tip-top shape. The "Tour of Gardens 2026" was held May 15-17. This endeavor was a big success for us. It exceeded our goals for attendance, and community feedback was very positive. We worked hard yet we had fun and decided to make this an annual event. Watch for the 2027 date.

We're ready for a class of 27 interns and are eager to start in August.



Mobile County EMG Jane Finley's home garden on Tour of Gardens. Photographer: Cindy Findlay

MORGAN COUNTY MGA

Julia Chenault

Our spring plant sale was a big success with nearly 1300 shoppers over two days. Since then, we've pulled out our Morgan County MGA tablecloth, banner and ACES materials for our monthly booths at the local farmers markets.

Many of our members were involved in planning for and working at the State Conference held in Huntsville. We had 28 registered from our group; kudos to all involved for a great conference!

We have partnered with the Decatur Downtown Redevelopment Authority to beautify a portion of our downtown area with hanging baskets. Morgan County EMG Philda Starks put her skills to work on these and they turned out beautifully.

We continue to make monthly, seasonal plant donations to patients of Hospice of the Valley. In recent months, small pots of begonias and snapdragons were grown for them.

With a Project Funding grant from AMGA, our association will create a pollinator/sensory

garden at the WaterWorks Center for Environmental Education. We installed a walkway with pavers and added mulch. Our next steps will include plantings and signage.

At our May meeting we heard from representatives of the seven schools that were 2025 grant recipients. Funds were spent on gardening supplies ranging from gravel and wood to gloves and owl pellets. A grow tower was purchased, raised beds were built, and a new greenhouse was framed.



MCMGA members that worked on pathway at WaterWorks. Photographer: Doty Henry.



PIKE COUNTY MGA

Buriece Gracey

Pike County Master Gardeners (PCMGA) have been buzzing with activity this spring, planning for the annual plant sale, volunteering throughout the community, and learning about new gardening topics. Our annual plant sale required much time and effort preparing for a successful event held during TroyFest. PCMGA also volunteered many hours at the Alabama Pioneer Museum, hosting school children and helping with Heritage Day activities. Another outstanding project involved teaching local school children how to garden. The group participated in Clean Up Day at the Arboretum and helped with the removal of invasive plants.

Learning is also an important part of giving back to the community. This spring, members enjoyed educational programs on growing pecan trees, raising and attracting butterflies, and learning about a new garden center in town.

Looking forward we remain committed to supporting the Pioneer Museum by volunteering for upcoming celebrations, including the Fourth of July activities. Since 2024, the PCMGA has delivered fresh-cut flowers weekly throughout the summer months to a local nursing home. This project is called the "Forget Me Not" project. The goal is to bring joy to the residents through the beauty of flowers.



Pike County Schools Pre-K Celebration in Brundidge. L-R: Amy Baker (standing), Wanda Corley (sitting), Jessie Dietrich (sitting). Photographer unknown.

SHELBY COUNTY MGA

Kathy Hagood

Spring was busy as bees for Shelby County Master Gardeners Association (SCMGA). April kicked off with five EMGs, led by President Elizabeth York, assisting with the Chelsea area home school co-op at Yellowleaf Creek Farm and Stables in Chelsea. EMG Carol Beard provided baby super sweet tomato seedlings. The group of 30 children and their parents learned how to plant vegetables in milk jugs and enjoyed the farm's baby goats, horses, pigs and donkeys. EMGs Karen Mims and Kate Vogel did a presentation at the Parnell Memorial Library in Montevallo for their monthly homeschool class on propagation. Richard Sturm led EMGs in two successful Helena Market Day plant sales and educational events in May and June. EMGs also participated in a workday held at Family Connection in Alabaster. The front entrance beds were cleaned up and are ready for 2026. Another group of EMGs shared

gardening information and resources about the EMG program at the 2026 Annual Shelby County Senior Picnic held at the Shelby Exhibition Center. Vice President Pam Dyer led an educational field trip in early May to the Montgomery Botanical Gardens, where the group learned the history of the gardens and viewed its gorgeous day lilies in bloom. At our June meeting Extension Agent Bethany O'Rear got us excited about volunteering at the upcoming Great Southeast Pollinator Census August 21-22.



Shelby County EMGs show children from the Chelsea area home school co-op how to plant vegetables in milk jugs. Photographer: Jullian Richardson



SHOALS MGA

Sally McGuire

Sitting here with pen and paper in hand, I can't help but think what a blessing it is to be a part of the Shoals Master Gardeners Association (SMGA). Many SEMGs and interns put in a tremendous amount of blood, sweat, and tears to make our plant sale a success. The last several years we've broken the previous year's record, and this year was no exception. All hands were on deck, and shoppers were lined up in the parking lot. Mile Wilson and Martha Cole sharpened garden tools, Brenda Smith, plus a few others, helped children make fairy gardens, Donna Walthall lined up SMGs for Saturday's Garden Talks while the rest of us were busy helping shoppers and, of course, taking their money! The Shoals area always supports our spring plant sale and turns in used pots year around at our two pot drop locations.

Calvary Learning Center (CLC) started the first Wednesday in June. Several SMGs teach the pre-K, third and fourth graders about

gardening. CLC has eight raised beds and several cattle tubs with vegetables and flowers for pollinators. The children are taught lessons on garden safety and etiquette, seed germination, how to water, good bugs, bad bugs, and water transportation. The children love to scout for bugs, water, pick the ripe vegetables, and in their little eyes the bigger the cucumber and squash the better!

SMGA is excited about an upcoming raised bed project at North Alabama Children's Home.



SMGA Plant Sale at the Florence Farmers Market. Photographer: Penny Townsend

SOUTHWEST ALABAMA MGA

Chester Vrocher

On Thursday May 21, eleven people held the inaugural meeting of the Southwest Alabama Master Gardeners Association in Grove Hill, Alabama.

It all started in 2021 when a citizen who had recently retired called his local county Extension office inquiring about participation in the Master Gardener training program. He was informed that there was not enough interest in the area to have a Master Gardener program. End of conversation.

After some research and contacting a neighboring County Extension agent he was referred to the Regional Master Gardener coordinator and was put on a waiting list for a training class two counties away. In 2023 he attended the training program and certified as a Master Gardener in Mobile. With support from Regional Home Horticulture Agent Jack LeCroy and Clarke County Extension Director, Robin Paul, he began an education and recruitment effort at local farmers markets and civic organizations. During spring 2026 registration

process, 12 people from five counties registered for the class beginning in February. With support from Jack, the instructor, and Robin, the host, classes were held and volunteer projects identified in the communities. At completion of the class, nine of the 12 interns had completed their hours for certification as Extension Master Gardeners and committed to the establishment of a local association. The Southwest Alabama Master Gardeners Association is now working to certify interns and recruit another intern class for spring 2027.



Newly formed Southwest Alabama MGA members (two members not pictured).
Photographer: Robin Paul



St. CLAIR COUNTY MGA

Pam Garrison

We have reached the time of year when lawns need to be mowed twice a week. In the heat and humidity, that is no easy task. As a result, most gardening activities are largely limited to the early morning and late afternoon hours.

Our group has stayed busy with several projects. In May, three members worked at the Moody Welcome Sign, where we cleaned the beds, pruned plants, replenished the soil, and planted summer annuals.

In mid-June, six members gathered at the Lakeside Native Walking Trail for some much-needed maintenance. We spread 20 round bales of pine straw around the perimeter, weeded and pruned the area, and fertilized several plants. One member donated a pot of common milkweed, which was planted alongside existing milkweed plants. We also dug up and relocated a large clump of *Silphium perfoliatum* (cup plant) to the area marked by its identification sign, as it had apparently reseeded itself in the wrong location.

Our July meeting will be a little different, as we have decided not to feature a guest speaker. Instead, we will hold a plant swap. Each member will bring a plant and give a brief presentation about it. It should be interesting to see the variety of plants that are shared and to learn more about them.

Looking ahead to September, we have planned a visit to Recreative Natives in Cropwell. Owner Jessica Thompson will provide a tour of the property and share information about her work.



Taken after we finished working at Lakeside Park. The feet belong to Marianne Landman, Pam Garrison, Carolyn Pennington, Vicki Jaco, Sara Zannis and Neva Webb. We took a photo of our feet because the rest of us was too hot, sweaty and dirty to be photographed. Photographer: Vicki Jaco

TALLAPOOSA COUNTY MGA

by Calvin Johnson

Birds are beneficial to our gardens and plants. They serve as excellent pollinators, control garden pests such as insects and aphids, and spread many seed varieties across neighborhoods and our country. In May, Dylan Ogle, a local bird enthusiast and expert, presented an informative talk with taped bird calls/songs to illustrate the richness of birds in our area. He related how their visits with us enrich our daily lives and improve our plant and floral displays. I could easily relate to his remarks as I have daily chats with a resident red-headed woodpecker, aptly named "Woody." Woody tells me all about his day as I supply his protein of crushed peanuts and locally purchased sunflower seeds still in the shell or shelled as Sunflower Hearts. Wild bird seed is always provided as I have a huge fan base of bluejays, wrens, thrushes and doves. Yesterday we had a mating pair of finches.

Apparently, they are not yet nesting.

We live adjacent to a lake which also is a major water source for lots of wildlife, especially the birds. Bird baths are very attractive and allow them to cool off during this heat wave. When I bring out the hose to water plants on the deck, the songbirds go wild and literally fly through the spray!

Migrating pairs such as wrens, sparrows and Eastern bluebirds stop for a visit and partake of the hummingbird feeder and blueberry bush. It is almost time to pick blueberries before the birds come. Happy gardening until next issue!



Dylan Ogle, local bird expert, discusses Eastern Bluebirds and plays birdcalls to Tallapoosa EMGs. Photographer: Calvin Johnson



TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

Tuscaloosa County MGA hosted a workshop on building a self-watering container garden, led by Dan Sutton. These types of events are publicly advertised and result in several non-members participating, which gives us a chance to promote our association.

Our spring pass-along plant sale in April was our most successful to date. We partnered with a local high school Ag program and assisted in their spring plant sale. Many of their unsold ornamental plants were then donated to us for our plant sale, which we use to fund scholarships for students pursuing an Ag related college path.

After an extended period without a Home Grounds agent, we are happy to welcome our new Home Grounds/Commercial Horticulture agent, Margaret Ann Snow, to our office. She brings over 20 years of farming experience to our group and is working aggressively to help our MGA program grow.

The latest project we are pursuing is the

enhancement of a local city park that has been owned by Tuscaloosa for one hundred years, originally improved in the 1930's by WPA and CCC work projects. The grounds are being cleared of invasive plants as we prepare to add plant/tree labels, an outdoor classroom and a sensory garden. Primary users will be students participating in summer outdoor education programs hosted by the public library next door but will benefit all park visitors.



Tuscaloosa County Master Gardeners at Culinary Science Center Rooftop Garden in Auburn. Photographer: Unknown

WIREGRASS MGA

Jan Shirley

Our spring plant sale in March was a big success and was attended by many who come to each of our sales to find something new to add to their gardens. The fun continued into April when our interns joined Wiregrass Master Gardeners in Landmark Park's Kitchen Garden. We teach nearly 200 school children, including kindergarteners, fifth graders and Special Ed students, about gardening at the turn of the century. In May, 13 of us traveled to Huntsville for the annual AMGA State Conference to participate in many of the excellent tours, as well as attend lectures which inspired us. We also talked with many who put together this year's conference, as well as those responsible for the 2027 Conference, to learn about planning our 2028 Conference.

May 16 found more than 70 EMGs from the Wiregrass area volunteering at the annual Go Public Gardens Day at the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens. Families visited more than 30 booths to learn about pollinators,

composting, bats, and snakes, or to enjoy storytelling, decorating pots and planting seeds, making suncatchers, digging potatoes —and so much more! In June we began weekly classes at Aunt Katie's Community Garden to teach the joys of gardening as part of the Hawk-Houston summer program. In July, the monthly Lunch and Learn series continues as well as planning meetings for our 2028 State Conference – “Nuts About Gardening” – here in the “Peanut Capital of the World!”



Wiregrass EMGs at the 2026 AMGA Conference, Huntsville. Photographer unknown.



You Know you're A Master Gardener When.....

10. You rejoice in rain...even after 10 straight days of it.
9. You have pride in how bad your hands look.
8. You have a decorative compost container on your kitchen counter.
7. You can give away plants easily, but compost is another thing.
6. Soil test results actually mean something.
5. IPM rules!
4. You'd rather go to a nursery to shop than a clothes store.
3. You look for gardens open to the public whenever you go on vacation.
2. Your non-gardening spouse is actually getting involved with your garden endeavors...digging ponds, building bird houses, watering, pruning, turning compost piles, planting...

And you definitely know you're a Master Gardener when...

1. You are surrounded by terrific people who share your passion!

Created by Audrey, Emmitsburg, Md.

<https://www.emmitsburg.net/humor/archives/gardening/gardening.htm#You%20Know%20you%E2%80%99re%20A%20Master%20Gardener%20When:>



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Got Questions?



We've Got Answers



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