

# Pathways

## Winter 2023 - 2024

Courtesy of Pexels

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**AMGA Website**  
[alabamamga.org](http://alabamamga.org)



**AMGA PRESIDENT**  
Devonne Ellis

Happy New Year! I hope your year has started off with good health and time to relax from the hustle and bustle of the holidays. My new year has started with seed packets. I seed annuals for our local plant sale. My group of Master Gardeners are fortunate to have a greenhouse for seeding, propagating, and storing plants for upcoming sales. We teach new interns in this greenhouse.

Did your association encourage your interns to go to Auburn for their intern graduation? There were tours and meet and greet times. It was a wonderful opportunity to speak with new interns from across the state. Thank you and your Master Gardener groups for encouraging our interns along their journey in becoming Master Gardeners.

It is now time to focus on the 2024 AMGA Conference in Baldwin County. Before you know it, we will be there learning from tours, workshops, and speakers plus sharing information with each other. Besides seeding, it is one of my favorite times of the year.

Do remember the application deadline for Project Funding and all other awards is January 31. I am sure your group could use the money, especially if you have not won this award in the last three years. Check the website: [www.alabamamga.org](http://www.alabamamga.org) for the list and please apply for awards.

Please encourage your members to go to the Advisory Council meeting on February 6, 2024. This is where we learn what local Master Gardeners are doing in their associations, maintaining their membership, and sharing new ideas for recruiting new members. We also share ideas for programs. Everyone is welcome to attend. We start at 10 am and visit Petals from the Past afterward. I would love to see you there.



## AMGA VICE PRESIDENT

Debbie Boutelier

Happy New Year! 2023 is in the books and now we have a fresh, new slate in 2024. I'm not one that makes New Year's resolutions, but I do like to plan my gardening year starting in January. Love, love, love all the seed and plant catalogs that hit my mailbox early in the year. I have a lot of the old faithful seed varieties that I plant each year, but there is always room for new plant varieties! Restraint is hard to follow except there is only so much room in the garden. Darn!

Get ready. It's time to register for the 2024 AMGA State Conference and Business Meeting being held in Daphne and hosted by Baldwin County Master Gardeners. The conference planning committee has worked so hard putting together a fun and educational event. There will be lots of choices for tours, workshops, and speakers. The food will showcase the best the coast has to offer. This is a conference you won't want to miss! For all the details and registration information, visit the AMGA website.

Then, you will want to mark your calendars for 2025. We will be traveling to the central region of the state for a meeting that the Autauga County Master Gardeners will host in Prattville on April 23 - 25, 2025. Teaser alert! Preliminary information on this meeting will be available in Daphne.

After visiting both the southern part of the state in 2024 and then the central part of the state in 2025, we will continue heading north to Huntsville in 2026. The dates for the 2026 conference will be May 6 - 8, 2026. The hosts for that meeting will be Master Gardeners of North Alabama, Limestone County and Morgan County. There we will learn about *Gardening to the Moon and Back*.

Always remember that time began in a garden!

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## AMGA AWARDS

Julie Conrey, Chair

Happy New Year!

The AMGA Awards Committee has revised one of the minimum requirements for the Mary Lou McNabb Master Gardener of the Year Award.

A Master Gardener nominee can now average 100 hours of volunteer service per year to be considered for this award.

Associations planning to submit a newsletter for an award, please be advised that the committee seeks admissions from February and October 2023. Local associations publishing on a quarterly basis, please submit an issue for award consideration that is closest to each of these months. Newsletters that have not received an award since 2021 are eligible for one of three awards to be given at the 2024 AMGA Conference in Daphne, Alabama. To check out winners from past years, please visit [Alabamamga.org](http://Alabamamga.org) and click on AMGA Award Recipients on the toolbar at the top of the landing page.

Other awards to be given at the 2024 Conference include Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award, Gary Murray Award for Outstanding Service and Dedication to the Alabama Master Gardener Program, AMGA Top Hours of the Year, and Mary Lou McNabb State Master Gardener of the Year.

For submission criteria for all awards, please visit [Alabamamga.org](http://Alabamamga.org) and click on the AMGA Awards and Criteria tab located on the right-hand side of the landing page.

Nominations for all awards must be completed and submitted electronically or via USPS no later than January 31, 2024, to: Julie Conrey, 1271 Skywood Drive, Mobile, Alabama 36693. Email address: [awardsamga@gmail.com](mailto:awardsamga@gmail.com).

## **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT**

Sondra Henley, Chair; Phyllis Clay and Doc Scheffler

Present Nominees For:

**BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE**  
Janell Diggs, Kim Johnson, Susan Steele  
**NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBER**  
Amy Weis



**Board Member at Large: Janell Diggs**  
Term: 2024-2027

Janell Diggs is a member of Capital City Master Gardeners Association (CCMGA), completing her initial certification in 2016. Since that time, she has served as Secretary, Vice President, and President of the CCMGA. She currently serves as the Education Chairperson. She is very passionate about learning and teaching. Her favorite volunteer activity, so far, is the time she spends educating as a guest speaker and working with the Master Gardener Intern Classes. Janell is currently working on her Advanced Master Gardener Certification in "Growing and Cooking with Herbs and certification as an Alabama Master Naturalist. Janell earned a BS degree in Natural Resources Management from the University of Tennessee at Martin and has used that degree throughout her life as a volunteer. She has been an avid supporter of the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) program where she has dedicated more than 20 years to the youth and adult leaders serving at Unit, District, and Council levels. She served as a Council Webelos Camp Director for 12 years. She was the Camp Director for two different Council-wide camps for more than 10 years. She continues to serve as a Life to Eagle Coach for scouts in Troop 23 on Maxwell AFB. After a lifetime of volunteering and service, it's an honor to be considered for a position on the AMGA board. She is connected to the military through her husband of 37 years, Rick. They have two grown children and live on a farm in Hope Hull, AL. They enjoy each other's company along with their dogs, chickens, and cows.



**Board Member at Large: Kimberly M. Johnson**  
Term: 2024-2027

Kim Johnson has been a Jackson County Master Gardener since 2019. She took her class in the Spring of 2019 and completed her requirements in 2 months, receiving her certificate in June 2019. She was Secretary of the JCMGA for 2 years January 2020 through December 2021 and is now serving a 3-year term as a Jackson County Board member since January 2022. She also serves as JCMGA super admin and dues tracker for the service website, JCMGA Facebook admin and JCMGA Membership Committee Chair.

She has been a lifelong resident of Jackson County and is a graduate of Kate Duncan Smith DAR School in Grant, AL. She has been retired for the past 6 years as a Paint Quality Technician for a Tier One Supplier to Honda Manufacturing of Alabama. She has been the Co-owner and Manager of Johnson Trucking for over 10 years now with her husband.

She loves the outdoors! She would rather mow her six acres than clean a kitchen any day of the week. She loves to paint, photography, travel, and social networking. She never meets a stranger and loves adventure and will try anything at least once. You never know if you like it until you try it because you never know what you are missing out on- we only live once!

## **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT (continued)**

Sondra Henley, Chair; Phyllis Clay and Doc Scheffler

Present Nominees For:

### **BOARD MEMBERS AT LARGE**

Janell Diggs, Kim Johnson, Susan Steele

### **NOMINATING COMMITTEE MEMBER**

Amy Weis



**Board Member at Large: Susan Steele**

**Term: 2024-2027**

Susan brings a broad business knowledge and leadership experience to the team after retiring with over 30 years of experience in telecommunications. Susan developed her love for Extension while growing up on a small farm in Mississippi and spending her formative years deeply immersed in all things 4-H. Career moves from Mississippi to Birmingham and Atlanta gave her a variety of work, life, and leadership experiences. Susan has served on non-profit boards and currently runs a non-profit ministry, serving four North Alabama counties, providing clothing and household items to anyone in need. She is a founding member of Lawrence County Master Gardeners and a member of Morgan County Master Gardeners. Susan's passion is working with schools to develop Outdoor Learning Gardens and has been instrumental in the building of two outdoor gardens in Lawrence County. Susan is deeply rooted in her faith and is blessed with a wonderful, supportive husband, Marvin, one son and a daughter-in-love. The highlight of her day is spending time with her two-year-old grandson.



**Nominations Committee: Amy Weis**

**Term: 2024-2027**

Amy Weis is the President of the Jefferson County Master Gardener Association, having served on their Board since 2022. In her tenure, she has led the JCMGA into modern times as a 501(c)3 and got them back on track post-pandemic. In 2023, her goal as president was to revive their membership through a communications campaign where, with the help of several stalwart members, they reached out to over 500 members listed in their roster. The result was an increase in dues-paying members of over 37 percent, a revival of committees, and solid attendance at monthly meetings. With the support of the Board, she established new committees and roles, such as a Policy and Procedures Committee, a Fundraising Committee, and an Archivist. Amy recently presented to the Advisory Council and AMGA Board on much-needed updates to the ACES Membership Directory, which the AMGA Board subsequently agreed to fund!

Amy hails from Mobile, where she completed a degree in Biogeography from the University of South Alabama. She moved to Birmingham in 2013 by way of England, where she completed a Master's Degree in GIS and Remote Sensing at the University of Cambridge and subsequently worked with the United Nations Environment Program World Conservation Monitoring Centre. Amy continued working for UNEP-WCMC and affiliates as a consultant, taught at Samford University as an adjunct professor, and is now the Executive Director of Miss Sims' Garden Botanical Park.

## **AMGA 2025 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND BUSINESS MEETING**

Sondra Henley, Co-Chair

Jane Boysen, Co-Chair

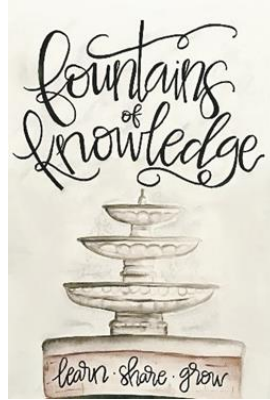
“Fountains of Knowledge”

2025 Conference, Prattville, AL

April 3-5, 2025 (Thursday, Friday, Saturday)

First Baptist Church of Prattville, AL

We are working toward completing our conference schedule and contracting with our speakers. We have an Estimated Conference Budget ready for review. Sponsorship packets for our membership will be disbursed in early 2024. Members should be able to answer questions about Autauga County MGA, ACES, and AMGA accomplishments while calling on businesses to support the conference.



## **AMGA MEMBERSHIP**

Rose McCauley, Chair

AMGA memberships for 2023 totaled 1,947. Discrepancies exist between membership dues submitted to the Treasurer and the Dues Tracker information. I do think this number for State membership is low.

If your association does not have a member entering information into the Dues Tracker, I ask that you assign someone to that task. If a member needs access to Dues Tracker, please contact me. I am available at [jrmprat@charter.net](mailto:jrmprat@charter.net) if you need Dues Tracker help or have questions regarding membership.

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## **AMGA NEWSLETTER**

Patricia Peoples and Terri Scheffler, co-editors

Sheila Bolen, apprentice

We've made some recent changes to how we produce the Pathways newsletter to increase productivity. These changes should have been transparent to you but should help us increase efficiency. We also hope having a dedicated point-of-contact for your local organization will prove to be beneficial to this process, as well.

We're excited about the 2024 growing season, our upcoming conference, and producing a newsletter that will be beneficial to you! One of the things we're most excited about is that our Editor, Patricia Peoples, is back on her feet following her recent surgery!

This is the time of year when many local officers and points of contact change. Please be sure to let us know if your local Pathways contact has been revised.



## **AMGA PROJECT FUNDING**

Sherilyn Osborne, Chair

Please remember to get Project Funding applications in by January 31. All applications are online. They must be completed and returned online. All rules stated with the application must be followed as these are guidelines used to determine eligibility! A local group can apply if it has not received an award in the last three years.

If your group did receive an award last year, a final report needs to be sent within a year of the time the award was given.

Thank you for all you do for Master Gardeners and send in applications for grants if eligible and desired.

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## **AMGA SECRETARY**

Lyn Webb

Did you pay to become an AMGA Lifetime Member? If you did, or you decide to, you are eligible to purchase a Lifetime Member pin that attaches to your badge similar to the stars that you earn by volunteering hours.

AMGA Lifetime membership is \$150, and if you would like to have the pin to attach to your badge, it is \$10. Make your check payable to AMGA and send it to AMGA, c/o Cecilia Adams, PO Box 3031, Decatur, AL 35602. Please include contact information so that we can get your pin to you.



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## **AMGA SPEAKERS' BUREAU**

Susan Hagen, Chair

As we move into the New Year with a new set of officers for local associations, presidents, program chairs, and publicity chairs might take a fresh look at The AMGA Speakers' Bureau (<https://alabamamga.org/amga-speakers-bureau/>) to discover resources for CEU programs and for ideas for public outreach for their association members.

The AMGA Speakers' Bureau list grew slightly over the past quarter but continues to seek Master Gardeners wanting to share their special expertise with other MGs or with the general public. Anyone in the process of Advanced Certification would find the Bureau a valuable resource for securing presentation engagements. The application form to be on the list is simple to fill out, and speakers can set the parameters of their presentations—how far they will travel, whether they can appear on Zoom, or will do Lunch and Learn programs. Once on the list, they also have complete control over which speaking invitations they want to accept.

Master Gardeners are encouraged to share this list of speakers and topics with other garden groups and civic partners who can benefit from our Extension/Master Gardener outreach mission. AMGA speakers have presented at garden clubs, Rotary Clubs, libraries, senior centers, agri-centers, botanical gardens, and of course local Master Gardener Association meetings.

## **AMGA TREASURER**

Cecilia Adams

Your association continues to hold a strong financial position, with a total of \$109,916.63 in the bank as of November 31, 2023, and no liabilities.

A more detailed Statement of Financial Position as of December 31, 2023, and a Statement of revenues and expenses for the year then ended will be presented at the 2024 annual conference.

Please forward any outstanding bills to be paid by AMGA for 2023 as soon as possible to the address below.

As a reminder, 2024 AMGA dues are due by December 31, 2023, payable to:

AMGA

c/o Cecilia Adams, Treasurer

PO Box 3031

Decatur, AL 35602



### **THE AMGA ADVISORY COUNCIL MEETING**

**Feb 6, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

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

The AMGA Advisory Council will hold a meeting on Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at Petals from the Past in Jemison, Alabama from 10 am to 12 pm. All Master Gardeners are encouraged to attend.

### **AMGA BOARD MEETING**

**March 5, 10:00 am - 12:00 pm**

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

The AMGA Board Meeting will be held at Petals From the Past, Jemison, Alabama on March 5, 2024, from 10 am to 12 pm. Everyone is welcome to attend.

### **PATHWAYS ARTICLES**

Due March 15, 2024.

### **2024 AMGA ANNUAL CONFERENCE**

The 2024 AMGA Annual Conference is set for Daphne, Alabama between the dates of April 22-24, 2024 in Baldwin County.

### **SEARCH FOR EXCELLENCE GUIDELINES and APPLICATION**

## EXTENSION UPDATE

Kerry Smith, State Master Gardeners Program Coordinator

### Winter Blues?

The weather might be gorgeous or dreary, and we're recuperating from festivities and excessive food. It's January and a new year is here!

Writing this in December, I'm also predicting a few of you might have my photo on your dartboard, on your MGA's dartboard, or maybe just a few of you are air-hugging me (I can pretend, anyway). Regardless, I'm anxious to watch and listen as several new items roll out for the Extension Master Gardener Program. As I said many times, "I think this will be a pivotal year for our program," and always with a sincere and happy face. 😊

At the same time, I fully recognize the pain of change. Our daily patterns roll us through each week giving comfort from their predictability. Ironically, gardeners find joy in the seasonal mysteries of gardening. When will my new seedlings pop their heads above the soil? Will the new cutting take root? Anticipating the unknown is sometimes exciting.... and it can give us fresh perspective too.

### WATCH FOR THESE ITEMS IN 2024:

- "Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program." Through our strategic assessment, it was clear that we want and need to reconnect Extension with the program and all volunteers.
- A new Service Report with 6 first-level categories, each having a few secondary categories underneath. I'm confident this will feel intuitive once you start using it. The Glossary is back too!
- A revised Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Remember this from your Intern year? It was formerly named a Memorandum of Agreement, has been extensively reviewed, and will be attached to your Service Report account sometime in January.
- A 5-Year Strategic Plan. Look in your Service Report for files showing our work-to-date.

Here are a few snippets from our upcoming 5-Year Plan. A NEW Mission Statement, "*We improve the lives of Alabamians through research-based horticulture education delivered by a dedicated, trained, and involved Extension volunteer team.*" It's been almost 20 years since this was reviewed. We've changed a LOT since then!

Our strategic assessment process added other new pieces too. Having many voices involved, Extension Master Gardeners and Agents, I feel strongly that our Plan will give us a sturdy foundation for future growth. Here's one example in our NEW Guiding Principles. They're brand-new in fact. We've never had these before now.

- 1.We value and encourage the teamwork of our program community.
- 2.We are rooted in research-based knowledge.
- 3.We are advocates for knowledge in all Alabama communities.
- 4.We are passionate about gardening.
- 5.We identify and implement projects that address local needs.
- 6.We are committed to environmental stewardship to protect and support Alabama's natural resources.
- 7.We collaborate to ensure a vibrant future for the Extension Master Gardener program and its mission.

I'm excited about our many opportunities in 2024. Thank you for your support of all things in Extension.



Kerry Smith  
State Extension Master Gardener Program Coordinator





# AMGA 2024 ANNUAL CONFERENCE AND BUSINESS MEETING

Joni Trusty Euler

What are two eight-letter words associated with the 2024 State Conference? If you guessed gardener and paradise, you are ready for April 22! Discover “Paradise Found” as Baldwin County Master Gardeners welcome everyone for an informative, action-packed, hands-on learning experience.

Preconference workshops will provide information and instruction on enhancing personal gardens (including DIY projects for drip irrigation and building a greenhouse). Preconference tour options include visiting a “giving garden”, a boat tour, an excursion to a sustainable designed outdoor classroom featuring an Alabama Wildlife Outdoor Certified Garden, touring the grounds of a local farm-to-table restaurant, plus others.

Breakout sessions cover a variety of topics to further your gardening knowledge (soil polymers, vertical gardening, etc.) Dr. John Bowen, a North Carolina Master Gardener, will speak on ergonomic and adaptive tools and ways to modify gardens as we mature. Dr. Dave Williams, Professor Emeritus from Auburn University, will present “The Power of Plants: The Effect on Human Health and Well-Being.” From a lifetime of gardening experiences and road-tripping around Texas and beyond, Steven Chamblee will share “Peace Love and Milagros: Life Lessons from the Road.”

Early bird registration opens on Monday, January 15. Check the AMGA website (<https://alabamamga.org/>) for any additions or changes to the conference materials. We will see you in “Paradise Found!”

Registration, speaker, and other conference info follows.





**2024 AMGA STATE CONFERENCE  
and ANNUAL MEETING**

***"Paradise Found"***

April 22-24

Daphne Civic Center

2603 US Hwy 98

Daphne, Alabama

**REGISTRATION OPENS 1/15/2024**

- Please complete a separate form for each person attending or register online
- Guests of attendee, who will not be attending the conference but will attend the meal events, are to be included on this form.

**1. Registrant Information**

Last Name \_\_\_\_\_ First Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Street Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_ Cell ( ) \_\_\_\_\_ Local MGA Assoc. \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one: MG \_\_\_\_\_ MG Intern \_\_\_\_\_ ACES \_\_\_\_\_ Speaker \_\_\_\_\_ Vendor \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Preferred name on badge (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

- **Registration fee includes welcome reception, Tuesday lunch, dinner and break refreshments. Breakfast is NOT included. (See hotel information)**
- **Preconference workshops, T-shirts and guest meals are additional pay items.**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Early Bird Registration** January 15-31 \$175 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Regular Registration** February 1-Mar. 22 \$180 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Late Registration** March 23-April 5  
(Guest meals and tee shirts not available.) \$185 \$ \_\_\_\_\_

**2. Registrant Meal Information and Selection**

Monday Welcome Social: Cash bar and hors d'oeuvres

Please check one: I will \_\_\_\_\_ I will not \_\_\_\_\_ be attending the Monday Welcome Social

Tuesday boxed lunch (select one). Includes chips, cookie and beverage.

\_\_\_\_\_ Chicken Salad Croissant \_\_\_\_\_ BBQ Sandwich \_\_\_\_\_ Veggie Sandwich

Tuesday Dinner Buffet: Farm salad, beef tenderloin, Gulf shrimp and grits, vegetables, dessert and tea.



**Pavilion at the Nest (Fairhope)**

\_\_\_\_\_ 12:00 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 1:30 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 3:00 pm

**Self- Guided Tours. Tour at your leisure anytime between 12:30 and 4:30 pm.**

**Branch Home Garden-*Giving Garden***

**Turner Home Garden-*Historical Home and Gardens***

**Check if attending \_\_\_\_\_**

**6. Preconference Workshops. Note that start times vary.**

All workshops will be held at the Daphne Civic Center Complex. You must be pre-registered and pre-paid to attend. Sessions are limited to 25 attendees per session on a first come basis. **Please CHECK the time of the session you wish to attend.**

***Kokedama* by Devonne Ellis and Judy Gobble**

Literally meaning “moss ball” in English, you will discover and learn the Japanese art of *Kokedama* and create your very own arrangement.

\_\_\_\_\_ 12:00 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 1:30 pm

\$30

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Build a Greenhouse Before Your Eyes**

Our own BCMG team will show you how easy it is to build a small backyard greenhouse.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1:00 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 2:30 pm

\$25

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Hands-on DIY Drip Irrigation by Jack LeCroy**

Jack is the Mobile County extension agent and he will lead you through a hands-on activity to assemble drip irrigation in your own garden.

\_\_\_\_\_ 1:00 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 2:30 pm

\$25

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Build a Bee Box by Becky Estes**

Attract non-aggressive, solitary bees to your garden with this simple-build habitat.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3:00 pm

\_\_\_\_\_ 4:30 pm

\$25

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Native Alabama Milkweed Project and Migratory Gardens by Baldwin County extension agent Carmen Flammini** who leads on this research project. She will discuss the project, milkweed propagation and culture as well as building a butterfly garden.

\_\_\_\_\_ 3:30 pm

No charge

\$ NC

**Total Workshop Fees**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Total Conference Fees**

**Registration**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Tee-shirt**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Guest meals**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Workshop fees**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**Total Fees Due**

\$\_\_\_\_\_

**8. To Register** On-line registration is preferred. To register and pay on-line by credit card, click on link: <http://c.planetreg.com/AMGA2024CONF>

**NOTE: A personal PayPal account is NOT required to register on-line. PayPal is the credit card processing service and will accept VISA and MasterCard.**

**To register and pay by check, please make checks payable to AMGA and mail along with this completed form to:**

**AMGA**

**c/o Z. Bauer**

**465 W 23rd. Avenue**

**Gulf Shores, Alabama 36542**

Please allow two weeks to receive an email confirmation of your registration. It is your responsibility to confirm receipt of your registration. Please email [AMGA2024@baldwinmastergardeners.com](mailto:AMGA2024@baldwinmastergardeners.com) or [phone/text 251.752.7755](tel:251.752.7755) if you feel you have been overlooked.

#### **Cancellation and Refund Policy**

This cancellation and refund policy applies to all 2024 AMGA State Conference registrations. By registering for the conference, attendees agree to comply with this policy.

#### **Cancellation Periods:**

On or before March 22: all conference fees will be refunded with the exception of any PlanetReg and PayPal processing fees incurred at the time of registration.

After March 22: All refund requests received after March 22 will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The BCMG Steering Committee reserves the right to assess each cancellation request individually and make refund decisions accordingly.

#### **No-Refund Scenarios:**

No-shows will not be considered for refund.

Due to our vendor commitments, we are unable to refund registrant or guest meal costs, Tee-shirt orders, workshop fees and PlanetReg and PayPal processing fees after March 22.

#### **Process for Cancellation:**

Registrants must formally submit a letter of cancellation and request for a refund by contacting [AMGA2024@baldwinmastergardeners.com](mailto:AMGA2024@baldwinmastergardeners.com).

Please include "Cancellation 2024 AMGA State Conference," in the subject line.

Include a short explanation of the situation necessitating your need to cancel.

Cancellation requests will be reviewed within 14 days of reception, and you will receive notification via email regarding a decision and the amount of refund due back to you.

#### **5. Refund Disbursement:**

**Once approved all refunds will be issued by the state AMGA treasurer in the form of a check. We are unable to directly refund your credit card.**

#### **10. Hotel Accommodations**

The following hotels have reserved blocks of rooms for conference attendees. All hotels are conveniently located 1 mile from the Daphne Civic Center. Conference rate is available until **March 23, 2024**. The reservation code is **AMG** and you may make a reservation by calling the number provided or by clicking on this link: <https://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/amgaconferencedaphne2024/>

**Hampton Inn 251.626.2220**

Complimentary hot breakfast; all rooms equipped with a microwave and mini fridge.

**1 King/2 Queen city view \$135 1 King/2 Queen bay view \$145**

**Hilton Garden Inn 251.625.0020**

Full on site restaurant. All rooms equipped with a microwave and mini fridge.

**1 King \$139/2 Queen \$149**



**Homewood Suite 251.621.0100**

Complimentary hot breakfast, full kitchen in all suites.

**1 King Studio Suite (sleeps 4) \$144**

**1 King 1 Bedroom Suite (sleeps 4) \$144**

Room rates subject to all applicable state and local taxes and fees. Hotel check-in time is 3 pm and checkout is 12 noon. Parking is FREE at the above hotels and at the Daphne Civic Center.

**11. RV Accommodations**

There is no over-night parking in the Daphne Civic Center parking lot. Reservations may be made at the following local RV parks: Meaher State Park, Fairhope Landing Resort, and Fairhope Motor Coach Resort.

**12. Breakfast Options**

Waffle House Open 24 Hours, locations at 6781 US 90 and 29100 US 98

StarBucks Opens 5 am, 6830 US 90

Dunkin Donuts Opens 5 am, 29160 US 98

East Shore Café Opens 7 am, 1506 Main St. Daphne

Sugar Kettle Café Opens 7 am, 1015 Daphne Ave. (CR 64)

Chick-fil-A Opens 6:30 am, 1682 US 98

Cracker Barrel Opens 7 am, 30227 Eastern Shore Center in Spanish Fort, I-10 Exit 38

Soul Caffeine Opens 6 am 2004 US 98 Daphne 2004 US-98, Daphne

**13. Conference Tour Descriptions****Village Point Park and Birding Tour-Monday morning**

This birding hotspot is a beautiful natural wildlife habitat with well-maintained pathways for easy walking. A local Audubon member will lead the tours at 7 and 9 a.m. for best viewing of Mobile Bay shore birds. Bring binoculars and walking shoes. **Meet in parking lot at 27710 Main Street, Daphne, AL**

**The Giving Garden**

Enjoy this neat and orderly raised community garden created by Beth Branch to provide fresh produce for the Ecumenical Ministries of Fairhope food pantry. A team of neighbors and friends assist in tending this garden built 2 years ago with input from a landscape architect and Master Gardeners. It is a peaceful garden that incorporates a fountain, wooden shed, irrigation system and drainage control.

**Historic Register Home**

This historic Spanish-style home built in 1923 is a wonderful example of co-mingling the practical with the artistic, incorporating several varieties of citrus, banana, and even an olive tree with all time southern favorites like azaleas, gingers, perennials, and two koi ponds. The owners Camille and Rex Turner have also extended their love of art and antiques into this lovely garden where you will be sure to enjoy them.

**Weeks Bay Reserve Pontoon Boat Tour**

One of our nation's Estuarine Research Reserves is offering a one-hour pontoon boat tour of the Weeks Bay watershed, comprised of 9,317 acres containing upland and bottomland hardwood forests, salt and freshwater marshes, and submerged aquatic vegetation where osprey, brown pelican, and water fowl abound. The boat features bench seating and a restroom. **Minimum of 10 needed with a maximum of 25 per tour. Allow 50-minute drive time from Daphne Civic Center. Must arrive 15-minutes early.**

**Pitcher Plant Bog at Graham Creek Nature Preserve**

Situated on over 600 acres owned by the city of Foley, this preserve is dedicated to the preservation of native plants and wildlife. As a naturalist narrates, a wagon tour will take you on the loop trail to the pitcher plant bog. Enjoy the breathtaking beauty of this rare plant and other endangered plants up close. Board wagons at the visitor center. Maximum of 60/tour. **Tour is located 50 minutes from the Civic Center. Plan accordingly as this tour will require approximately 2.5 - 3 hours for travel time and tour.**

### The Pavilion at the Nest

The Pavilion is an outdoor classroom created to expand STEM learning opportunities on the campus of an old elementary school, featuring an Alabama Wildlife Outdoor-certified Garden and an award-winning science lab. The Pavilion was built with sustainable design and features bioswales for water runoff control, cisterns for collection of rainwater, and filtration of “gray water.” The landscape was designed for habitat restoration and the enhancement of this “biodiversity hotspot” by using native and adaptive plants, oyster shells for filtration, and pervious pavers. Located in Fairhope.

### Hope Farms

Tour the grounds of a local farm-to-table restaurant in downtown Fairhope. The Hope Farm uses greenhouses, farm, hydroponic containers, raised beds, and an orchard to supply the culinary and bar teams with fresh ingredients. The farm uses sustainable farming techniques in every aspect to maximize output and minimize the negative impact of traditional methods. It is a father and son’s “fair hope” for a sustainable future.



## BREAKOUT SPEAKERS

### **The Outdoor Room Catherine Arensberg**



Catherine Arensberg is an exterior designer who specializes in finding ways to create beautiful, functional outdoor spaces that fit her client's lifestyle, no matter what the budget. She will show us how to make the most of our outdoor spaces for years of enjoyment. From small patio styling to complete redesign, she creates spaces that fit how each client lives and how they use their outdoor areas. With over 16 years of residential design experience, Catherine guides each client through the design process from planning to implementation and beyond. With Catherine, homeowners feel like a partner in the process of creating their dream exterior.

### **Water Less by Using Soil Polymers Yvette Gautreaux Cutrer**



Yvette Gautreaux Cutrer will teach us how using Soil Polymers can increase our watering efficiency in our gardens. Polymers use 30-50% less water and promote root development for better plants. She will show us the benefits of polymers when rooting leaves, cuttings and growing antique roses. Yvette started using polymers in 1986 and has been a Louisiana Master Gardener since 1999. Yvette enjoys showing gardeners how to design living wreaths and shares her ideas to use everyday items to enhance her gardening creations. She has been featured in State-By-State Gardening in December 2002, Union County Green Mississippi

Magazine Spring/Summer 2013, and many other newspaper articles.

### **Gardening Under Trees Chris Francis, MS**



Chris Francis is an International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified professional with ISA Tree Risk Assessment Qualification. He will guide us on how to properly plant and maintain the areas under our trees. Chris is a local businessman and truly cares for the beauty and health of our trees. He is licensed in Alabama in Tree Surgery, Landscape Design, Setting of Landscape Plants, and Ornamental and Turf Pest Control. He is an Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association Certified Professional and holds certifications in Urban Forestry as well as Utility Vegetation Management with the

Alabama Urban Forestry Association. Chris graduated from the University of South Alabama in Business Administration with a Master of Science in Arboriculture and Urban Forestry from the University of Lancashire.



## Vertical Gardening Ann Luther and Terry Henry



*Ann Luther*



*Terry Henry*

Ann Luther and Terry Henry will introduce us to planting our gardens vertically, so they are more accessible to us as we age. This ergonomic approach gives your back a break, so you are more likely to have an easier time caring for your plants.

Ann has been an Escambia County, Florida, Master Gardener for 14 years. The program combines her teacher/instructor skills with her love of learning about gardening and she thoroughly enjoys talking to others about the topic. Her garden is her classroom where she shares how much it does for the mind, body, and soul.

Terry serves as a Master Gardener volunteer for Escambia County, Florida where she teaches best practices for local gardeners. She believes that we don't quit gardening because we get old, we get old because we quit gardening! She likes to teach adaptive gardening techniques for older gardeners, so that they can continue to do something they love. When not gardening, Terry is a writer who is working on a book that combines both of her passions. She also has a website and weekly video blog at [moonflowermoments.wordpress.com](http://moonflowermoments.wordpress.com).

## Greenhouse Basics for Profitability Jeremy Pickens, PhD



Dr. Jeremy Pickens is an Assistant Extension Professor in the Department of Horticulture at Auburn University. He will share his expertise in greenhouse practices with us. A summer job at a nursery in high school sparked his interest in agriculture. He primarily works with nurseries, greenhouses, and Christmas tree growers across the state. He also works on hydroponic production of vegetables and has been conducting research for almost 18 years. Jeremy's work with area farmers has been extremely helpful to their success. His office is located at the Ornamental Horticulture Research Center in Mobile.

## **Oh, My Aching Back**

**Jenny Resmondo, PT, FAAOMPT**



Dr. Jenny Resmondo is one of Baldwin County's top physical therapists for back pain. She will help you avoid aches and pains so you can enjoy gardening for many years. Our area of the Gulf Coast has numerous outside activities to enjoy and maintaining your physical health is important to continue fun activities or hobbies. Jenny's love of the outdoors drives her desire to heal others so they too, can experience nature. She completed her physical therapy degree in 2000 from the University of Mobile and a post-professional fellowship in Orthopedic Manual Physical Therapy in 2019. Jenny opened South Alabama Physiotherapy in

Loxley, AL in November 2021.

## **Forest Finds to Floral Divine**

**Peggy Snipes**



Get ready to be amazed by the floral designs Peggy Snipes will share with us. Her background in art has certainly come in handy for her wedding cakes and floral creations in the past 30 years. She has an eye for design and uses her precious finds to make unique works of art. She is a former art teacher and will show us some basics to help us produce our own original creations in our homes.



## PRECONFERENCE ACTIVITIES

### **Build a Greenhouse Before Your Eyes** **Elmer Vick**



A lifelong resident of Fairhope, our own Elmer Vick, a Master Gardener in 2015, has been our go-to expert for all things greenhouse-related. He is retired from both a career as an instructor of AC/Refrigeration at South Baldwin Center for Technology and owning his own business in the field.

When his intern mentor, John Kitch, died of cancer, Elmer chose to honor him by saving the seeds and growing the climate-adapted tomato that Kitch had perfected. These plants are offered at our spring seminar, and all funds are donated to the Mitchell Cancer Center. This endeavor led to the impulsive buy of a greenhouse from a roadside vendor. Over the years he has orchestrated our greenhouse repairs and rebuilds. Enjoy this amazing greenhouse build, step-by-step, all around you, from the comfort of the classroom.

### **DIY Drip Irrigation** **Jack LeCroy, MS**



Jack LeCroy is from Centre, AL located in Cherokee County. He went to Auburn University and received his Bachelors and Masters in Horticulture. He worked for The University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences in Ocala, FL for two years. He made his way to Los Angeles and worked as a horticulture consultant for a business located in Beverly Hills. After returning to his home state in 2017, he began working in Mobile as an Urban Regional Extension Agent. Jack is now a Regional Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator for Alabama Cooperative Extension System in Clarke, Mobile, Monroe and Washington Counties. His active style of teaching Master Gardener interns makes his classes very interesting. He will lead us through a hands-on activity to assemble drip irrigation in our garden.

## Native Alabama Milkweed Project and Migratory Gardens Carmen Flammini, MAG



Carmen is the Regional Extension Agent for Alabama Cooperative Extension System for Baldwin, Butler, Conecuh, and Escambia Counties. She earned a bachelor's degree in Agricultural Engineering in Chile, her native country, and a Masters Degree in Crop, Soil, and Environmental Science from Auburn University.

In northwest Georgia, she developed STEM programs for public schools, integrating agriculture and environmental science hands-on learning experiences. Other experience includes constructing STEM school and pollinator gardens and conducting the first international symposium of Dalton State College, where she served as an instructor of Life Science and Environmental Studies. Carmen now leads the Native Alabama Milkweed Project in collaboration with the Ornamental and Horticulture Research Station of Auburn.

## Kokedama

### Devonne Ellis and Judy Gobble



*Devonne Ellis*

Devonne and Judy are eager to present a fun workshop on Kokedama, an ancient form of Japanese art that involves growing plants in moss-covered soil. The use of twine or wire eliminates the need for gardening pots.

Since 2013, Devonne has been a Master Gardener with Wiregrass Master Gardener Association. She enjoys working with annuals for the local plant sales. She has served on the AMGA Board since 2017, with one year off before becoming AMGA Vice President, and is now President. Devonne and Judy have shared their presentation on Kokedama online for Alabama Smart Yards, and in person for WMGA's Lunch and Learn.



*Judy Gobble*

As a Master Gardener since 2019 with Wiregrass Master Gardener Association, Judy loves working with houseplants for the local plant sale. She enjoys trying different techniques of propagation, as well as creating different ways of mounting and displaying houseplants. Since learning about Kokedama, she is trying different ways to display them.

**Build A Bee Box**  
**Becky Estes, B.S.**



Becky Estes, a native of Lake Charles, Louisiana, is a retired Louisiana Tech University medical technologist and systems analyst. A 40-year career in healthcare provided many locales in which to garden, including Colorado, Tennessee, Kentucky, and Alabama. The diversity of climates provided ever-changing opportunities to learn what grows well in one place, doesn't necessarily grow in another.

Problems with vegetables not being pollinated led her to research the issue. Attempts at manual pollination made small, but insignificant improvements. Beekeeping with a regular hive seemed too expensive and involved. Planting more native perennials to attract pollinators was more attainable. Building native bee boxes is one small way we all can try to increase pollination in our home gardens and have fun using our "DIY" skills.

Becky now lives in Magnolia Springs, Alabama, with her husband, Tom, and their pets. As a Baldwin County Master Gardener since 2019 and a member of the Magnolia Springs Garden Club since 2017, she serves as chair of their Arboretum Committee.

## **The Lifelong Gardener**

### **John Bowen, PhD**



John Bowen is a lifelong gardener. He gardened as a child in California and managed to keep his hands in the soil in all the five other states where he lived. Somewhere along the way he found time to earn a PhD in Plant Biochemistry, did some scientific plant research, and in his later years, chose to teach high school science in Texas. When he retired, he and his wife moved to Asheville, North Carolina, where they planted a new garden and remodeled a house, in that order. John became a Master Gardener 5 years ago and finds it the best way to combine his love of gardening and teaching. He chairs the Speakers Bureau and has been working with a Master Gardener team to develop a program in Lifelong Gardening. He loves working in the garden, talking about gardening, and hearing stories from others about their own gardening adventures.

## **Peace Love and Milagros: Lessons from the Road**

### **Steven L. Chamblee, MS**



Steven has loved plants since childhood where he transplanted trees with his father and later formed a business called Southern Lawn Care.

Steven is now the Executive Director for the Longview Arboretum & Nature Center in Longview, Texas. He writes a monthly column in Neil Sperry's online gardening newsletter entitled "Native Son" and gives garden presentations that weave together hard science, humor, and matters of the heart.

He holds a BS in Horticulture from Tarleton State University, and an MS in Public Horticulture Administration from the University of Delaware. Steven's career in Texas includes serving as the Native Plant Horticulturist for the Heard Natural Science Museum in McKinney, Grounds Manager and Education Director at the Fort Worth Botanic Garden, Chief Horticulturist for Chandor Gardens in Weatherford, and finally Executive Director for the Longview Arboretum.

## **The Power of Plants: The Effect on Human Health and Well Being**

### **J. David Williams, PhD**



Dave grew up in a family florist business in Tallahassee, Florida. He earned a BS and an MS in Horticulture from Auburn University, and a PhD in Horticulture from Ohio State University.

With the Alabama Cooperative Extension System, he served as a horticulture specialist and team co-leader for the Home Grounds and Gardens, taught landscape design for many Master Gardener classes, and coordinated training events for Garden Clubs of Alabama, the Alabama State Florist Association, and the Alabama Nursery and Landscape Association. As Auburn faculty, Dave taught many horticulture courses, as an academic advisor for over 20 years and co-advisor to the student chapter of the National Association of Landscape Professionals. He served as Head of the Department of Horticulture and as Interim Associate Dean in the College of Agriculture. He retired from Auburn 2019 and was awarded Emeritus Professor status.



# 2024 AMGA State Conference Agenda

## *"Paradise Found"*

**April 22-24 Daphne Civic Center**

**Daphne, Alabama**

**Monday, April 22**

**10:30 am-5:00 pm** Registration

**11:00 am-7:00 pm** Silent Auction and Vendors

**Pre-Conference Tours** Attendees must be pre-registered for all tours.  
**Tour times vary.** Directions will be available at registration.

### **Guided Tours**

#### **Morning Birding at Village Point Park in Daphne**

Two sessions: 7:00 am and 9:00 am

#### **The Barn at Hope Farms "Farm to Table"**

Three sessions: 12:00 pm, 1:30 pm and 3:00 pm

#### **The Pavilion at The Nest**

Three sessions: 12:00 pm, 1:30 pm and 3:00 pm

#### **Weeks Bay Boat Tour**

Two sessions: 1:30 pm and 3:00 pm

#### **Graham Creek Pitcher Plant Bog**

Two sessions: 12:00 pm and 3:00 pm

### **Home Garden Tours**-tour at your leisure between 12:30 and 4:30 pm

Branch Home Garden Tour-The Giving Garden

Turner Home Garden Tour-Historic Home and Gardens

### **12:00 pm-Preconference Workshops---Session start times vary.**

All workshops will be held at the Daphne Civic Center Complex. You must be pre-registered and pre-paid to attend.

#### **Kokedama by Devonne Ellis and Judy Gobble**

Literally means "moss ball" in English, you will discover and learn the Japanese art of Kokedama and create your very own arrangement.

Two sessions: 12:00 noon and 1:30 pm \$30

**Build a Greenhouse Before Your Eyes**

Our own BCMG team will show you how easy it is to build a small backyard greenhouse.

Two sessions: 1:00 pm and 2:30 pm      \$25

**DIY Drip Irrigation by Jack LeCroy**

Jack is the Mobile County extension agent and he will lead us through a hands-on activity to assemble drip irrigation for our own gardens.

Two sessions: 1:00 pm and 2:30 pm      \$25

**Build a Bee Box by Becky Estes**

Attract non-aggressive solitary bees to your garden with this simple-build habitat.

Two sessions: 3:00 pm and 4:30 pm      \$25

**Native Alabama Milkweed Monarch Project and Migratory Gardens**

by Baldwin County extension agent Carmen Flammini who leads on this research project and will discuss the project, milkweed propagation and culture as well as building a butterfly garden.

One session: 3:30 pm      No charge

**Monday Evening**

**5:30-7:00 pm**

**Welcome Social "Sunset in Paradise"**

Cash Bar and Hors d'oeuvres

**Tuesday, April 23**

**Breakfast**

On your own

**7:30 am-5:00 pm**

Vendors and Silent Auction

**8:00 am-5:00 pm**

Registration and Concierge  
*"How may we help you?"*

**8:30 am**

Welcome and Opening Remarks

**9:00 am-10:00 am**

**Session 1** John Bowen *"The Lifelong Gardener"*

**10:00 am-10:15 am**

Break

**10:15 am-11:15 am**

**Session 2** Breakout Sessions Concurrent:

A. Jeremy Pickens-*Greenhouse Basics for Profitability*

B. Yvette Gautreaux Cutrer-*Soil Polymers*

C. Peggy Snipes-*Forest Finds to Floral Devine*

D. Ann Luther & Terry Henry *Vertical Gardening*

E. Dr. John Bowen -*Adaptive Tools*

<b>11:30 am-1:15 pm</b>	Lunch and Business Meeting
<b>1:30 pm-2:30 pm</b>	<b>Session 3</b> Breakout Sessions Concurrent: A. Chris Francis- <i>Gardening Under Trees</i> B. Catherine Arensburg- <i>The Outdoor Room</i> C. Peggy Snipes-Repeat- <i>Forest Finds to Floral Devine</i> D. Jenny Resmondo- <i>Oh! My Aching Back</i> E. Dr. John Bowen-Repeat- <i>Adaptive Tools</i>
<b>2:30 pm-3:00 pm</b>	Break
<b>3:00 pm-4:00 pm</b>	<b>Session 4</b> Breakout Sessions Concurrent: A. Catherine Arensburg – Repeat- <i>The Outdoor Room</i> B. Jenny Resmondo-Repeat- <i>Oh! My Aching Back</i> C. Yvette Gautreaux Cutrer-Repeat- <i>Soil Polymers</i> D. Chris Francis- Repeat- <i>Gardening Under Trees</i> E. Ann Luther & Terry Henry-Repeat- <i>Vertical Gardening</i>
<b>5:30 pm</b>	Vendors close and <b>bidding ends for Silent Auction</b>
<b>5:30 pm</b>	<b>“Paradise Found”</b> Social and cash bar
<b>6:00 pm</b>	Dinner/Awards <b>Session 5</b> Steven Chamblee <i>“Peace, Love and Milagros: Lessons from the Road”</i>

### **Wednesday, April 24**

<b>Breakfast</b>	On your own
<b>9:00 am-10:00 am</b>	<b>Session 6</b> Dr. David Williams <i>“The Power of Plants: The Effect on Human Health and Well Being”</i>
<b>10:00 am-11:00 am</b>	BCMG Skit Wrap up and closing remarks
<b>11:00 am -12:00 pm</b>	<b>Pay/Pick up Silent Auction</b> <b>Pick up door prizes</b>

# HAPPENINGS

## Winter 2023 - 2024

Courtesy of Pexels

### AUTAUGA COUNTY MGA

Glenn Huovinen

Our Demonstration Garden in Prattville consists of 1,700 square feet of raised beds, located next to the Prattville Library. Our mission at the garden is to grow fresh produce that is donated to the Autauga Interfaith Care Center Food Bank. Produce is distributed to those in need throughout Autauga County. As of 1 December, we have donated almost 1,600 pounds of food to the Food Bank! The garden is used as a teaching tool for visitors, and periodic classes for groups are offered. In addition to growing and teaching, we post informative ACES publications and QR Codes on many of the plants growing in the garden. You can find us in the garden each Tuesday morning year-round, weather permitting. The garden is open every day for tours. If you are in Prattville, come see us!

ACMGA has made community contributions by becoming a member of the Prattville Chamber of Commerce and supporting Prattville's Family Support Center by participating in the Autauga Creek Christmas Tree Trail this year. Incoming new officers are Amy Richardson, Secretary and Elijah Pugh, Treasurer.



Harvest from ACMGA Demo Garden.  
Photographer Glenn Huovinen

### BALDWIN COUNTY MGA

Mary Calvin

In September we worked with Stapleton School for a second year, adding a bog/frog pond, rain garden and songbird garden to the pollinator and butterfly gardens created last year. This Outdoor Classroom project is also supported by the Alabama Wildlife Federation.

Birds are featured prominently in the fall due to the world-renowned Alabama Coastal BirdFest. Kathy Hicks presented *Birds of Southern Alabama* at our September meeting, we worked at the Eastern Shore Art Center's *Art of the Bird* and we made centerpieces for the BirdFest dinner and hosted an outreach table at the BirdFest Expo.

In October, Mobile County Master Gardeners Alice Marty and Leslie Maycock gave a presentation on *Winter Sowing - Plant Your Tomatoes Early* and we held our annual Fall Seminar.

We also had the bittersweet opportunity of finding new homes for the late Jere Trigg's collection of several hundred African Violets. Although many went to Master Gardeners, we had aficionados come from as far as Louisiana for one more chance to buy Jere's beautiful plants with the hopes of continuing his propagating and hybridizing methods.

Our greenhouses opened a little later than in previous years due to the heat, but plants are growing well now and will be ready for the April 4-6 plant sale at Weeks Bay.

Excitement is building as we prepare for the AMGA 2024 Conference. It will be held here in Daphne, April 22-24. We hope you will join us for *Paradise Found*.

## BLOUNT COUNTY MGA

Irene Latham

The 13th annual Blount County Gardening Conference organized by Sherilyn Osborne was held at Locust Fork Baptist Church, October 12, 2023. The 180 registrants enjoyed a day full of information and inspiration beginning with Kira Sims, who provided tips for thrifty gardening. From fashioning a garden fence from old pallets and bamboo stalks to using cardboard boxes for mulch, attendees learned multiple ways to “work smarter, not harder.” Hayes Jackson entertained the group with stories from his fantastic life as a plant collector. Many could relate to the way he plans vacations around visiting nurseries and gardens. His slides of unusual plants from all parts of the world generated a room full of oohs and aahs. Lucy Edwards shared lessons learned from her childhood, including “okra itches” and “butterbeans are punishment,” as well as her recent adventure growing a cutting garden. She suggested using Indian Hawthorn as a good “green” for flower arrangements. Finally, Dani

Carroll shared her thoughts about planning a landscape project. Her experience has taught her that the way to have more time is to take your time observing the space before you plant. This includes studying sun/shade and other environmental factors, as well as practicalities like where one might most utilize a path. In addition to great speakers, attendees were nourished by homemade soups; friendly conversation; plant shopping with Jason Powell (Petals from the Past), and informal plant swaps in the parking lot. Thanks to everyone who helped make the day a great success!



Lunch at gardening conference.  
Photographer: Sherry Maddox

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## CALHOUN COUNTY MGA

Tom Gilbert

The last few months of 2023 saw the Calhoun County Master Gardeners complete the annual election of new Board members, prepare home grounds for winter dormancy and the greenhouse - setting the stage for another growing season. This winter the greenhouse will receive new evaporative cooling mats and other needed maintenance.

One of our unique Master Gardener community support activities included support for the annual Prisoner of War (POW) Memorial Ceremony. The observance was held at the German and Italian Enemy Prisoner of War (EPW) Cemetery on the former Fort McClellan in Anniston on November 19, 2023. The ceremony honors the 26 German and 3 Italian soldiers that died while in captivity during World War II. These soldiers are from several POW camps at Fort McClellan and throughout the southern US. Representatives from Germany, Italy, US Army, the Veterans Administration, and the American Legion were in attendance. Honored guests included the family of one of the interred that came from Germany for the ceremony.

We are planning for our 2024 Lunch and Learn Program from April through September. Our busy year concluded by installing Clubhouse holiday decorations, hosting certification of our latest intern class and conducting a fun holiday and awards dinner.



(L to R) The Italian, German and American Wreaths  
at the POW Cemetery on November 19, 2023.  
Photographer: Tom Gilbert



## **CAPITOL CITY MGA**

Mary Eleanor Hines

CCMGA volunteers have been busy winterizing gardens for our short Alabama winter. Workdays were scheduled at our project gardens with seed planting at EAT (Educate Act Transform) South and 200 ferns planted at the Montgomery Botanical Gardens, as well as winter preparation at our other gardens.

We are proud of seventeen interns that graduated in November earning a total of 1378 volunteer hours. They are enthused to continue their volunteer hours in our project gardens.

Our Christmas luncheon on December 12 was successful with a silent auction bringing in funds to help offset the expense of a Spring trip with plans in the making.

The Spring '24 plant sale will be held on April 13 at Frazer Methodist Church. Plants are currently "wintering" in the greenhouse at the MBG green house until the sale.

New officers were elected for 2024, and a Financial Review Committee has been appointed.

A new laptop has been purchased for future work with the Helpline.

One of our projects, EAT South, under the direction of Janice Jackson and Henry Lucas, is Montgomery's Urban Teaching Farm and home to small farm animals, honey bees, wildlife, fresh fruits and vegetables. It includes a greenhouse, space for growing vegetables, fruit trees, an apiary, a chicken coop, a dye garden, and a compost system. Approximately 3000 children have learned about plants and healthy eating there. EAT South grows transplants and donates hundreds of plants to community gardens and CCMGA plant sales.



EAT South. Photographer: Janice Jackson

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## **CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA**

Cindy Augustine

CAMGA members have been busy since the last edition of Pathways. On October 20<sup>th</sup>, members of CAMGA participated in a project with fifteen senior adults at the Wetumpka Senior Center at Cedarwood Community Church. The project involved making Fairy Wreaths from natural items and bought items. CAMGA members collaborated with the participants to create the wreaths, and a wonderful time of creativity was had by all involved. CAMGA members Rebecca Ridley and Michelle Sharpton did a wonderful job in coordinating the event and leading the demonstration on how to create the wreaths.

In November, a dedication celebration was held at the Elmore County Extension office to celebrate the new CAMGA Memorial Brick Patio Garden. The development of the memorial patio was led by Rhona Watson. Bricks were bought by CAMGA as tributes to CAMGA members who are no longer with us, and CAMGA members were also able to buy bricks as memorials to others. The bricks have been installed into a patio outside the Extension office. At the dedication celebration, CAMGA remembered the people who had been

memorialized in each brick. A memorial tribute book was developed with that information and will be in CAMGA's library at the Extension office.

In December, CAMGA members celebrated the holidays together at our annual Christmas party. Everyone enjoyed the delicious food, games and fellowship.



CAMGA and Wetumpka Seniors show off fairy wreaths they made. Photographer unknown.

## CHEROKEE COUNTY MGA

Bill Holland

As I look at our Cherokee County Master Gardener Association, I feel nothing but pride for the many accomplishments of our members:

- Operated Fern Ridge greenhouse, shut it down and moved all plants to Centre Middle School greenhouse. Opened and upgraded Centre Middle School greenhouse
- Conducted another successful plant sale fundraiser with an arts and crafts component at Centre and at Leesburg
- Participated in Leesburg Day and Centre Fall Festival
- Had a successful season at the Centre Farmers Market (and Leesburg also!!)
- Completed six (6) major service projects (Centre Downtown Planters, Leesburg Town Hall, Centre Post Office, Slackland Beach, Centre Town Hall and Centre Ball Field);
- Helped conduct a MAJOR renovation of Centre City Park with irrigation and sod provided by the Town and landscaping provided by our outstanding group of master gardeners
- Provided a major contribution to Extension Grow More / Give More program with

- the pop-up garden at Cherokee County Sr Ctr
- Led an outstanding horticulture education experience for the students at Centre Middle School through the partnership with the Century 21 program
- Had 40 of our members complete 5,675 hours of volunteer work and 525 hours of continuing education (through December 15) AND NUMEROUS OTHERS

In early January, we will start the planning for another successful year in 2024. It really is enjoyable to be part of such an enthusiastic group that really makes a difference in our community.



Christmas Tree Competition. Becky McMichen at CCMGAs Christmas tree. Photographer: Diane Coker

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## CHILTON COUNTY MGA

Kerry Rush

During this past quarter, the Chilton County MGA welcomed its new REA, Jacob Turner. We look forward to a great partnership with Jacob. Also happening this quarter was the Chilton County Natural Resources Council's sponsoring of its annual Fall Landowner Tour, and featuring our own association members, Clem and Diane Clapp's farm. The event included a tour, several topic presentations, and lunch. The event was a success and provided volunteer opportunities for our members. With our newly formed Conservation Group, Patrick Thompson (Coordinator, Alabama Plant Conservation Alliance; Curator and Arboretum Specialist, Davis Arboretum-Auburn University) spoke with the association sharing his expertise and experience and how Chilton County and Master Gardeners can partner to recognize and save unique plants such as the Alabama Canebrake Pitcher Plant. Subsequent membership meetings brought two additional presentations: *Snake Awareness* and *Open the Gift of Herbs*. In addition to hosting a tour for the Bibb and Shelby County MG Intern classes at our Demonstration Garden, the membership had an opportunity to tour the University of West Alabama Cahaba Biodiversity Center (Bibb County).

Also in November, the CCMGA gathered to assemble its new 18'x 20' steel framed Shade Structure, made possible by a submitted and awarded CAWACO grant. The new structure is located at the association's Demonstration Garden and will serve as a multi-use outdoor classroom, providing educational opportunities for the residents of our community. Closing out 2023, the CCMGA will have its annual Christmas luncheon and Gift Swap while making plans for a prosperous 2024!



Shade Structure. Photographer: Jerry Farmer

## **CULLMAN COUNTY MGA**

### **Ellen Hall**

When writing for the Fall Pathways, we had been dealing with the weeds from too much summer rain. Three months later, we are celebrating the return of rain after a 64-day stretch with less than 2.5 inches of rain. Our Fall Plant Sale in October was successful in spite of the drought – gardeners do persevere! Earlier in October, we registered the crops at the Cullman County Fair.

EMG Brad Mitchell, who was named the Fred Evans ACES Intern of the Year at last year's AMGA conference, kicked off a new Monster Vegetable Contest for giant pumpkins, watermelons, and other oversized produce. He is hoping that this fun event could spark an interest in gardening for some children.

Work has continued at the Wildflower Garden in spite of Sportsman Lake roads being closed to traffic due to the Christmas light display. Implemented improvements include a Storybook Trail, benches, and new plantings; construction is underway for the new deck with bench seating, which we hope will

be used for educational programs or events.

New officers for 2024 were elected in November; our program was a planning session to highlight the various committees and encourage members to sign up to serve on one or more. We plan to start the new year with a committee meeting to review our bylaws.

In early December, we celebrated Christmas with a nice luncheon where we presented a framed certificate and photo collage to Patricia Sharpton, who was elected our CCMGA Master Gardener of the Year. Congratulations, Pat!



L to R; Holly Hirsbrunner, president, Pat Sharpton, MG of the Year. Photographer: Ellen Hall

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## **DEKALB COUNTY MGA**

### **Donna Elrod**

DeKalb County Master Gardeners closed out 2023 with a delightful Christmas potluck meal with members creating so many yummy dishes. Delectable Ham and Smoked Chicken were provided by our wonderful Hospitality Group, big thanks to them for all they do year-round to make our other favorite passion (eating) go so smoothly every time. Afterward members were all led in the singing of 'God Bless you Master Gardeners' and followed with a game of Dirty Santa.

**HAPPY  
NEW  
YEAR  
TO  
YOU**



## **EAST CENTRAL ALABAMA MGA**

Sheila Bolen

East Central had a busy fall this year. Our September meeting featured a presentation by ACES Regional Extension Agent, Chip East, on Cool Season Crops to Plant. The public was invited, and we all thoroughly enjoyed Chip's presentation. The School of Blooms Bird Sanctuary is nearing completion. We held a workday and installed the windsock, wind vane, and four 4X4s for the bird feeders. We have a large thermometer to hang, also. More pine straw will be added to the area and additional pine bark nuggets will be added to the trails.

Lineville Public Library is planning a Sensory Garden at their location and has requested assistance from ECAMGA in developing plans for design and plantings. Dani Carroll, Regional Extension Agent, gave a presentation on Sensory Gardens at our October meeting and shared a wealth of information with us.

November was our end of year potluck and social gathering. With all the growing Master Gardeners do, we are all excellent cooks!

In December, a Cookie Exchange was held at the home of Jack and Sheila Bolen. What a great time we had, sharing stories and recipes. This should be a regular event on our yearly schedule!

Have you gotten any seed catalogs yet? We have! And so, the planning begins.

Christmas blessings to you and yours, and may 2024 be all you need it to be.



Workday at School of Blooms Bird Sanctuary.  
Photographer: Sheila Bolen

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## **ETOWAH COUNTY MGA**

Carol Link

The Etowah County Master Gardener Association had a busy fall which began with a Plant Sale at Noccalula Falls during the annual event, Art on the Rocks. The sale was a success. A new red wheelbarrow was awarded as an attendance/door prize.

A group of association volunteers met on October 5, at the newest Habitat for Humanity construction in North Gadsden on Graves Street, to install plants, mulch the planting beds, and prepare the landscape for the new homeowners.

At the November meeting, ECMGA member, Kelly Miller, gave a presentation on decorating for the holidays using greenery from the landscape combined with a few flowers. Afterwards, she donated all of the beautiful arrangements as door prizes.

Five Etowah County MGs attended the Fall Seminar in Huntsville where Harvey Cotton, formerly of from Huntsville Botanical Garden, was guest speaker.

In November, a group of Etowah County Master Gardeners made a trip to Huntsville Botanical Gardens.

A fall Master Gardener Class was conducted in Etowah County, with fourteen new interns hard at work to accomplish the required number of service hours. The class was held every Thursday at the Etowah County Courthouse. Dr. Brian Brown, Home Grounds Regional Extension Agent, was the class facilitator.

At the December 7th meeting at the Gadsden Public Library new officers and board members were elected for 2024.

## JACKSON COUNTY MGA

Bill Caudill

Well, it feels like winter is here in Jackson County. How about you?

We had a total of 454 contacts at the flower house during the Jackson County Fair.

The Jackson County Park butterfly habitat has been winterized. We had a decent number of butterflies. We had some trouble maintaining a good food source at times. We added some raised beds and hope to have a good food supply next year. Plus, we can demonstrate other items.

We had a great time at our Fall Plant Swap. Thanks so much to Shannon Hansen for hosting. Along with getting plants, we saw a beautiful yard and had great snacks, too!

On November 2, we heard from Aaron Stiles from Foraging Ahead. He specializes in sustainable, native designs. He did a wonderful presentation on Native Plants in Your Garden to Create Habitat for Pollinators.

We held a dedication ceremony for Honorary Member Bob Hanson who died. We planted a hydrangea in his honor alongside the one for his wife Janice, in Jackson County Park.

Our December meeting was the Christmas Party. We descended upon the Scottsboro Veteran's Home and devoured a great meal along with fun fellowship. This was followed by a Dirty Santa gift swap for members.

We're now planning for our Chemical Applicators Workshop coming January 23, 2024.

HAPPY New Year from all of us.



Jackson County Butterfly Park.  
Photographer: Wilma Brocket

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## JEFFERSON COUNTY MGA

Fletcher Harvey

If you've ever entered the City of Vestavia Hills from the north on Highway 31, chances are you've noticed a pretty little garden spot on the east side of the street across from the remnant of the Vestal Temple. Maintained by the Vestavia Hills Men's Garden Club, it is over 40 years old! In October, our own Advanced Master Gardener Richard Cybulsky, who has been involved with the Vestavia Hills Corner Garden for a number of years, presented "Brightening Up the Neighborhood," an interesting and colorful presentation about this prime example of community outreach.

In November we celebrated our new graduates at a catered luncheon, and it was truly a cause for celebration. We started the course with 31 participants and wonder-of-wonders, 31 interns became Certified Master Gardeners! As if that wasn't enough, these fledgling Master Gardeners had already accumulated 2900 volunteer hours! Kudos to all and to ACES Agent Bethany O'Rear who "orchestrated" the MG course.

As we approach the end of an exciting year, we would like to thank our President, Amy Weis, and our Board who are leading us toward a very bright future.



Jefferson County 2023 Graduates. Photographer: Patricia Putnam



## LEE COUNTY MGA

Linda Nowlin

Lee County Master Gardeners have been busy! Our demonstration garden in Pioneer Park, Loachapoka had hundreds of visitors during Syrup Sopping. Volunteers decorated the Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail in Opelika with red bows and greenery. Residents often take their Christmas pictures at the garden.

In October, we heard updates on 2023 horticultural grants. The Auburn Tree Commission started a loaning program for gardening tools. Nourish Foundation developed vegetable beds to promote healthy eating. Loachapoka Elementary School planted herbs and flowers in their school courtyard. Lee County Master Gardeners assisted by teaching the students how to plant the plants. Lee County Historical Society purchased mulch for their herb and vegetable garden at Pioneer Park. We are currently receiving grant applications for 2024 projects.

Several members have completed their Advanced Master Gardener Certification and are sharing presentations at monthly meetings.

In October, Diana Fortner gave a wonderful program about creating a Moon Garden including information on design, site preparation, and plant selection. Carol Borowski is giving her presentation on Cover Crops in December.

This year we moved the annual Native Azalea Sale to fall to capitalize on the best planting time. November 15 was cool and drizzly, but people still stopped and bought native azaleas.

Our fall social was held on the Roof Top Garden at AU's Culinary Science Center. Watching the sunset and viewing the beautiful plants was a wonderful treat.



Caroline Dean Wildflower Trail. Photographer: Carolyn Plott

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## LIMESTONE COUNTY MGA

Carol Knox

Our Inaugural Members Benefit on October 28 was a wonderful time of good music, food, fun & fellowship. We enjoyed a wonderful historical slideshow of all that our past and present members have accomplished. Huntsville Botanical Garden was the perfect host for our event. Thanks so much to our own Dan Pline and his amazing band for our live music. We are also very thankful to intern Barbara Daly for donating so many beautiful pumpkins making our space festive. It was exciting to get everyone together for a great opportunity to catch up and get to know each other better. It was a perfect day for a stroll through the garden and visiting with sweet friends.

On November 28, we hosted a holiday wreath making class with Jayne Luetzow. Everyone had such a fun time! There was a great crowd of eager, excited students!!! More workshops are in the plans next year, so be watching for future opportunities to join in on the

fun!!! Stay tuned for our monthly series, "Getting Dirty at the Library." Next year the topics will be very diverse ranging from Whooping Cranes to Pruning for Blooms and the Value of Oaks.



Wreath Class. Photographer: Marcy Smith

## MARSHALL CO MGA

Jo Drueen

A BIG Congratulations from all of us MCMG. (Awarded by FARM CITY): Friend of Agriculture: Harry Williams, Master Gardener certified 2017.

One of the long-standing community service projects for the Marshall County Master Gardeners is the CASA garden. It can be said that JD and Annette Swartzlander are the heart of the garden project each year, but the glue that makes the garden successful, as well as attractive in the neighborhood, year after year, is Harry Williams. Harry is a quiet and steadfast volunteer, always a little behind-the-scenes and always working for garden success. He arranges mulch deliveries, irrigation setup, and personally keeps the property mowed all season. Harry comes up with new ideas to improve both the yield and the ease of gardening

for the group and is first to arrive and last to leave on gardening days.

He shares his knowledge and sets an incredible example for new and long-term volunteers. Harry Williams is deserving of some special thanks and recognition for all he does to make a difference for seniors in Marshall County through his gardening activity and leadership.



MG Harry Williams. Photographer: Jo Drueen

## MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

Barbara Stansky

MGNA volunteers are wrapping up a very busy and productive year! Developing the Pollinator Garden at the Blevins Gap Trailhead has been a great success. The demonstration beds in front of the County Extension office have been revitalized and a new Adopt-a-Spot in downtown Madison has benefited from the touch of our volunteers.

MGNA was proud to host the AMGA Fall Seminar at the Huntsville Botanical Gardens. The event was well attended, and visitors enjoyed touring the gardens during their break. Students at Morris Elementary School continue to enjoy the hands-on guidance of Master Gardeners, and the Demonstration Vegetable Garden at Huntsville Botanical Gardens had a successful and productive year. The Education Workshop committee partnered with the library system to offer several workshops.

During Thanksgiving week members enjoyed participating in a floral arranging workshop. The Speaker's Bureau and the Habitat for Humanity crews continued to serve the Huntsville area by sharing their knowledge and their talents.



Participants enjoyed making beautiful fall floral arrangements at the Floral Workshop. Photographer: Janet Boothe



## MOBILE CO MGA

Cindy Finlay

What a busy time! While Jack LeCroy was teaching an Intern class of 15, he also made time for us 'other' MCMG's. He provided a series of classes, "On the Same Page" (1 hour CEU) each week, where everyone who was trained differently, and before & during Covid, could all be together on the helpline entering contact hours and many other areas of interest to our Master Gardeners' mission.

In October, we had a bus trip to Auburn. Forty of us toured the Davis Arboretum, the Freight farms that feed the students via the campus dining program, and the Tony & Libba Rane Culinary Science Center, which has a rooftop garden! Then, on to Botanika in Opelika! A good, long, and fun day! We learned quite a lot too!

Our 2023 Greenery Sale was a wonderful success this year. We moved the pick-up location to Jon Archer Building, where we make the arrangements. The weather did not want to cooperate for the sidewalk sale at the Botanical

Gardens, so for two weekends we did what Master Gardeners do - made it work!

Congratulations to our 2023 Interns! MCMG had 15 Interns graduating the Master Gardener Program. We had our Annual MCMG Awards Banquet on December 10th, where a record 14 of the 15 achieved certification, with the last one expected to complete within the month!

We are so proud of them! They are a wonderful addition to our Alabama Master Gardener family.



MCMG interns! Photographer: Unknown

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## MORGAN COUNTY MGA

Julia Chennault

The Morgan County Master Gardener Association continues to be very active. Fourteen MCMGA members attended the Blount County Fall Conference. We continue to learn at various workshops in the area, and monthly from interesting speakers at our own Lunch and Learn programs and association meetings. Each month, one of our members creates and delivers plants or arrangements to Hospice of the Valley to be given to their patients. Several of us planted a Chaste tree and converted an old fountain into a planter in the HOTV garden. This fall, some members assisted with the local Master Gardeners Intern classes.

Preliminary plans for clean-up and drought-tolerant landscaping have been made with volunteers who are working to restore a historic and sometimes forgotten cemetery in Decatur.

Support for outdoor classroom gardens at several schools is ongoing with volunteers and grants. This summer, backyard birds were having a feast on Monarch caterpillars at the home of one of our members. She gathered up what she could and gave them a new home at one of the school butterfly gardens. The students

were so excited when the butterflies were released.

We dealt with a massive water leak at our greenhouses all summer and gave thanks for working faucets when it was finally repaired just before Thanksgiving. We are gearing up for our spring plant sale by propagating new plants and returning plants to the greenhouses that were fostered out during the summer and fall.



MGs Barb Brown and Shirle Rogers propagating begonias from a couple of donated beauties.

Photographer: Julia Chenault

## PIKE CO MGA

Buriece Gracey

The Pike County Master Gardeners celebrated the graduation of interns Amy Baker, Havard Folmar, Buriece Gracey, Dianna Hauf, Sharon Lawrence, and Samantha Rouse. We appreciate their assistance during a busy Fall season.

Pike County Master Gardeners contributed to the success of two significant events at the Pioneer Museum of Alabama - Pioneer Days and Ole Time Christmas- by maintaining gardens, offering guided tours to hundreds of local teachers and students, and decorating cabins for Christmas. Additionally, we supported our extension office by participating in Classroom in the Forest, where 5th graders learned about plant and animal life, and Farm Day, where 3rd graders discovered life on a farm.

We actively participated in fall fairs and festivals. Apart from creating an educational booth for the Pike County Fair, our members served as judges for arts and crafts entries, and our interns took turns managing the "Ask a Master Gardener" booth at the Peanut Festival. We assisted our friends at PCES in starting their fall garden, eagerly anticipating the growth of giant cabbages.

Lastly, our meetings included a plant swap, an arboretum tour, and an informative session on growing peonies in the south. We congratulate our 2024 officers and wish our fellow Master Gardeners a Happy New Year!



Decorating for The Pioneer Museum of Alabama's Olde Time Christmas. Kneeling (L-R): MGs Jackie Meggison, Buriece Gracey, Leigh Calk, and Cathy Jorgensen. Standing (L-R): MGs Dianna Hauf, June Moore and Nell Haigh. Photographer: Barbara Tatom

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## SHELBY CO MGA

Kate Vogel

In 2023, Shelby County Master Gardeners have been volunteering at Montevallo's Seed to Table Community Garden, Birmingham Botanical Gardens, Aldridge Gardens, Manna Farms, Kings Ranch, 4H, and several senior centers, church gardens, and school gardens.

At the October meeting, Jefferson County MG Rick Cybulsky provided a program on perennials. Members visited the home of rosarian Chris VanCleave. A community Meet & Greet, held at the Montevallo Seed to Table Community Garden, added several new local gardeners.

In November, Lucy Edwards provided a program on Making Your Landscape Colorful All Year Round.

Members met Jacob Turner, the new Home Grounds agent for Shelby County. An intern celebration luncheon was held, and six interns were presented with certificates of completion. The intern class project involved planting several gardens at the Heardmont Community Center.

The year ended with the annual Dirty Gardeners Christmas gift swap and soup lunch in December. New officers—President, Elizabeth York; Vice President, Greg Adair; Secretary, Martha Jones; and Treasurer, Sue Owen--were installed.

## SHOALS MASTER GARDENERS

Lisa Maples

Everyone is wrapping up the year and winterizing their gardens. Time to take an indoor break, have a cuppa, and scour the catalogs to plan for next year. Our group had a very productive year, with 16 projects completed. The senior Master Gardeners joined with the interns to close out workdays at various worthy facilities in our area. We taught at Calvary Learning Center and worked at Ivy Green. We helped at Habitat for Humanity and shared our expertise and knowledge making our libraries and the gateways to our cities more welcoming while we fellowshiped and shared experiences and workload. We had Garden Angel days where we spent the morning with folks that were no longer able to be in their gardens.

2023 brought an abundance of worthy projects, both large in scope and small in comparison.

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## TALLAPOOSA CO MGA

Calvin Johnson

TCMGA's October 19 meeting was an eventful guided tour of Auburn University's recently established Transformation Garden project.

We enthusiastically recommend that all MGs make the trip and tour the garden as a group, or individually. The garden has great educational value, as well as loads of gardening ideas as it springs forth!

Dr. Desmond Layne, Professor and Head of AU's Department of Horticulture conducted our tour. He taught us a new gardening term, vertical gardening. We did not realize that one could easily grow plants, fruits, and vegetables in stacked layers and confined environments, thereby greatly expanding productivity per square foot of space. The increase in production could be as generous as 15 times normal production amounts! All it takes is skill, care and know-how. The trick includes some hydroponic growing techniques, adequate lighting, and temperature control over longer periods of time. We learned of other benefits, such as soil conservation, year-round "growing season" possibilities, and reuse of any waste plant products back through a compost pile. Thus, Auburn processes its garden harvest into its dining facilities and donates excess amounts of food through the community anti-hunger programs. In other news, our MGs were instrumental in forming a Dadeville Beautification Board, which completed

These projects would not have come to fruition without the input of our membership, which is the best, and the commitment of our very dedicated Master Gardeners to complete these awesome projects. One such project was Helen Kellers' home, Ivy Green, that required four separate workdays and became one of our showcase projects with thousands of visitors each year walking on those hallowed grounds.

As we come to the close of one of our most successful years, we are grateful for the cold weather ahead that allows a break in outdoor activity, but we are always mindful of the promise of Spring, our forthcoming plant sale, and the stirrings of what will come next in our journey as Shoals Master Gardeners!

planting flowers around a community gazebo for all to enjoy at their leisure. The AMGA lauded the Board and was awarded a \$1,000 grant that was presented by the Dadeville City Council. Congratulations and thank you to the awesome MGs who shepherded this initiative!



Vertical gardening display at Auburn University's Transformation Garden, Nov. 19, 2023. Photographer: Calvin Johnson



## TUSCALOOSA COUNTY MGA

Dan Sutton

With the onset of colder weather, some activities are slowing down in our area. Our members are still volunteering at community charity gardens and harvesting leafy greens to provide to local groups. In our November monthly meeting, we did a special recognition of the owners of the two garden tours in this year's State Conference for their contribution to the program and awarded several local charities with donations from the State Conference proceeds. Our special project of an Education Garden next to the Extension Office / Court House Annex in Tuscaloosa has been completed with signage installed and autumn crops growing nicely.

The garden has won many compliments from both local employees and courthouse visitors.



Example of signage placed at Education Garden.  
Photographer: Dan Sutton

## WIREFRASS MGA

Kelly Bexley

Our members continue to work on projects, which include teaching students about gardening at Bethel Christian Academy; working at the Ask a Master Gardener booth during the week of the National Peanut Festival; hosting three Lunch and Learns that featured peanut pod blasting, raising chickens in the backyard, and soil biology; manning the Helpline; and caring for the demo beds and Heirloom Garden at the Dothan Area Botanical Gardens (DABG).

At Landmark Park, we taught schoolchildren about peanuts during Harvest Hey Days, and during Fall Farm Day we invited the public into the Kitchen Garden to demonstrate how gardening was done at the turn of the century. During all of this, we continued caring for and growing plants that were sold during a very successful two-day Fall Plant Sale. The proceeds from both our spring and fall sales enabled us to fulfill one of our important missions - giving back to other horticultural programs here in the Wiregrass.

Work was also completed on upgrading our greenhouse with new electrical wiring and new grow lights. To round out these last few months, a group of experienced MGs decorated the demo beds for DABG's annual Gardens Aglow Event and made wreaths and swags for Landmark's annual Victorian Christmas. While it would be lovely to rest, we are looking forward to teaching Junior Master Gardener

classes, revising our bylaws, setting up a 12x15 greenhouse generously donated by one of our MGs, and mentoring our spring class of Interns! Needless to say, the Wiregrass stays busy!



Master Gardener answering questions about plants.  
Photographer: Jan Shirley



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MASTER  
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**Got Questions?**



We've Got Answers



# Happy New Year From AMGA!

## NEXT ARTICLE FOR PATHWAYS DUE MARCH 15, 2024

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