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UofA
DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE
RESEARCH & EXTENSION
University of Arkansas System

No. 2

Kurz hired as new extension consumer horticulture specialist



Berni Kurz

Berni Kurz, honored in Arkansas and nationally for his work as a county extension agent, has a new role to fill as consumer horticulture specialist for the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Cooperative Extension Service.

Kurz relocated from Fayetteville to the state extension headquarters in Little Rock to begin his new role on Feb. 1.

From his undergraduate years, horticulture has been a dominant theme for the Arkansas native, who graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in horticulture and a Master of Science degree in ornamental horticulture from the University of Arkansas. He accepted a position as a Garland County extension agent immediately after his college graduation, overseeing the horticulture and 4-H programs. In 1991, he moved to Crawford County, where he led the fledgling Master Gardener program established in 1988. In 2002, Kurz was promoted to Crawford County staff chair, where his duties grew to include the Landscape Maintenance Seminar and River Valley Lawn and Garden Show.

In 2004, Kurz became staff chair in Washington County, overseeing one of the state's largest county Master Gardener groups. He has plans for his new statewide duties, as well.

Among his objectives are to “update the many out-of-date consumer horticulture publications and create new ones to support the current research-based recommended principles and practices for all Arkansas home gardeners,” he said, adding that he plans to “initiate a process where Arkansas Master Gardeners will create a long-range vision to keep relevance to the program which also embraces the extension mission of the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture.”

Kurz said he also plans to develop relevant consumer horticulture information to help county agents when delivering their local programs.

“We are excited to have Berni join the Horticulture department,” said Wayne Mackay, head of the horticulture department for the Division of Agriculture and the Dale Bumpers College of Agriculture, Food and Life Sciences. “Berni brings many years of experience in consumer horticulture and the Master Gardener program and is a great addition to the horticulture program.”

(See Kurz, page 4)

Upcoming Events

March 1-3 - Arkansas Flower and Garden Show,
Arkansas State Fairgrounds, Little Rock.
www.argardenshow.org

April 10 - 2019 Extension Retiree Luncheon,
C. A. Vines Arkansas 4-H Center, Ferndale.
Reception at 10:30 a.m. followed by lunch at noon.

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Master Gardeners making great progress in 4-H Center Demonstration Garden

A great deal has been accomplished since Randy Forst addressed guests at last year's Retiree Luncheon. At that meeting, Forst outlined plans for a new demonstration garden to be constructed at the Arkansas 4-H Center, intending to provide a setting for educational events for 4-H'ers, students and other youth and adult groups.

The Pulaski County Master Gardeners Demonstration Garden is to include warm and cool season vegetables in raised beds, a trial garden for annual and perennial ornamental plants, fruit bushes and trees, a honey bee yard, a native plant border, commodity crops and a rain garden. A tool and equipment shed, seating areas, gravel paths and a central gazebo will also be part of the garden.

Since last year's luncheon, a core group of Master Gardener volunteers – 20 Master Gardeners and four significant others – has constructed 16 raised beds that will be planted with fruit trees, vegetables and annuals. They are working on adjusting drainage at the site, and are ready to install two beehives, eventually progressing to five.

The shell of the garden house is complete. When finished, the house

will have a handicapped-accessible restroom, sink, a place to hang coats, storage space for chairs, tools and beekeeping equipment. The gutters of the house have been designed to catch rainwater to reuse in the garden.

Master Gardener volunteers have put down landscape fabric on one-fourth of the garden area, moved



Master Gardener volunteers have laid landscape fabric on one-fourth of the garden area. The garden shed can be seen in the background.



Moving soil to a raised bed.



Digging trenches and cutting pipe.

gravel and supersoil and dug trenches. They have contracted with a company to erect an 8-foot fence to keep out deer. Upon completion of the fence, scheduled for March 1, volunteers can begin planting.

"Some of the work you can't see, because it's literally underground," said Kathy Ratcliffe, past


president, Pulaski County Master Gardeners.

Last year, Master Gardeners donated 700 volunteer hours to the project. In addition to the core group of Master Gardeners, development teams and new Master Gardeners also assisted.

This summer Master Gardeners plan to begin working with Shannon Caldwell and 4-H groups in the garden for the first time and also hope to host adult groups.

The garden "will showcase plant species and varieties appropriate for central Arkansas, demonstrate research-based gardening and agricultural techniques and teach nutritional guidelines," Ratcliffe said.

Funding for the garden has come from foundations, individuals and grants. Retirees have raised money for the project, and the garden has also received in-kind services.

Ratcliffe credited the 4-H Center staff, county agents and the 4-H Foundation for their help and support throughout the process of getting this project off the ground. 



Volunteers begin framing a raised bed.

Brenda Henderson Pratt dies

Brenda Henderson Pratt, age 76, of Mount Ida died Jan. 19, 2019.

Pratt joined Extension as a home economist in 1962 after graduating from the University of Arkansas. Her early assignments were in Phillips and Drew counties.


She and husband Jerry Henderson raised two sons in the Mount Ida area, where Brenda was home economics leader for Montgomery County for more than 15 years.

In 1988, she became Northwest District program leader and later associate district director for the Northwest District. She served as Southwest District director from 1997 until her retirement in 1999.

After the death of her husband Jerry, she married Larry Pratt, who also preceded her in death.

She is survived by a sister, Mavis, of Austin, Texas, son David Henderson of Mount Ida, son Greg Henderson of Bulverde, Texas, two granddaughters and two grandsons.

A celebration of Brenda's life was held Jan. 23 at Joplin United Methodist Church in Mount Ida.

Memorials may be made to CASA of Hot Springs, Arkansas (508 Ouachita Avenue, Hot Springs, Arkansas 71901) or Joplin United Methodist Church (59 Mountain Harbor Road, Mount Ida, Arkansas 71957). 

Scholarship donations

The following gifts were recently received to support professional development opportunities for faculty and staff of the Cooperative Extension Service.

■ Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship

Linda Taylor

In Memory of Michael Wright

Jimmy Bowling

In Memory of Brenda Henderson Pratt

Jimmy Bowling


M. Portia Short

In Memory of Orva Dee Peachey

Alva Ray Siler

In Honor of Fann Woodward

M. Portia Short

Honorary or memorial donations may be forwarded to Development Office, ATTN: Brian Helms, Cooperative Extension Service, 2301 South University Ave., Little Rock, AR 72204. To ensure that proper notification is sent, please also include in whose honor or memory the gift is made and the mailing address of the person to receive the notification. 

To our Extension retirees



The best thing about February is that it is not January. Lately though, I have also been disappointed by the February weather, although it may be typical for Arkansas in that we have a four-season climate, sometimes all in one day. At least, the weather gives me something to gripe about, which is increasingly important as I grow more chronologically gifted.

In this issue, please note the exciting and interesting developments in consumer horticulture and the Master Gardener Program. Please help us extend a welcome to Berni Kurz, our new specialist taking over the duties of the recently retired Extension legend, Janet Carson. Huge shoes to fill, but Berni is up to the challenge, and most of us know Berni and his stellar career in extension education.

We hope you also can help us extend congratulations to Randy Forst and the Pulaski County Master Gardeners for creating and building the demonstration garden at the C.A. Vines 4-H Center near Ferndale. This thing is impressive, an accurate reflection of its creators and the site. It should be a boon to youth and adult education in modern gardening, and we look forward to the many activities to be centered there.

We were very saddened to hear about the passing forward of Brenda Henderson Pratt, a class act if there ever was one. I hope you keep the family in your thoughts and prayers.

Another sad day for us was the retirement of Iris Phifer, after 44 years of truly exceptional service in Cooperative Extension, lastly in Ashley County. Sad for us, probably happy for Iris, but how do we replace somebody like this? We wish Iris and her family the best, but we will miss her professionalism and leadership greatly. I have known no better person or professional, truly.


Not to "bug" you, but please note the changes to the insect (arthropods) museum at UA-Fayetteville, led by Dr. Ken Korth and former Department Head Dr. Terry Kirkpatrick. This move should assure a continued future for the collection as well as broaden the usefulness of same.

(See Cartwright, page 4)

New retiree

This Extension employee has joined the rank of the retirees:

Iris Phifer - Ashley County

Iris began her career in 1974. She served as a county extension agent for 44 years until her retirement on Jan. 31, 2019. Her last position was county extension agent - staff chair in Ashley County. 

UA Arthropod Museum gets new home

The thousands of shelled, winged and multi-legged arthropods squeezed into a room in the University of Arkansas' agriculture building will soon have roomier digs from which to feed to curiosity and stoke the awe of visiting schoolkids and adults.

The museum houses more than 1,000 drawers of insects, including some species found only in the Ozarks.

The collection's home is cramped, with narrow aisles making it difficult to host visitors. However, the Arthropod Museum will now be housed at 1580 Mitchell Street, right off of Razorback Road in Fayetteville.

"Part of the motivation for this move was that the museum space we have now is not very accessible," said Ken Korth, department head for the Department of Entomology and Plant Pathology. "The new space will be much improved in terms of accessibility for small groups."

The move will take place this spring and the museum will share the building with the biology department's herbarium as well as offices for the College of Education and Health Professions. e



The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture Arthropod Museum houses thousands of specimens of insects and other arthropods from Arkansas and around the world.

Kurz, cont.

Kurz is filling the position vacated by Janet Carson upon her retirement. Vic Ford, extension's interim associate director-agriculture and natural resources for the Division of Agriculture, put it simply: "Good things are still going to happen."

"I am excited and pleased to have someone with Berni's experience and dedication to continue Janet's work in consumer horticulture," he said. "My expectation is that under Berni's leadership, that the Master Gardener program will continue to flourish." e

Cartwright, cont.

Finally, we hosted the 4-H Day at the Capitol on Feb. 12, with about 600 youth and 230 adults on site most of the day. To say the efforts of our 4-H staff, volunteers, parents and youth were impressive is a vast understatement. Made me proud to just watch it, and stay out of the way. My observation was that the young folks learned a tremendous amount, and two of them told me they planned to run for Governor someday. And, the elected officials encountered seemed very positive about the event and about Division programs and work, as exemplified by our absolutely exceptional 4-H programs. Anyway, we will summarize the event with really outstanding images by our Communications Team in the next issue.

I hope you all are well, and please know that my door and phone will always remain open to you. Many thanks for your continued support and good will.

- Rick Cartwright e

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Yes, I want to support the fundraising initiative in support of the Cooperative Extension Service Retiree Scholarship.

Enclosed is my gift of \$_____. My gift is in honor/in memory of_____.

Name/Address for notification of honorary and memorial gifts:

Please make check payable to the **UA Foundation** and mail to Brian Helms, Development Office, 2301 South University Avenue, Little Rock, AR 72204-4940.

March Birthdays

- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------|
| Mr. Peter G. Faison, March 1 | Mrs. M. Dorene Wills, March 16 |
| Mr. Ralph Warren Tyler, Jr., March 1 | Ms. Doris L. Markle, March 17 |
| Ms. Lynn Whitlock, March 1 | Mr. Larry H. Pitman, March 19 |
| Mrs. Carolyn R. Hester, March 2 | Mrs. Nina Boston, March 19 |
| Ms. Janet L. Hill, March 3 | Mr. Danny O. Walker, March 21 |
| Mrs. Glenda McLaughlin Rushing, March 5 | Dr. Steven Charles Seideman, March 22 |
| Ms. Sandra Lea Schlinker, March 5 | Mr. Charlie E. Parsons, March 23 |
| Mr. Danny Gene McCarter, March 8 | Dr. John F. Robinson, March 24 |
| Ms. Barbara Jean Tompkins, March 9 | Mr. Ronnie Joe Bateman, March 24 |
| Mrs. Bobbie Floyd, March 10 | Ms. Ocsie Barnes, March 26 |
| Ms. J. Alene Bates, March 10 | Mr. Thomas D. Moody, March 27 |
| Mrs. Bonita Mueller, March 10 | Ms. Debbie B. Henry, March 28 |
| Mrs. Dorothy Rodgers, March 12 | Mr. Eddie Hubbell, March 29 |
| Mr. John B. Baker, Jr., March 13 | Mrs. Celia Boon Shireman, March 29 |
| Mr. Danny Ray Allen, March 14 | Ms. Patsy Hall, March 29 |
| Mrs. Sue Seevers, March 14 | Ms. Shelly D. Johnson |
| Ms. Judy Ann Drewrey, March 14 | Karen L. Fite, March 31 |