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**PNG (Plant-Nurture-Grow) Leadership Conference**

**2025 Session Synopses**

**October 1 & 2, 2025**

MG 101 – Randy Forst, State MG Coordinator & Consumer Horticulture Instructor

Session Description: Learn basic information concerning the Master Gardener Program. (Example: Requirements for annual volunteer hours each year, Leave of Absence and Sustainer defined. Sanctioned and Non-Sanctioned projects defined.)

**Tips and Strategies for a Successful Plant Sale – Karen Hicks, Dee Dee Allen, and Celia Harkey – Faulkner Co MGs**

Session Description: From humble beginnings in 1999, with less than a dozen FCMG’s gathering plants from fellow master gardeners and selling them in makeshift locations around Conway, to the large, coordinated effort of bringing in, caring for, and organizing for sale almost 14,000 plants with over 130 volunteers, and raising tens of thousands of dollars to support scholarships and horticultural education in the community and run the county’s program, the Faulkner County Master Gardener Plant Sale has become a major go to event for hundreds of Arkansans each year. Come and learn some of the key organizational strategies employed by this group to make this process fun and manageable for its volunteers, while improving efficiency along the way. One major improvement the FCMG plant sale made in 2024 was eliminating a single plant sale chair to take on the mammoth leadership role and dividing the role into a Plants Team Chair, Logistics Chair, and Communications Chair. You will hear from these three chairs for the 2025 sale in this plant sale information session.

**Grow Your Organization Thru Recruiting – Tools, Tracking and Techniques – Don Casteel, Benton Co MG**

Session Description: Join us for an in-depth seminar designed to help your county program recruit Master Gardeners more efficiently and effectively. You’ll learn how to spotlight your program, attract qualified candidates, and manage your outreach from first contact through enrollment.

What we’ll cover:
• Crafting ads and messaging that showcase your program’s strengths
• Leveraging social media platforms to reach gardeners in your area
• Using simple spreadsheet systems to track inquiries and gauge interest
• Building and segmenting mailing lists for upcoming training classes
• Timing your emails and structuring follow-up schedules for maximum engagement

Walk away with hands-on tools, proven workflows, and a clear action plan to expand your Master Gardener cohort and strengthen your county’s gardening community.

**Easy Trip Planning for Educational Gardening Adventures – Michelle Mobley, CEA Staff Chair, Independence Co**

Session Description: Embark on educational gardening journeys with confidence. Learn how to plan impactful trips for your Master Gardener group-the essential steps, pitfalls to avoid and insightful tips for maximizing learning & enjoyment.

**QR Codes for Master Gardeners – Jacob Holloway, CEA Prairie Co**

Session Description: Join Jacob as he shows you how **QR codes** can make your projects and outreach shine. Forget complicated tech – this presentation is all about practical, easy ways to use QR codes effectively.

We’ll dive into:

* **Making Great QR Codes:** How to design codes that scan easily and look professional.
* **What to Link:** Discover the best things to connect to your codes, like plant info, event sign-ups, garden maps, or even quick video tutorials.
* **Smart Strategies:** Learn simple tips to make sure your QR codes are accessible, last a long time, and really hit the mark with your audience.

Whether you’re looking to simplify plant sales, create fun, interactive garden tours, or just make sharing information a breeze, this session will give you the know-how to use QR codes confidently and successfully.

**Please bring your smartphone** to this presentation, as we’ll be doing some hands-on exploration of QR codes!

**The Visionary Master Gardener – Diann Arington, Garland Co MG**

Session Description: Using the skills of a visionary leader to enhance and grow your Master Gardener community. We will talk about the traits of Visionary leader…Inspire others, create a vision, build trust, foster collaboration, and promote optimism. We will see how a focus on these traits helps us to both recruit and retain Master Gardeners.

**Canva for Beginners – Master Gardener Edition – Amanda Sinkey, CES Prairie Co**
Session Description: This beginner-friendly workshop is designed to help Master Gardeners learn how to use Canva, a free online design tool, to create eye-catching newsletters, event flyers, social media graphics, and educational materials. No graphic design experience is needed! We’ll walk through the basics—how to navigate the Canva dashboard, customize templates, add images and text, and organize your designs. Whether you're in charge of your group's communication or just want to make your projects look more polished, this class will give you the tools to get started with confidence.

**Fulfilling the Master Gardener Mission: Educating Ourselves and our Communities – Krista Quinn, CEA, and Janet Gingerich, MG, Faulkner Co**

Session Description: The Master Gardener mission is to provide research-based gardening education to the public. While Faulkner County Master Gardeners have always conducted some educational programs, they decided to focus more on education in recent years and have increased their educational offerings for both members and the public. Join us to learn about some of the unique ways the Faulkner County Master Gardeners provide learning opportunities for the public and continuing education to their members.

**Crafting Winning Award Nominations: Elevating Your County’s Recognition – Andrea Klokow, Benton Co MG**

Session Description: Go beyond basic submissions and learn how to truly showcase your county's exceptional work! This comprehensive training will equip you with the essential strategies for turning great projects and dedicated individuals into award-winning achievements. We'll cover everything from strategically selecting your nominees and projects to writing compelling narratives, choosing impactful visuals, and mastering the review and submission process. Leave this session with the knowledge and tools to ensure your county's hard work earns the recognition it deserves.

**Sharing the Load – Randy Forst**

Session Description: Are you a volunteer that is responsible for every activity involving your group? This topic will cover how to make sure that work on your team is evenly distributed. What do you do about the person who’s great at saying no and the one who can’t say no? These are just a few topics that will be discussed and hopefully resolved.

**Mentoring - Lessons Learned and Tips for Success - Gail McClure, Paula Jackson, and Diann Arington, Garland Co MGs, and Mimi Cox, Craighead Co MG**

Session Description: Garland Country Mentoring Committee has implemented the original mentoring program developed by Mimi Cox and applied their own spin to various elements of the program to make it work for their new master gardeners. Come hear what they have done that is new (or a new twist) and what they have tried that did not work so well.

**Sowing Seeds for Success – A SSS Presentation by RRR – Liz Hale, Washington Co MG, and Hilde Simmons, Garland Co MG**

Session Description:The Excellence in Education Award was established in 2016 to give local Master Gardeners programs the opportunity to showcase an educational project that goes above and beyond any regular sanctioned projects. The criteria are rigorous and specific.  The session highlights past award recipients, gives updates about the projects, the effect of the project on the target audience, the local Master Gardeners, and the community at large. The goal of the session is to offer information about the variety of EIE projects in the state and provide opportunities to identify proven implementation tools and support for MG programs who are considering implementing similar projects in their communities.

**Tools for an Effective Meeting – Debbie Atchison, Garland/Faulkner Co MG, Donna Peebles, Garland Co MG**

Session Description: Master Gardeners should know what tools to put into their bucket for the specific projects they are working on and how to use those tools. The same is true for an effective meeting. There are specific tools that are essential for the presiding officer but also for the other officers and the membership in order to have successful, productive and effective meetings. Learn what tools you need in your “Meeting Bucket” and learn how to use them. You will be amazed what a difference it will make.

**Randy’s Reliable, Relevant Resources – Randy Forst, Becky Gibson, Pulaski Co MG; Patsy Louk, Washington Co MG; Julie Treat, CES, Horticulture**

Session Description: This is a Panel Discussion. Have your MG Program questions answered by our fearless leader and other seasoned Master Gardeners on this panel.

**Engaging Perennials In Volunteer Activities – Rose Ann Houston, White & Independence Co MG**

Session Description: We will be discussing the issues and ways to encourage our aging members, Perennials, to stay active within our MG program. Perennials are motivated to meet new people and volunteer their time. After working for many years, they still want to remain active and feel useful. MG is not always just digging in the dirt, as we will explore different possibilities within the MG program.

**Effective Internal Communication for Master Gardener Groups – Krista Quinn; Lin Johnson, Garland Co MG**

Session Description- Effective internal communication is crucial for keeping Master Gardeners informed of group activities, making sure tasks are completed, building a sense of community, and ensuring volunteers feel valued. In this session, we will discuss some of the communication methods Faulkner and Garland Counties use to keep members informed and engaged.

**Developing and Managing MG Projects – Randy Forst; Phil McConnell, Saline Co MG**

Session Description:How to initiate a new Sanctioned Project. What steps must be taken before bringing it to the general Master Gardener assembly for voting. This topic covers the **Definition** of the project, the **Physical Needs** of the project, the **Maintenance** of the project, and **Phil McConnell** will give an example of this whole process.

**Canva: Beyond the Basics – MG Edition – Amanda Sinkey**

Session Description: Already comfortable with Canva and ready to do more? This session is designed for Master Gardeners who know the basics and want to explore some of Canva’s more helpful tools without diving too deep. You’ll also pick up tips for designing polished newsletters, event flyers, and social media posts that make your projects stand out.

This workshop is perfect for those who want to build confidence and efficiency using Canva for communications and outreach

**Keeping the Peace – Randy Forst**

Session Description: Join Randy in this session to gain insight to navigate differences of opinion in your program with a positive outcome for conflict resolutions.

**The Wonders of the MG Website – Julie Treat**

Session Description: In this session you will get a glimpse of the many pages of information for the state Master Gardener Program, horticulture, and other program areas the U of A Cooperative Extension Service provides for all Arkansans. The answer to your question may just be a click away.

**Program Planning=Spark Session – Dana Ellis and Pat Kizzire, Arkansas Co MGs**

Session Description: Utilizing free flowing ideas for planning programs that are engaging, innovative and educational.

**Leadership Capital – Becky Gibson**

Session Description: A time of sharing ideas for getting Master Gardeners to step up to leadership positions. Topics include Capital Skills; Stages of Leadership; and Leadership Design. As we learn together, all participants are welcome. Come and share issues and solutions.

**Fundraising within Counties – Patsy Louk**

Session Description: During this session, we will discuss fundraising ideas other than plant sales. We will take a look at ideas that could work for a large or small county. Options

that are very involved and those that are very simple. We will also discuss some

of the extension guidelines you will need to navigate.

Join us to get ideas on how to raise funds for your county Master Gardener program!!