

GARDEN VOICE



COUNTY 76 NEWSLETTER

1st Quarter 2024 January 2024

Volume 28, Number 1

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a great day at our January 23rd Membership & Projects Meeting. I hope you had the opportunity to attend. It was a great opportunity to meet other Master Gardeners and exchange ideas. Our projects are busy preparing exciting activities and events.

Today, I think something which is extremely important to all individuals is the sharing of what you know or learn, whether it is in a training session or some other type of meeting. The word is communication. Do you share? It is a vital part of not just everyday life; it is a necessary part of any leadership role. A parent works to have and maintain communications with their children, a boss does for their employees.

We have learned how important communication is in County 76. When a project has a meeting and the entire group cannot attend, it is the leader's communication that makes the project work a success. We have project leaders that are excellent in communicating with every member of the project – whether the member attended the meeting or not. Without communication skills, we would not have successful Advanced Trainings, Fundraising projects, PNG Conferences or Master Gardener State Conferences. I appreciate our leaders that consistently communicate for success!

County 76 is actively supporting Arkansas Master Gardeners in so many ways. When leaders are willing to give members an opportunity to contribute to the ongoing matters, everyone benefits. If those attending, or not attending, never get a chance to voice their concerns, the project becomes one-sided. By requesting feedback, it affords opportunities for everyone to help make better decisions and be a part of the success. Accepting input from others is an essential part of communication.

Communication is not just a human activity. If you take time to watch animals, insects, and other creatures, they have a specialized ability to communicate with their species. I encourage you to share with others and be willing to listen. Each day is a gift. It gives a wonderful chance to include others by communicating with them.

Outside, some of my spring flowers are trying to make an appearance, it is way too early. So far, the ornamental cabbage is still alive. The Ornamental Cabbages are with the pansies in large containers on the front porch. Also, the horse did think some of the pansies were pretty good, too!

Until next time, God Bless, and remember the earth is also resting, waiting for spring.

Kay Roberts, President

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

~Business~

- Kay Roberts, President, called the meeting to order. She greeted both members and visitors before introducing our presenter, Randy Forst.
- Following the morning presentation by Randy Forst, Kay Roberts facilitated the current business of County 76. The minutes of the October 24, 2023, membership meeting were entered on file without further corrections.
- Gail McClure, Treasurer, was introduced to present the Financial Report 2023. Gail began by explaining that the UADA had made changes to financial practices for Master Gardeners. Our income and expenses have been in two bank accounts, a County 76 private account and a CES (Cooperative Extension Service) account. To improve accounting practices, now our finances must be totally handled through the CES account. In October 2023, a meeting was held, and a timeline was given, for our private account funds to be transferred to the CES account.
- Gail reported combined 2023 income and expenses. 2023 Income was \$23,605.33. 2023 Expenses were \$18,111.98. Balance shown after combining assets: \$107,339.00 with the explanation of a miscellaneous deposit of \$3650.00 which was inadvertently deposited in our account and has been requested to be moved. We have an anticipated net total of \$103,689.00.
- Susan Colles, Past President, presented Executive Board recommendations for updates to our County 76 Bylaws. These changes in ARTICLE VI – DUTIES OF OFFICERS were approved by members:
 - Responsibilities related to the County 76 private bank account were removed.
 - The tasks of the 2nd Vice President were simplified. The 1st Vice President will be responsible for the creation and communication of the County 76 Timeline. The Past President will coordinate the update of the Volunteer Manual, including quarterly Roster updates.
- Susan conducted a membership-approval vote on the 2024 County 76 Proposed Budget. Some line items were increased when compared to our 2023 Proposed Budget due to rising costs in our activities. Proposed Budget increases presented and approved by membership are:
 - **County 76 Meetings** - Expense increase \$1,000. Meeting at the 4-H Center.
 - **Fundraising** - Income of \$21,680 offset by \$15,450 expense. Spirit Pole Project and the potential to have pre-orders for Root slayers and Tree of Life charm.
 - **PNG** - Income of \$3,315 with expenses of \$10,705. County 76 to fund \$7,390 due to minimal conference fee.
 - **Janet B Carson High School Senior Scholarships** - Expense increase of \$12,000. Four scholarships at \$2,000 and a continuing 1-year \$1,000 scholarship to the 2024-2025 scholarship winners

- **MG State Conference** – Expense of \$5,000. Seed money for 2025 conference
 - **RRR** – Expenses increased \$3,060. MG State Conference dinner for award winners + 1 guest and scholarship winners + 2 guests.
- Our final business item was shared by Susan Colles. These are the updates made to our County 76 Policies and Procedures which do not require an approval vote from members to be placed into effect.
- In the event a member of County 76 passes away, we will no longer directly contribute \$25.00 to the Janet B. Carson Scholarship Fund, but will collect member contributions at the next County 76 meeting to be used to support the JBC County Sanctioned Project Scholarship Fund. (Due to financial rule change.)
 - If the Master Gardeners of the Year and the Mentors of the Year register early and attend the Master Gardener State Conference, s/he will be reimbursed the basic conference registration fee. The details of required communication and actions for this process are now part of our County 76 Policies and Procedures.

~Education~



Our presenter was Randy C. Forst, Extension Educator Consumer Horticulture/Master Gardener Coordinator with the University of Arkansas Division of Agriculture. The purpose of Randy's presentation was to share information about Arkansas Master Gardeners – the beginning, where we are now, and where we want to be in the future - *FROM SEED TO BUD TO BLOOM*.

THE SEED

Since Master Gardeners are part of the University of Arkansas Extension Service, Randy presented the organizational chart of the U of A Division of Agriculture. The chain of command was interesting as Randy was able to personalize the positions and people in them. Operationally, Arkansas is divided into three districts each with a director: Ozark, Ouachita, and Delta. We have 75 County Offices with 25 per district. We were also told about the State Horticulture Specialists, e.g., Entomology, Food Safety.

Arkansas Master Gardeners began in 1988 with gardeners from four (4) counties: Garland, Jefferson, Pulaski, and Saline. Thirty (30) Master Gardeners graduated on October 13, 1988, which is the MG Birthday. Master Gardener Appreciation Day is always celebrated on that date. This year October 13 is on Sunday. We will celebrate on Monday, October 14, 2024.

THE BUD

As the four groups continued to meet, others were formed. The next step was 'sanctioned projects'. A sanctioned project is one that has gone through a specific proposal procedure, been accepted by the Master Gardener membership as one of the group's official projects and been approved by the County Extension Agent.

Sanctioned projects create funding connections with County Administrations. They create funding connections as there must be a 'host agreement' between MG's and community organizations. It is important for MG leaders to understand the connections which support the existence and work of our organization. We receive funding on a federal, state and county level. Funding is dependent on our value to our communities. Our value is shown by the hours we work to enhance and support our projects. We are consistently reminded to document hours we give in an online reporting system – and this is why.

Master Gardener projects beautify the environment. Many projects are so much more. There are Demonstration Gardens across the state. These are places to share with the public appropriate plants and practices for their areas. There are Teaching Gardens where knowledge is shared, and skills are learned. There are Trial Gardens for Annual Plant Trials and Vegetable Trials. Many Flower Shows are on this list of MG Projects, also.

Randy was an Extension Agent in St. Francis County, Carroll County and Pulaski County. He gave an example of data gathered at the Teaching Garden at the Juvenile Detention Center (3001 W. Roosevelt Rd, Little Rock). The garden includes vegetables, fruits, herbs, and pollinators. Production is measured and used to improve practices and share with the community.



Scan to learn more.

It is his experience and leadership with the U of A Department of Agriculture Extension Service that is responsible for Randy's strong belief in and promotion of the program known as 'Arkansas Diamonds'. Arkansas Diamonds are locally grown plants proven to be tough able to thrive in Arkansas. New plant selections are chosen and released each year. Many Master Gardeners volunteer to conduct plant trials and collect detailed data to contribute to this process.

Master Gardeners are working with county leaders to plan & make an impact that will benefit the community. As Master Gardeners are connecting to the communities, they are valuable as partners to county agents. Randy said, "I know what the partnership of agents and Master Gardeners can mean. My Master Gardeners, when I worked in County Extension, always made me look like a Rock Star!"

Randy continued, "The number of education hours Master Gardeners are providing is tremendous. This is one way the impact of Master Gardeners makes a real difference. The Pandemic increased interest in gardening tremendously in our state, I know personally, in Pulaski County there was a thirty-seven (37) percent increase, and post-pandemic the interest hasn't stopped. We have people becoming part of our program that don't know the difference between a tomato and an eggplant – but they are learning! I believe all our meetings have an educational component."

Randy told us that the amazing part of all of this is that Master Gardeners are not paid anything, this is a 'volunteer organization'. He said, "YOU choose to work with us".

Then along came a *Bud Sport*. Randy asked if anyone knew what a *Bud Sport* is. He said that when you have the mother plant and there are growths on the side of the plant

that you clip and propagate – those are *Bud Sports*. In botany, a *sport* or *bud sport* is a part of a plant that shows morphological differences from the rest of the plant. *Sports* may differ by foliage, shape or color, or flowers. That's what County 76 is to Arkansas Master Gardeners. When the Master Gardener organization needed support and advice, the State Advisory Board presented a new program, County 76, to help set policy and provide guidance to county programs. born."

The birthday of County 76 is October 2005. It is called County 76 because Arkansas has 75 counties – and this is a combination of Master Gardeners from across the state – so it became the 76th County group. The Bylaws and operations of County 76 are as those in County groups.

There are no dues for County 76 members; however, they do agree to volunteer at least ten (10) hours to the work of County 76. There are four (4) projects in County 76: Advanced Training, Fundraising, Plant, Nurture, Grown Leadership, and Recruitment, Retention, Recognition. Randy

shared details of the work of each of the projects. He talked about the 'fun' that members of County 76 have – "County 76 is the *cool kids* of Arkansas Master Gardeners".

Randy continued, "If you are asking why, you should join County 76 -

To LEARN more about the Master Gardener program.

To STRENGTHEN the state and county programs,

To take the LEAD in setting our direction,

To share your TALENTS,

To join a statewide NETWORK of Master Gardener friends."

THE BLOOM

Arkansas Master Gardeners are 'blooming'. We have reached a state of productivity which serves so many. We have achieved so much, but the work must not stop. We continue to face challenges.

- Recovering from Covid mindset.
- Extension staffing is shrinking – we can't be everything to everyone.
- Many agents don't have a horticulture background. We need Agent Training on Consumer Horticulture.
- We need Fruit & Vegetable Resources for Consumers.
- We need Grant Funding for Consumer Horticulture.

Randy continued with even more challenges:

- Re-establishing the program and enthusiasm.
- Enrolling & retaining Millennials into the Master Gardener Program.
- Retention of existing Master Gardeners.

Randy asked, "What do we need to do in the future to make sure this Master Gardener program keeps going?"

- 1) Add new people every year – new people with new blood and new ideas. We must develop diversity in our membership – in age, race, experience among others.
- 2) Retain our members by recognizing their achievements and celebrating our work as Master Gardeners together. Every year, Arkansas has sixty-eight (68) volunteer awards given at our State Master Gardener Conference. Thanks to County 76 Recruitment, Retention & Recognition Project.
- 3) Continue Master Gardener Educational Opportunities to share our work and get our name out. Support peer-to-peer training. Build strong MG Mentoring programs. We have improved our Advanced Training statewide program from credit for classes to credit for hours of training.
- 4) Develop our technology literacy to help other counties, who may not have the resources of larger groups.
- 5) Communicate to get and keep our County Agents involved in our work.
- 6) Continue to provide demonstrations for our communities.
- 7) Participate in conferences and learning on a national level to bring back ideas and resources from others. (Randy meets with others in his position in other states.)
- 8) Treasure local Master Gardeners and their work. Keep our programs viable through ongoing project evaluations. One example of this is the PEST (Project Evaluation & Support Team) work in Pulaski County.
- 9) Continue and expand our work in Arkansas Diamond plant trials to increase our visibility in supporting our communities and consumers.
- 10) Improve our communication to get our message out. Use resources which best reach your community. Use social media, if possible.
- 11) Invest in our Master Gardener program – much of this is done by County 76 through the Fundraising Project at our statewide events.
- 12) Encourage all MG's to attend leadership training. Every year, the Plant, Nurture, Grow leadership conference is held. This year in August at the Vines 4-H Center in Little Rock.
- 13) Stay current through Master Gardener Mondays (MGM), a monthly zoom with Randy and Julie Treat.

“A strong and visible Master Gardener Program is the gateway to Extension horticultural programs!” We must work smarter with less people. This means we use Master Gardener volunteers to distribute our message and serve clientele. We can use technology to teach and train – agents and volunteers. We can support County Agents. Extension's strength is having a presence in every county. We should help our agents succeed (peer-to-peer training).

Randy encourages us, “We must bring all components of horticulture together to build a stronger program on the local and state level.”

- Consumers are more interested now – they want the plants.
- Nurseries need to have the plants to sell.

- Growers must have plant availability.
- In our Fruit breeding program, consumers need to know what to look for.
- Consumers need to know where to buy plants.
- Communication is the key to our success.
- Our goal is to have Applied Research Agents & Master Gardeners working together.

Randy continues the Master Gardener Leadership tradition of having a vision for us and working hard to see it become reality. He is an available resource as he and Julie lead and support us every day.

Question for Randy: *What about the MG Only page? It doesn't have a password now?*

Randy answered: *Yes, that's right. there have been changes on what we can post on our website. We cannot post any information which may lead to identifying individuals. We are working on the best way to handle updating the page.*

Question for Randy: *How can our county Master Gardener group post our information online safely? Is there a place for that?*

Randy answered: *Currently there is not a place, unless the County pays for a site online. Randy & Julie are asking those in charge of technology about this.*

THE PROJECT PATCH

Advanced Training (AT) Project Meeting Report

Chair: Joellen Beard (Pulaski Co.) Co-chair: Dana Downes (Pulaski Co.)

- All the Advanced Training documents and forms for our revised program have been updated and are waiting to be posted on the Master Gardener website.
- Our Advanced training in Marion, Crittenden County, was very successful. There were about 50 people each day. Arkansas Master Gardeners were well-represented. This was a two (2) day training, five hours a day for ten (10) hours of State Advanced Training Credit. Participants have received a completion certificate by email.
- The next opportunity for Advanced Training Credit will be Wednesday, January 24, 2024. This is a Zoom training, hosted by Pulaski County Master Gardeners. and will begin at 11:00 a.m.

Fundraising Project Meeting Report

Chair: Patsy Louk (Washington Co.) Co-chair: Susan Colles (Pope Co.)

Patsy Louk reminded us about one of the MG State Conference fundraisers this year in Hot Springs. Rather than an online auction, we will sponsor an auction of County Spirit Poles. A 'Spirit Pole' is a handcrafted garden monument that reflects your personal style and message of community spirit.

To properly prepare for this event, a Participation Form is required to be sent in by Thursday, February 29. At the time of our meeting, these counties have confirmed participation: Washington, Pope, Benton, Garland, Pulaski, Jefferson, Madison, and Lonoke. During Patsy's report, other county representatives confirmed participation.

This is a wonderful opportunity to share and promote your County Master Gardeners. Please find details and Participation Form here:

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/yard-garden/master-gardeners/county-76/fundraising.aspx>



Or scan this Quick Reference (QR code) to understand 'Spirit Poles'.



Media Relations

Coordinator: Mike Wilbanks (Craighead Co.)

The annual Master Gardener Calendar is something we all look forward to. You can be 'published' as an Arkansas Master Gardener in the beautiful and informative calendar. There are rules about submitting photos for our 2025 MG Calendar. These were reviewed:

- 1) The photo must be original to the exhibitor.
- 2) Color, black & white, or sepia is acceptable.
- 3) The photo must have plant material.
- 4) Photos must be taken inside Arkansas' borders.
- 5) Judges' decisions are final
- 6) Photos are judged on creativity, composition, technical merit.

An example of a proper PHOTO LABEL:

Your name, your county name, name of entry, season of photo:

Ansel Adams, Green, Dogwood Berries, WI

The deadline to send in photos for the 2025 calendar is Friday, June 21, 2024.

Photo entries are emailed to mwilbanks3@gmail.com

Plant, Nurture, Grow (PNG) Project Meeting Report

Chair: Linda Soffer (Jefferson Co.)



- 2024 PNG Leadership Conference
- Vines 4-H Center, Ferndale, Little Rock AR
- Tuesday afternoon – Wednesday morning
- August 20 & 21, 2024
- We will have previous success: Roundtable Discussions, Assigned-seating dinner, Table Talk
- Most topics & speakers have been selected, contacted and confirmed

Recruitment, Retention, Recognition [RRR] Project Meeting Report

Chair: Liz Hale (Washington Co.) Co-chair: Holly Bacon (Crittenden Co.) Co-chair: Leisa Stotts (Clark Co.)

- We have sixty-eight (68) nominations for our 2023 Arkansas Master Gardener State Awards. They are from eighteen (18) Master Gardener programs. There are nine (9) from smaller groups (>51 MG members) and the same number from larger groups.
- Hilde Simmons has completed the 2024 Arkansas Master Gardener Presidents List.

- This year's Annuals to Perennials (A-P) Zoom training will be on Thursday, July 18, 2024. We are thrilled that this year's speaker will be Brie Arthur, The Plant Lady, author, speaker and podcaster.

COUNTY 76 LEADERSHIP - 2024

State Leadership

Randy Forst, Extension Educator Consumer Horticulture/Master Gardener Coordinator

Julie Treat, Horticulture Program Associate

County 76 Officers

Kay Roberts, President (Lonoke County)

Becky Gibson, First Vice President (Pulaski County)

Second Vice President [to be filled]

Dana Downes, Secretary (Pulaski County)

Gail McClure, Treasurer (Garland/Hot Spring County)

Linda Soffer, Assistant Treasurer (Jefferson County)

Susan Colles, Past President (Pope County)

County 76 Project Leaders

Advanced Training Project

Joellen Beard, Chair (Pulaski County)

Dana Downes, Co-chair (Pulaski County)

Fundraising Project

Patsy Louk, Chair (Washington County)

Susan Colles, Co-chair (Pope County)

Plant, Nurture, Grow Leadership Training Project

Linda Soffer, Chair (Jefferson County)

Co-chair [to be filled]

Recruitment, Retention, Recognition Project

Liz Hale, Chair (Washington County)

Holly Bacon, Co-chair (Crittenden County)

Leisa Stotts, Co-chair (Clark County)

County 76 Appointed Positions

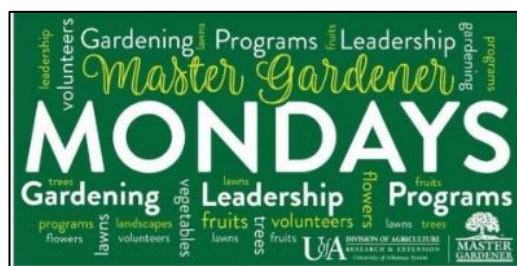
Mike Wilbanks, Media Relations Coordinator (Craighead County)

Becky Gibson, Garden Voice Editor (Pulaski County)

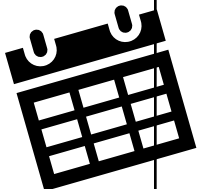
Angela Ryland, Garden Voice Co-editor (Lonoke County)

Stay in touch with Arkansas Master Gardeners

See
Constant
Contact



MASTER GARDENER EVENTS 2024



May 30 – June 1 – State Conference

“Springtime in the Springs”

Tours, Awards, Training, Auction, Shopping, Networking
Hot Springs Conference Center/Hot Springs

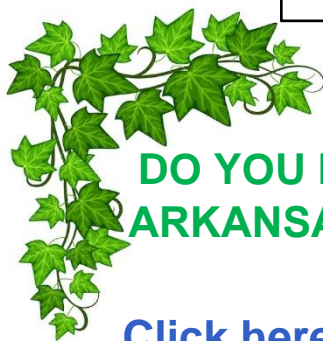
July 18 – **Annuals to Perennials** (Zoom) Special time for
Mentors and Mentees, Brie Arthur, The Plant Lady

Aug. 20 & 21 – **PNG Leadership Conference**

Tues. afternoon & Weds. Morning
Vines 4-H Center Little Rock

Oct. 14 – **MG Appreciation Day**

Arkansas Master Gardeners’ B-Day
Botanical Gardens of the Ozarks
Fayetteville



**DO YOU RECEIVE CONSTANT CONTACT EMAILS FROM THE
ARKANSAS MASTER GARDENER PROGRAM? IT’S THE BEST
WAY TO KNOW WHAT’S HAPPENING 😊**

[Click here to sign up for state MG Program Constant Contact.](#)



County 76 Membership/Project Meeting

The Vines Arkansas 4-H Center

1 Four H Way, Little Rock, AR 72223

Tuesday, April 23, 2024, 10:00 am

We look forward to seeing you there!

The University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture is an equal opportunity/equal access/affirmative action institution. If you require a reasonable accommodation to participate or need materials in another format, please contact our State Coordinator/Program Associate Office as soon as possible. Dial 711 for Arkansas Relay.