

GARDEN VOICE



COUNTY 76 NEWSLETTER

3rd Quarter July 2025

Volume 29, Number 3

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

As an Arkansas Master Gardener, I have realized that MG's have problems. The problems that come to us are sized from tiny to huge. Almost always, they come in 'green' packages, and they are the reasons we spend time problem-solving, thinking and acting. Best of all, they are the source of our growth and joy.

The Master Gardener problems will result in learning a lesson and being better next time or having beautiful, healthy plants.

When you complete the Basic Master Gardener Training and share that fact with others, they often say, "Oh good, now you know *everything* about plants." We know that's not what being a Master Gardener means. [Dictionary.com](https://www.dictionary.com) says a Master is a person with the ability or power to use, control or dispose of something. We do not have *all* knowledge about plants, but we have the gift of connections. Our connections are resources in people and searchable information.

Having connections to others who are plant-focused experts and practitioners through Master Gardeners means we have shared experiences. We have a shared understanding. Learning and working together means we become comfortable in sharing with others. We feel closer, valued and cared for. We learn to trust each other, and we develop

skills and positive memories in the process.

Our closest resources are at the County Extension Services Offices. State and County Extension Agents working with horticulture programs are good to know. If a ready human resource isn't found, we have a terrific knowledge base online at uada.edu

County 76 Master Gardeners is a statewide volunteer group that serves as advisory and support to Randy Forst, Julie Treat and Arkansas Master Gardeners. County 76 supports Arkansas MG's through opportunities for training and networking. This is in two categories. They are Advanced Trainings and the Plant, Nurture, Grow Leadership Conference. Advanced Trainings are announced through our statewide Constant Contact emails. The same is true for the annual PNG Conference. This year's PNG Conference is October 1 & 2 in Ferndale, AR. If you can attend, you will leave with new knowledge and connections - and a plant from Randy Forst:)))

These are some of the reasons I value being an Arkansas Master Gardener. It's why I value you, too!

Smiles,

Becky Gibson, President



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

~Business~

- Becky Gibson called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. She welcomed everyone and shared the day's agenda.
- Minutes from the April 22, 2025, County 76 General Meeting will be filed as presented.
- Gail McClure, Treasurer, reported on the 2025 County 76 Budget to date. Gail briefly went over the budget line items. Income for the second quarter (April, May & June, 2025) is \$10,236.00. Second quarter expenses total \$12,603.61. Our current balance is \$98,056.99 as shown in Workday. Gail explained that the report shows \$880.00 as miscoded funds. This is money from an Advanced Training Class and was placed in our account rather than being sent to the County. A request to move the funds has been made. In response to a request in our last meeting, Gail explained an additional column added to our report titled, "Authorized but not in WD yet." This refers to expenses that have been authorized by our treasurer in reference to our 2025 Projected Budget, but do not appear as 'paid' in our Workday report. A member asked about the money we make from State Master Gardener Calendars. Randy shared that Calendars are not a fund-raiser, but sponsored by the State Extension Office.
- Following the Budget Report, Becky shared a Thank You note to County 76 received from the White County Master Gardeners. They appreciated the \$5000.00 support County 76 sent for the 2025 State Master Gardener Conference held in Searcy.
- In our April 2025 Membership Meeting, the Janet B. Carson Scholarship Committee requested an additional \$500.00 be approved for an additional Janet B. Carson County Sanctioned Project Scholarship. Membership approved. Becky reported that the additional scholarship was awarded to Madison County for their Watson Primary Garden Project. Kay Roberts and Susan Colles were thanked for their work on our 2025 scholarships.
- Randy Forst, Arkansas Consumer Horticulture/Master Gardener Coordinator, brought an update to us.

~Farm news~

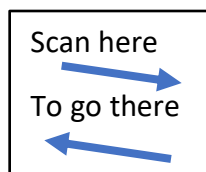
- At our April meeting, Randy shared a little lamb named 'Tater Tot'. He weighed less than a pound when he was born. Usually, a lamb weighs around five pounds in the morning. Randy found him, bottle fed him, and he is thriving. His name is "Tater Tot". Randy didn't think he would live, but he did. He's now fifty-five (55) pounds and is no longer at the farm. He's now a lawn maintenance guy for some people that are keeping him as a pet in our orchard because he's a little boy. Randy just keeps on ram

to do the job needed. Randy just needs the girls. So, Tater Tot is no longer with Randy, but he has a happy life.

- Randy's always thinking about plants that survive in the heat. He water twice a day in the morning and at night. Lantanas are doing fantastic. They love the heat. And the sweet potato plant – Randy has four giant concrete planter at St. Andrews and he clips off a truckload of sweet potato vines out of those to seed to the sheep every week.

~Extension news~

- Randy listed County Master Gardener presentations and events.
 - We had three monthly PNG Conference planning meetings.
 - State Master Gardener Appreciation Day will be Friday, August 22, 2025, at the Southwest Research Station in Hope. Registration has been sent out twice by Julie Treat. We had to move the original date due to six (6) inches of rain. We will learn about the American Selection Trials
 - Randy was in Hot Springs visiting for the Horticultural Consort at a church.
 - We had a successful State Master Gardener Conference hosted by White County. Randy and Julie have been there every month (sometimes twice a month) to work with them.
 - Next year, State Conference will be in Faulkner County. Randy and Julie have already been working with them for a year.
 - Meetings with Greene County begin for the 2027 State Conference.
 - Randy did a recruitment meeting for Lonoke County.
 - We continue to have Master Gardener Monday every month.
 - Randy emceed the Garland County Plant Sale.
- Randy shared Consumer Horticulture Events
 - Randy conducted two State Herb Webinars.
 - He completed a consult for Malvern 1st United Church.
 - Randy conducted an Ag In-service. We are responsible to teach horticulture agents. Randy is so pleased with Master Gardeners because they work with agents. It is so nice because a lot of agents don't major in horticulture.
 - Presented for Lady Beekeepers.
 - Polk County Orchard Production presentation.
 - Grow Your Own Groceries – vegetable container gardening presentation.
 - WUW – Hort Agent Updates (3)
 - 4-H District ORAMAS (3)
- Please find tips, tricks, and good gardening advice on Randy's Blog, *The Arkansas Garden*.
- Please feel free to email Randy and Julie to schedule a presentation.



~Education~



Our guest speaker was Lauren Anderson, Apiary Manager of Calm & Confidence which is a co-op located at 112 So. Cross Street in Little Rock. They place honeybee hives and native pollinator habitats throughout Arkansas to engage all communities in biodiversity preservation. Calm & Confidence partners with schools and area organizations to show the public the importance of pollinators.

Calm & Confidence serves the public by conducting the 'Host-a-hive program'. Beekeeping training is provided. Support for setting-up and maintaining bee hives through an apprentice program for volunteers. Community event involvement is also part of this. Lauren arranges workshops for schools and businesses and is active in community partnerships. The Co-op supports other small businesses.

Calm & Confidence is a result of Lauren's work as a science teacher in California. This started as a high school program integrating honey and beeswax into the chemistry and biology curriculum. They had an end-of-year project which was using beeswax to create something. Networking at farmer's markets started the spread of this work.

The Co-op restores old hives or builds new hives from scratch. The honey harvest is split 50/50 with homeowners or businesses and the Co-op. It is most interesting to know that the honey tastes different from all these different neighborhoods because of the different plants.

Calm & Confidence community partners are the Historic Arkansas Museum, the City of North Little Rock, and Central Arkansas Water. We are part of neighborhood associations, community gardens, and schools. We see this work form community and neighborhood pride, as well as creating teamwork and leadership opportunities for youth and adults.

Lauren shared information about Honeybees and Native Bees. There are over 400 species of native bees in Arkansas. Native bees pollinate a couple hundred feet from their hive. Honeybees go three miles to obtain nectar. Habitat near blooms is important for native bees.

Each species has unique characteristics and habits. Honeybees have one queen and thousands of bees in each colony. They sting and die when they sting. Bumblebees and Mason Bees only sting if threatened or if you come upon their nest. Bumblebee colonies have a couple hundred bees in a colony with a solitary queen. They will overwinter. Mason bees live in tubes. Leaf Cutter Bees are like mason bees; they build structures for their eggs. Instead of mud, they use leaves to create chambers for each

egg. They chew pieces of leaves and take them back to their reed structures. Solitary Bees lay one egg in the back of a long tube, add pollen and nectar, and create a wall. Carpenter bees drill into garages and wood sidings, so luring them to other logs is a way to remove them. Miner bees create little ant hills in the soil. They lay eggs in the holes and die off.

Honeybees are not native to the Americas. European and African honeybees are common in Arkansas. Asian honeybees cannot mate with other honeybee species. They create cone-shaped honeycombs with a hole in the middle. Modern agriculture is dependent on honeybees for pollination. Without them, grocery stores would have half as much fresh fruits and vegetables. Almonds must be pollinated by honeybees. Honeybees increase crop yields, provide honey, and beeswax.

In practice, we create Mixed-Use Habitats. They are recommended for different types of pollinators. There should be different sized reeds for pollinators to lay eggs. Best practice is to use removable brick for cleaning out debris. Slits are important for butterflies to hide from predators. You can buy mason bees and leaf cutter bees to release. Bring habitats inside in the fall to protect from wasps. Wasps consume the contents of the habitats. Place habitats back outside in the spring (March). Clean out dud eggs in the spring when things are hatching. Habitats can be left outside, but contents may be consumed by other creatures.

Bees need a water source, shade, and protection from the heat. Bees are most active in the early morning and evening. Provide a bird bath or dish of water with rocks for bees to land on which prevents them from drowning. In the spring, the bee population increases with abundant blooms and nectar. The queen can lay up to 2,000 eggs a day. In the Fall, the population decreases as summer bees die off. Summer honeybees live for six to eight weeks. In winter, hives become smaller and enter dormancy, but bees still fly in Arkansas due to warmer temperatures.

Concerning plants, early and late blooms are important for providing food sources. Dandelions and clover can be beneficial. Drought-tolerant plants are ideal. Native plants are best suited for native pollinators. Honeybees are attracted to UV light. They see lines and bursts of color on flowers. They do not see reds. Stripes on flowers act as landing pads. Flower shape is important for different pollinators. Shallow flowers are better for bees. Color and shape are essential for attracting pollinators.

The Xerces Society is an organization that provides resources on plants for pollinators. They offer information on blooming times and plant characteristics. The website uses symbols to convey information about plants and pollinators.

What about honey production? Growing temperatures affect honey production. Arkansas has a long growing season, making it a top honey-producing state. Beekeepers must leave enough honey for the bees to survive the winter. Texas and Florida have more problems with aggressive bees because the hotter the temperature, the more competitive they are with each other. Two hives in the same property will often compete and try to steal each other's honey. In arid areas with few flowers, there is a lot of competition and aggressive bees.

Arkansas has a long growing season, allowing beekeepers to move hives between corn, soy, and cotton fields. Downtown Little Rock produces a lot of honey. Hives in Pinnacle and Scott might produce 40 pounds a year. A hive in Hillcrest produced 65-70 pounds this spring. Splitting hives 50/50 works well because of the high honey production. A quart of honey weighs about three pounds. One frame, when spun, yields about a quart. One box yields about nine to ten quarts. Beekeepers aim for at least one box in the spring and one in the fall. There is a pollinator garden exhibit at Garvan Woodland Gardens. It was made in Fayetteville and won an award in France. It is designed for bees, butterflies, birds, and bats.

There is competition between honeybees and native bees for pollination. Calm & Confidence tries to spread hives out to ensure enough food for all pollinators. A queen bee can lay up to 2000 eggs a day, starting as early as February and ending in December. Females are born with all the eggs they will have in their life. A queen bee goes on mating flights when young and mates with several drones. She stores sperm to fertilize eggs throughout her life. Unfertilized eggs become male bees, while fertilized eggs become female worker bees. Worker bees live about six to eight weeks during the summer, while a queen can last three to five years. To get more queens, take five frames with all stages of bees (workers, eggs, food) away from the queen. The remaining bees will grow queens to replace the missing one. This split can be used to create a new hive or sell the queens.

Calm & Confidence Co-op runs over 150 hives and split the ones that are doing well in the springtime. Daughter queens should have similar attributes. You can buy mated or unmated queens. Unmated queens will mate with local bees, which may be better adapted to the climate. Mated queens start laying eggs immediately.

The Arkansas Beekeeper Association is a wonderful resource. Also, Dr. Jon Zawislak, Certified Master Beekeeper with UA Extension is our state Apiculture Specialist and teaches all over our state. The co-op supports people who are supporting pollinators. They help connect swarms of bees with good places. They are a resource for questions and visits.

THE PROJECT PATCH

Recruitment, Retention, Recognition [RRR]

Don Casteel, Chair

Don Casteel reporting.

Arkansas Master Gardener Awards

- 19 awards were given at the state conference.
- In 2026, for the 2025 State Awards, a single award for the entire state for each category will be given.
- Award documentation has been rewritten and revised.
- Checklist and guidelines have been revised.
- Documents have been submitted to be placed on the website.

Annals to Perennials Conference

- A to P was held on July 10th, with Joe Lamp'l as the speaker.

- There were 402 participants, representing 23 counties.

PNG Conference Sessions

- Two Sessions will be offered from the Triple R group.
- One Session will be on growing your organization through recruiting.
- The Session will cover tools, tracking, and techniques for recruiting.
- Don's reason for presenting this session, "in the last couple of years we've had over 150 people come through our class." Benton County Master Gardener membership has more than doubled in the last two years. Fifty (50) people already signed up for fall classes in October. We will be looking at techniques and tools for finding potential new master gardeners. We have a mailing list of about 180 people who have shown interest – and no advertising is done.
- About Benton County Marketing and Outreach - Events and sign-up sheets are used to gather interest. Our social media presence includes a Facebook page with ads. Follow-up is done by contacting people who have shown interest in the past.
- We will also have a session on *Crafting Winning Award Nominations* Andrea Klokow, Benton County, will present on crafting winning awards.
- Andrea Klokow and her partner team have written winning awards for: Three Master Gardeners of the Year; Two County Projects of the Year; Newsletter of the Year and Mentor of the Year. We hear, "It's all about how you write it...it's in how you write it is the key to winning." This is an opportunity to hear from someone who has succeeded.

State Awards Video

- Julie sent an email stating that the state awards video is on the website.
- The video includes nominations and pictures from the last year.
- Viewers can skip to specific awards using the guideline across the screen.
- People should be encouraged to watch the video.

Advanced Training

Joellen Beard, Chair; Valerie Smith, Co-chair

Joellen was unable to attend, so Valerie is reporting.

- There are several trainings coming up. We need to start thinking about next year and members putting on Advanced Training. The Advanced Training committee is available to help.
- We might consider repeating trainings in different locations to reduce travel expenses for members. Training could be presented in a slightly different way.
- Following a question, Valerie confirmed that the Training Agenda is part of the training documentation. The beginning of the process starts with a training proposal document found online to be completed and submitted to the Advanced Training Project.
- Project members discussed videoing trainings for those who pay but cannot attend. This would be similar to the Thursday night Annual to Perennials presentations.

Upcoming Trainings

August 1st: Seed Saving seminar. There is a venue change: Grand Prairie Center at 2807 on U.S. Highway 16 in Stuttgart. Speakers are John Coykendall of Blackberry Farm in Knoxville TN and Michael Washburn, Preservation Director of Seed Savers Exchange.

September 5th : Compost Happens, hosted by Washington County Master Gardeners. The time will be 9:30 am to 3:00 pm. at the Washington County Extension Office. Participants will develop a better understanding of backyard or in-home composting, and learn from a local waste management environmental educator.

September 12th–13th: Advanced Master Gardner Class The Garden School Series: Class 3 in the West Memphis area. It will be a total of 10 training hours. Attendees can choose to attend either Friday or Saturday, or the full two-day session.

September 18th : The Use of Native Trees, Shrubs, and Vines in the Urban Landscape will be at the State office. This training is a project by Melody Parsley from Pulaski County. Melody will be the first Level 5 Arkansas Master Gardener in the history of Arkansas Master Gardeners.

October 17th : Ever-Growing Evergreen Garden: October 17th, Garland County EHC Building, Hot Springs Fairgrounds. It will be from 9:00 am to 2:30 pm. This is an in-depth training on how to use evergreens in the landscape, which evergreens are best for our area and best growing practices.

Information on Advanced Training (AT) Forms

- All forms needed to put on an AT class can be found on the website.
- These forms include the proposal, speaker requirements, and budget.
- Contact Joellen Beard or the speaker if there are any questions.
- Hosting counties should make their groups aware of their plans to host advanced training.
- The hosting county now receives the money from the training.
- "The money that is taken in for these trainings covers the cost."

Budget Considerations for AT Workshops

- Ensure the budget covers the cost of speakers, lunches, and snacks.
- Example: A workshop is \$75, which includes the fee for the speakers.

Fundraising

Susan Colles, Chair; Sheila Waddell, Co-chair

Susan Colles reported.

State Conference Fundraising Recap

Preliminary numbers are being presented, with verification of entries still needed.

Silent Auction

- We raised over \$6,000.
- There were no items left over.
- Ten (10) spirit poles were brought.
- We have additional stands for spirit poles. They are available for \$20 each.
- Thirteen (13) solar porch lights were brought.

Pre-Orders

- Logo rain jackets and Root Slayer trowels and shovels were available for pre-order.
- Logo rain jackets will be available at the PNG conference on October 1 & 2 at the opportunity table.

Plant, Nurture, Grow Leadership Conference

- Fundraising will have an Opportunity Table. Instead of bid sheets, attendees put tickets in a jar for each item they want to win. The drawings occur at our closing

session. \$1 per ticket or \$5 for 6 tickets. Approximately 20 items plus jackets will be available.

- Randy Forst and his brother will have a Fall Brunch at the family homestead in western Arkansas. Seats are raffled off. Brunch raffle tickets are \$20 each.
- We will have five (5) Brunch Seats available at a "buy it now" for \$200 per seat.
- We are considering a county project, like spirit poles and solar porch lights.

Plant, Nurture, Grow Leadership [PNG]

Phil McConnell, Chair

Phil McConnell, Saline County, has graciously stepped into the position of Chair of our PNG Project. We are all very saddened at the unexpected passing of our Chair, Linda Soffer, Jefferson County. We will plan and act to honor Linda's legacy through our 2025 Conference and beyond.

Phil reported.

PNG Conference Details

Linda prepared many parts of our conference before her passing. The PNG Conference will be on Wednesday and Thursday, October 1st and 2nd at the Vines 4H Center. Schedule information has been sent out via Constant Contact email.

- Garden party this year will be different from last year. Last year the meeting was in the summertime with more daylight. This year the garden party will be after dinner at 6 p.m. on October 1st.
- Before the party, there will be an opportunity to tour the garden with people from Pulaski county before dinner.
- Attendance will be limited to 140 attendees.
- Registration will be coming out soon, Julie will send it out.
- Registration deadline is September 10th. Registration is \$25, up from \$20 last year.
- Information about sessions and speakers has been sent out and is available on the website.
- We will have a Garden Hat Contest at the party after dinner on October 1st. Hats will be in two categories: Vintage and Whimsical.
- Refreshments and activities will be available.

Media Relations

Mike Wilbanks, Coordinator

Mike Wilbanks is on vacation. Becky Gibson shared that we received a "flood of exceptional entries" before July 7, 2025 (which is entry deadline). The 2026 Master Gardener calendar entries were sent to judges the first week of July. Final winners will be sent to the State Office at the end of July or the beginning of August. It is clear the high standard Arkansas Master Gardeners have set for our calendars will continue in 2026.





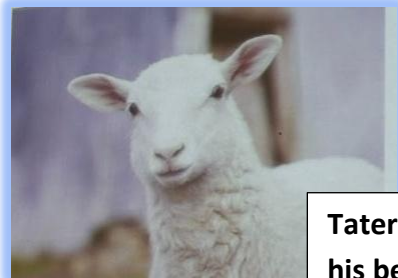
In Memory of Linda Soffer, Jefferson County AR

It is with deep sadness that we share the passing of our fellow Master Gardener, **Linda F. Soffer**. She was a valued member of our gardening community, generously sharing time, knowledge, and a love of plants with others.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to her family and friends during this difficult time. Linda will be remembered for her kindness, dedication, and the beauty she helped grow in both gardens and hearts.



MG Appreciation Day (Hope):
Friday, August 1, 2025
Plant, Nurture, Grow Conference:
Wednesday, October 1 –
Thursday, October 2, 2025



**Tater Tot – Livin’
his best life 😊**

Tuesday, October 28, 2025, 10:00 am
The next
County 76 Membership/Project Meeting
State Extension Office
2301 S. University Ave, Little Rock, AR 72204
We look forward to seeing you there!

Pursuant to 7 CFR §15.3, the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs and services (including employment) without regard to race, color, sex, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, generic information, sexual preference, pregnancy or any other legally protected status, and is an equal opportunity institution