

GARDEN VOICE



COUNTY 76 NEWSLETTER

3rd Quarter 2024 July 2024

Volume 28, Number 3

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

County 76 projects have done exceptional work this year. We have watched as each has taken on roles with energy and new ideas. Advanced Training has been actively looking at what would meet requirements to offer additional classes. Advanced Training classes were offered at the State Conference this year. Once again, they are offering another training with the National Garden Clubs in Marion. It is possible to attend one or two of the days of training.

The Fundraising Project seems to have come up with some truly amazing ideas; everyone always enjoys the silent auctions. "Spirit Poles" at our state Master Gardener Conference, each with a different theme, were a special project. Gardeners are talking about what theme they will use for making a "spirit pole" for the 2025 conference.

For the RRR project, I heard a lot of positive comments about the Awards Presentations being so much better this year. There was a special reception for winners. Our evening speaker was enjoyable. The Annuals to Perennials Event in July is always great fun for our new Master Gardeners and those seasoned MG's who are helping them along the way. Plus, they always have a wonderful speaker for this event.

Plant Nurture Grow (PNG) is returning to the Vines Center in Ferndale this year, it feels sort of like we are returning home again. This leadership conference offers something for everyone; it is a wonderful chance to meet MG's. You can learn how to help your group address issues they may have as Master Gardeners. I urge you to take part in this event and the activities.

Don't forget Master Gardener Appreciation Day October 14th more information in the next few weeks.

County 76 is looking for members to join our Executive Board and take on other leadership roles. If you are a member and want to take a more active part, I encourage you to contact Susan Colles or Becky Gibson. Either will be glad to discuss with you in more detail what each position entails. In October, we will have nominations presented to the membership for approval.

Mike Wilbanks is masterful at putting together our annual Master Gardener Calendar. He always finds a great group of judges to select various photos. We appreciate all his work and hours for making this 'job' appear so easy, when I am sure it is not.

We have several new members, and some of our seasoned members have been able to return. We are always happy to include them in our projects and have them actively participate. Experience in our work is invaluable.

I like to mow, for me it is a peaceful time. I solve problems when mowing, it gives me the opportunity to review or maybe approach something with a different point of view. Often, of course, this comes up with a very different solution than I initially thought. Recently, I found it amazing how busy it was all around my Bee Balm plants. They were covered with every size of butterflies - tiny to large - all kinds, all while sharing with each other. In this mixture were Bees everywhere, absolutely none cared about me mowing next to it. I thought it would be wonderful

if everyone could do the same. However, sometimes issues come up which we wish never occurred in our programs or projects. Another great reason to attend the PNG leadership training and find possible new solutions.

My hope and prayer for each of you is that you stay safe in the oppressive heat we have at times. Stay cool, and don't overdo it with the heat. If you travel, be safe until we meet again. God has blessed us with so many beautiful flowers and gardens. I hope you have time to enjoy them! This week I learned a flock/group of Hummingbirds is called a "charm".

I invite you to attend and join County 76 to become a part of helping make Arkansas Master Gardeners better.



Happy Gardening,

Kay Roberts, President



MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

~Business~

- 1) The meeting was called to order by President Kay Roberts. Kay thanked everyone for coming to the meeting. She recognized those who were attending for the first time.
- 2) General Meeting minutes from January 23, 2024, were approved by members following a motion by Angela Ryland and a second by Barbara French.
- 3) The County 76 Financial Report for the 2nd Quarter 2024 was presented by Assistant Treasurer Linda Soffer. Linda reviewed the details of our income and expenses for April, May and June of 2024. Members were delighted to hear that this year's Silent Auction & Spirit Pole sales at the State Master Gardener Conference in Hot Springs raised \$ 10,449.00 and there was \$ 4,770.00 in Root Slayer Tools sold. Even following expenses, a healthy profit was added to our CES account owing to the dedication of Patsy Louk, Susan Colles and the Fundraising Project. Linda shared that we are working to have updated Request for Spending Reimbursement forms posted on the County 76 landing page. As always, please use the *Financial Guidelines for Management of 4-H Club & Master Gardener Group Funds* (Revised February 2024) as your source for financial activities.

County 76 2024 Summary

Starting Balance (12-31-23)	\$ 107,339.00
1 st Quarter Calculated Balance (3-31-24)	\$ 109,776.34
2 nd Quarter Calculated Balance (6-30-24)	\$ 115,556.98



Scan for the
Financial
Guidelines

- 4) Susan Colles, Chair of the Leadership Nominating Committee shared that she and Becky Gibson (Co-chair) will be looking for one or two more members for the committee. Elected positions needing to be filled for the 2025 Executive Board are 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, and Secretary. A recommended slate of officers will be presented to membership for a vote in our October meeting.
- 5) County 76 supports sending a qualified Arkansas 4-H Youth to the National 4-H Competition. The Arkansas State 4-H ORAMA is being held on the University of

Arkansas Fayetteville Campus. A special event being held Wednesday evening, July 24, 2024, is a Donor Appreciation Dinner. Susan Colles and Becky Gibson will attend and report to us at our next meeting.

- 6) Randy Forst, State Consumer Horticulture/MG Coordinator, brought a report of activity since our last membership meeting.

<u>COUNTY MG HORTICULTURE PRESENTATIONS & MEETINGS</u>		
Pulaski (Bemis Bee Farm)	White County Conf. Plan (2)	MG Appreciation Day Mtg.
Garland County (Walk Thru)	White County Pre-plan Garden Tour	Faulkner County State Conf. Mtg.
MG State Conference (4 days)	Adv. Train. State Office Daylily	MGM (1)
PNG Sub-com. Mtg (2)	County 76 Agenda Mtg.	Garland County Leadership

<u>CONSUMER HORTICULTURE PROGRAMS</u>	
EHC State Mtg. (LR)	Ouachita District 4-H ORAMA
Grow Your Own Groceries "Blackberries"	Delta District 4-H ORAMA
Farm to Table 4-H (2)	WUW Agent Program (2)
Ozark District 4-H ORAMA	State 4-H ORAMA to be worked

Randy gave details of his days since he is not just responsible for Master Gardeners, but also Consumer Horticulture. He and Julie answer many questions for those in counties that do not have an extension agent available to guide Master Gardeners. They also answer questions for Extension Agents about programs & requirements (and that's just the beginning). Randy reminded us of his social media: his blog, Snapchat, & Instagram.

He shared the success of this year's Annuals to Perennials (A to P) on July 18, 2024, with Brie Arthur. There were 344 attendees from 25 counties. Randy recognized the work of our RRR Project on this event. Without them, success would be so much harder.

We were reminded of this year's PNG Leadership Conference at the Vines 4-H Center on August 20 & 21, 2024. The registration deadline is July 26, 2024. Each MG who attends will receive a Japanese Ensata Iris – a beautiful plant. There will be new ideas and new friends for everyone. There is a garden party and a hat contest. County 76 made a \$20.00 registration fee possible for attendees – it is much appreciated, and registration shows it.

Our next Advanced Training will be at PNG they will hold two classes. Then in the fall will be in Marion with the National Garden Clubs. This is Course 2 of a training

held last year and will have interesting topics and presenters. Dates are September 27 & 28, 2024. Details for registration will be received soon.

Randy reviewed the dates for this year's Master Gardener Training in the Fall so new gardeners can begin volunteer and education work hours in January. There is the self-paced online training. The Classroom Zoom training will be all on Wednesdays: October 23 & 30, November 6, 13, & 20. September 20, 2024 is the deadline for registrations.

Master Gardener Appreciation Day will be on Monday, October 14, 2024. A great time will be at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville.

The 2025 State Master Gardener Conference will be June 5,6,& 7, 2025, in White County (Searcy). 400 Master Gardeners will be able to attend.

~Education~



Our guest presenter was Dr. Chris Cooper, University of Tennessee Extension Agent, Shelby County Master Gardener Coordinator, the host of The Family Plot: Gardening in the Midsouth, Dr. Cooper can be found on YouTube and other online sources. His topic is 'SUSTAINABLE LANDSCAPING PRINCIPLES'.

Dr. Cooper began by sharing that Shelby County and West Tennessee are really growing. Industries are moving there – so those who will be working in those companies are moving there. Within the next couple of years, factories will be completed, where electric Ford F-150 trucks will be built,

During the pandemic, interest in gardening soared. Dr. Cooper has noticed more and more inquiries about successful gardening as interest has grown. People are staying home more and are interested in activities for the whole family. Growing your own food is important to many who want to eat healthily and avoid the pesticides used in store-bought produce. Another important reason for interest in gardening and landscaping is so peaceful places can be created. Finding serenity through nature is important.

It is for these reasons that Sustainable Practices are sought by so many. Dr. Cooper said ~~that~~ when he thinks about sustainability, he thinks about water. Ninety-seven (97) percent of the water on Earth is salt water. Three (3) percent is fresh water, and of that 3%, less than 1% is available for human consumption. He told us to think for a moment about the importance of water to humans. Dr. Cooper has heard experts who believe the next World War will be fought over water.

Dr. Cooper defined Sustainable Landscaping Practice. It is a holistic (sustainable) landscape management philosophy. It is a collection of good landscaping practices. It is environmental stewardship in action, and it is solutions to meet your landscaping goals. These are tried and true practices. We know they work. They are sound practices

Principle 1: Right Plant- Right Place.

Dr. Cooper asked, "What does this mean to you?" Members had quick responses: Sun or shade (light), water, climate, drainage. Dr. Cooper continued, "Most important, read the tag. You must remember – Plants can't read the plant tag! They won't do it for you:)"

He continued, “What mistakes are usually made with this?” Answers: Plants are put in the ground with burlap attached to roots. When planting, holes are dug wrong. Shallow is better than deep. Dig the width as wide as possible. Have a depth less than the height of the root ball. Dr. Cooper said if you are having a landscape company do your planting, always be there so you can ensure that the planting hold is more shallow than deep.

People often ask about amending the soil before planting. Dr. Cooper said if you make the planting soil so much better than the surrounding soil, you are not doing the plants any favors – this doesn’t encourage roots to grow ‘out’. Be aware of proper ‘pore space’. This means that water and air flow around the roots and are not obstructed. Shop at a reputable nursery. Don’t be ashamed to slide the plant out of the pot to look at existing roots. Tight roots will not grow out properly. Loosen roots before planting. If roots are dark, dingy and smell, put the plant back!

Principle 2: Make sure the available soil is best for the plant

Know the soil texture – sand, silt, clay. Plants need water and humus. Humus is dark, organic material that forms in soil when plant and animal matter decays. When a lot of new homes are being built, topsoil is removed, and concrete is left in the soil. This means soil becomes hard as bricks. Organic material must be mixed in.

Even the pH of the soil may be changed. Soil pH affects the availability of nutrients to the plant. Healthy soil depends on soil structure – infiltration or the movement of water into the soil from the ground to the root. Be aware of proper ‘pore space’. This means that water, air, and nutrients flow around the roots and are not obstructed. No pore space means soil erosion.

Use mulch – use it properly. Go to the drip line of the plant, no ‘volcano mulching’. Voles feed in volcano mulching – they girdle the tree – not good. Volcano mulching will compost the tree. Bad practices can be contagious. We discussed having turf grass vs. edible gardening. Both have their place.

Principle 3: Appropriate Turfgrass Management

We discussed having turf grass vs. edible gardening. Both have their place. Ask: what is your desire for your home? A lot of people ask Dr. Cooper why they can’t get grass to grow under trees. He explained that we remember from science class learning about the full light spectrum. Grass must have the full light spectrum available for its optimum growing potential. What can prevent that? The light spectrum can be blocked from the ground by a tree canopy. This is why tree maintenance (including limbing) is so important.

Next, mowing heights are important. Higher turf grass heights results in more extensive root systems. Mowing height recommendations vary by grass species. Correct mowing height creates a more drought resistant and pest tolerant system.

Principle 4: Best irrigation management practices

Select the proper system to meet your irrigation needs and maintain it properly. Group your plants by water requirements. Manage irrigation zones to meet plant requirements. Calibrate your system and check it regularly. Install a rain shut-off on automatic systems. Only water when needed.

Principle 5: Use Fertilizer Appropriately

Don't guess – soil test. It's about nutrient availability.

You fertilize the lawn. Then it rains. The rain washes the fertilizer along the curb into the storm drain, and directly into our lakes, streams and bays. This causes algae to grow, which uses up oxygen that fish need to survive. So, if you fertilize, please follow directions and use sparingly.

Principle 6: Integrated Pest Management

Regularly check for evidence of insect damage. Dr. Cooper asked about common pests: sucking pests, egg-laying pests, galls (mites), chewing pests, disease-causing pests, and internal feeding pests. We then talked about beneficial pests – ladybugs and others.

Dr. Cooper said that he asked Felder Rushing for advice when his career started. Felder told him to tell people to 'beware of plants that have pests named after them'. Crepe myrtle – crepe myrtle bark scale, etc.

Finding pests? Make a decision. Is it time to act? What is your economic threshold – how much damage can you stand? What is your aesthetic threshold?

Consider 'low impact' pesticides.

Principle 7: Prevent Stormwater runoff

Impervious surfaces & compacted surfaces are the problem areas. We are now seeing storm water drains stopped up by trash that people are throwing in them.

How can you reduce stormwater damage? Direct your downspouts and gutters to drain onto lawns, plant beds or other pervious surfaces. Use mulch, bricks, gravel or other porous surfaces for walkways, patios and driveways. Plant rain gardens. Keep the water on your property.

Principle 8: Care for wildlife

Without wildlife sustainability is not possible. Wildlife require four basic elements: food, water, shelter and a place impossible.

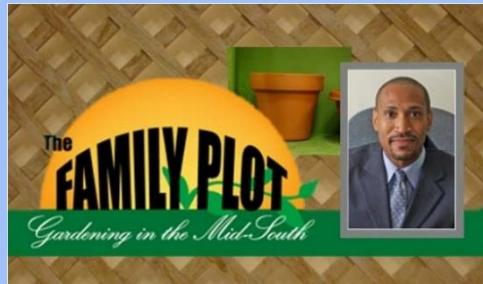
Those listening were challenged by Dr. Cooper to make a difference for pollinators. So many insects and animals are not often considered for their contribution to our green world. We owe 1 out of every 3 bites of food we eat to pollinators. Dr. Cooper is fascinated by nocturnal pollinators, e.g., bats (that pollinate agave) and moths.

Principle 9: Be good stewards of the land

Dr. Cooper said when he thinks about sustainable practices, he remembers our precious, natural resources. He thinks of clean water, healthy soil and wildlife habitats. He thinks of things that can be done. For example, Shelby County is experiencing new housing developments, and a lot of them are around bodies of water. Shelby County Extension has asked Landscaping Companies to honor a 25 to 50-foot zone around bodies of water of no fertilizers, no pesticides. Dr. Cooper said, "Can we guarantee they will do it? No, but we can ask and see what happens.

Stay mindful of our precious, natural resources. Work to use plant roots to help reduce soil erosion and runoff into waterbodies. Remember, we are not alone in this, but we are surrounded by wonderful systems which will give us life in return.

Dr. Cooper thanked Kay Roberts for the invitation to speak. In appreciation, County 76, Randy Forst and Julie Treat gave Dr. Cooper a Root Slayer shovel. He was thrilled because he doesn't have one. He said, "I already know what I will be doing when I get home!"



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THE PROJECT PATCH

Advanced Training (AT) Project Meeting Report

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

- Valerie Smith reported for AT.
- As our system for AT has been updated, we are aware that some attendees of last year's Training in Marion have not received their certificates yet. The same is true for the January 2024 Seed-saving Training hosted by Pulaski County. This process is continuing.
- The Hybridizing Daylilies with April Burchfield was successful. Everyone who attended enjoyed the hands-on experience. April was generous with sharing both her expertise and Daylilies. Valerie reported that she was surprised when she discovered success with the process at home.
- There is good news for us with the form to move up a level in training. An online form is available to allow MG's to pay \$25.00 to work on a level. Julie Treat demonstrated the form today. We may have some tweaks made for additional information.
- A discussion regarding recording AT hours took place. Even though this is a state program, the selection for *STATE ADVANCED TRAINING credit appears at the top of each county's category list in the online system. You must record your own hours and keep a continuous record of AT hours. They will be removed with the county hours in December of each year.
- We experienced success with AT classes at our State Conference in Garland County this year. There were 58 people who attended each class. We are working to improve the sign-in process. We are excited to know our pilot was positive.
- We will be having two AT classes at the PNG Leadership Conference in August. They are sessions on QR Codes & Cautions and Incorporating Educational Sessions into Programming.

- We will have Course 2 of training with the National Garden Club in Marion on Friday & Saturday, September 27 & 28, 2024. There will be room for 100 participants. We have heard good things from those who attended last year.
- March 28, 2025, Randy has told us that State Extension will sponsor an AT training on Grafting Apple Trees.

Fundraising Project Meeting Report

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

- Patsy shared a recap of the funds raised through tool sales and the silent auction at this year's State MG Conference in Garland County.
Tool Sales Report – There were 91 Root Slayer Shovels & 83 Root Slayer Trowels ordered for a total count of 112 orders. With \$6,210.00 collected, the cost of tools was \$3,303.97, the expense of shipping tools was \$265.09, and there was \$589.95 paid in sales tax. Net profit was \$2,050.99.
Silent Auction Report – Gross collected from sales was \$10,349.00. (\$5,472.00 from Spirit Poles and \$4,877.00 from all other items). \$169.98 was paid in Credit Card Fees, \$666.05 was the cost of Spirit Pole Metal Bases, and \$170.00 was Paid for 17 tables at the conference. Our net profit was \$9,342.97.
- Patsy thanked all the Counties who contributed and the volunteers who worked hard to make this event a success.
- There will be a fundraising event at this year's PNG Leadership Conference. On August 20 & 21 in Ferndale, there will be an Opportunity Table Raffle. Miscellaneous Items will include MG emblem embroidered shirts. County 76 member Sheila Waddell (Jefferson County) is kind enough to embroider these. To participate in the raffle, you buy tickets and place them in a jar by the item you wish to win. Tickets will be \$1.00 each or 6 for \$5.00. There will also be a raffle for 10 winners to attend Randy's Barn Brunch on Saturday October 5, 2024, from 10:00 – 2:00. Tickets for the Barn Brunch at Gary Forst's Barndominium in Ratcliff, Arkansas, will be \$20.00. As PNG closes, winners will be chosen. The menu will be decided by a poll of the winners.
- Fundraising is working on some new ideas for next year's auction. They are considering some order-only MG clothing items among other things.

Plant, Nurture, Grow (PNG) Project Meeting Report

Chair: Linda Soffer (Jefferson Co.)

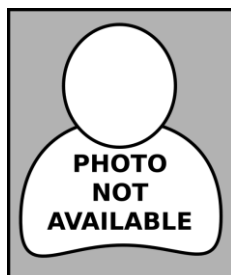
A PNG Leadership Conference Update was given by Linda. The conference will be held on Tuesday afternoon – Wednesday morning, August 20 & 21, 2024, at the 4-H Center in Ferndale.

- We will hear from our Leaders – Dr. Fields & Dr. Savin.
- Sessions will be in many formats: Forums, MG Mingles, Mock Meeting, Panel Discussions, PowerPoints. The MG Mingles will be an informal time for gardeners to meet, share, and ask questions.
- There will be great educational sessions. It will be possible to learn new skills or improve existing skills. There will be several sessions for new leaders. There will be Round-Robin Discussions. We have activities which have been held before, and we received positive responses about them.

Welcome Our Newest Members!



Sheila Waddell
Jefferson County
Project: Fundraising



Belinda Randle
Jefferson County
Project: TBD



Douglas E. Tipton
Arkansas County
Project: Advanced Training

MASTER GARDENER EVENTS 2024



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*



Next County 76 Membership/Project Meeting
State Extension Office
2301 S. University, Little Rock, AR 72204
Tuesday, October 22, 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.