New Beginnings for 2015

By Andrea Thomas

2015 Officer – President Teresa Slack, VP Rita Nichols, Secretary Kathy Boyles, and Treasurer Robert High – were all in place for the first (January) monthly meeting of the new year. Carla Hadley introduced Jennifer Caraway, our new County Extension Agent. Jennifer will be the new CEA advisor for the Red Dirt MGs. A lot of us know Jennifer from the Ag Learning Center at the Four States Fairgrounds. GLAD to have you on board, Jennifer!

Teresa presented Martha Bean, outgoing president, with an appreciation gift for all her hard work during the past year.

Teresa needed some volunteers to fill a few committee chair spots. All positions were filled; many thanks to those who were willing to stand up and volunteer.

Cathy introduced Susan Arnold and Teresa Dow who presented the program “Downtown Community Garden.” The Downtown Community Garden is being considered as a possible new sanctioned project. 2015 is off to a great start thanks to each and every one of you!
PRESIDENT’S CORNER

One of my favorite things that I like about this time of year is all the seed catalogs I receive daily in the mail. I just love looking through all of them and planning on the beautiful gardens I will have in the spring! Of course, by the time I get around to ordering plants, reality sets in and I realize I should only buy what I can realistically work with. I have learned that my yard is not going to look like the pictures in the seed catalogs, but it is fun to look.

All that to say, Red Dirt Master Gardeners are getting revved up for spring as well! We have lots of opportunities for service coming up – just look elsewhere in the newsletter and you will find lots of places to fill your gardening passions.

I thank everyone who has answered my request for help with committees… you guys are awesome! One thing, we need a chairperson for Gateway Farmers’ Market. If you could help with this endeavor, please let me know. The Farmers’ Market is a sanctioned project.

Like I have said earlier, it takes all of us working together to make this organization successful – so find your place and let’s get going!! Red Dirt Master Gardeners is NOT a spectator sport!!

Happy Master Gardening!

Teresa Slack
President

Your Birthdate is Wanted!!

Master Gardeners, Gayle Renfro would like for all Master Gardeners to email their birthdates to her. It is for a new program recognizing MG’s each month. Please call her at 870-779-1038 or email this information to her at grenfro19@aol.com.

MGs Helping to Get Greenhouse in Nashville

MGs Debra Bolding & Lanie Snow are assisting the Mine Creek Soil Conservation District in Nashville, AR acquire a greenhouse that will be used for public workshops and for school projects. The Conservation District received $8,000 from Weyerhaeuser last year to purchase a greenhouse and asked the Master Gardeners to develop specifications for the structure and a plan for how the greenhouse will be used. Plans are to site the greenhouse at the Howard Co. Farmers’ Market where the greenhouse will become part of the demonstration garden. Lanie and Debra are recommending an Exaco Riga XL, which is approximately 14′x20′ with 16 mil triple wall polycarbonate glazing & other features to improve energy efficiency and durability. It will be built on a 20″ stem wall to add headspace (and aesthetic appeal!). The MGs are also assisting with acquiring additional grant funds that will be needed for equipment and supplies in the greenhouse.
Howard Co. Farmers’ Market Holds First Grower Meeting

Howard County Farmers Market held its first grower meeting of the year, January 27th, partnering with markets in Hope & Old Washington. The markets plan to continue a partnership started two years ago in which growers who sign up may participate at all three markets. The meeting was held at Hempstead Hall on the U of A Community College Campus in Hope and started with a fabulous “Local Foods Tasting” attended by more than 100, including the general public, market vendors and members of at least 3 newspapers!

Thirteen MGs assisted with the event: Brenda and Chris Engledowl, Mary Stuart, James and Rita Lamb, Mary Hartness, Mary Carlisle, Debra Bolding, Gary Driver, Charlotte Fuller, Paula Fields, Shaye Standokes and Chuck Ainsworth. During the meeting, twenty growers signed up for the season. James and Rita Lamb, Paula Fields and Shaye Standokes are also market vendors. Attendance at the meeting was much greater than expected and definitely would not have been the success it was without the MGs helping out!

Chris & Brenda Engledowl and Charlotte Fuller, registering participants. Then off to the kitchen to help with the “Local Foods Tasting”!

Far Right: Howard County Farmers Market Manager & MG Mary Hartness visiting with Old Washington FM Manager Billy O’Rorke before the meeting.

Right: Mary Stuart on one of MANY trips between the kitchen and the “Local Foods Tasting” … MGs REALLY helped out at this event! Fantastic Everyone!! Middle: MG & beekeeper James Lamb (right) chatting with another beekeeper at the “Honey Tasting” table. James & his wife Rita are members of both Miller & Hempstead County MGS and own SW AR Beekeeping Supplies. Right: Gary Driver & Rita Lamb checking out the dishes being set out prior to the “Local Foods Tasting” … Can this be counted as work hours???

Put On Your February “To-Do” List

Take those spring bulbs out of the refrigerator & get them in the ground!
Be careful around frozen plants; they are frozen, they break!

When a pretty and mild day comes around, deadhead and fertilize winter annuals.
If you see green, it’s probably winter weeds; it’s time to spray!

Please don’t “murder” the crape myrtle; it’s about time to lightly prune!
Now is the time to plant or transplant trees or shrubs.
It’s time to plant cool season vegetables.
Prune ornamental grasses, fruit trees, rose bushes, and summer flowering shrubs.
Master Gardeners are in the process of adding a reference library to NDOG, the demonstration garden MGs maintain at Howard County Farmers Market. The books will be used to support workshops and other public education activities in the demonstration garden, and can also be “checked out” by Master Gardener NDOG volunteers, with “work hour penalties” for late returns! The idea for the library sprouted last year when MGs Glenda Rice, Mary Hartness and Debra Bolding attended an organic-farming conference in Mobile, Alabama to see what they could learn that would benefit the Farmers’ Market in Nashville. The three saw a fantastic book, Insects of North America, and thought this and other books, especially those related to organic gardening, would benefit the demo garden. Funds to attend the conference had been provided by Blue-and-You Foundation for a Healthier Arkansas and Glenda donated the reimbursement she received for fuel expenses to purchase the first six books. Plans are to add more books. The books purchased are:

- Garden Insects of North America: the Ultimate Guide to Backyard Bugs
- Good Bug Bad Bug: Who’s Who, What They Do, and How to Manage Them Organically
- What’s Wrong With My Plant? (And How Do I Fix It?): A Visual Guide to Easy Diagnosis and Organic Remedies
- Teaming with Microbes: The Organic Gardener’s Guide to the Soil Food Web
- Attracting Beneficial Bugs to Your Garden: A Natural Approach to Pest Control
- Four-Season Harvest: Organic Vegetables from Your Home Garden All Year Long

Please contact Mary Hartness (501-472-8092) or Debra Bolding (870-557-2352) if you have gardening books you are willing to donate to the library!

Registration for the 2015 MG Conference is now open! Early registration is for active Master Gardeners ONLY from now through February 23rd, for $95. New trainees, sustainers, and those on leave of absence may register from Feb. 24-March 20 for the early bird rate of $95. This is when spouses and/or one guest may register as well. Regular registration will go from March 21-April 17 for $110. We think this conference will fill up quickly since it is centrally located in Benton, AR.

For more information, call our office at 870-779-3609 and we will email or mail the registration form and list of events.

Dirt Friends Festival

Union County Master Gardeners present DIRT FRIENDS FESTIVAL, March 14, 2015, from 8:30-noon (with registration at 8:30 & the program at 9:00), at West Side Baptist Church, 2400 W. Hillsboro, El Dorado, AR. Cost is $10 per person. Featured speaker is Bob Byers, Associate Executive Director for Garvan Woodland Gardens, with Janet Carson, Extension Horticulture Specialist.
Weeds Tell a Lot About Soil

Weeds help you to assess current soil conditions. This is a long held principle best explained by American botanist Frederic E. Clements (1874-1945), who wrote, “Each plant is an indicator...the product of the conditions under which it grows, and is thereby a measure of these conditions.”

As you survey your soil, remember that you can learn a lot more from a variety of weeds growing together in one area than from a single species.

If you have mugwort and common mullein — your soil is not very fertile.

If you have dead nettle, pigweed, lamb’s quarter, or purslane, your soil is high in nutrients.

If you have quack grass, crabgrass, plantain, or field bindweed, your soil is hardpan or compacted.

If you have Joe Pye weed, marsh mallow, horsetail, cattail/rushes, your soil is wet or poorly drained.

If you have dock, horsetail, bracken fern, nettle, daisies, or Virginia creeper, your soil is acidic.

If you have lamb’s-quarter and wild mustard, you soil is alkaline.

from the Old Farmer's Almanac

See part 2 next month.

Garvan Woodland Gardens

550 Arkridge Road, Hot Springs National Park, AR 71913 • 800-366-4664

Carson/Byers Workshop “Propagate!”

FEBRUARY 26th • 9:30-2:00 • Magnolia Room • Reservations Required

Are your gardening ambitions bigger than your budget? Join Janet Carson, Bob Byers, and the Gardens’ horticulture staff to learn how to get free plants! From air-layering to root division and leaf cuttings, watch the experts propagate favorite houseplants and annuals to carry over winter or just have extras for the garden and to share. At this hands-on event, you’ll not only see how to propagate a wide range of plant materials, you’ll get to do your own and take them home.

Lunch Options are $10 (be sure to choose the lunch option for THIS DATE). Sandwich options are turkey on wheat or pimento cheese. Both options include lettuce, tomato, pickle spear, chips, and cookie with tea or lemonade.

$75 members I $90 non-members. Reservations required!

It’s Great Being Green and Daffodils for Your Garden

Gardening 101 • MARCH 17th • Registration Required • Magnolia Room

It’s Great Being Green 9:30-Noon

Let “green” bring new dimensions of subtle beauty to your landscape. Bob Byers kicks off a jam-packed morning with great ideas for using green to create garden interest, followed by master gardeners Yvonne Becker and Sherry Faulkner sharing tips for growing great fern and moss gardens.

You will experience growing tips, new plants to learn, and lots of luscious, fabulous green to keep you dreaming.

Daffodils 1:00-3:00 PM

There’s a reason daffodils have more names than almost any other Southern flower. From rock-hardy constitutions to their cheery blooms, these harbingers of spring have withstood the test of time. They even shine through snow and ice! Bonnie McClure of the Arkansas Daffodil Society shows you all the ins and outs of growing armloads of bright sunny blooms; then veteran horticulturist Paula Wallace gives you a personal tour of the Gardens’ extensive collection.

Free to members $15 for non-members

Building with Trees

MARCH 24th • Registration Required • 9:00-3:00 • Magnolia Room

Trees are among the greatest assets in any landscape, but to build a garden requires environmental changes that can negatively affect these magnificent living treasures. Experts from university forestry programs, the Arkansas Forestry Commission, and the Gardens discuss everything from pests to new protection techniques like engineered soils and recycled rubber tree guards.

$45 fee includes lunch.

GARDENING TIP: All shrub roses, fruit trees, blueberry bushes and ornamental grasses should be pruned every year in late February. Wait to prune growing climbing roses until after their first flush of flowers.
Topics

Hot New Plants for AR Gardens – Janet Carson; Champion Trees of AR: An Artist’s Journey – Linda Palmer; Top 10 Best and Top 10 Worst Trees for AR Landscapes – Dr. Tamara Walkingstick; Wild Thing, You Make My Garden Sing: Gardening with Native Plants – Jane Gulley; What Goes on Underground Affects What Goes on Above Ground – Dr. Vic Ford; Simply Southern Style – Bob Byers; Fragrant Herbs on the Patio – Tina Marie Wilcox; Making a Garden Your Own – Mary Evans; Get FIRED Up! – Megan Thomas; Vegetables in Spite of It All – Ellen Chagnon

Krista Quinn, executive director of the AR Flower & Garden Show said, “People sometimes don’t understand the importance of horticulture in our lives – it’s the food we eat, the green spaces around us. It impacts our lives on a daily basis. It improves not only the lives of individuals, but it’s also good for communities. Landscaping improves property values, and often leads to decreases in littering and vandalism.”

Proceeds from the Arkansas Flower and Garden Show provide educational scholarships in horticulture related fields to students in Arkansas colleges and universities and funds for the Greening of AR Mini-Grant Program

GARDENING TIP: Companion planting is an excellent way to improve your garden. Some plants replenish nutrients lost by another one, and some combinations effectively keep pests away.

Red Dirt Master Gardener Minutes

January 8, 2015
REA BUILDING

Call Meeting to Order:
The January meeting of the Red Dirt Master Gardeners was called to order by President Teresa Slack at 6:20 p.m. A quorum was present. Carla Haley Hadley introduced Jennifer Caraway, the new Extension Agent. Teresa thanked the members of the Hospitality Committee for the refreshments at the meeting.

Approval of Minutes:
A motion was made by Bill Bean to approve the minutes of the December 11, 2014 meeting. Motion seconded and passed.

Special Presentation:
Teresa Slack presented past president Martha Bean with a gift in appreciation for her service.

On Line Reporting:
Andrea Thomas encouraged members to start putting their hours in early and to keep up with their hours. The cut off for 2014 hours was December 31.

New Business:

Election of Master Gardener Awards – Members voted and the following received the most votes: Project of the Year – Gateway Farmers Market; Friend of Master Gardeners (individual) – Sue Dowd; Friend of Master Gardeners (business) – REA; Master Gardener of the Year – Martha Bean; Rookie of the Year – Robert High; Agent of the Year – Carla Haley Hadley.

Appoint Program Committee – Lynn Willing, Sharon Ethridge and Martha Bean volunteered to be on the Program Committee.

Miller County Agri-Expo – The Expo is February 12. Sue Ellen Letterman is the chair. Twenty people have already signed up to help, but more volunteers are welcome. Sue Ellen will email volunteers with more information. Master Gardeners can get education hours by attending classes at the Expo.

Basic Training Committee – The planning committee for Basic Training will meet at 9:00 on February 9.

The next Master Gardener meeting is Thursday, February 8 at the REA Building.

After the meeting was adjourned, Susan Arnold and Teresa Dow presented a program about the Downtown Community Garden.

Respectfully submitted: Kathy Boyles
 Secretary