

Chilton County Master Gardener Monthly Meeting

July 14, 2026; 9:30 a.m.

Clanton Recreation Center

Call to Order

Chairman Hugh Nichols called the meeting to order at 9:30. Clem Clapp led the Pledge of Allegiance to open the meeting.

Program

Sonja Johnson, VP introduced the speakers for today: Dr. Wesley Anderson and Angie Kelsoe.

Dr. Anderson is a wildlife specialist for the Alabama Cooperative Extension Service and serves as the director for the Alabama Master Naturalist (AMN) program. He has been in this role since 2021. Ms. Kelsoe is the Outreach Coordinator for the Extension Master Gardener program and provides support to the AMN program, as well as other duties.

Master Naturalists focus on the environment and conservation. The program is relatively new in Alabama, whereas Florida and Texas have had programs for 25 years. Elements of the Master Naturalist program are classroom (virtual), readings, field experiences, volunteering, and continued engagement. There are 88 certified Master Naturalists in Alabama; 543 are enrolled in the program.

Goals of the AMN are to provide awareness, education of the public, and service. Dr. Anderson highlighted the tremendous biodiversity, geology, history, and natural resources of Alabama. He said for example, that there are more species of turtles in Alabama than anywhere else in the world.

There are statewide alliances and cooperative agreements with many state agencies (Alabama State Parks, Black Warrior River Keepers, and many others).

The group thanked the presenters and Sonja offered a token of appreciation from the Chapter and took a picture with them.

Since the speaker's topic aligned with conservation, Hugh took the opportunity to cover the Conservation Committee report next. He gave a brief history of the Conservation Committee inception (May 2023) and the various steps of growth to where it is today. A key partnership is with Patrick Thompson and Auburn University. Local projects include surveillance of Owl's Eye Ginger plants at various sites, Mohr's Barbara's Button location and propagation, and of course the Canebrake Pitcher Plants at the Clanton Flats. Hugh suggested further dialogue within the CCMGA to gauge local interest in members becoming involved with the Alabama Master Naturalist program (enrolling, offering field trip opportunities, and promotion).

Hugh should be commended for his broader work to champion conservation efforts in other parts of the state. He developed a PowerPoint presentation, Native Plant Conservation Opportunities in Alabama and has been an invited speaker for the Shelby and Elmore County Master Gardener associations. He speaks tonight (7/14/26) at the Tuscaloosa Chapter of Master Gardeners. Plans are made to visit Walker County next. Finally, the conservation committee's work has been submitted for consideration of the Search for Excellence Award. Great job, Hugh and committee members!

Hugh asked Sonja to remain in the front of the room for a special presentation. It was announced earlier that Sonja was selected as The Alabama EMG Intern of the Year for 2026! Hugh presented Sonja with the official marble inscribed plaque to honor her achievement. Great job, Sonja for such a notable accomplishment!

There was a break for 10 minutes and then door prizes were given to Angie, Lynn, and John.

Treasurer's Report

Judy Cobb gave the financial report in Kerry's absence. The treasurer's report was accepted. See below for the June statement.

June 2026	For July 2026 Membership Meeting
Beginning Balance Checking	13,068.29
Total Deposits	0.00
Total Withdrawals	23.99
Total Checks	241.45
Net Balance Checking	12802.85
Cash box	100.00
CD balance (YTD Interest: \$226.19)	8,781.34
TOTAL	\$21,684.19

Secretary's Report

Donald thanked Beverly for taking the minutes for the previous two meetings. The minutes of the June meeting had been sent ahead of time. They were accepted with one clarification. The orientation and welcome session for the fall Master Gardener class is August 6th at 9:00 a.m. at the Chilton Research and Education Center.

Garden Reports

Trisha gave the Demo Garden report. She stressed the importance of volunteers to continue maintenance of the garden. The workers who do volunteer get a lot done; there just needs to be more hands to help out. Cal gave the Extension Office report. Weeds have been sprayed. There is a workday scheduled for Monday, July 20th at 8:00 a.m.

Audrey gave the Rec Center report. Plants have been provided by Lanell and the Wrights. The flowers continue to look impressive.

Education Committee Report

Betsy announced there were 14 enrolled in this fall's MG class. As was stated earlier, the kickoff is scheduled for August 6th. Folks are welcome to attend. Pat had a sign-up sheet for refreshments. This welcome is at 9:00; successive labs begin at 9:30. Betsy had a sign-up sheet for topics if members wanted to volunteer to help. A goal is for the interns to interact with the members to more easily assimilate into the culture and service opportunities of the Chapter.

Next spring's Junior Master Gardeners program will again be with SPAN. Pat indicated it will be a new group of students. More information will be available as the time draws closer.

David Wright discussed the plans for the field trip to Young's Nursery in Auburn on July 22nd. The group will meet at 7:15 at the Extension Office to carpool and leave at 7:30. All participants will need to stay together for the duration of the tours. The group thanked David for arranging this outing.

Sonja said a field trip is being considered next spring for Barber Motorsports Park in Birmingham. There are beautiful gardens, a guided tour using a tram, and a motorcycle museum that is world-class.

Volunteer Opportunities

August 21-22 is the Pollinator Census. Look for details soon.

Pat said the Landowners Tour is scheduled for October 23rd. Sonja has volunteered to lead the decoration team again this year.

September 4th is the Professional Loggers Meeting. More details to follow.

Be alert to communication from Lucy about an Ice Cream Day this Thursday, July 16th.

A sign-up sheet for Helpline is at the table in the lobby.

Betsy announced that a slot is open as an alternate representative to the Alabama Master Gardener Advisory Council. She had been the alternate for Kerry, but since her appointment to the nominating committee, the alternate position is now vacant. There are only 4 meetings a year and they are held at 10:00 at Petals from the Past. The upcoming dates are August 3rd, December 3rd, and February 2nd. Please volunteer for this important role.

Adjournment

With no further business, the final door prizes went to Trisha, Sam, and David.

The meeting adjourned at 11:30.

There were 24 members present and 4 guests in attendance.

Donald Jones, Secretary