



Master Gardeners of North Alabama

GARDEN THYMES

Summer 2026



From the President

Greetings MGNA Family,

Welcome to summer! It has been a wet spring in North Alabama. Although we have beautiful green landscapes, some of us are experiencing fungal diseases that may be wreaking havoc in the garden. When dealing with fungi, here are some useful tips:

- Disease identification is important. It will help your decision to provide or ignore treatment.
- Utilize the MG Hotline as a toll-free service.
- When using the internet to find answers, use colon, dot edu (: .edu) after your search phrase for reliable information.

On April 10th – 11th, we had our largest MGNA Plant Sale. Minus expenses, we raised \$27,246.50. Anita thanks “all of the many, many hands that helped make this the best plant sale yet”. For further details, see page 16.

On May 6th – 8th, many of us attended the AMGA State Master Gardeners conference in Huntsville, AL. The speakers were great, the field trips that weren’t cancelled were very informative. The MGNA newsletter, *Garden Thymes*, earned the AMGA Outstanding Newsletter Award for 2025 and a check for \$100. Cookie, thank you for your hard work. Another hard worker, Helen Carr, earned the Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award. Congratulations Helen!

On June 6th, we had our annual MGNA picnic at Graham Farms and Nature Center in Estillfork, AL, from 10:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.

As a friendly reminder, in memory of Mary Lou McNabb, it’s not too late to donate funds to the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program Endowed Fund for Excellence in the Alabama Cooperative Extension System. The MGNA goal is \$500. Please make your check or money order payable to MGNA and mail to:

Dee Vines Scott
175 David Douglass Road
Harvest, AL 35749

In closing, please make the time to write an article for the fourth quarter newsletter. We have a great association doing many wonderful activities and we would like to read the highlights from the event you attended or presented.

Happy Gardening.

Acacia Moore, MGNA President

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From Our County Agent, Lilly Oaks

What a fantastic spring we had! We are thrilled to announce that 22 individuals graduated from our Extension Master Gardener training class, and 16 of them were fully certified by the end of the 14 weeks. A massive welcome to all of our new Extension Master Gardeners! Looking ahead, Limestone County will be hosting the training class this fall, and we look forward to watching even more individuals join our ranks. If you see a new face at upcoming events, please make sure to welcome them warmly and show them the ropes of being an EMG and MGNA member. May also brought us a wonderful Alabama Master Gardener Conference, and I absolutely loved seeing so many MGNA members in attendance

and volunteering. It took a lot of hard work to pull off, and so many of you stepped up to make it an amazing, memorable event. Thank you so much for your dedication!

A garden note: as you spend time in the garden this growing season, keep a close eye out for spider mites. When temperatures skyrocket quickly and weather patterns get irregular, these pests love to move in. You can normally spot them when leaves start turning yellow in a speckled, dotted pattern, or when you notice tiny, fine webbing along the edges of the foliage. To keep them at bay, make sure to keep some neem oil on hand or use an organic insecticide like Captain Jack's Dead Bug Brew.

Looking forward, be sure to mark your calendars for the Great Southeast Pollinator Census on August 21 and 22. Last year, Madison County had a great showing, and we would love to see our participation grow even more this year. It only takes 15 minutes on either day to count insect landings on one specific plant. You can do your count in your own backyard, at a community garden, or even host a "count party" to get a group together for some fun citizen science research.

As a reminder, in conjunction with the 250th anniversary of America, we have a truly meaningful challenge this year: we are asking every county in Alabama to donate 250 pounds of produce between Memorial Day and Labor Day. As you harvest your summer vegetables, please consider donating a portion to a local charity or someone in need. To help us track Madison County's progress toward this statewide goal, please report your donations on both your regular service reports and the official challenge link at <https://www.aces.edu/blog/topics/grow-more-give-more/grow-more-give-more-250-pound-challenge/>. This is a wonderful way to celebrate our nation's milestone by giving back to our neighbors. Thank you for everything you do to serve our community and bring top-tier horticulture education to adults and youth across Madison County!

Lilly Oaks



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Lilly Oaks

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Report your hours here :
https://www.acesagmg.org/site/login_1.php And as
always, if you have any
questions regarding the
entry of your Volunteer
Hours, contact Deen Rice
deenr@bellsouth.net

MGNA Nominating Committee Accepting Nominations by Acacia Moore

The MGNA Nominating Committee is accepting nominations to fill the upcoming vacancies for the position of MGNA Vice President and two positions on the Board of Directors. These vacancies will be filled at the MGNA Annual Meeting on November 12, 2026.

Officers serve a two-year term; Directors serve a three-year term. The election of MGNA officers and Board of Directors is a very important part of MGNA and its success. Candidates for these positions must be members of MGNA and need to have demonstrated outstanding leadership abilities and must have a strong commitment to the Master Gardener program. Candidates must be willing to attend monthly meetings and participate in committee activities.

The Committee is in the process of evaluating nominees, so they need your input as soon as possible. Please contact any of the three members of the MGNA Nominating Committee. They will appreciate your participation.

Anita Reeves, Chair
Email: tdralr@gmail.com
603-493-4746

Cynthia Achorn
Email: cawaa@aol.com
256-665-4229

Marsha Levy
Email: mdl1@earthlink.net
408-806-7341

In Memory

Known as the mother of the Alabama Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Program, MGNA's own Mary Lou McNabb passed away this spring at the age of 98. Madison county was the home of Mary Lou McNabb, and we were honored to have her in our own backyard, sharing her passion for plants and vision of what would become the Alabama EMG Volunteer program. Since the first course in 1981, the program spread quickly throughout the state. To date, more than 10,000 Alabamians have earned Master Gardener volunteer certification and have shared their knowledge and passion for gardening in communities across Alabama.

It's no exaggeration to say that thousands of people are grateful to Mary Lou for bringing this Extension program to Alabama. And many other people who may not have ever heard her name benefit from the ongoing efforts of today's Extension Master Gardener volunteers. Thank you, Mary Lou! We are grateful that you shared your passion for plants, gardens, and the Master Gardener program in Alabama.

-Kerry Smith, Horticulture Administrator, Auburn



This year will be our 8th Pollinator Census. Let's keep the momentum going because what YOU do for the Census matters! Make sure you mark your calendars for August 21st and 22nd, 2026 , and join us on social media as we prepare.

Facebook: [Southeast Pollinator Census Group](#)

Instagram: [@SoutheastPollinators](#)

To find Census related events on social media - [Great Southeast Pollinator Census Page](#)

Design Your Home Landscape Design Classes, Fall 2026

by Karen Kirk-Williams

The DYHL landscape team will offer our popular do-it-yourself landscape design classes again this fall. Classes will be held at the Agribition Center on Wednesdays, August 26 through September 30, 2026, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. The \$75 class fee includes a 100+ page handbook, classroom instruction, three approximately 15-minute individual sessions, one email consultation, individualized plant recommendations, and plant photos and information.

The registration date has not yet been set, but it is expected to be about two weeks prior to the first class. Space is limited, so please watch for an MGNA email reminder announcing the date and time registration will open through SignUp Genius. Classes typically fill quickly, so you must register and pay through SignUp Genius to reserve your spot. To keep registration fair, advance registration is not available. Refunds cannot be provided; however, if needed, you may arrange for someone else to attend in your place.

The DYHL landscape team includes Janet Acosta, Janet Boothe, Helen Carr, Carlita Edwards, Suzanne Kirkhuff, Karen Kirk-Williams, Sandra Smith, Loretta Stinnett, and Carol Umstaedter, along with assistants Desiree Umstaedter and Andria Cummings.



Join the Team by Rita Icenogle

Make a difference! Join the MGNA soil pH team! Help educate the public and expand your own knowledge. Our team members provide testing and guidance on the impact of soil pH to successful gardening, along with amendment strategies. We serve “Design Your

Home Landscape” team students, provide testing and interpretation at the annual plant sale, and hope to expand this service and develop educational strategies with a full team in place. Call or text Rita Icenogle, 256 924-8083, or email phtesting@mginfo.org to hear more.

Huntsville Greenhouse

by Cyndi Lindblom

There has been little activity at the Huntsville Greenhouse since the plant sale.

We do have an Eagle Scout project scheduled for this summer, hopefully in June/July timeframe. Wes Weilliams is going to build us a 3-level compost system AND signage for the greenhouse. He is the grandson of one of our greenhouse workers.

I have stepped back as the greenhouse lead and there is a committee that will take over, they are very competent folks and are a great asset to the greenhouse. I will continue to work with herbs and propagation....if they will let me 😊 😊



Limestone County Master Gardeners

Fall Plant Sale

September 19th

8 am – 3 pm

at their greenhouse

(located behind

Athens Middle School)



AMGA Fall Seminar

UPDATED 6/3/2026



AT AUBURN UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE OF NURSING
OCTOBER 8TH-9TH

REGISTRATION OPENS
AUGUST 1ST*
\$45

JOIN US ON OCTOBER 8TH FROM 2:00-3:00PM AT THE
AUBURN UNIVERSITY RAPTOR CENTER TO MEET SOME
GAMEDAY SUPERSTARS!

OUR MAIN EVENT IS OCTOBER 9TH. YOU'LL GET A SNEAK PEEK
AT NEW TRANSFORMATION GARDEN PROJECTS, LIKE THE
CHILDREN'S GARDEN AND VINEYARDS—PLUS A CHANCE TO
WIN EXCITING PRIZES!

*NO REFUNDS



EMG Intern Album by Lilly Oaks



Trip to Hudson Alpha

Anita Reeves teaches propagation

Adopt-a-Spot • Blevins Gap Land Trust Pollinator Garden by Valeta Wheeler



MGNA's Adopt-a-Spot at the Pollinator Garden (aka Marie's Garden) at the Land Trust's **Blevins Gap** site (3470 Cecil Ashburn Dr. SE, Huntsville, AL) is looking more and more like a garden. That means there are plenty of weeds to pull! We also do other work as required – watering, putting down pine straw, and raking gravel back into the pathways. Plus, we do things that aren't really work – admiring the view, chatting with people who visit the garden/scenic overlook, and learning more about natives and non-natives as we figure out what are weeds and what are "good" plants.

Registration is required by the Land Trust, but it is OK to register on the day you are volunteering. Signing up earlier is encouraged - if these events are canceled due to weather, the Land Trust will send a notification to registered participants.

Sign up at <https://landtrustnal.org/support/volunteer/>
Look for "Garden Care: Marie's Garden"

There will be volunteer opportunities at the Land Trust garden July 1st and July 7th from 9-11am each time.

Please bring water for yourself, basic tools, and work gloves. A hat is a good idea too.

Send any questions to Valeta Wheeler
ValetaLynn@gmail.com



Valeta Wheeler

Mary Lou was an encourager and ever reliable expert when Hampton Cove Garden Club started in 1994. She spoke 6-8 times in our first three years (a couple of times at the last minute when a speaker had to cancel) and always on a different topic. She invited us on tours of her garden, gave us tussie-mussies, and answered so many questions. She was one of our favorite godmothers.

- Cathy Hales

Madison Monarch Butterfly Habitat at Dublin Park by Kathy Gardner

It's June and the flowers are in bloom at Madison's Butterfly Habitat. Created by the Rotary Club of Madison in 2019 and supported with MGNA's member expertise, the **Habitat at Dublin Park** is blooming with lilies, red and pink bee balms, penstemon, coral honeysuckle, zinnias and much, much more. Including weeds – yikes! You weren't expecting that, were you?

This Spring's unusual drought made planting difficult as well as risky. Then along came heavy rains which triggered cancellations of maintenance days in May and June. Despite the cancellation of June 13th, a few intrepid weeders showed up: Gayle Stinnett, Rilla Thedford, and Kathy Gardner (pictured, left to right).

The next scheduled maintenance days, or weed wrangles, are listed below. Feel free to arrive early if you'd like to beat the heat. Members of both MGNA and the Rotary Club of Madison will spread the remaining 10 or 15 bags of mulch and do some much-needed weeding to protect the intentional plantings from being choked out. In months when pollinators are active, at least one day per month is scheduled for a weeding and maintenance day with a Signup Genius going out to membership. Interns are always welcome to contribute and earn hours.

The Habitat is host to 100+ milkweed plants, including three of the four milkweeds native to Madison County. The Habitat is also host to passionflower vines (known as Maypop) which support the Gulf Fritillary. A native, this vine wasn't intentionally planted at the Habitat yet it's a favorite of trail walkers. In past years, the black-spiked orange Gulf Fritillary caterpillars could be seen crawling all over the plants in the section where passion vine thrives the best. Larger lilies are set to bloom soon, and the bees are already standing by.

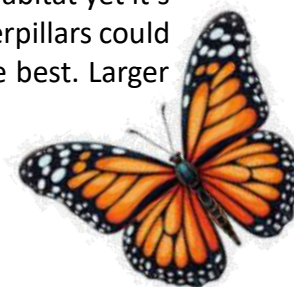
Here are tentative dates for the next three weed wrangles:

Saturday, July 18th, from 8 - 10 am

Wednesday, August 12th, from 8 - 10 am

Tuesday, September 22nd, from 9 - 11 am

Other dates will show up each month on the website. I'll try to send emails to MGNA.

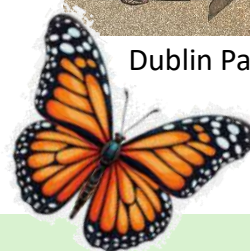


On a separate but related matter, I'm stepping away as MGNA's Project Lead for the Butterfly Habitat. After 20+ years in Madison, my husband and I are moving out of the area in early 2027. Anyone interested in assuming the Project Lead position can feel free to contact me for information at kgardner0321@gmail.com or at 256-617-1030.

MGNA's Project Lead works in coordination with Debbie Overcash, the Rotary Club's Project Lead. You couldn't ask for a more supportive partner in any project – I can promise you that. The Habitat began as an effort by the Rotary Club of Madison to conserve the Monarch Butterfly. The Monarch is Alabama's state insect because it travels through Alabama in its 1,800 mile migration.



Dublin Park Crew



Monarch Conservation Webinar Series



- **When:** Monthly one-hour webinars at 1:00 PM Central Time
- **Registration:** Register once to receive access to all webinars in the series.

Register for the 2026 Monarch Conservation Webinar Series

- **Recordings & Resources:** Following each webinar, we'll email a recording link and any additional resources shared during the session to those registered.
- **Webinar Archive:** All webinars will be posted on our [archive](#) for later viewing.

Please note that scheduled webinars are subject to change. If you have questions, feel free to contact us at learn@monarchjointventure.org.

- **July 28: Earth, Wind, and Fire: Impacts of Prescribed Burning and Extreme Weather events on Butterfly Populations in South Texas**, presented by Rebecca Zerlin, University of Minnesota
- **August 25: Soil - The Foundation for Thriving Habitat**, presented by Brandi McCoy, Thriving Lands
- **September 22: Seeds of Change: How Volunteers Power Prairie Restoration**, presented by Angela Grill, Three Rivers Park District, Steve Solbrack and Elizabeth Andress, Twin Cities Rotary EcoClub

I have looked up to Mary Lou ever since I began the Master Gardeners course and read about her efforts to bring Master Gardeners to Alabama in the first chapter of our thick textbook. I find it truly inspiring that she dedicated herself to starting such a significant project in Alabama when she could have stopped with her own yard and garden.

Mary Lou attended several of our Master Gardeners of North Alabama meetings. I always looked for her. Once I sat myself and a friend at the same table. When I could see my friend didn't recognize Mary, I incredulously asked her, "Don't you know who this is? This is Mary Lou McNabb. She's the one who started Master Gardeners here in Alabama!"

From Master Gardeners, I find pleasure in looking at Alabama's landscapes and identifying many of the plants. I love understanding why and how microbes and other elements come together and how everything works. At night, I tell God how magnificent His creations are. "Oh, what a wonderful world!" And it's all because of Mary Lou McNabb.

My fellow Master Gardeners are top notch and have all taught me so much.

Mary Lou was an approachable, unassuming, down-to-earth person. Maybe gardening does that to a person!

-Laurie Horrocks

"Gardening for Wildlife -Planting for Beneficial Insects and Pollinators"

This Master Gardener Workshop was presented April 7th at the Madison Public Library by Sara Johnson, a Conversationalist Biologist from the N.A. Land Trust. The goal is to have diversity in your garden for increased interactions between native insects and pollinators and plants. Native because, for example, adult butterflies will eat non-native butterfly bushes but there is nothing there for their babies to eat. So they do not lay eggs there. Native plants provide food, habitat, and a nursery.

To attract a variety of pollinators, you need a diversity of plants. Pollinators are attracted by smell, color, the amount of nectar a bloom has, and where the pollen is located in the flower. Different floral shapes attract different pollinators--tubular, bowl, bell, cups, rimlets, etc. Different scents--stinky, sweet, etc.--also attract different pollinators. Some plants require a higher "buzz frequency" to release pollen.

Bees eat different parts of seed pods and spread seed. Insects can prefer a special plant for food and different ones as hosts. Some plants, like mistletoe are required for the life cycle of different insects (like the Great Purple Hairstreak Butterfly). Insects need protection of plant debris, leaf miners, galls, stems, roots and decaying woodland plants. Having a lot of galls on your trees means you have a healthy habitat in your yard. There can be 800 different galls on an oak tree which are eaten by insects, bats, birds, opossums, etc. The entire native life cycle is at play here.

Sara recommended Douglas W. Tallamy's book on sustaining wildlife with native plants "Bringing Nature Home". (and he was one of the Keynote Speakers for our May, State Master Gardener Conference).



Wednesday, April 29, 2026, the Master Gardener Workshop at the Madison Public Library was on "**Propagation**" and presented by Cyndi Lindbloom. Cyndi made an interactive workshop about the "sex life" of plants very educational and entertaining.

We all learned about the propagation of plants in our Master Gardener Intern classes but here at this workshop, we were finally reaching mostly the general public and they had many questions. I think they really liked Cyndi because she told of the "right way" to do most propagation and "her way"! There is always more than one right way!

At the end of the workshop and after all Cyndi's talk about the Master Gardener Greenhouse, she had many of the participants wanting their own greenhouses, evidenced by all the questions on the evaluations: how to purchase, build a greenhouse; what kind; how and what to grow; how to organically get rid of weeds (!); how to kill pests and diseases; what to store in there. Wow, now the general public wants to know everything about plants. Implanting that "seed" or thirst or zest for more knowledge is what makes a good future Master Gardener Intern! "Good job", Cyndi!





Huntsville Workshop

On June 16 MGNA presented a public workshop at the Huntsville Main Library. Aaron Stiles, of Foraging Ahead, talked about “**Gardening in the Shade**” to a packed auditorium of gardeners eager to learn about plants and strategies for making the most of the shadiest parts of our yards.



MGNA Workshops You Won't Want to Miss

by Suzanne Kirkhuff



Mark Your Calendar

The workshops below are free and open to the public:

July 21-***Common Butterflies and Their Host Plants in North Alabama*** to be presented by our very own Melissa Kirkindall at the Madison Public Library, 10:30 am to noon

August **Landscaping Series**, Wednesdays from 10-11:30 am at the Madison Public Library

August 5-*Planning Your Landscaping* by Makahla Holloway

August 12-*Landscape Design with Water in Mind* by Brian Brown

August 19-*Turfgrass and Lawn Care* by Jason Somerville

August 18-***Garden to Glass*** by Lilly Oaks at the North Huntsville Public Library, 3011 Sparkman Drive, 10:30 to noon Using herbs in more than just cooking, such as mocktails/cocktails, with water, salsas, etc.

September 15-***Deer Tolerant Native Plants*** by Holt Akers Campbell, at the Madison Public Library, 10:30 to noon

October 20-***Orchids*** by Keith McCormick at the Madison Public Library, 10:30 to noon

For MGNA members only:

November 10-***Kokedama*** (hands on and each take home their own creation) at the Extension classroom from 10 am to noon, \$20 each and limited to 25 participants



Field Trippin'



The Master Gardeners had a field trip to **Graham Farm and Nature Center**, a very interesting place with 6 miles of hiking trails, kayaking on the Paint Rock River, 2 covered wagon accommodations, a sleek pavilion and more. This 500 acre property was donated to the Extension Service several years ago. The facility is located about 20 miles northeast of Gurley, AL. Add another 10 miles if coming from downtown Huntsville.

-- Bob Goodwin



I wish I had more time to write about Mary Lou. She was one of my three greatest mentors. She, Kent Haistens, and Rosa Belle Van Valkenburg were always there to answer my questions and help me when I was learning something new. When Kent passed, I was drafted to work the veggie garden and from helping my hubby in our garden I had some skills, but my main interest was landscape plants and flowers. I was thrown tending all kinds of things from growing transplants in my hobby greenhouse to trying to clear up some problems that existed in the DVG. Mary Lou was always someone I could ask for advice...She and Bob were a wonderful pair, and I am eternally grateful for her friendship and advice. Making a veggie garden looking equal in beauty to a flower garden was a stretch for me and she was such a help with her advice when I could not find the answer in extension publications. I have her Red Cascade rose that I grew from cuttings she gave me and an azalea she rooted and gave me....along with two of her prize-winning Iris. I probably have notes from her presentations on herbs in my files.

There have been many wonderful Master Gardeners in our association and so many are gardening in Heaven. She has great company.

-Bess Parks

Field Trip to Hope Botanical Gardens

by Dawn Nelson

On May 9, 11 of our MGNA members, family and friends enjoyed a Mother's Day luncheon with teas, sweets, sandwiches and tour of Hope Botanical Gardens in Leoma, Tennessee. We were hosted by Jerry Clayton who designed this lovely four acre garden which has been open to the public for 3 years.

Hope Botanical Gardens is the home of many unique gardens including a maze, a meditation garden, a Japanese Garden, a children's garden with a wishing well, a water garden, a pink garden honoring breast cancer patients, a native garden including a First Responder Memorial Garden, and a visitor's garden with a Veteran's Memorial.

The garden also has roses, flowering quince and unusual plants such as a corkscrew hazel, *Corylus avellana* "Contorta", a slow growing deciduous shrub famous for its dramatically twisted zig zag branches.

Hope Gardens hosts community events for Halloween, Christmas and Mother's Day. Jerry's team prepares treats and creative decorations for these holidays, and if you don't mind the 90 minute trip, your efforts will be richly rewarded.



Hope Garden Volunteers Marsha Stepp, Lillie Zimmerman and Nancy Brewer, and Jerry Clayton



JULY Field Trip by Ameree Young

I would like to invite everyone on a **tour of Shannon Hansen's garden** on July 11 at 10:00 am. The address is 274 County Rd 31 in Hollywood, AL. For a preview of Shannon's garden, please visit her Facebook page, Flourish gardens24. She has a cottage style garden with lots of flowers, butterflies and hummingbirds. There is also a small flower farm on the property.

If you plan to go on the tour, please send me an email by July 8th with how many are in your party. Lunch will probably be in Scottsboro at a local restaurant, Magnolia House.

amereeyoung@comcast.net

Mary Lou brings to mind so many things to me-smart, educated, determined lady who didn't let others stop her from pursuing her ideas and dreams. She was to me very much like my mother, giving honest advice.

I have many plants in my landscape from her own gardens-including some of her prize-winning peonies which will make me stop and remember her when I look at them.

But most of all when I think of Mary Lou, I will think of a friend who loved gardening as I do.

- Helen Carr

The Demonstration Vegetable Garden (DVG)

Text and Photos (unless noted) by Susan Parker, DVG Chair

June 2026

All the DVG's crew's hard work paid off in an exemplary vegetable garden for the AMGA State Conference tour. Bob Houseman (Limestone) and Barbara White, both part of the regular DVG crew, greeted guests. Connie Carr and Clémentine Brulin were present to guide the guests and answer questions. The rain showers deterred many from seeing the handiwork of our dedicated DVG crew.



(Photo by Clémentine Brulin May 6, 2026) **Bob Houseman greeting guests.**

In honor of the Nation's 250th birthday, the DVG is focusing on vegetables documented by Thomas Jefferson, collections from Thomas Jefferson's Revolutionary Garden and Martha Washington's Kitchen Garden with some seeds harvested directly from the gardens at Monticello. The photo above shows four kinds of lettuce with 'Tennis Ball' being Thomas Jefferson's favorite. In Thomas Jefferson's Garden, the garden peas shown above would be planted continually throughout the spring for harvest until the fourth of July.



Connie Carr is shown harvesting the 'Tennis Ball' Lettuce. Thomas Jefferson loved a good salad. Note the informational cards with a ribbon designating this display as in the 250th focus.

Left. The 'Lacinato' Kale was documented by Thomas Jefferson in his book *Notes on the State of Virginia*.
Right. 'Blue Curled Scotch' Kale from Martha Washington's Kitchen Garden.





Still on display are the Allium trials with garlic pulled and drying. The garlic, shallots, chives and leeks were planted in the fall of 2025. Also, the bunching onions. The globe onions in the background were planted in late March. Within the month most of the onions will be harvested.

Clémentine Brulin planted the garlic in October and here she harvested the 'Early Italian' Garlic before returning with her family back to France as she is a General Physician. Clémentine began volunteering at the DVG as a garden volunteer in the Spring of 2024 and in the fall of 2025, she became a Master Gardener.

As we maintain the DVG, we share our gardening knowledge with the guests and garden volunteers. We are not only Extension Master Gardeners but also Ambassadors for Huntsville and the state of Alabama.

Every once in a while, you meet extraordinary folks and they change your life. I first met Mary Lou McNabb at the first Master Gardener class at A&M way back in 1983. She was just one of us who were taking the course. Little did I know that she had instigated the whole thing and had been every part of the planning for heaven knows how long. Every time Mary Lou or Bob (who was a great gardener but never took the classes) was a part of anything, you were blessed by it. They gave freely of their time, their many perennials, their patience, teaching all of us newbys, and their blueberries. Many times, Mary Lou brought vegetables to meetings to share. Many times she opened her garden to teach folks about pruning, gardening, flowers, and vegetables. Many times she took the time to be a Rose Society Judge and often a participant as well as a winner. And never did she push the idea that she had started all of this--we the participants of her gift did, but she didn't. For me she kept me known as the person who was in that first class who has stayed with the best group in the Huntsville area--Master Gardeners of North Alabama. Don't ever forget that there are now over 10,000 folks who have been trained to understand gardening in Alabama because of the work Mary Lou and Bob (an honorary member of MGNA) did behind the scenes in Alabama for Alabama and gardening.

-Elouisa Stokes

2026 Spring Plant Sale

Text and Photos by Anita Reeves, Coordinator

A big THANK YOU to all who played a part in our super successful spring plant sale! We raised a lot of money (over \$28,700) as we shared our love and knowledge of plants with our community. MGNA members came through with the *10 10 10 Challenge* and gave more! We grew plants - at home and at our greenhouse. We gathered and brought boxes for shoppers. We advertised among friends and in the community. At the sale we shared plant information, sold plants, and provided soil pH level testing. We set up and tore down nearly 100 tables, moved plants out of the greenhouse, hauled them in - and hauled just a few out at the end of the sale. No one went hungry thanks to our volunteer hospitality folks and all of you who provided food. Our vendors also added to our successful sale by sharing a varied selection of products and information to our customers, and many of us too, who shopped at their booths.

It's not too early to "save the date" and start thinking of how you can help next year.

Our Spring 2027 MGNA Plant Sale will be:

Friday, April 16, 8am – 4pm

Saturday, April 17, 8am – 2pm

Once again, the Alabama A&M Agribition Center has graciously agreed to host our sale in 2027. Thanks, A&M!

Yes, you read the dates of the sale correctly. It'll be the THIRD weekend in April, not the second weekend - which is when in recent years we've had our sales. You can have your cake and eat it too next year... the AMGA conference is scheduled for the second week in April (April 7-9 <https://alabamamga.org/event/2027-annual-state-conference/>). Many of you will want to attend and now you can attend the conference AND volunteer at our plant sale.



Tomato tables



Free Advice



Hanging Plants



Checkout Lines

PLANT SALE ALBUM



Park-a-Plant



Herbs



Herb Tasting



Houseplants



Highlights from the AMGA Conference



The Numbers by Soozie Pline

409 registered,	Silent Auction
14 cancellations, 7 no-shows	& Buy a Chance
= 388 attendees	(Best Profits Ever!)
REVENUE : \$ 142,603.71	Gross Sales : \$ 25,734.60
EXPENSE : \$ 127,012.28	Expenses : \$ 14,262.23
NET INCOME : \$ 15,591.43	NET Income: \$ 11,472.37



Helen Carr received the
Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award



Acacia Moore accepted the
Outstanding Newsletter
Award



Jean Lee and Elouisa Stokes,
along with Mary Lou,
Members since 1981

THANK
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Yay! We won the 2025 state **Outstanding Newsletter Award**
for groups with 60 or more members, plus \$100 for the MGNA treasury.

The outstanding part is YOU, our members who support this newsletter with your articles, pictures, suggestions and proofreading skills; especially the “regulars” whose names you see in every issue. Knowing that I can count on you to contribute every quarter, is what keeps this publication going. All I do is gather it all together and make it pretty.
So Thank You and Congratulations! This award is for all of you!

Cookie

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Speakers Bureau

by Melissa Kirkindall, Chairman

Melissa Kirkindall gave a presentation on "Color in the Shade" to the Hampton Cove Garden Club on April 16, and Melissa will be speaking about Hummingbirds Oct. 1 for Jackson County EMGs.

On July 21, 10:30-12:00, Melissa will be giving a presentation at the Madison Branch Library. The topic is **Common Butterflies of North Alabama and Their Host Plants**. It is free and open to the public; no registration required. [See p.11 & 21]

On May 8 Kathy Gardner spoke on the topic "Gardening for Pollinators" at the First Baptist Church in Huntsville at the request of our ACES office. There were 92 in attendance. The fellowship group from the church and the local community has speakers once a month. There were a lot of really good questions, and the church received positive feedback on the presentation. Kathy gave out four small plants as prizes.



Lauren Linder talked about Native Plants at the June MGNA

I knew about Mary Lou for years - I picked blueberries at her farm, bought her book, and knew some of her history. I thought of her in August 2023 when I visited the Cutler Botanic Garden maintained by Cornell Extension Service and Master Gardeners in Binghamton, New York, where she first became involved in Master Gardeners. But I first met her in person when I was an intern for Master Gardeners in the fall of 2022. Then I heard her speak at the 2023 AMGA Fall Seminar where we celebrated 50 years of Master Gardening in Alabama. I learned that she grew up very close to where I did. I spoke to her about west Texas, visiting the garden in New York, and living in Huntsville. She was close friends with another of my friends, Joyce Brown, from the early days of the Herb Society. Joyce always spoke of how gracious she was (and Joyce was 100% right!).

- Valeta Wheeler

The Garden Professors Blog

<https://gardenprofessors.com/>

Dr. Jeff Gillman, Dr. Linda Chalker-Scott, Dr.

Holly Scoggins, and others

<https://www.facebook.com/TheGardenProfessors>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/GardenProfessors/>

Garden Rant <https://gardenrant.com/>

Eight regular writers from the US & UK + guests. Biographies here:

<https://gardenrant.com/about-us>

Horticulture Magazine calls it “edgy, entertaining and informative.”

Share your favorite blogs.

rkruvand@gmail.com



Couch Potato is Baked, and has retreated into the air conditioning to watch Blogs!



<https://nationalmothweek.org/> July 18-26

Founded in 2012, National Moth Week celebrates the beauty, diversity, and ecological importance of moths. Like the pollinator count, Moth Week is another world-wide citizen science project. Register on the web page and learn how to set up, count and identify moths. You can upload your photos to various [websites](#) and receive a participation certificate. Moth Week includes two weekends to give you more time. This year's National Moth Week theme is

“Moths in Art,” celebrating the beauty of moths and the way they inspire the artist in all of us.

<https://www.instagram.com/reels/DWZ4W6PDcGV/> share your moth art work using #mothweek26art

<https://nationalmothweek.org/2022/07/04/how-to-use-inaturalist/>

<https://www.facebook.com/NationalMothWeek/>

Mary Lou will be remembered for her kindness and her generosity--with her time, her knowledge, and her garden. I first met her through the Herb Society. For programs, she liked to dress in colonial costume as the “Yarb Lady” and she loved making tussie-mussies. She was a teacher and mentor to me when I moved here, and a friend for 28 years. She taught this yankee what “greens” are and how to cook them, how to deal with Alabama red clay, and how to fold plastic bags into a neat triangle. The plants she shared with me have always been special to me and now are even more so.

-Cookie Kruvand

I am 98!
I have lived through 97 years -
mostly smiles, but a few tears.
You need stamina to get this old.
With courage to face what the future holds.
With veggies and flowers a long romance.
With blueberries a plentiful and tasty dance.
I accept the bad and praise the good.
I always try to do what I know I should.
I have good neighbors who help me so much.
Take me to church, get mail, take out the garbage and such.
Wishing you a wonderful Holiday Week
And a year ahead with all of the
joys you seek!

Gardening in Small Spaces

Maximize your growing space

Growing vegetables, herbs or ornamentals this class is for you!



Learn about:

- Trellis and Vertical Gardens
- Square Foot Gardens
- Raised Beds
- Container Gardens
- Succession Gardening

Plus –

Tips for Landscaping small back yards

Presented by Eileen Tully, Alabama Master Gardener



July 18

10 AM – 11 AM

Limestone County Extension Office
1109 W. Market St., Athens, AL

Limestone County
Extension Master Gardeners



Like us on Facebook

Find us on the internet

www.mastergardeners-limestonecountyalabama.org

Free and Open to the Public



The Alabama Cooperative Extension System (Alabama A&M University and Auburn University) is an equal opportunity educator, employer and provider. If you need a reasonable accommodation or language access services contact 256-384-5130 or 256-714-0611 by July 3, 2026



Common Butterflies

& their Host Plants in North Alabama

Learn how to identify, attract, and maintain common butterfly species in your garden for years to come by planting the larval host plants they need

Tuesday, July 21
10:30-Noon
By Melissa Kirkindall
Master Gardeners of North Alabama
Madison Public Library
142 Plaza Blvd, Madison



ALABAMA MASTER GARDENERS
ALABAMA EXTENSION
MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

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MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

GARDEN TO GLASS

Lilly Oaks
ACES Extension Agent, Home Horticulture

We all love to use our garden herbs in our cooking, but how else can you utilize an abundant harvest? This workshop will feature herb-forward recipes in a new light: BEVERAGES!



TUESDAY, AUGUST 18 - 10:30-NOON
North Huntsville Public Library
3011 Sparkman Drive

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ALABAMA MASTER GARDENERS
ALABAMA EXTENSION

MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

Award Winning Classes!

Design Your Home Landscape Course

Six 2-Hour DIY Landscape Design Classes

August 26-September 30



Wednesdays
10:00-Noon
Aug 26-Sep 30

Alabama A&M
Agribition
Center

4925 Moores Mill Road NE
Huntsville

- Step-by-step instruction
- Helpful shortcuts
- 4 Individual sessions included
- 100+-page DYHL Handbook
- Personalized plant recommendations
- Plant photos & information
- Research-based information from ACES



The cost is \$75. Class size is limited, and registration will be first come, first served using MGNA SignUpGenius (SUG) which will be sent via MGNA email. For more information or to receive the SUG registration in mid-August, please send an email to WorkshopContacts@mginfo.org to be added to our MGNA email distribution list. We hope to see you in August!

MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

LANDSCAPE SERIES

Madison Public Library
142 Plaza Blvd, Madison

Wednesday, August 5 - 10:00-11:30am
Planning Your Landscaping

Makahla Holloway - ACES Extension Agent, Home Horticulture

Wednesday, August 12 - 10:00-11:30am
Landscape Design with Water in Mind

Dr. Brian Brown - ACES Extension Agent, Home Horticulture

Wednesday, August 19 - 10:00-11:30am
Turfgrass & Lawn Care

Jason Somerville - ACES Extension Agent, Home Horticulture



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MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA



DEER TOLERANT NATIVE PLANTS

Holt Akers-Campbell

ACES Extension Agent, Commercial Horticulture

Tuesday, September 15 - 10:30-Noon
Madison Public Library - 142 Plaza Blvd, Madison



Deer browsing is a significant problem for homeowners as well as farmers in Alabama. Learn measures, including plant selection, that you can take to reduce browsing pressure

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Orchids

By Keith McCormick

Tuesday, October 20
10:30-Noon
Madison Public Library
142 Plaza Blvd, Madison

Keith McCormick is co-owner of
Catbird Seat Garden Center in Madison

Using orchids from his own collection, Keith will demonstrate how to care for a variety of orchid types. Come learn how to succeed in growing your own beautiful, flowering plants

MASTER GARDENERS OF NORTH ALABAMA

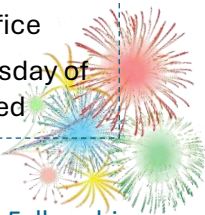


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DATES DATES DATES

Board Meetings: The Monday before the General Meeting, at 12, at the County Extension Office

MGNA General Meetings: The second Thursday of each month at location and time announced



July 4 - Independence Day

July 9 – MGNA Meeting 5:30-7 PM Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan, 35802 Speaker: Melissa Kirkendall, “Ireland”

July 11, 10 am -Tour of Shannon Hansen's garden **p. 13**

July 18, 10am, Gardening in Small Spaces, Limestone Ext. Office **p. 21**



July 18-26 – Moth Week **p.20**

July 21, 10:30 am, Butterfly program at Madison Library **p.11, 19, 21**

Aug 13 - MGNA Meeting 5:30-7 PM Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan, 35802 Speaker: Soozie Pline, “Great Southeast Pollinator Census”

Aug 18, 10:30 am, Garden to Glass workshop, North Library **p.11, 21**



August 21 and 22

Great Southeast Pollinator Census **p. 4**
Taking place in your back yard or wherever you want to be.

Sept. 7 Labor Day

Sept 10 - MGNA Meeting 5:30-7 PM Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan, 35802 Speaker: Norris Johnson, “Water You Thinking”

Sept 15, 10:30 am, Deer Tolerant Native Plants, Madison Library **p.11, 22**

Sept 19, 8 am-3 pm – Limestone County MG Fall Plant Sale **p. 5**

Sept. 22 - First Day of Autumn



Oct. 8 - MGNA Meeting 5:30-7 PM Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan, 35802 Speaker: Phyllis Light, “Growing Native Herbs for the Marketplace”

AND MORE DATES



Workshops

August Landscaping Series **p. 11,22**

Madison Library 10:00 – 11:30

5th - Planning Your Landscaping

12th- Irrigating Your Landscape

19th- Turfgrass and Lawn Care

Aug26- Sept 30

Design Your Home Landscape Course

p. 4, 21

October 8-9

AMGA Fall Seminar, Auburn

Register Aug 1, \$45

p. 5

October 20 - Orchids Workshop

Madison Library , 10:30-12

Nov 10 - Kokedama Workshop

\$20 members only

Nov 12 MGNA Meeting

11:30 am-1 pm

Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan

Dec 11, 6-8 pm

Potluck Christmas Party and Award Ceremony

Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan



Trending Now:

Natives Natives Natives

<https://gardenrant.com/2026/04/counting-the-ecological-contributions-of-non-native-plants.html?lctg=72768751>

Master Gardeners of North Alabama

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Thank you to Extension Agent Lilly Oaks and all of the members who submitted articles and pictures, and to our proofreaders. We are grateful to all for your participation. We would not have a newsletter without all of your support.

As we finish one issue, we start on the next one. The Fall Thymes will be delivered October 1. You may send material to the editor any time up to Sept. 15.

Public:

facebook.com/MGofNA/

Members:

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<https://mg.aces.edu/madison/>



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