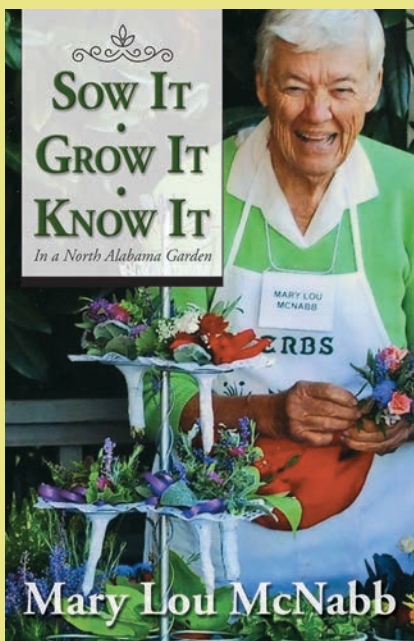




## McNabb Releases Gardening Book

**O**ur own Mary Lou McNabb has written a book about gardening in North Alabama. *Sow It, Grow It, Know It in a North Alabama Garden* is full of advice and amusing tidbits from the woman and berry farmer who founded our Master Gardener association. Books are available at all MGNA events and meetings. Stop by our plant sale on May 13 for a signed copy. Just \$19.95.

**Ann Tippie  
MGNA President**



## Reaching for the Stars!

By Sandra Pape

**R**each for The Stars is a program of tracking Master Gardener's volunteer hours and rewarding those members for the hours they have given to the community. During the February MGNA general meeting, advanced badges and pins were announced (they will be awarded during the MG State Convention) and, Bronze, Silver and Gold star pins were awarded.

Joan Jones earned the honor of Top Hours of the year by posting 1,177 volunteer hours for 2016!

Alice Lawler was honored with the Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award with a total of 8,214 volunteer hours since becoming a Master Gardener in 1998!

Other awards were announced as follows.

Diamond Pin (8,000-9,999 hours):  
Alice Lawler

Emerald Pin (6,000-7,999 hours)  
(none)

Ruby Pin (4,000-5,999 hours):  
Brenda Myers  
Dorothy Thomas  
Carolyn Wade



**Deen Rice presents Alice Lawler with the Jean Lee Lifetime Hours Award. Photo by Jessica Wood.**

**STARS Continued on Page 6**

## Give-A-Hand Recognizes Mary, Howe, Shelly Miller and Meredith Kilby

By Suzanne Kirkhuff

**A**t each MGNA general meeting, the members nominate a master gardener to be recognized for their volunteer work. In January Mary Howe was the

nominee, in February it was Shelly Miller, and in March it was Meredith Kilby. Each received a nominal gift and recognition.

# From The President

**T**he year has gotten off to a busy start. Mary Howe and the Ask a Master Gardener team are in great demand, including the first ever MDA Earth Day. Seedlings and Sprouts, under the leadership of Eugene Roberts, has been busy planning for several events coming up. Brenda Myers and the Field Trip Committee have planned some exceptional field trips including an overnigher at the end of September. Educational Workshops have been doing great and the committee is already getting started on plans for next year. Diane Campen and many others were very busy preparing for the best state conference ever that took



place on May 1-3. The Huntsville Botanical Garden plant sale has come and gone. As usual, many of us supported the Garden by working the plant sale. We have lots going on and need everyone to join in. Please don't pass up an opportunity to volunteer when you are asked.

I want to thank our outgoing president, Kathie Bass, Sue Khoury and the board of directors for helping me undertake the role as president. They have been super supportive and very much appreciated. Wishing everyone a happy spring.

*Ann Tippie*  
*MGNA President*

**VOL. XXVI, ISSUE 2**

**Editor in Chief**  
**Jessica Wood (F'14)**

**Regular Contributing Editors**

**Bill Fuller (W'97)**  
**Jean Lee (W'95)**  
**Brenda Tapp (W'98),**  
**Carolyn Wade (W'12)**  
**Lynn Overman (F'15)**

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## In This Issue

|                                       |     |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|-----|---------------------------------|
| From the President . . . . .          | 2   | Features                        |
| News . . . . .                        | 1-9 | • Reach for the Stars . . . . . |
| McNabb Releases Book . . . . .        | 1   | • MG Profile . . . . .          |
| Nick Mangus Recognition . . . . .     | 1   | • Locke's HBG Work . . . . .    |
| Horticulture Therapy Update . . . . . | 3   | • MG Costa Rica Trip . . . . .  |
| Give a Hand . . . . .                 | 5   | • Gulf Fritillaries. . . . .    |



Gulf  
Fritillaries on Page 10



# Horticulture Therapy Update

By Susan Meyer

**H**orticulture Therapy, under the leadership of Jean Lake, met early this spring 2017 for our yearly planning session. We met for 2 hours at the senior center, and we mapped out our plans for 2017. We have some exciting ideas of planting projects, craft projects, coloring pictures and eating activities for the year and would love to have some new members if anyone is interested in joining us.

We meet every other week, on Tuesday from 9:30-11:30 at the senior center in the adult day care area. Lots

of hands make for little work for all and our time with the clients is so rewarding. We usually grab lunch together at the HBG or another local lunch spot after our activity at the senior center.

Please consider joining us! You can contact Jean Lake at [jeanlake7@comcast.net](mailto:jeanlake7@comcast.net) (256)683-8787, or feel free to contact Susan Meyer at [docmey@gmail.com](mailto:docmey@gmail.com) (256)508-1289 for information, too.

Come and see what we do...we are a fun group! 🌱



*MGNA Horticulture Therapy Master Gardener volunteers work at the Huntsville Senior Center. Photo credit: Susan Meyer.*



## Susan Meyer Engages with the World

By Jessica Wood

**M**AGNA 2016 Intern of the Year Susan Meyer does not hesitate to take on big challenges. When her children neared leaving home, she went back to school and earned her bachelors, masters, and PhD in nursing to deal with being an empty nester. Following earning her PhD, she taught nursing for 10 years – which she loved! – and led the effort to setup an online PhD nursing program through the University of Phoenix.

Her path to getting involved with MGNA stemmed from an interest in finding an activity that she and her husband Walter could do together. Walter, a physician, and Susan took the MG class together. Susan has taken on a number of significant and volunteer roles within MGNA, including the Project/Intern Coordinator role and participating with plant sales, Madison Beautification, the MG class, and Horticulture Therapy. The latter project really resonates with Susan, “I love Horticulture Therapy! I’m a nurse, so it fits with what I do.”

Around the house, Susan nurtures her woodland garden on the mountainous three-acre property where she and Walter have lived for the past ten years. They don’t get much sun but love the untouched woodland feel of their yard. Susan has turned part of her yard into a playful “gnome home” complete with A-frame structure, 100 year-

old oak root ball, rock garden, and wildflowers. Susan also handles the leaf blowing at their home with the backpack leaf blower Walter gifted her as a joke a few years ago for Christmas! Walter handles their home vegetable garden; Susan particularly likes kale and swiss chard.

In addition to gardening, Susan’s hobbies include sewing and cooking. She especially enjoys baking and has a real talent for it according to her granddaughter who joined us during our interview (her favorite is Susan’s tres leches cake). Says Susan, “I cook because you have to eat, but I bake because I love to bake.” She and Walter also enjoy traveling; their trips include Paris, Florida (Naples, Bradenton, Key West), and Costa Rica in early 2017 to celebrate their 40<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. They also make frequent trips to New Jersey, Birmingham, and San Francisco to visit their children and grandchildren.

Family care is a big part of Susan’s life. Susan’s 93-year-old mother lives in Huntsville, and Walter and Susan have eight grandchildren ranging in ages from 4-13; three live in Birmingham, three live in Huntsville, and two



### Susan Meyer (W’15)

- 2016 MGNA Master Gardener Intern of the Year
- 2016-present: Project/Intern Volunteer Coordinator
- 2016-present: Plant Sale Volunteer
- 2016-present: MG Class Volunteer
- 2016-present: Horticulture Therapy Volunteer
- 2016-present: Madison Beautification Volunteer

live in New Jersey. One of her local grandsons took the Seedlings and Sprouts class, planted a garden bed, and produced so much the family had to take up canning!

Susan was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and grew up in Cleveland, Ohio, a few blocks away from Lake Erie. She went to school in Akron where she met her husband and lived in Detroit for two years before moving to Huntsville in 1979. She has a younger brother who lives in Phoenix and had an older brother who was a pilot and passed away in an aircraft accident in Alaska.

In addition to her family, friends, career, and hobbies, Susan describes faith as a very important part of her life and defines herself as a very strong Christian. She participates in church and also meets up with her friend Jill to walk five miles, five days per week. This time is special because it brings together and connects so many aspects of Susan’s life: faith, friendship, physical activity, and her love of being outside. 🌿



**Sculpture honoring Honorary Master Gardener and Galaxy of Lights Co-Founder Nick Mangus** Photo credit: Jean Lee.

## HBG Honors Galaxy of Lights Co-Founder Nick Mangus

By Jean Lee

**O**n a windy day in January 2017, friends, family and co-volunteers gathered in the Volunteer Tribute Garden at the Huntsville Botanical Garden for the unveiling of a sculpture in memory of Nick Mangus.

Nick was a member of the original team that established the Galaxy of Lights and he was the artistic creator of many of the exhibits that we enjoy each holiday

season. The sculptor was Professor Pamela Sue Keller from Athens State University. The sculpture includes the light bulb (his creative ideas), the tree (Galaxy of Lights) and the sail boat (Nick's other hobby). Nick was one of the first to be given the status of Honorary Master Gardener by MGNA in 1998. His wife, Irene, was a long time Master Gardener and member of MGNA. 🌿

## Barbara Locke's Path to Working with Native Plants at the HBG

By Anna Bright

**B**arbara first got into plants at the age of eight when she went to work at a nursery/garden center owned by Jeanette Sipla in Long Island N.Y. When Barbara was ten, Jeanette sent her to an agriculture school, Farmingdale State College, to learn more about plants, flower design. Barbara worked at the nursery for about twelve years. Barbara still keeps in touch with the owner of the nursery, who is in her eighties.

Barbara moved to Alabama about 48 years ago when her husband was working in Missile Command. She started visiting the Huntsville Botanical Garden when it first opened and brought friends when they were visiting, commenting that Huntsville is very fortunate to have the HBG and that the South is able to grow a variety of plants. In Long Island the azalea she was familiar with was Hinodegiri Azalea.



**Barbara Locke**

She didn't know native azaleas, commenting they are much more beautiful and colorful.

Barbara took the Master Gardener class in 2011. She started working with the DVG with Joe White growing vegetables, then with Carolyn Wade and now Tom Simpson. She mentioned that homegrown vegetables are the best tasting ever. She is also very active in the Herb Society.

She was visiting the native greenhouse one day and was talking to Vernon about different things and he asked her if she would like to up-pot. She averages about 250 azaleas per week, on the day she was interviewed; she was up-potting dogwoods. The plants that are up-potted might go towards the Plant Sale. 🌿





**STARS Continued from page 1**

**Platinum Badge (2,000-3,999 hours):**

Diane Campen  
Barbara Locke  
Carol Milton  
Tom Simpson

**Gold Badge (1,000-1,999 hours):**

Suzanne Beckinger  
Alice Brigman  
Nancy Butler  
Shirley Campbell  
Gloria Johnson  
Sue Khoury  
Meredith Kilby  
Barbara McFarlen

**Gold Star (500-999 hours):**

Anna Bright  
Crystal Kitchens  
Charlene Learner  
Candy Trowbridge  
Gloria Uhl

**Silver Star (300-499 hours):**

Deen Rice  
Deborah Severn

**Bronze Star (100-299 hours):**

Virginia Agee  
Kristen Bowen  
Carol Cook  
Gloria Couch  
Alexander Gilmore  
Revelle Gwyn  
Walter Lindblom  
Susan Meyer  
Pam Price  
Marcus Rhodes  
Judith Rushton  
Nareatha Studdard  
Jessica Wood  
Sonja Wood







*Silver Star*



*Ruby Pin*



*Platinum Badge*



*Gold Badge*



*Diamond Pin*



# A Tour for Extension Master Gardener Volunteers: **Costa Rica 2017**

## Tropical Horticulture, Fruit and Nature

By Susan Meyer

*MGNA Members Susan and Walter Meyer recently joined a group of Master Gardeners from North Carolina, Nebraska, and Alabama on a horticulture-themed tour of Costa Rica. Their group included: NC State hosts Lisa Sanderson (NC Master Gardener State Coordinator) and Dr. George Wilson (Professor Emeritus at NC State University); the bilingual tour guide Jose and Spanish-speaking bus driver Roy; and 14 Master Gardeners including four from Nebraska (Dee, Greg, Linda, and Richard), four from Alabama (Charlotte, Linda, Walter, and Susan), and seven from North Carolina (Maggy, Connie, Debra, Amanda, Bill, Donna, and NC county agent Cindy). Susan describes their trip below.*

### **Trip Introduction**

Costa Rica is one of the most peaceful countries in the world. The tremendous natural diversity of plants and animals, as well as culture; the friendliness of the Costa Rican people will ensure that you have an unforgettable experience as our guest on this magnificent tour. Costa Rica is also the land of gardens, where you will see some of your most cherished garden plants growing in the wild. The national flower of Costa Rica is an orchid. Costa Rica has the richest orchid flora in Central America, with more than 1,400 identified species. Join Lisa Sanderson, NC Extension Master Gardener State Coordinator and Dr. L. George Wilson, NC State Horticulture Professor Emeritus, on this extraordinary, atypical tour

through this lush, beautiful country, discovering the diversity of rainforest plants and wildlife in their natural environment, and experiencing agriculture in this tropical country from strawberries and organic bananas to a Fruits of the World tour.

### **Day 1 – Sunday, February 26**

Upon arrival in Juan Santamaría International Airport, our guide met us and took us to the Hotel Bougainvillea where we spent the remainder of the day touring the lush tropical gardens of the hotel property. We also spent a little while sitting by the pool. The Garden Club of Costa Rica recently recognized the garden at Hotel Bougainvillea as the “Best Garden of Costa Rica”—proving a perfect start to this tour.

### **Day 2 – Monday, February 27**

After breakfast, we boarded our tour bus for travel to the slopes of Poás Volcano (<http://costa-ricaguide.com/nature/national-parks/poas-volcano/>). We climbed the hill to view the non-active volcano identifying plants, trees, and birds along the trail. Some of us then climbed another 30 minutes higher to see the beautiful lake that lies atop the mountain. Back on the bus, we drove across the continental divide from the Pacific side of Costa Rica to the Caribbean/tropical side. We ended up at Cosac farm where we visited Freddo’s place [Freddo-Fresas, a local dairy farm and organic strawberry plantation. We boarded a tractor cart and toured the acres of land identifying plants, trees and birds of the area. We also toured the farm taking time to milk the cows, meet the pigs, chickens, and rabbits that have been rescued and now live on the farm. After a brief strawberry tasting and cheese sampling we were back on the bus headed to La Paz. When one thinks of Costa Rica, you imagine lush tropical rain forests, flowing white-water rivers, spectacular waterfalls, birds, butterflies and flowers galore. La Paz Waterfall Gardens \(\[www.waterfallgardens.com\]\(http://www.waterfallgardens.com\)\) has all this and more, including one of the largest collections of bromeliads in the country. We spent the afternoon touring the La Paz animal refuge, identifying native animals, reptiles and birds \(including parrots, macaws and lots of hummingbirds\) of Costa Rica. We also identified plants including gunnera “poor man’s umbrella” that grows all over. Monday was our most strenuous day as far as walking/hiking hills and lots of steps.](http://www.facebook.com/Restaurante-</a></p></div><div data-bbox=)

### **Day 3 – Tuesday, February 28**

We boarded the bus and headed across the continental divide again to the Sarapiquí region. Travel took us through the only tunnel in Costa Rica and through the Bravlio national park where we identified common trees, plants and some birds. We spent the morning visiting one of the



world's premier artisan chocolatiers, Sibü Chocolate (<http://sibuchocolate.com>), where Julio and George, the Master Chocolatiers guided us on a tasting tour of the history of chocolate, from the times it was used as currency, until today. We learned how the cacao grows and were shown how, throughout history, the fruit was used. We watched them make their famous artisanal chocolates and got to taste the cacao at each step of the process from raw fruit to drying, peeling, crushing and tempering. We participated in the whole process and even got to crush the cacao beans to make a paste, using a hot rolling pin-type tool. After that, we continued to the area of Sarapiquí, where we went on a leisurely boat tour for views and sounds of the forest along the Sarapiquí River. Many trees, plants, birds and animals, plus a few reptiles like crocodile and caiman, plus the Jumping Jesus lizard (so named because they 'walk' on water). This was the day we finally found a sloth lounging in a tree at the end of our boat ride!

#### **Day 4 – Wednesday, March 1**

Morning visit to La Selva Biological Station (<http://www.tropicalstudies.org>), a research station managed by the Organization for Tropical Studies. We experienced the rainforest (lots of rain) along their well-kept trails. We identified many insects, reptiles, birds, plants and trees native to Costa Rica. The afternoon included a 2 hour tour

of the gardens and property of the hotel where we enjoyed the plants, flowers and birds of the area...plus a few howling monkeys.

#### **Day 5 – Thursday, March 2**

This day we left Sarapiquí and headed out to the village of Turrialba. This busy town is in the bottom of the Turrialba Valley, with the magnificent (and active) Turrialba volcano in full view. The volcano is active and at times we could see it 'steaming'...



sending up clouds of steam above the mountain peak. En route we stopped at the campus of EARTH University (<https://www.earth.ac.cr/>) (School of Agriculture of the Tropical Humid Region), where one of their resident guides took us on an extensive tour of their organic banana plantation and their botanical garden.

#### **Day 6 – Friday, March 3**

In the morning, we enjoyed the gardens of CATIE-The Tropical Agricultural Research and Higher Education Center ([www.catie.ac.cr/en/](http://www.catie.ac.cr/en/)), where we experienced their

"Fruits of the World" tour. We tasted tropical fruits from all around the world. Some of the fruits are used in dyes so we painted on orange "cheeks" and blue patches (that lasted for days on our skin) on our arms. We learned all about growing coffee organically and experienced eating sugar cane cut from the stalk. In the afternoon, our service-learning project was 2-hours of pruning coffee trees to increase production of fruit and learned about pruning other fruit trees to stimulate the tree to produce more fruit and to allow more light to penetrate the plant.

#### **Day 7 – Saturday, March 4**

After breakfast, we headed back to San José, stopping en route at a very large Farmer's Market. Then we drove to Oroquieta for lunch and visited the oldest church (The Iglesia de San José) in Costa Rica. From there we drove to Ileana Terán's home and private garden.

#### **Day 8 – Sunday, March 5**

We were at the end of our adventure and headed for home – Pura Vida!!

*The North Carolina Cooperative Extension hosts for this tour:*

*Lisa Sanderson NC Extension Master Gardener State Coordinator 919-515-1226*

*Lisa\_Sanderson@ncsu.edu*

*George Wilson, Ph. D. Professor Emeritus Postharvest Physiology/Technology Horticultural Science Department North Carolina State University*



# Gulf Fritillaries Bring Joy, Peace, and Hope

Essay and Pictures By Jennifer Johnson

One day this winter when it was bitterly cold outside, I was putting some dates on my calendar. I flipped to March and I came across a reminder to myself to check my bluebird boxes and prepare them for potential visitors. My heart fluttered a little; it reminded me that Spring would soon be here, and I would spend my days outside preparing for the arrival of all God's creatures.

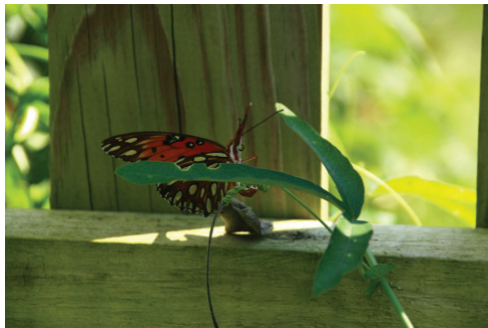
What word would you use to describe how you feel when you're working in the garden? The words that stand out for me are *joy*, *peace*, and *hope*.

God brings me joy in the smallest things. I grew up in Huntsville, but I don't remember seeing or noticing Gulf fritillaries – those beautiful bright orange butterflies. Even when I taught about butterflies to my second grade students, I don't remember Gulf fritillaries standing out to me. But now she is my little friend.

If I take time to *be still*, I notice her. She comes to my garden throughout the day and brings all of her friends with her. She nectars in my flower garden. As she is taking in nourishment, she flutters about and the underside of her wings reflect the sun's rays like tiny little mirrors. Sometimes I catch her playing hanky-panky with a male Gulf fritillary. Then she floats over to the passion vine I have growing in my yard just for her. While I'm watching, she bends her abdomen to touch a leaf and lays a single yellow egg. Then another. And another. As I watch, she lays 20-30

eggs, then flitters off.

In the coming days, I check the vine until the caterpillars begin to emerge one day. They munch the



leaves and grow and grow until they become big and fat. They leave the arbor with the passion vine growing wildly. They travel east along my fence until their body says STOP. They

attach themselves to my fence with a silk button. I can't help but stop all that I'm doing to watch as they turn into a chrysalis.

In the early morning, I go out to see how many will emerge that day. I watch them as they break free from the brown casing, their wings wrinkled and wet, dripping the dye that makes them so vibrant in the sun. Once they are strong enough, and their proboscis has formed into a drinking tube, they find the flowers with the rich nectar. And it all starts all over again.

How do they know which flowers will provide them the best nectar? What draws them to the passion vine to lay their eggs? Why do they leave my fence and travel east to form their chrysalis? To me, the answer is simple. It's God's design. Every butterfly was created to know what its host plant is. For the Gulf fritillary, it's the passion vine. For the black swallowtail, it's fennel or dill or parsley. For the giant swallowtail, it's rue or citrus plants. When that adult butterfly lays that tiny little egg on its host plant, the caterpillar stays on that same plant and finds all that it needs to thrive until the day comes when it is ready to form a chrysalis. Understanding that there is a design in nature brings me comfort and a joyous peace that passes all understanding.

So when you plant a host plant for a species of butterfly this spring and you find your garden filled with butterflies and caterpillars, take time to be still and enjoy them. And I hope that you, too, will find *comfort* and *joy*, and *peace* and *hope*. 🌿





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