




# GARDEN THYMES



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**SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST**

- Our 2024 Board
- 2023 MGNA Awards
- 2024 Calendar

## A Word from Our 2024 President . . . . .

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to serve as president of Master Gardeners of North Alabama for 2024. This new year will bring many opportunities for MGNA members to showcase their knowledge and willingness to volunteer in all areas related to gardening.

Our largest expenditures will be the building of two new greenhouses. These builds will happen during the first quarter of the year. The first 24 x 60 foot greenhouse to be completed will be on Bob Wallace Avenue in Huntsville, east of Enable Madison County Garden, formerly CASA. The purpose of the greenhouse will be to grow plants for the MGNA Annual Spring Plant Sale, which is MGNA’s largest fundraiser. In the future, there will be classes for the Master Gardener education programs and community workshops.



**Carlita Edwards (W21)**

The second 24 x 60 foot greenhouse will be constructed at the location of the former Three Springs facility on Browns Ferry Road in Madison. The location will be a new community center. There, MGNA will be propagating plants for our annual plant sale with hopes of conducting future workshops and aiding with a community garden.

I am looking forward to volunteering with fellow Master Gardeners who share a love of gardening as we aim to have a *Blooming good year*.

“..we aim to have a Blooming good year”



# INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS AND BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2024

## Pictures by Walt Lindblom (F13)

New Officers and Board Members for 2024 were installed by outgoing President Carol Weand at the December Christmas Social.

Our 2024 Officers are:

President: Carlita Edwards

Vice President: Acacia Moore

Treasurer: Ruth Kemple

Secretary: Karen Kirk Williams

New 2024 Directors:

Keith Johnson

Gina Gonzalez

Rotating off the Board are Walt Lindblom and Jim Mullen. We thank them for their years of service to MGNA.

Continuing on the Board as Directors are Paul Gohmann, Owen Hofer, Cathy Hales, and Dean Rice.

We thank these new Officers and Board members who have agreed to give their time, talents, skills and resources to lead this amazing organization. As members, we ask that you support them when asked to serve on committees, projects and other events/activities. MGNA has been Number One at the state level for many years and we hope to maintain that status, with your help.

### OUR OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS FOR 2024



Owen Hofer (Director), Keith Johnson (Director), Ruth Kemple (Treasurer), Acacia Moore (Vice President), Carlita Edwards (President), Paul Gohmann (Director), Dean Rice ( Director), Gina Gonzalez (Director), Karen Kirk-Williams (Secretary), Not pictured: Cathy Hales (Director)

# 2023 MGNA Christmas Social and Silent Auction

## By Cyndi Lindblom (W13), Photos by Jim Mullen (W19)

The MGNA Christmas Social was held at Community Fellowship Baptist Church, December 14. We had about 95 people in attendance.

This year we had a great Silent Auction, it was really hard to decide what to bid on. I did notice a bidding war or two going on! We made about \$1000 with the auction.

MGNA provided the meat which was ham and turkey breast and you wonderful MGNA members did the rest. We had TASTY side dishes and desserts!

There were several new faces at the social and we found out they were the graduating interns. This is a good intern group and Lilly Oaks, the Regional Extension Agent, did the honors of giving out the certificates of graduation. Then we moved on to installation of the officers and board members. Carlita Edwards, our 2024 President, spoke about the upcoming year.

The awards were handed out by Helen Carr and Debi Bonkoski. Janet Boothe gave out 2 Jane R Parks grants to Madison Public Library and Horizon Elementary School PTA.

We closed the program about 8PM after much more socializing and left around 9PM.



The social time



We had such a nice variety of delicious food



The Silent Auction



Our new regional extension agent, Lilly Oaks, along with former agent Rhonda Britton (not pictured) presented certificates to the graduating interns.

# Morris Elementary

Pictures and article by Carlita Edwards (W21)

Our team of MGNA volunteers continues to meet weekly with a class of 27 fourth graders at Morris Elementary. The class is divided into four teams.

Activities are varied and have included investigating and comparing soils, proper watering, weed identification, and checking for diseases and insects. Students learned the needs of plants through the acronym PLANT-Place, Light, Air, Nutrients, Thirst (water). Students harvested sweet potatoes that had been planted in May by last year's students and planted assorted carrot and radish seeds into the raised beds.

After learning the basic parts of a flower, students dissected flowers to discover what was inside. They have also made bird feeders using paper towel rolls peanut butter and wild bird seed.

Common seed dispersal methods were introduced to the students and they participated in demonstrations of these methods and recorded weekly changes in their garden journals. Students were introduced to comparison between dicots and monocots, and various propagation methods were discussed and demonstrated using plants donated by MGNA members.

The groups learned that a variety of plants have been used for medicinal purposes for thousands of years, and they made a salve that can be used to treat wounds. They have also learned how plants are used for coloring fabrics using plants such as beets and avocado.

*Isn't this just wonderful?*





## Acacia Moore (F12) Our New Vice President

When asked to volunteer for a worthy cause, **Acacia Moore** (F'12) says "Yes!" Given this approach, it is no surprise to learn that Acacia is deeply and broadly involved in the North Alabama community.

Acacia is a Huntsville native and her father named her after the Acacia tree in the Bible. The importance of family and faith was instilled in her at an early age. She has a strong work ethic and is highly competent, focused, and loves doing a good job. This attitude is mirrored in her approach, both professionally and personally.

As a child, Acacia's mother taught her the fundamentals of cooking and allowed her to experiment with different flavor profiles. Today, Acacia, her mother and daughter share a passion for cooking, baking, and eating good food. In October 2023, Acacia became a proud new "Abuela" (Grandmother in Spanish).

Acacia is a Senior Quality Manager and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DE&I) Ambassador with a local company. A short list of her hobbies includes certified SCUBA diver, gardener, cake decorator, cook, baker, quilter, local actor, model, and world traveler.

Acacia has joyfully volunteered for many MGNA and Huntsville Botanical Garden projects to include:

- MGNA Vice President (incoming 2024)
- HBG Spring Ephemeral Phenology Observer (2023)
- ACES 4-H Adult Advisory Board (2021 – present)
- Alabama A&M and Auburn University's Harvest for Health - Cohort 11B, Liaison (2021-2022)
- MGNA Newsletter Editor-in-Chief (2017-2018)
- Habitat for Humanity Homeowner's Education Coordinator (2016-2022)
- MGNA Board of Director (2016-2018)
- Fall Intern Mentorship Program (2016)
- Ask a Master Gardener (2016)
- Alabama A&M and Auburn University's Harvest for Health - Cohort 4, Mentor (2014-2020)
- Legacy Elementary Outdoor classroom (2013)
- pH testing (2013)
- HBG Administrative Aide (2012-2013)
- Dot's Greenhouse (2012)

Other community volunteer activities include Leadership Greater Huntsville Board of Director (2023-2024), City of Huntsville Beautification Board (2022-2024), City of Huntsville Human Relations Commission Board (2022-2025), 48in48 Website Builder for Nonprofits (2019-present), Jazz in the Park-Huntsville, Hospitality Chair (2015-present), AUM Foundation *Pathway to Success* Mentor (2015-present), AIM Ministry (2015-present), Kids to Love (2013-present), and Manna House (2012-present).

A few of her gardening interests include Bonsai, vegetable, lasagna, vertical, and water gardens.

*"My green thumb came only as a result of the mistakes I made while learning to see things from the plant's point of view." —Fred Dale*

# The Hofer's Hosted Our 2023 Picnic On Their Farm In October

Pictures by Suzanne Kirkhuff and Bob Goodwin



Those who arrived early got to experience a partial eclipse.





# THE DEMONSTRATION VEGETABLE GARDEN

Article and Photos by Susan Parker (F17)

A major goal of the DVG team during the summer was preparing the garden for the 2023 AMGA Fall Seminar. Our activities included planting fall crops, mulching, weeding, and installing crop ID and rotation charts. Our final activity was decorating the garden with pumpkins and zinnias.

Demonstrations during the seminar included use of exclusion pest cloths, soil sterilization, proper sanitation practices, and small-space and square-foot gardening. Mexican sunflowers, marigolds and zinnias were in full bloom to attract pollinators, and trials for bell pepper, okra and basil were highlighted.

Hosting this event allowed the DVG crew to celebrate and share 35 years of educating and demonstrating when greeting visitors to the Demonstration Vegetable Garden – A Gardening Classroom on Display.



Master Gardeners strolling through the DVG during the Fall Seminar



The DVG display before you enter the garden



Valeta Wheeler, our Intern of the Year, volunteered at the DVG. Here she is digging sweet potatoes.



## DATES TO REMEMBER IN 2024

### MGNA 2024 Meeting dates, times, and locations

- January 11, 11:30 am-1:00 pm. Auburn University Research and Innovation Campus, 345 Voyager Way NW, Huntsville, Alabama 35806
- February 8, 11:30 am-1:00 pm. Auburn University Research and Innovation Campus
- March 14, 11:30 am-1:00 pm. Auburn University Research and Innovation Campus
- **April 11—plant sale set up**
- **April 12—MGNA plant sale at Agribition Center, 4925 Moores Mill Rd., Hsv.**
- **April 13—MGNA plant sale at Agribition Center, 4925 Moores Mill Rd., Hsv.**
- May 18, 10:00 am, TBD
- June 13, 2024: 6:00 pm, Community Fellowship Church, 7905 Logan Drive, Huntsville Alabama 35803
- July 11, 2024: 6:00 pm, Community Fellowship Church
- August 8, 2024: 6:00 pm, Community Fellowship Church
- September 12, 2024: 6:00 pm, Community Fellowship Church
- October 10, 2024 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Auburn University Research and Innovation Campus
- November 14, 2024 11:30 am-1:00 pm, Auburn University Research and Innovation Campus
- December 12, 2024: 6:00 pm Christmas Social, Community Fellowship Church



Ameree Young will be busy planning new field trips this year. She says there will be at least two places she wants to plan a day trip, Lavender Wynde Farm and Manna House.  
Hurray!



## 2024 MGNA Education Workshop Schedule

The Workshop Committee, composed of Suzanne Kirkhuff, Bonnie Gardner, Karen Kirk-Williams, Helen Carr, Trish Cantrell-Teetor, Brenda Tapp and Janet Boothe, have finalized the 2024 MGNA Education Workshop schedule. The workshops will be presented at either Madison Library, Main Library, or South Huntsville Library. If you would like to join our troupe of remarkable Master Gardeners please contact Janet Boothe at [j.booth@bellsouth.net](mailto:j.booth@bellsouth.net). We meet the first Thursday of each month at the Extension Office.



### Workshops will be 10:30—noon (unless otherwise stated)

Newcomer and Beginner Vegetable Gardening Series, Madison Public Library 10:30 AM – 12 PM, Every Tuesday in February

**February 6<sup>th</sup>** – Starting a Vegetable Garden – Jayne Luetzow, Regional Extension Agent

**February 13<sup>th</sup>** - Seed Starting (what, when and how) Soil Test – Allyson Shabel, Urban Regional Extension Agent

**February 20<sup>th</sup>** – Maintaining the Garden, Diseases/Insect control - Tim Crow, Regional Extension Agent

**February 27<sup>th</sup>** – Food Preservation – Christy Mendoza, Regional Extension Agent, Food Safety and Quality

**March 19<sup>th</sup>** – “Pruning Shrubs and Trees” – Madison Public Library, MG Tom Simpson and MG Janet Boothe, 10:30 - Noon

**April 18<sup>th</sup>** – “Creating a Beautiful Pollinator-Friendly Cottage Garden” - Madison Public Library, MG Karen Kirk-Williams, 10:30 - Noon

**May 21<sup>st</sup>** – “10 Easy Ways to Kill Roses...NOT” – Main Library, MG and Rosarian Barbara McFarlan and Gail Futuron, 1PM – 2PM

**August 20<sup>th</sup>** – “How to Compost/Different Methods of Composting” – Master Gardener Jim Mullen, 10:30 - Noon

**September 18<sup>th</sup>** - “Terrariums”, Hands on, \$25, Maximum 25 people - Pam Price & Doty Henry, @ Extension 10 AM - Noon

**October 15<sup>th</sup>** – “Fall Gardening” – Marcus Garner, Urban Regional Extension Agent, 10:30 - Noon

**November 25<sup>th</sup>** – “Fall Floral Arrangement” – MGNA members only, \$35, Maximum 25 people, Huntsville Florist, Anderson Education Bldg., H’sv Botanical Garden, 10AM - Noon

## MGNA WORKSHOPS

By Suzanne Kirkhuff (W07) with pictures by Janet Boothe (W06)

We have had an awesome year workshop wise. We beat all past records with attendance. The most attended workshops were “Nuisance Wildlife Management” and “ Cottage Gardening” by our own Karen Kirk-Williams.

Our “Floral Arrangement” workshop conducted by Huntsville Florist for our Master Gardeners is always a success. Below are a few candid shots of the floral workshop. See if you can find your picture if you attended.

Be sure and check your new directory when it comes out for a listing of 2024 workshops and if you are interested in joining the committee, contact me or Janet Boothe.

In 2024 the workshops will be “Pruning Shrubs and Trees”, “Roses, Variety, Select Site and Maintenance”, “Fall Gardening”, “Terrariums-Hands on”, “Fall Floral Arrangement”, and more.



Lily Rose Oaks, our new extension agent, took the workshop. She is seated on the far right.

## MGNA Design Your Home Landscape Course By Karen Kirk-Williams (F21)

The MGNA Landscape Team, after 18 months of preparation, will offer our new 6-week **Design Your Home Landscape Course** beginning January 31. Team members are Janet Acosta, Janet Boothe, Gigi Bullman, Helen Carr, Rita Icenogle, Suzanne Kirkhuff, Karen Kirk-Williams, Sandra Smith, Eileen Tully, and Carol Umstaedter. Our new Regional Extension Agent, Lilly Oaks, will also teach a class.

Our DYHL course is based on classes Karen started as a Master Gardener at Northwest Florida State College, which quickly became their most popular adult class. Each class features a lecture combined with individual student/MG consultations. \$60 includes a 100 page handbook and a personalized list of recommended plants. The class size is limited.

This outreach project is ideal for homeowners who wish to learn how to design their own landscape using an easy-to-follow process. We provide simple design instruction and focus on proper plant selection, planting, and maintenance using ACES research-based plant lists and guidance.

Our goal is to help participants create a pleasing landscape that offers enjoyment and pride of ownership. We stress “right plant, right place” using sustainable gardening practices so that the use of pesticides, irrigation, and maintenance is minimized.

Wednesdays, January 31-March 6, 10:00-12:00

Auburn Campus, 345 Voyager Way

SUG registration in early January

Master Gardeners of North Alabama LANDSCAPE TEAM will offer a new 6-week class

### Design Your Home Landscape Course



Wednesdays, January 31-  
March 6, 2024  
10:00-12:00

Auburn Research & Innovation Campus  
345 Voyager Way, Cummings Research Park, Huntsville



*Class size is limited - Advance registration + \$60 payment required*

Students will receive:

1. ~100-page Handbook
2. Personalized list of recommended plants based on landscape preferences and growing conditions
3. Detailed information for recommended plants

Each class includes:

- One-on-one student/MG sessions for Q&A, best plant choices, etc.
- Helpful step-by-step DIY landscape design tips & shortcuts
- Research-based advice on plant selection, planting & maintenance



**ALABAMA MASTER GARDENERS**  
ALABAMA COOPERATIVE EXTENSION SYSTEM

Please send an email to [WorkshopContacts@mginfo.org](mailto:WorkshopContacts@mginfo.org) to receive more information and to receive notification for MGNA Sign-up Genius online registration in early January (No early registration)

# INTERNS RECEIVE THEIR CERTIFICATION

Pictures by Walt Lindblom (F13)



Terry Boyd



Ara Cripps



Donna Everett



Elise Fulda



Victoria Justice



Wendy Worley



Extension Agent Lilly Oaks presented the awards. Kim Robbins on the far right side also received her certificate.

## Jane R. Parks Memorial Grant

By Janet Boothe (W06), Picture By David Boothe

The Jane R. Parks Memorial Grant was established in 2012 as a memorial to a MGNA member. This grant supports educational horticultural projects in Madison County.

The 2023 recipients of the grant were:

**Madison Public Library:** Will create a Seed Library to encourage the community to discover the joy of gardening, learn how to grow their own food, help with food insecurity, and create community connections. The grant amount is \$1000.

**Horizon Elementary School PTA:** Will have a Plant Night where students will learn about the life cycle of a seed and learn different plant names. Families will paint a pot, plant a seed and monitor the seeds growth. The students will be learning about the environment, plants that hopefully will lead to an appreciation and love for nature. The grant amount is \$325.

Donations to the Jane R. Parks Memorial Grant are deeply appreciated and are tax deductible.

Grant committee members are Janet Boothe, Sue Bish, and Suzanne Kirkhuff.



Suzanne Kirkhuff and Janet Boothe with grant recipients Carolyn Reagle of the Madison Library and Eva Clifton of Horizon Elementary

# 2023 M.G.N.A. Award Winners

By Helen Carr, Co-chair of Awards Committee (W98)



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There were lots of surprised faces at our Christmas social when the award winners heard their names called. They do an exceptional job volunteering their skills and time for our community.

Lilly Rose Oaks, our new extension agent, and Rhonda Britton, our past agent, presented the intern of the Year Award to Valeta Wheeler. Friend of the Master Gardeners was awarded to Carolyn Reagle, assistant branch manager of the Madison Public Library, for her efforts with the publicizing and scheduling of our workshops at various libraries.

The New Initiative Award was won by Jennifer and Keith Johnson for coordinating efforts to start the “Blevins Gap Pollinator Garden”. The Project of the Year Award was earned by Ameree Young for her double success in chairing both the Field Trips and our Hospitality Committee.

Lifetime Achievement Award was won by Melissa Kirkindall, who since the winter of 1998 has accumulated 8,000 volunteer hours. She is known especially as head of the Speakers Bureau, wildflower promoter, and hummingbird supporter. A special Lifetime Achievement Certificate (and Lifetime Membership and pin) were awarded to Elouisa Stokes for her 40 years of active service to the local and state organizations.

Master Gardener of the Year, the final and most prestigious award, was earned by Suzanne Kirkhuff for volunteering all of her skills so graciously, chairing so many committees and being our newsletter editor.

*Debi Bonkoski (F10) and Helen Carr W98) chaired the Awards Committee and presented the awards unless noted otherwise.*



**Master Gardener of the Year, Suzanne Kirkhuff**



**Intern of the Year Award, Valeta Wheeler**  
Presented by former extension agent, Rhonda Britton



**Group Project of the Year, Ameree Young**



**Lifetime Member Award, Elouisa Stokes**  
Presented by Carol Weand

*... Awards continued on next page*

## 2023 M.G.N.A. Award Winners, continued



**Friend of the Master Gardeners  
Carolyn Reagle of the Madison Library**



**New Initiative Award, Keith and Jennifer  
Johnson ( Jennifer not pictured)**



**Lifetime Achievement Award  
Melissa Kirkindall**



**Congratulations to our 2023 MGNA Award winners: Suzanne Kirkhuff, Elouisa Stokes, Melissa Kirkindall, Ameree Young, Carolyn Reagle, Valeta Wheeler, Keith Johnson (not pictured Jennifer Johnson)**



# GARDEN THYMES



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MGNA has 168 certified Master Gardeners.

Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/MGofNA](http://www.facebook.com/MGofNA)

MGNA website: [www.mginfo.org](http://www.mginfo.org)

The Alabama Master Gardener Program is conducted at the county level by the Alabama Cooperative Extension System.

*Thank you to our members who submitted articles and pictures and special thanks to our proofreaders. We would have no newsletter without you.*  
Editor

