



History of the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program 1988 – 2011 By Vicky Kessel

1988

The Master Gardener program began in 1988 when Janet Carson, County Extension Agent, began searching for 40 citizens to help solve gardening problems in Pulaski County. Following five training sessions the 40 would have responsibilities that would include assisting with the telephone, answering citizen’s calls on horticulture, planting and maintaining a demonstration vegetable garden at the Little Rock Zoo, maintaining the Old State house flower beds, and other horticulture projects.

Kathleen Ragsdale designed the Master Gardener logo using the tree “that grows strong branching out to many areas of Pulaski County.”

1988 - 1989

There was not a slate of officers for the group, but Sally Garrison took notes. The second Master Gardener class had 40 members including 11 of the original 19 from the 1988 class who were re-certified.

1989 - 1990

There was not a slate of officers, but Sally Garrison took notes. Garden Projects worked in 1989 and 1990 were; The Zoo Vegetable Garden (89), The Old State House (90), Trapnall Hall (1990), Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden at Pinnacle Mt. Visitor Center (1990), Project Learning Tree (1990), Master Minutes (1990), Arbor Day, and a Zoo Aviary (1990).

The first PCMG family picnic and the Christmas party were held in 1990.

1990 - 1991

There was not a slate of officers for the group, but Sally Garrison took notes. During 1990 and 1991, Master Gardener meetings were held bi-monthly at the County Extension Offices.

In addition to the projects mentioned previously, five new projects were initiated; North Little Rock Old Mill (1991), Contemplation Garden (1991), State Hospital Greenhouse (1991), School for the Deaf (1991) and E.O. Manes House (1991).

A Master Gardener picnic and a Christmas Party were held in 1991.

The Master Gardener training in 1991 was held at Highland Valley Methodist Church.

The PCMG hosted an event at the Old Mill in Jim Wilson’s honor, The Victory Garden TV host.

1991 - 1992

The PCMG elected their first slate of officers in the fall of 1992 with Sally Garrison becoming the first PCMG President.

New garden projects in 1992 included: Baptist Rehabilitation Institute and Arkansas Fish and Game building (A brief project).

The first annual Arkansas Flower and Garden Show was in February 1992 at Robinson Center. Many PCMG assisted with the show.

In 1992, Regular Master Gardener meetings were held bi-monthly at the Arkla Building, Blue Flame Room.

1992 - 1993

In 1992-1993 Sally Garrison served as PCMG president.

In 1993 Beth Phelps became the new Pulaski County Extension Agent and began working with the PCMG program.

In 1993 the MG meetings became monthly instead of bi-monthly.

War Memorial Bus Stop Garden became the only new project of 1993.

The 1993 social events included a fall family picnic held at Burns Park and a Christmas Party.

In 1993 the PCMG Association became a non-profit corporation registered with the state of Arkansas. For the first time, members were assessed a \$10.00 annual fee.

1993 - 1994

In 1993-1994 Cecilia Buck served as PCMG President.

In 1994 the Governor's Mansion Vegetable Garden was added to the existing projects.

Along with numerous activities, including a picnic and a variety of trips, a Christmas party rounded out an exciting year.

1994 - 1995

For 1994-95 Jay Hill served as PCMG President. Again, the meetings were held monthly in the ARKLA Blue Flame Room in Little Rock.

There were no new projects initiated in 1994-95 MG year.

Five-year service certificates were awarded to 35 PCMG.

In 1995 the PCMG held their annual spring picnic and Christmas party. Also, the membership voted to purchase good reference books annually for the MG Library at the Extension Office.

A Sunshine Committee was initiated.

1995 - 1996

For 1995-96 Jane Gulley served as PCMG President.

In April of 1995 a new project, The Victorian Cottage, located in downtown North Little Rock, was added.

Activities in 1996 included several trips. Some of the trips were out of state travel. The annual Spring Picnic and the Christmas party were well attended.

A few of the important events in 1996 included honoring Carl Hunter for his many contributions to the MG program. He was presented with the title Honorary Master Gardener. Also, on September 10, 1996 the PCMG began meeting in the new AR Cooperative Extension Building auditorium on University Ave.

1996 - 1997

In 1996-97 served as David Dodson as President.

The PCMG added the River Market to its list of MG projects. As in years past there were many horticulture activities available for MG participation.

28 PC Master Gardeners received their five (5) year pins.

1997 - 1998

In 1997-1998 Bettye Jane Daugherty served as PCMG President.

A new project for 1997-98 was the Cammack Village UALR Fruit Garden.

1998 - 1999

In 1998-99 Connie Ruth Smith served as President of the PCMG. The total slate of officers consisted of: President, 1st Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Past President.

Committee Chairmen were selected for the following activities: Newsletter, Social, Speakers Bureau, Sunshine, and Travel.

Park Hill Water Works, in the Park Hill area of North Little Rock became a new PCMG project.

The statewide Master Gardener conference, held in April, identified several Pulaski County people and projects for special awards: Included in these awards were Jack Singleton for his "Funny Bone" award-winning story and the Master Minutes received the Outstanding Newsletter Award. Ten MG received ten year service pins and twenty-one MG received five-year service pins.

As in years past, many activities and/or trips dotted the calendar through out the calendar year including the annual PCMG tour of gardens as well as the annual picnic and Christmas party. The Arkansas Times highlighted MG Rita Hopkins Johnson, Nancy and Duncan Porter and Jane Gulley as well as the Old Mill. Also, a feature photo of the Contemplation Garden in MacArthur Park was published by the Arkansas Democrat.

An 18-member committee was formed to do a self-evaluation and develop future plans for the PCMG. Membership consisted of past presidents, current executive board and several at-large members.

In 1999, 7,291 hours were put into our projects and 5,016 hours were spent learning more about gardening. 1,140 hours were spent on the telephone at the Cooperative Extension Office and we

spent 2,054 hours in community outreach. All in all, we totaled 15,501 volunteer hours as PCMG members of the PCMG.

1999 - 2000

In 1999-2000 Martha Jones served as PCMG President.

A special project was chosen in June by the MGs. It was identified as 'The Green Team' and was located at the Immaculate Conception School in NLR. Its purpose was to involve youth in the discovery of the good earth; selecting plants, developing gardens, and promoting self-esteem.

Beth Phelps announced two new committees in 2000: Habitat for Humanity Project and Youth Garden Resource Committee.

The home of Virginia Johnson, a PCMG, was highlighted on HGTV hosted by Bob Vila.

Several PCMG, Jan King, and Nancy and Duncan Porter were featured in Southern Living magazine during 2000.

Fourteen PCMG received ten-year service pins.

Mentors were used for the first time to assist the MG trainees.

In 2000 an Arkansas MG-only web site was initiated.

2000 - 2001

In 2000-2001 Suellen Roberts served as PCMG President.

Fifteen MG received ten year pins.

Several PCMG volunteered to assist with the annual Little Rock Council of Garden Clubs Garden Tour serving as garden experts.

The first Friend of the Master Gardener Award was presented in 2001 to Marilyn Mason, Bryan Day, and Joe Scerbo with the LR Parks and Recreation Department Horticultural Division. Also, the Green Team, an Oakbrooke Elementary School horticulture project was featured in the August issue of Active Years, a monthly magazine.

Dues were increased to \$15.00 in October of 2001 (New Master Gardeners did not pay dues the first year).

An anonymous friend paid the fee to use the State Extension Office auditorium for the 2002 meetings.

2001 - 2002

In 2001-2002 Jane Druff served as PCMG President.

Curran Hall, a new PCMG project, opened May 18, 2002. Other new projects approved by the PCMG were Historic Arkansas Museum (formerly Arkansas Territorial Restoration), and Oak Forest Community Garden.

Two new committees were formed in 2002; the '3P's' (Publicity, Public Relations, and Promotion Committee), and the "Stuff" committee. The "Stuff" committee will merchandise items like caps,

t-shirts, etc.

2002 became the year that the PCMG Board voted to provide each project with \$100.00.

Jane Druff was elected chairperson of the State Master Gardener Advisory Board.

Carolyn Newbern chaired a Project Evaluation committee that considered new project requests.

A new Retention Committee, chaired by Jane Gulley, was selected. Its purpose was to investigate why people leave the PCMG program.

2002 - 2003

In 2002-2003 Carolyn Newbern served as PCMG President, and for the first time two At-large members were selected to serve on the board.

Three new projects were approved at the September general meeting: Patrick Henry Hayes Senior Center, Asian Wildwood Park for the Performing Arts, and the Amy Sanders Library.

Some of the activities included the annual picnic and Christmas party, a trip to St. Louis to see the Missouri Botanical Gardens, and a visit to Ridgecrest Nursery in Wynne.

A color brochure outlining Master Gardener projects was produced.

In January of 2003 there were 321 certified PCMG.

The Pinnacle Mountain project received 3rd place for the Arkansas MG Project of the Year award.

Sustainer Status was established and a MG was eligible to apply who had been a member in good standing for a minimum of seven years.

Mrs. Ethelyn McKinney, long time Secretary at the Pulaski County Extension Service, who assisted with the Master Gardener program retired.

Friend of Master Gardeners' was awarded to the PC prisoners who helped at the greenhouse.

Twenty-four PCMG received five-year pins, eight received ten-year pins, and two received fifteen-year pins.

A 15-year Lifetime Membership policy was established by the State Advisory Board.

At the April MG meeting a new Volunteer Manual was introduced.

2003 - 2004

In 2003-2004 Nancy Kirsch served as President of PCMG.

Beginning in January of 2004 the PCMG began having their monthly meeting on the third Tuesday of the month at St. James United Methodist Church at 11:30 until 1:00 p.m.

Carolyn Newbern was selected to the State Advisory Board. Curran Hall was selected as PCMG and State Project of the year. The award was dedicated to the City of Little Rock. Chris Olsen was selected to receive the Pulaski County 'Friend of MG' and the state MG 'Friend of MG' award. The Pulaski County Master Gardener membership totaled 315 members.

Beth Phelps, Pulaski County Extension Agent, was recognized as the Arkansas Flower and Garden Show Volunteer of the Year.

Activities for the year were numerous. Several of these activities included an 'Heirloom Gardening Seminar' with 164 MG members in attendance, a clinic at the River Market, an information meeting and a light meal was provided to the Quorum Court members, and the annual Spring Picnic and Christmas Party.

Leave of Absence Reinstatement Requirements were adopted by the board. New membership cards were provided to the membership, and a new brochure identifying MG projects was distributed to the membership.

The membership decided that 2 workdays a year would be given to St. James in appreciation of our use of the church facilities.

Special recognition was given to six members for completing 15 years of service and fourteen members were honored for 10 years of service. In 2004, there were 10,450.5 volunteer project work hours, 7,930.5 education hours, and 2,040 community outreach hours.

2004 - 2005

In 2004-2005 Dick Blankenbaker served as PCMG President.

In the 2004-2005 MG year we had 321 active members and 44 trainees. The Baptist Rehabilitation Project was recognized as the PCMG Project of the Year. Barry Travis (LR Convention Center) was also selected as the 'Friend of MG'. Eleven members received recognition for 10 years of service and nine members received pins for 15 years of service. The new trainees totaled 53.

Activities for the year included a PCMG Heritage Gardening Day 'AR Gardens: The Roots of our Heritage'; a Continuing Ed. Program 'Tropical Paradise'; a display was erected at the AR State Fair in the Arts and Crafts building; The Extension Service hosted the Quorum Court members; the Spring Picnic and Christmas Party.

Ann Ward, secretary for Beth Phelps at the Extension Office retires and Carl Hunter, distinguished MG, lecturer and author on Wild Flowers of Arkansas passed away.

Special recognitions include an article on Curran Hall in the Arkansas Gardener; a profile of the MG Program and President Dick Blankenbaker in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette

A new Master Gardener organization State Advisory Group "County 76" was introduced.

Two new projects began: the Maumelle Community Center and the Scholars Garden at the Clinton School for Public Service. The Oak Forest Garden was discontinued as a Master Gardener project.

2005 - 2006

In 2005-2006 Sandy Harrison served as PCMG President.

Mt. Holly was selected as the PCMG Project of the year; Maurice Dillon, who helped at the Gov. Mansion, was selected as the PCMG 'Friend of MG'

A long range planning committee was selected to research the possibility of building a new greenhouse and to survey the membership about a new meeting place. After meeting with the authorities at St. James concerning the need for more space, a solution was quickly reached and the PCMG meetings remained at St. James United Methodist Church.

A new project, The Jacksonville Pathfinders' Greenhouse, was initiated in the fall of 2006. The State Hospital PCMG Project became inactive.

The PCMG contributed \$1,000.00 to help sponsor the 2007 International MG Conference. Activities for the year again were numerous with a special occasion when the Board, led by Jim Dyer, provided Bananas Foster to the attending membership. The annual Spring Picnic and Christmas party were also very successful.

Eight members received 'Lifetime' pins, eleven received ten-year pins and the new MG class totaled 35.

Volunteer time on projects totaled 10,422 hours, while phone hours, 1,169. Continuing Ed. recorded 10,356 hours and Community Outreach equaled 1,471 hours for a total of 23,418 hours.

2006 - 2007

In 2006-2007 Marilyn Tilley served as PCMG President.

The Pictorial Directory was distributed to the membership, A policy amendment to increase education hours by providing up to 5 points earned for reading, watching TV, and listening to radio garden programs was approved.

Jacksonville City Hall was the Pulaski County Master Gardeners selection for Project of the Year and at the state meeting received 2nd place overall. The Volunteer of the Year award was presented to George Collins from Arkansas Garden Center.

The International Master Gardener Conference was held, May 2-5, at the LR Convention Center. PCM Gardeners and Master Gardeners throughout the state insured a successful conference by acting as greeters, announcers, or whatever the need demanded.

Twenty-five members received Lifetime certification and we had thirty-four new Master Gardeners.

Special emphasis went to Pinnacle Mountain Project for being nominated for 2007 Take Pride in America Award given by the U.S. Dept. of Interior and to the Pulaski County Master Gardener booth at the Watershed Appreciation, which was held at War Memorial Stadium.

2007 - 2008

In 2007-2008 Jim Dyer served as PCMG President. Jim passed away in early 2008 and Don Davis, first Vice President served as president for the remainder of the term.

The Old Mill became the Arkansas Project of the Year and Pulaski County Judge, Buddy Villines, presented a proclamation recognizing the Old Mill for its accomplishment.

Bert Turner was Arkansas Friend of PCMG for 2007.

In 2008 we experienced our first MG membership meeting in the New Worship Center at St. James. The monthly fee is \$50.00 for each meeting with the exception of November and that will be \$75.00.

We had a successful New Chair and Co-Chair meeting, The Spring Picnic, the ice cream social held at Chris Olsen's, and the Christmas Party were well attended, The Quapaw Quarter Association awarded the PCMG with the "Peg Smith Service Award" for their work enhancing and promoting the historic places of Little Rock and Pulaski County.

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Two new projects proposals were approved; The Witt Stephens Jr. Central Arkansas Nature Center and the Pulaski County Courthouse. The printing of the Master Minutes was changed from the State Cooperative Extension building to the County Ext. Office to save on expenses.

Six members received 15-year pins and twenty members received 10-year pins.

In 2008 the Master Gardener program in Arkansas celebrated its 20th anniversary.

2008 - 2009

In 2008-2009 Don Davis served as PCMG President.

Eighty-five members attended a well-organized advanced training course on Edible Landscaping. 23 thousand hours of volunteer service were dedicated to answering gardening questions on the telephone, working on projects, continuing education, and community outreach.

The PCMG Project of the Year, the Governor's Mansion Vegetable Garden, was recognized as the State runner up and the Friend of Master Gardener nomination went to Ed Garretson from the Old State House.

A new greenhouse committee was formed, the MG Project brochure was updated, the State Hospital Project was reinstated, and the 3P's Committee was disbanded.

The Little Rock Park's Commission recognized PCMG for their work in beautifying the Little Rock Parks and the City.

Fifty-two people graduated from the Master Gardener training.

Tom Mertens retired from his position as Horticulture Program Assistant with the Pulaski County Extension Service.

2009-2010

Martha Basinger served as PCMG president this year. There were 53 graduates of the Fall 2009 entering class; nine recipients of the Lifetime Membership award (15 years); 14 recipients of Ten Year Membership award, and 18 recipients of Five Year Membership award.

The Continuing Education Committee presented a Landscape Design seminar in April, the Spring Picnic was held at Wildwood in May, and PCMG volunteers helped Janet Carson guide a group of Tennessee Master Gardeners on a Little Rock garden tour in June.

In September, Janet Carson's book *In the Garden* was launched, with book sale proceeds earmarked to benefit the PCMG program. Also in September, a new photo calendar, the 2011 "Twelve Months of Gardening in Arkansas," was introduced, with proceeds to benefit County 76, which produced it, and the PCMG program.

A Fund Raising Committee was created this year, with the goal of generating funds to build a new greenhouse and to support PCMG projects. The committee began planning events where more copies of the book and the calendar could be sold. The New Greenhouse committee continued seeking bids for the project, working in conjunction with the State Hospital.

2010-2011

Jett Cuffman served as PCMG president this year.

To make it easier for the new Master Gardeners to become familiar with all the PCMG projects before they make their choices, an additional opportunity to visit projects was introduced in the fall. MG project visits were scheduled for Thursdays during the weeks when the Wednesday training classes were held. Trainees were free to choose which projects they wanted to visit. Project members were on site to meet and greet and "show and tell," without a formal tour.

The board determined at its annual August review meeting not to take on any new projects in 2011, so that existing project committees could be strengthened.

Announcement was made that Arkansas Master Gardeners would participate in the Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network of the National Weather Reporting Service.

In the 2010-2011 year, work progressed on the renovation and expansion of the Little Rock greenhouse, and it was ultimately generously funded. In June, the Fundraising Committee announced that general fundraising for the greenhouse had reached \$19,645 and that the Stella Boyle Smith Trust had made a \$10,000 gift. Then Mike Mayton of the Stella Boyle Smith Trust said the trust would like to make an additional \$10,000 donation in honor of Mackie Hamilton's birthday. The new greenhouse was named the Stella Boyle Smith Greenhouse.

The PCMG organization learned that it must remit sales tax on plant sale proceeds because there are now more than three sales a year. The board decided to incorporate the expense of the tax into the price of the plants, rather than calculate the tax on each sale.

Many PCMGs qualified for Length of Service Awards; there were sixteen 5-year awards, sixteen ten-year awards, ten 15-year (Lifetime) awards, and seven 20-year (Lifetime Plus) awards.