

History of the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program 2012-2018

2011-2012

The PCMGs 'were working on the renovation of the Little Rock greenhouse. The fundraising was started in 2011. The construction had started in 2011 but continued into 2012 with a grand opening ceremony on April, 24th at 2:00.

There was a bus tour by a group of 30-35 Master Gardeners from Sedgwick, Kansas. The group requested to see The Old Mill, Governor's Mansion, and Witt Stephen's Nature Center and would be in Little Rock in April. An orientation for chairs of PCMG projects was started. All PCMG projects were continued for 2013, but the Board decided no new projects would be added because of manpower concerns. The Stuff Committee, Horticulture Hotline Committee, and PCMG Speaker's Bureau were all working in 2012. The Stuff Committee decided to place orders in November and April to satisfy quantity requirements made by the vendor. A Continuing Education class about hydrangeas was presented. A July 17th Garden Tours and Social was held. It started and ended at the Amy Sander's Library and included tours of PCMGs 'gardens. New pictorial directories were made for the PCMG membership and a PCMG Volunteer Manual was compiled to help new Master gardeners learn how the Pulaski County Master gardener program functioned.

The big news was a complete overhaul of the MG hourly reporting system. A new statewide system was being started. Beth's assistant, Katie Reddick, and four PCMG Board members attended a December training session in Faulkner County because the system was to be implemented statewide in 2013. Bren Coop, PCMG Treasurer, told the Board the PCMG group had to pay sales tax monthly instead of quarterly because of changes in the tax law.

2012-2013

A new Project Incentive Plan called Busy Bees was started. It recognized those who gave over 40 hours to their primary project. The award was a small replica of a bee that could be attached to the membership badge of the PCMG. 47 PCMGs 'were eligible to receive the award the first year. "Bring a Friend to Your Project" was started as a recruitment tool. New larger metal PCMG signs that were uniform in size and appearance and that had an updated MG logo were purchased for each PCMG project. It was decided \$200 should be allotted to each project for expenses.

David Werling proposed a PCMG Facebook page and after extensive work coordinating with the UofA Extension Office it was approved. \$500 was contributed to the 25th Birthday Party for Arkansas Master Gardeners that was being coordinated by Janet Carson.

2013-2014

2014 was a special year because our leader, Beth Phelps, went to the State office as the State Director of the Ouachita District. Randy Forst came to Pulaski County as Pulaski County CEA-Staff Chair and took over as shepherd of the PCMGs.

A continuing education class, Your Urban Garden, was presented with 115 people registered, and a Saturday Master Gardener Class was presented by Janet Carson. There was concern about integrating the Saturday group into established PCMG projects, and it was decided the mentoring program was the best way to make the new PCMGs feel welcome. The PCMG Board was expanded and became more of a working board with individual responsibilities, and a Training Committee was formed to handle the new members training programs. Before Randy came Beth Phelps did most of the planning of the training classes.

Beth Phelps was honored as Agent of the Year at the State MG Meeting.

2014-2015

Randy Forst immediately made a major change in the focus of the PCMG when he rescinded the mandatory Hot Line Phone Duty requirement. Because of changing times not as many people were calling the Extension Office to get gardening information. The Horticulture Hotline project was scaled back and became voluntary. The Horticulture Hotline was reorganized to manage the required orientation of phone duty information for the new Master Gardeners and to help coordinate volunteers for phone duty. Planning was started on the 2017 State MG Meeting that was hosted by the PCMG group.

2015-2016

There was an ice cream social held in downtown Little Rock. Projects toured would include, The Scholar's Garden, Old Sate House, Heifer's Project, Curran Hall, Witt Stephens, and HAMS. Ice cream would be served at the Choctaw Building. Three major changes were made in 2015. The PCMG Board raised dues from \$15.00 to \$20.00 for yearly dues, and \$20.00 to \$30.00 for late dues. A huge change was having PCMG Board terms run from January 1 to December 31 instead of October 1 to the next year's October 31st. Marylea Gazette was President during this time and she had to serve two extra months, Nov. and Dec. because of the change in Board terms.

The third major change was redoing the bylaws to divide the duties of the treasurer of PCMG to help with book keeping chores.

Three new projects were added in 2015, The Heifer Project, the Family Home Serenity Garden, and the Arkansas State Fairgrounds became PCMG sanctioned projects.

2016

Because of a revision to the PCMG By-laws, the officer's terms now ran a calendar year, Jan.1 to Dec.31. Randy reminded the PCMG Board that all Master Gardeners who wanted to continue in the program had to sign a Volunteer Agreement. In May of 2016 there were a few MGs who had not signed. The Fairgrounds Project was granted permission to expand by the PCMG Board and the Pulaski County Rose Garden was added as a sanctioned project.

2017

This entire year was busy with the State MG Conference, A Capitol Idea. 615 people registered to attend. A Project Evaluation Committee, Project Evaluation and Support Team (PEST) was formed. There are 34 PCMG sanctioned projects and the PEST Committee checked to see if each project had a current Host Agreement on file and if the project was running smoothly. 10 projects would be evaluated in 2017 and ten more each year until the task was complete. After the initial evaluations each project would be re-evaluated every three years. Two new projects were started in 2017. The DIG Project in conjunction with the Hilary Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center, and a PCMG Demonstration Garden at the CA Vines 4-H Center. The ground breaking for the PCMG Demonstration Garden was November 16th at 2:30. A new website ARMGS.ORG was started. Another first was the announcement that the State Flower and Garden show would be moving to Barton Coliseum in 2018.

Submitted by Jane Gulley