

MG WOOD WORKS



APRIL, MAY, JUNE 2024

Inside This Issue

2023 WCMG Service Pins page 2

2023 WCMG 2023 Awards page 3

Certified Naturally Grown page 5

Texas Master Naturalist page 6

Value of Trees page 8

Squirrel Proof Bird Feeder page 9

Going Native, Some Lessons I've Learned page 10



Upcoming Events:

Lunch & Learn: (held at the Wood County Extension Office, 618 Main St., Quitman, TX)

April 25 - Composting-Latest & Greatest Methods

May 23 Orchids & Houseplants

June 27-Revamping Winnsboro Library Gardens with Earth Kind Principles



President's Letter

by *Angela Thompson*

Hey yall! I am so excited about our Spring Conference; Homesteading, Back to Basics because I am a Homesteader! We live on 5 ½ acres in Mineola, TX and call our little farm The Chicken Coop Homestead. Over the years we have raised chickens, pigs, horses and of course a garden.

I was raised in town, but my relatives lived on a small farm in Golden, TX. I loved visiting them and have very good memories of gardening, feeding the animals, fishing, (they even raised their own worms-vermicomposting) picking fruit from the orchard, milking, churning butter, canning etc.

One of my earliest memories was a time when I was about 4 years old. My aunt and uncle had purchased 100 baby chicks and had them in a big box in their house. Of course at that age I was so curious about those cute little baby chicks but was told not to mess with them. My aunt

YEARS OF SERVICE



Linda Long & Linda Timmons
20 yrs of service



Kathi Ladewig receiving her
15 year service pin



Jenna Nelson receiving her
10 year service pin



Elaine Porter, Susan Jarrell and Ann Reynolds receiving their 5 year service pins (not pictured are Hilda Clark, Jessie Mellon, Melinda Moffat & Theresa Pruitt).

stepped outside to take care of a chore and while she was gone the temptation was just too great! Before I knew it, the whole box fell over and 100 baby chicks were everywhere; under the furniture, behind the refrigerator, just everywhere! I was able to get the box back up and was desperately trying to scoop up baby chicks when my aunt walked into the calamity! Now you know where my fascination and my love of chickens started, way back when I was 4 years old.

After 2020, I expanded my garden and started growing and foraging medicinal herbs. As an RN, of course I believe in modern medicine but wanted to be prepared just in case. I began an online course on herbal medicine and now make oils, salves and tinctures for my family and friends.

Because I was so young on the farm, it was just a fun adventure but I didn't really learn the skills of homesteading. As a perpetual learner, I love learning new skills and becoming a Master Gardener in 2019 has expanded my knowledge greatly. We are just one generation away from losing all the valuable wisdom of homesteading. When people have to rely on their homestead for feeding their family they cultivate good anecdotal knowledge but Wood County Master Gardeners are so fortunate to learn, teach and demonstrate scientific, evidence based practices at our events such as this conference, our trainee classes, Lunch and Learn, Science Days, demonstration gardens and the Greenhouse Tour.

Thank you all for your skills, knowledge and willingness to volunteer as a Wood County Master Gardener to fulfill our purpose as an educational volunteer program of Texas AgriLife Extension Service. We are never too old to learn something new and pass it on to the next generation!

Happy Homesteading



WCMGA 2023 Awards

Gayle Mullinax and Nancy Kinder with their plant for attending every WCMGA monthly meeting this year.



Meleena Byram with her **“WCMGA Community Outreach 2023”** award. Meleena has spent a lot of time and energy in her community, meeting and talking to its members as well as its leaders. Meleena has spent her time in community outreach this year through her work on the Hawkins City Park and Library Project as well as working the MG booth at both of the festivals held in Hawkins. She has represented the WCMGA well through promotion,

educational information shared, and her positivity!

Laura Palumbo with her **“WCMGA Project Leader 2023”** award. Laura worked tirelessly as the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office Gardens Project Leader, with the help of Dana Childs, through the heat of the summer. Also, Laura has been a dedicated volunteer at the Quitman Library Project and has since taken over the reigns as project coordinator alongside Dana Childs. Laura has been a quick study and is always looking for ways to help our association grow!



Carolyn West with her **“WCMGA Innovator of the Year 2023”** award. Carolyn has



excelled at her role on the Executive Board this year and has brought a new, innovative take on her responsibilities as Vice President. She has brought in wonderful groups and speakers to the 2023 monthly association meetings. Carolyn also led the 2023 Class Graduation Luncheon Committee coming up with new ideas to honor and celebrate the work of the 2023 training class. It was a wonderful and very lovely luncheon that is still being talked about!

Gayle Mullinax with her **“WCMGA Master Gardener of the Year 2023”** award.

Gayle has served as Director for the Wood County Master Gardeners for many years, always attending Director’s meetings and reporting back to the association. Gayle helped facilitate the WCMG 2023 Training Class and was a catalyst in the decision to proceed forward with a 2024 Training Class. In 2023, Gayle helped teach the Vegetables class to the 2023 trainees and attended Superstars Advanced Training. She has a heart for service and is always there with an encouraging note and a smile on her face.



Not pictured is Dana Childs the recipient of the **“WCMGA Rookie of the year 2023”** award. Since the first day of the 2023 training class, Dana has been ready and willing to become a Wood County Master Gardener. Dana was one of the trainees that completed their required 50 volunteer hours early on, and quickly earned certified Master Gardener status. She has dedicated her time and energy in her work as Project Leader for the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office Gardens during the summer with Laura Palumbo and has recently taken the reigns as project coordinator for the Quitman Library Project, also alongside Laura. Dana is a wonderful individual who has been known to lend a helping hand to her fellow 2023 classmates and Master Gardeners.



Certified Naturally Grown

by Linda Mahony

I never knew I wanted to be a farmer. Then I found myself living on Quitman land passed down in my boyfriend's family since before the Civil War.

Intrigued by permaculture agriculture and not afraid of hard work, we started building a farm— planting trees and berries, building greenhouses and high tunnels, laying water lines, and putting in raised beds and living hedges for native plants.

In Hobby Farms magazine, I read about an independent, nonprofit organization started by market farmers in 2002 in New York called Certified Naturally Grown® (CNG). The process of becoming certified parallels USDA Organic certification, but it requires less paperwork and lower certification costs.

The CNG membership includes over 600 farms and beekeepers across 46 states and continues to grow. There are five certification types available: Produce & Flowers, Livestock, Mushrooms, Aquaponics, and Apiary. The primary aim is to increase biodiversity using sustainable practices, without the use of synthetic inputs or GMOs.

Applicants complete an application at naturallygrown.org and provide an inputs list of all soil amendments, seeds, plants, potting soils, root stimulators, herbicides and insecticides to ensure each product is OMRI (Organic Materials Review Institute) listed or contains no prohibited ingredients. In addition, the certification requires an annual farm inspection from another CNG farmer or agricultural professional, as well as a signed commitment to follow CNG standards.

The standards are available in full on their website, but some examples of the high growing standards are as follows:

- Genetically modified organisms in any form are not allowed in CNG production, including seeds, livestock feed, mushroom growing media, or any other inputs.
- In order to add OMRI-listed chelated micronutrients to the soil, a farmer must have had a soil test done within the last 12 months that shows the deficiency.

- Using manure on produce beds requires a 120-day period between application and harvest (90 days for produce that does not directly come into contact with soil)
- 20-150 ft buffer zones are required between the CNG growing area and potential sources of contamination.

Annual recommended dues are on a sliding scale and start at \$250. Certification provides CNG farms with an online presence, including contact information, farm location, email button and link to website.

CNG places a high value on education and farmer support and provides online training classes. The organization also sells marketing materials including produce stickers, twist ties, and posters to highlight certified producers.

The most valuable resource, however, is being able to network with like-minded farmers to learn and share to enhance our crops, our health, and our environmental legacy.

What is a Texas Master Naturalist?

by Ann Reynolds

Recently I spoke at the January meeting about the Texas Master Naturalist program and the similarities to the Texas Master Gardener program.

Much like the Texas Master Gardener Program, the Texas Master Naturalist (TMN) Program's mission is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers to provide education, outreach, and service. However, the TMN program is dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within the State of Texas.

Many communities and organizations rely on such citizen volunteers now days. While the TMG program focuses on horticulture; the TMN program focuses on natural resource conservation. Either way, the public is getting highly educated, top notch information from qualified volunteers.

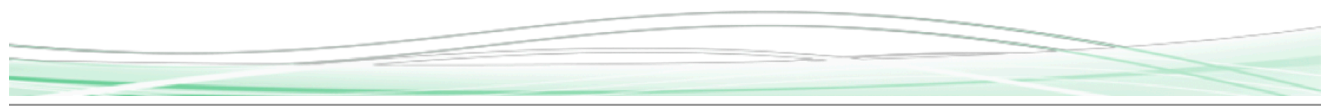
Unlike TMG, TMN have to perform 40 of volunteer service hours and 8 hours of advanced training (CEUs to you!) every year to be certified. Service projects are



self-directed, consist of opportunities developed by local partners and take advantage of individual skills. For instance, I am trained in native plants and ornithology and volunteer for outreach and the speakers bureau. I speak to local groups about birds, pollinators and native plants. I get a kick out of speaking with elementary children. It can be rewarding or hair pulling.

TMNs are concerned about soil, water, plants and creatures just as TMG are! TMNs tend to focus on gathering data for scientific study and educating people within the community. TMNs monitor Monarchs and count birds or dragonflies/damselflies during different times of the year. TMNs monitor invasive species and gather seeds for Project East Texas Seeds (Caesar Kleburg Wildlife Institute). Precipitation is monitored through the CoCoRhas (Community Collaborative Rain, Hail and Snow Network) and this information is used by the National Weather Service, other meteorologists, hydrologists, emergency managers, city utilities (water supply, water conservation, storm water), insurance adjusters, USDA, engineers, mosquito control, ranchers and farmers, outdoor and recreation interests, teachers, students, and neighbors in the community. Doesn't this sound like one big phenology project? TMNs participate in bioblitz projects which are events that focus on finding and identifying as many species as possible in a specific area over a short period of time (a contest with no prize).

Either program is all about educating the public about the things you and I are most passionate about. We want to make east Texas a better place. It is a win-win for the community and us. The TMN does not replace the TMG program but can add valuable information to what you already know and love. If you are interested, let me know!



Value of Trees

At our February WCMG business meeting Bob Bauerschmidt provided education via a powerpoint presentation that was written by Steve Houser.

Trees are vital as a cash crop to the farmer providing fruit, wood, and employment. They provide the foundation for a healthy society by improving the air, water, soil, and our quality of life.

Trees absorb 17 tons of carbon dioxide per 100 trees.

The process of filtering rain through their branches and leaves slows rainfall to allow for more absorption and minimize runoff and flooding.

Tree roots stabilize banks of rivers and streams and filter the water that flows through their root system.

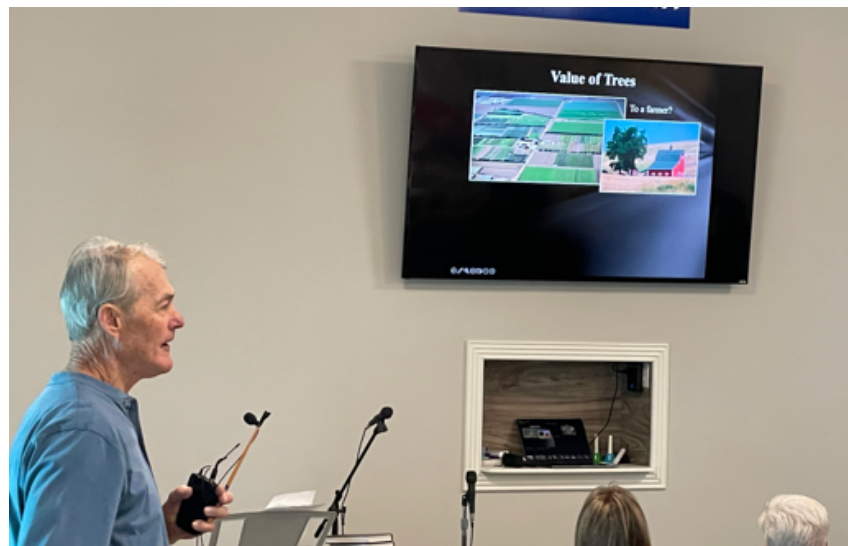
Animals of all types find habitat in trees. Limbs and leaves improve the soil as they become mulch.

Studies have shown that patients' physical recovery and mental health are improved with exposure and views of the outdoors and trees.

Why plant a tree?

- Aesthetics
- Save energy
- Visual screen
- Windbreak
- Erosion control

Planting trees is an optimistic process; trees are planted for the future.



War on Squirrels or how to make a squirrel proof bird feeder

by Gerson Stearns, Wood County Master Gardener

I have a squirrel proof bird feeder, which I made some 24 years ago. It is made of steel as wood will not prevent the squirrels from climbing up the side of the feeder.

The key is the 1 1/2 inch sleeve around the bird feeder tray which prevents the squirrels from climbing up the side into the feeder tray. The feeder tray is 3 feet down from the peak and is made out of pierced steel to allow drainage

The roof is unnecessary and is primarily for aesthetics.

Squirrels go up the steel pipes and back down again which can be entertaining while the birds feed undisturbed. The squirrels try to go around the steel sleeves and then fall to the ground which doesn't seem to faze them. After a while they finally give up.

Trees and limbs need to be 8 feet from the feeder as the squirrels will otherwise jump from a limb into the feeder.



Going Native, Some Lessons I've Learned

by *Linda Timmons*

When I first moved from the Metroplex to East Texas I was excited to have a place to garden. I wanted to grow EVERYTHING! I pretty quickly realized a better goal was to grow plants that like East Texas soil and weather.

I've always been interested in what was native to the land I garden, but when warnings about the challenges Monarch butterflies are facing, it added another level to my love of gardening. I realized my garden isn't just about me, I have a responsibility to the critters that live in and visit my garden too. Wood county isn't really on the Monarch migration route. I only get a hand full of the beautiful butterflies when they're going north and a double handful when they're going back to Mexico. Their plight opened my eyes to the needs of the insects and birds that do share my garden.

One of my first attempts at gardening for the butterflies was to add the Gulf Fritillary host plant, passionvine. I thought it would look beautiful growing over the side door to the den. It grew and bloomed beautifully. The butterflies laid their eggs which hatched into scary looking caterpillars that devoured my beautiful vine and pooped on visitors using the door. Lesson learned, the vine was moved to the pergola in the side yard. Second lesson learned, caterpillars can completely strip the passionvine without killing it.



Gulf Fritillary caterpillar on a passionvine



Bee on a Burford Holly

I've been learning in recent years about how many native bees depend on my garden/yard for pollen and nectar. If you had to choose between a rose or a holly for the bees, which would you choose? Turns out my beloved double roses are not a bee's choice. The single roses would be second choice for bees after the holly. Hollies bloom early and prolifically. A real surprise for me was discovering how many of my "weeds" were important food sources for the native bees. I look at my lawn differently now. We mow a much smaller grassy area right around the house and leave a larger area for less frequent mowing allowing flowering native (and some non-native) plants to grow.

The property I garden has a lot of trees and a lot of birds. There's room enough to leave areas for the birds to nest and my husband keeps birdfeeders filled throughout the year. Three lessons I've learned about gardening with birds in mind: almost all birds feed insects to their young, all berries are not necessarily good for birds, and you don't have to pick the persimmons at the top of the tree. So now I don't worry about killing all bugs, I'm working to get rid of all nandinas on my property (or

at least cut off the berries), and I only pick the persimmons I can reach because mockingbirds love persimmons. I have to admit, I'm growing non-native (Fuyu) persimmons but its my garden and I grow some stuff for me.

My journey to a more native landscape has a long way to go. I've been adding native plants I can get at nurseries and from friends. The past two years I've been growing more natives from seeds. There are definite challenges in trying to go native but it's fun watching the diversity of plants and critters that are coming to share my garden.

Come out and visit our Wildscape garden at the Mineola Nature Preserve to see Texas native plants growing and blooming year around.

WCMGA Projects

1. Emory City Park & Sandy Creek Park (Emory)
Project Chair: Lannette Beaver
Workday: Varies
2. Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office (EOG)
Project Chairs: rotating
Workday: Thursday @ 9 am
3. Mineola Nature Preserve (MNP)
Project Chair: Linda Timmons
Workday: Tuesday @ 9 am
4. Hawkins City Park & Library (HCP)
Project Chairs: Meleena Byram & Betty Stark
Workday: Varies
5. Quitman Public Library (QPL)
Project Chairs: Laura Palumbo & Dana Childs
Workday: Monday @ 9 am
6. Winnsboro Library (WINNS)
Project Chairs: Patt Bauerschmidt & Cindi Miller
Workday: Monday @ 10 am
7. Wood County Arboretum & Botanical Gardens (WCABG)
Project Chair: Lin Grado
Workday: Wednesday @ 9 am

How to Sign Up for Up-To-Date Information

Please sign up on the Texas Master Gardener Volunteer Management System (VMS) for each of the projects you would like an email from so you can receive up-to-date information about a particular project and their work schedule for the week.

For Texas Master Gardeners in Wood County

To sign up for a project:

1. Sign in to Texas Master Gardener VMS at https://vms.texasmg.org/sec_Login/
2. Select **GENERAL INFORMATION>PROJECTS**
3. Click an **ID** for a project.
4. Scroll to the bottom. Add **Notes** to indicate that you want to offer a particular skill, and then click **Volunteer for this Project**. You will receive an email verifying your sign up.



Contact Us:

- ◆ **To become a Master Gardener**, contact the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Office for Wood County @ 903.763.2924
- ◆ Please send newsletter articles, suggestions, and interesting information to newsletter editor Kathy Durham (kdurha@me.com) **Note:** for writing articles, Master Gardeners can count up to 3 hours as Project: NL volunteer hours in VMS under Project: Research in VMS. Please understand that all articles will be edited to fit the newsletter style or for spacing needs.
- ◆ **Texas Master Gardener, Wood County Website** <http://txmg.org/woodcounty>
- ◆ **WCMGA Private Facebook Group** <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1534107646899295/> To join, contact Linda Timmons
- ◆ **Wood County Master Gardeners Public Facebook Group** <https://www.facebook.com/WoodCountyMasterGardeners>
- ◆ **Volunteer Management System** <https://vms.texasmg.org> contact Linda Timmons for information updates or issues with entering hours.
- ◆ **Advanced Training** <https://mastergardener.tamu.edu/master-gardener-specialist/>

The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating. The members of Texas A&M AgriLife will provide equal opportunities in programs and activities, education, and employment to all persons regardless of race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, veteran status, sexual orientation or gender identity and will strive to achieve full and equal employment opportunity throughout Texas A&M AgriLife.