

# GRASS ROOTS

NEWSLETTER OF THE BALDWIN COUNTY MASTER GARDENERS, INC.

JANUARY 2026

[www.baldwinmastergardeners.com](http://www.baldwinmastergardeners.com)

VOL. 34 ISSUE 01



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## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

By Lynn Barnes

HELLO Master Gardeners! I'm excited to be your President this year! We have an excellent organization with so many fine projects that make a difference in Baldwin County and in the state of Alabama. Your help is needed to keep these projects planted and thriving! We will be offering opportunities to sign up for your favorite project(s).

Becoming a Master Gardener is more than learning about what thrives in our area for your own benefit. It is also a way to become involved in worthwhile projects that enhance the lives of adults and children in our area. Our Mission Statement is: *"Provide horticultural education, community service and environmental stewardship for our community in affiliation with the Alabama Cooperative Extension System (ACES) program."* If you want to find a good way to "Give Back", this is it! I'm keenly aware that when you become a Master Gardener, you have found your community. We all love gardening and have our favorite flowers, trees, shrubs, vegetables, etc. that we can talk about to our friends and they get excited too!

In the coming year we hope to establish a new greenhouse for ourselves. We must do it right and that will take some patient effort on the part of the greenhouse team. We will have to buy many of our plants this year for the Spring Plant Sale instead of growing them ourselves.

I'm finding that not everyone reads the Grass Roots Newsletter or emails that come from our organization.

## PRESIDENT'S NOTE

By Lynn Barnes

It's important to stay abreast of our activities by reading the available shared information. I encourage every Master Gardener to consider submitting articles to the Grass Roots.

We want to focus on our Website: [baldwinmastergardeners.com](http://baldwinmastergardeners.com). Our tech team hopes to have it updated soon with coming events and activities that can be a helpful tool for all our members. Charlotte is planning our speakers for the year and there is the possibility of a field trip to stimulate our minds!

In the coming year, it is my plan to be a good communicator. I want to share with you any helpful information that comes my way. Therefore, I want to inform you that there has been a change in personnel on the Board. Our Treasurer for 2026 will be Casssandra Rabren, who has been in this position for several years. Nancy Schlack resigned from Treasurer on Dec. 12.

On January 15, registration opens for the Annual AMGA State Conference in Huntsville on May 6-8, which will be held at The Westin Huntsville. The theme is "Gardening to the Moon and Back" which sounds informative and inspiring! Pre-conference activities on Wednesday, May 6, include: tours of the Space and Rocket Center, Huntsville Botanical Garden and Hudson Alpha Institute for Biotechnology. During the conference, the keynote speakers Doug Tallamy, Melinda Myers and Harvey Cotten will teach us how to "create biodiversity through creative gardening concepts". Other topics include: Feral Foraging, The Southern Herbalist, Grow More, Give More: Galactic Benefits for School Gardens, and Gardening in Space. I hope you will plan to attend this impressive event.

I truly appreciate your enthusiasm, hard work and sweat as active members. You use your own time to serve others and that is an unselfish act of love. Thank you!

## JANUARY BIRTHDAYS



Including our missed December Birthdays

Allie Pearce	12-17	Marilyn Bullington	01-02	Bonnibel Byars	01-21
Ken Gates	12-19	James Greer	01-03	Michele Doyle	01-22
Gilda Underwood	12-30	Sara Semmes	01-03	Keith Cardwell	01-25
Lynn Barnes	01-01	Paula Pritchett	01-07	Barbara Comstock	01-27
Linda Ennis	01-01	Terry Delker	01-13	Sharon Smith	01-29
Vicky Franks	01-01	Fran Posey-Eversole	01-13	Deborah Marriott	01-30
Eileen Greene	01-01	Juanita Dodd	01-17		
Mary Meyer	01-01	Thomas Hickman	01-19		

*Happy Birthday*

# ADVISORY BOARD/COMMITTEES BCMG 2026

By Lynn Barnes

- Arbor Day–Sara Semmes
- Archivist–Gail Hand
- Audit Committee–Mickey Ezell and Nancy Schlack
- Award Committee Social Co-ordinator–Lynn Barnes and Kay Heinrich
- AMGA Advisory Council–Aletza Boucher
- Directory Committee–Loree Hadley, Brenda Montgomery
- Finance–Mickey Ezell
- Grant Writing–Julie Cox and Gilda Underwood
- Grassroots Editor–Kim and Larry Musson, Andreu Riebe, Linda Crowell
- Greenhouses
  - Coastal Community Campus–Mary Calvin,
  - Robertsdale–Myra Lassere
  - Gulf Shores–Mickey Ezell
- Grow More–Give More–Sheryl Bly
- Helpline–Marta Stauts
- Historian–Robin Newell–end of year video–December
- Hospitality–Sue Barnwell, Lee Brady, Claudia Barbee
- Hours Awards Manager– Andeu Riebe, Carmen Flammini
- Interns–Anita O’Connor
- Intern Hospitality– Eileen Greene
- Media and Technology–Website–Andreu Riebe
  - Facebook Carmen Flammini, Lynn Barnes
- Member Care–Judi Smith
- Membership and Dues Tracker–Cassandra Rabren
- Merchandise Sales–Mariah Curow and Diane Roberson–Hill
- Nature Day for Kids–Fran Posey–Eversole
- Outreach–Sara Semmes
- Online Calendar–Lydia Chan
- Plant Sale–Dolores Hammack and Team
- Policy and Procedures–Tom Fortner
- Programs–Charlotte Hamm
- Projects–Shannon Russell
- Publicity–Tom Fortner and Vicky Franks
- Scholarships–Sharon Smith
- Speaker’s Bureau–Wanda Martin
- Seminars–Wanda Martin
- Wayne de la Rua–Don Richerson and Carmen Flammini

If you would like to serve, please call or text me and we will find you a job!

# MONTHLY PROGRAM NOTES

By Charlotte Hamm

The longleaf pine, *Pinus palustris*, once covered some 90 million acres across America from East Texas to Southern Virginia, but by 1990 less than 3 million acres remained. This towering 120-foot-tall tree with its long needles and large cones thrives in soils from the coastal plains to the mountains. As the state tree of Alabama, it provided timber for building, turpentine for ship building and was the basis for many early settlements. The longleaf forest is one of the most diverse biological ecosystems. This forest provides a home to 900 plant species such as pitcher plants, 100 bird species like the bobwhite quail and mammals such as squirrels and whitetail deer. It is the vital habitat for endangered or threatened species such as the red-cockaded wood pecker, the indigo snake, and the gopher tortoise. With the great loss of the pine forest goes the great loss of other species.

Our speaker for January 14 will be Ryan Peek with the Alabama Forestry Commission. He is the Coastal Program Manager for Baldwin County. He will discuss this valuable natural asset and work being done to address the reforestation of the longleaf pine.



Photos by  
Charlotte Hamm



# BCMG DECEMBER AWARDS

Recipient names can be found in the Meeting Minutes



INTERNS



BRONZE STAR



SILVER STAR



GOLD STAR



GOLD BADGE

# BCMG DECEMBER AWARDS

Recipient names can be found in the Meeting Minutes

AMBER STAR



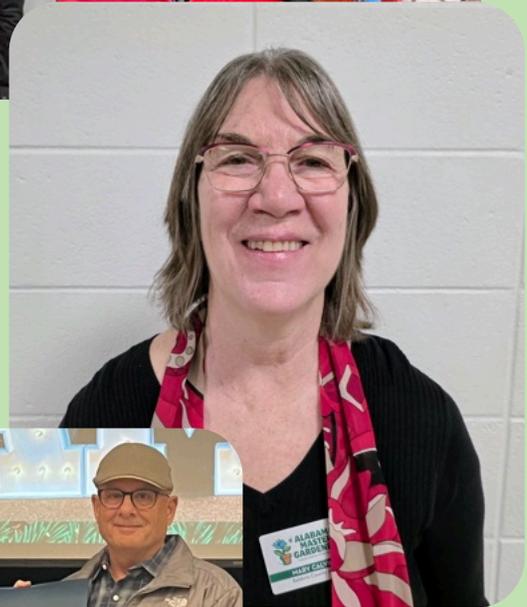
SAPPHIRE STAR



POLLINATOR CENSUS



BEST-DRESSED COUPLE



RUBY STAR



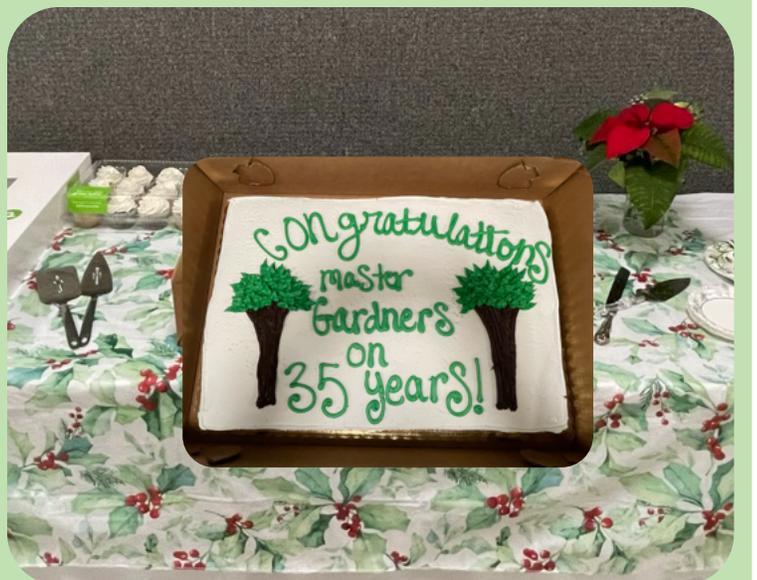
HONORARY MG

## 2025 Wayne de la Rua Award Recipient

In recognition of her tireless efforts, unwavering support, and dedication to the BCMG Spring and Fall Plant Sales, as well as the Greenhouses and various projects throughout the year, Mary Calvin proudly bestowed the 2025 Wayne de la Rua Award to Dolores Hammack.



## BCMG 35<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY



Thank You Loree Hadley for creating the 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Book to celebrate this special milestone.

# BCMG BOARD MEMBERS 2025/2026



2025 BOARD MEMBERS



PRESIDENTS-  
Passing the gavel!



2026 BOARD MEMBERS

DISTRICT MEMBERS



# MEETING MINUTES



By Gilda Underwood

Baldwin County Master Gardeners

General Meeting 12/10/2025

Don Richerson called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. He then asked all to stand for the Pledge of Allegiance. Don greeted the guests and invited everyone with December birthdays to stand, followed by former Presidents and previous WDLR winners. There were 84 attendees.

Don asked if there were any corrections or additions to the November 12, 2025, General Meeting minutes. None were noted. Mary Meyer moved to approve the minutes as written, seconded by Lynn Barnes. The motion passed.

President's Remarks: Don announced that he will be stepping down from his role as President and will officially transfer the Baldwin County Master Gardener's gavel to the newly elected incoming President, Lynn Barnes, for the 2026 term.

Intern Class 2026: Anita O'Connor announced the completion of interviews. Following a few withdrawals, the class consists of 19 new students. Today, Tom Meyer, husband of Master Gardener Mary Meyer, has also requested to join the 2026 class. Tom attended meetings with Mary and contributed work throughout the year she interned. When Tom requested to join as an intern, the 2026 class increased to a total of 20 members.

On Thursday, January 22, 2026, there will be a Mentors Breakfast. Those invited are Board members, interns, mentors, people from the Extension and Master Gardener's kitchen crew that is headed by Beth Robinson. You will get to meet the interns through the Grass Roots Newsletter. The mentors will write a paragraph about their intern and submit it for publication. Also, you may have the opportunity to meet the interns as they participate in volunteer activities at community gardens and greenhouses. Volunteerism will be emphasized.

Master Gardener and Monthly Program Chair, Charlotte Hamm, came forward to recognize a special person that contributed time and expertise to the 2024 AMGA State Conference held in Daphne, Alabama. With his graphics and computer skills, he worked to make the conference book special for all the attendees. He continues to assist BCMG with the printing of our Grass Roots Newsletter every month. It is our pleasure to announce Larry Musson as an Honorary Master Gardener for all his contributions to Baldwin County Master Gardeners. A certificate and Master Gardener's tee shirt were presented to Larry Musson followed by applause.

WDLR Award: Don greeted Master Gardener and past President, Mary Calvin as she came to the podium to announce the winner of the 2025 Wayne de la Rua Award. Mary stated Wayne was the founding member of Master Gardeners in the class of 1990.

# MEETING MINUTES



By Gilda Underwood

In 1997, he received the Master Gardener of the Year award. Since then, BCMG has continued to honor exceptional Master Gardeners annually with the Wayne de la Rua Award. This Award is peer-nominated and peer-selected. This year there were four hardworking, knowledgeable and deserving nominees. Mary proudly presented the 2025 Wayne de la Rua Award to Dolores Hammack. Applause.

Don Richerson delivered an invocation for the luncheon. The lunch buffet featured an excellent assortment of dishes, all prepared by members of the Master Gardeners.

The General Meeting resumed following lunch. Don noted that Master Gardener Robin Newell created the slideshow presented during the meeting. The photographs featured were taken at various Master Gardener events throughout the year. Robin discussed getting slides ready for future events. She informed everyone of her updated email address to use this year, asking that they avoid contacting her by text or through her personal email. Robin expressed her willingness to prepare the slide show for 2026. The new e-mail address to use for pictures is:

Robin.rn@baldwinmastergardeners.com

Don commented that it was nice to see Master Gardener Tanys Waldron able to join today's celebration.

Don announced that Cassandra Rabren, Treasurer, was not able to attend today's meeting. However, all treasurer reports are available.

Member Accomplishments - Don Richerson asked all award recipients to gather at the back of the room for photos to be taken by Loree Hadley. Don noted that the total hours for each member was reviewed. Today, some members who have already received their awards might be called out again. Our intention is to ensure that no individual is inadvertently overlooked.

The announcement of the 2025 BCMG awards began:

Bronze Star - volunteering 100 hours: Kim Scasny; Diana Rodgers; Laurie Simpson; George Donchez; Vicky Franks; Tom Fortner; Robin Newell; Jim Faulkner; Ed Bradshaw; Mary Meyer; Aletza Boucher; Eileen Greene; Ann Lemis; Margie Grace; Barry Gilliland; Ken Gates; Sarah Duncan

Silver Star - volunteering 300 hours: Claudia Barbee; Beth Murray; Patty Rowland; Sueann Barnwell; Diane Roberson-Hill; Susan Palmer; Catherine Kiser; Keith Cardwell; Lee Brady

# MEETING MINUTES



By Gilda Underwood

Gold Star - volunteering 500 hours: Sara Semmes; Sheryl Bly; Maureen Krison; Shannon Russell; Liz Wojtaszek; Julie Cox; Gilda Underwood; Kim Musson; Connie Gillespie; Mickey Ezell; Jackie Gray; Linda Crowell; Joyce Hewitt; Lynn Barnes

Amber Star - volunteering 2,000 hours: Mia Martin; Beth Robinson; Eileen Huisman; María Curow

Sapphire Star - volunteering 3,000 hours: Gordon Cooper; Anita O'Connor

Ruby Star - volunteering 4,000 hours: Mary Calvin

Emerald Star - volunteering 5,000 hours: Andreu Riebe

Gold Badge - volunteering 1,000 hours: Susan Mattingly; Kay Heinrich

2025 Intern Class badges - Sara Roulston; Allie Pierce; Debby Tollefson

Carmen Flammini, Regional Extension Agent, announced Baldwin County is the first in the state to participate in the Alabama Native Milkweed Pollinator Census, a scientific project of counting bees and other pollinator insects. In July volunteer Master Gardeners went to selected gardens to count and record. Carmen called all participating Master Gardeners to the front of the auditorium, where each received a book titled "Managing Alternative Pollinators or Handbook for Beekeepers, Growers, and Conservationists."

Carmen recognized the selected District Leaders in charge of projects: Shannon Russell, Karon Pennington, Sueann Barnwell, Beth Murray, Ken Gates, Nicole Reid and Laurie Simpson. She noted that District Leaders' responsibilities are growing because of more new projects.

Don introduced the 2025 Outgoing Board of Directors, acknowledging their excellent service. The outgoing Board members are Don Richerson, Lynn Barnes, Gilda Underwood, Kim Scasny, Cassandra Rabren, Tom Fortner, Mary Calvin, Mickey Ezell, Anita O'Connor, Charlotte Hamm, Elmer Vick, and Sara Semmes.

Don Richerson, serving as President for 2024 and 2025, formally invited the President-elect to accept the BCMG gavel, thereby officially transferring the leadership of the presidency to Lynn Barnes.

# MEETING MINUTES



By Gilda Underwood

Next, Don introduced the 2026 Incoming Board members. Incoming Board of Directors being President, Lynn Barnes; Vice-President, Tom Fortner, Recording Secretary, Gilda Underwood; Corresponding Secretary, Kim Scasny; Treasurer, Nancy Schlack; Members at Large, Barry Gilliland and Mary Meyer; Past President, Don Richerson; Finance Chair, Mickey Ezell; Intern Program Chair, Anita O'Connor; Monthly Program Chair, Charlotte Hamm; Projects Chair, Shannon Russell, and Outreach Chair, Sara Semmes.

Lynn Barnes, our President for 2026, expressed her appreciation for the opportunity to serve in this role. She is committed to effective planning, communication, and fostering a culture of volunteerism. Master Gardeners continue to have a meaningful impact on the community, with a primary objective to provide education. Carmen Flammini, our Extension Agent, has effectively assisted members in implementing various community initiatives and expanding the presence of Master Gardeners across the county.

Lynn shared that Master Gardener Loree Hadley put significant effort into creating a beautiful commemorative book titled "35 Years Baldwin County Master Gardeners" which features photos and information. Lynn presented Loree with a thank you gift.

Lynn acknowledged Don Richerson for his two years of service as President, a role that requires significant time and commitment. He has demonstrated both kindness and effective leadership throughout his tenure. Lynn presented him with a gift on behalf of the group.

There were 4 door prizes given to lucky members.

Anita O'Connor asked mentors that were not able to attend the meeting last Wednesday to please stay five minutes after the meeting today.

Charlotte Croft made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Beth Robinson seconded the motion with all in favor. The meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM.



# JANUARY/MARCH EVENTS



## ARTHUR R. OUTLAW CONVENTION CENTER

Downtown Mobile, Alabama

THURSDAY MARCH 19, 2026	FRIDAY MARCH 20, 2026	SATURDAY MARCH 21, 2026	SUNDAY MARCH 22, 2026
Preview Party <i>Ticketed event</i> 6 - 9 p.m.	Show Hours 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Show Hours 10 a.m. - 5 p.m.	Show Hours 11 a.m. - 4 p.m.
	Lecture Event <i>Ticketed event</i> 1 - 2 p.m.	Lecture Event <i>Ticketed event</i> 11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	Music in the Garden 2 - 4 p.m.
	Bourbon Tasting <i>Ticketed event</i> 6 - 8 p.m.	Lecture Event <i>Ticketed event</i> 2 - 3 p.m.	

The Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo in Gulf Shores will host its 4th Annual Seed and Plant Swap on Saturday, January 31, 2026, from 9 AM to 2 PM. We will have a table at this event, and all Master Gardeners are encouraged to participate and assist. Please feel free to bring seeds and/or plants to share.

Additionally, if you are interested in presenting a brief demonstration or talk on a gardening topic during the event, kindly reach out to Beth Murray at [bethmurray2011@gmail.com](mailto:bethmurray2011@gmail.com).

## Camellia Club of Mobile

### 86<sup>th</sup> Annual Show

# January 17, 2026

Abba Shrine, 7701 Hitt Road, Mobile, AL 36695

Doors open: 7 a.m.  
Bloom entry window: 7 a.m.-10 a.m.  
Judging time: 10 a.m.  
Open public viewing: 12 p.m. to closing  
Doors close: around 4 p.m.  
Plant sale begins at 9 a.m.

Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo is celebrating National Seed Swap Day!

Join us for the

## 4th Annual Community Seed & Plant Swap

bring your seeds, plants and cuttings from your garden to swap activities

seed & plant swap • gardening tips & demonstrations

**Saturday, Jan 31 • 9am-2pm**

included with paid zoo admission or zoo membership

Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo

# MEMBERSHIP DUES REMINDER

By Cassandra Rabren

As a friendly reminder, 2026 membership dues are \$25.00 if paid by January 31, 2026. After that date, dues will increase to \$30.00 for the year.

To remain an Active Member, everyone—unless you hold a Lifetime Membership—must have their dues paid by the deadline.

You can conveniently pay online using the secure link below or QR code. :

<https://www.zeffy.com/en-US/ticketing/baldwin-county-master-gardeners-annual-membership>



2026

If you have any questions about your dues or payment options, please email me at [Treasurer@baldwinmastergardeners.com](mailto:Treasurer@baldwinmastergardeners.com).

Thank you for keeping your membership active and supporting all that we do together as Master Gardeners!

# MARK YOUR CALENDAR



CEU Opportunities - Access more information at [aces.edu](https://aces.edu) calendar

## Online Classes

January 21, 2026

12:00 pm to 1:00 pm

Natural Resources Webinar Series-2026: Year of Alabama Invasive Plant Awareness  
Online, AL

Non-native, invasive plants harm ecosystems, economy, and human health. Join to learn what Extension and partners are doing in 2026 to increase public awareness, strengthen identification skills, and encourage action for controlling invasive plants.

February 18, 2026

10:00 am to 11:00 am

Back 2 Basics Gardening Series  
Online, AL

Join the Urban Home Grounds Team on the 1st and 3rd Wednesday of each month to learn about the basics of urban ag, limited space gardening, and many other home horticulture topics! On Feb. 18, we will have Urban Extension Agent Bronson Lubresky with us to talk about using biochar in the garden.



By Andreu Riebe

## New Login Process

You may have noticed a change to the Service Hour Report login. Previously, both your email and password were entered on the same page. Now, the process is split into two screens:

- Page One: enter your email address
- Page Two: enter your password

This “split login” improves security by reducing automated login attempts and sets the stage for stronger features such as multi-factor authentication.

You can log your hours anytime at  <https://www.acesagmg.site/>

## Got Tech Questions?

Send them to: [Grassroots@baldwinmastergardeners.com](mailto:Grassroots@baldwinmastergardeners.com). Your question might be featured in the next Tech Corner!

## How do I submit something to Grass Roots?

Send your article or photo to:

 [grassroots@baldwinmastergardeners.com](mailto:grassroots@baldwinmastergardeners.com)

**DEADLINE:** 20th of each month

- Articles: Google Docs, Word, PDF, or Rich Text
- Photos: JPG or PNG (minimum 1MB). Attach files or share via Google Drive.

Articles- Due to limited space, we appreciate short well-written paragraphs.

Photos- Please provide group, action photographs along with a brief description of the event and names of subjects in the photo.

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Newsletter Committee:  
Andreu Riebe, Kim Musson, Linda Crowell, Larry Musson

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Baldwin County Master  
Gardeners, Inc.  
8300 State Hwy. 104  
Fairhope, AL 36532



# CALENDAR

- JAN. 07 2026 BCMG Board Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
JAN. 14 2026 BCMG Monthly Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, Speaker Ryan Peek  
JAN. 22 2026 Mentor / Intern Breakfast, Hwy 104, 9:00 a.m.  
JAN. 31 2026 Dues will increase to \$30.  
JAN. 31 2026 Seed / Plant Swap, Alabama Gulf Coast Zoo, 9:00am- 2:00pm. See flyer.  
FEB. 04 2026 BCMG Board Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
FEB. 11 2026 BCMG Monthly Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, Volunteer Fair  
MAR. 04 2026 BCMG Board Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
MAR. 11 2026 BCMG Monthly Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, Speaker TBA  
MAR. 19 2026 Home & Garden Show Mar. 19 - 22, See flyer.  
APR. 01 2026 BCMG Board Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
APR. 08 2026 BCMG Monthly Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, Speaker TBA  
APR. 09 2026 Spring Plant Sale, April 9 - 11,  
APR. 29 2026 BCMG **MAY** Board Meeting, Research Station, Hwy 104, 9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.  
MAY 06 2026 AMGA 2026 Annual State Conference, Gardening to the Moon and Back, Huntsville AL.



## 2026 BCMG Elected Board

President: Lynn Barnes  
Vice-President: Tom Fortner  
Treasurer: Cassandra Rabren  
Recording Secretary: Gilda Underwood  
Corresponding Secretary: Kim Scasny  
Members at Large: Barry Gilliland,  
Mary Meyer  
Past President: Don Richerson

## 2026 Appointed Board

Monthly Program Chair: Charlotte Hamm  
Intern Program Chair: Anita O'Connor  
Outreach Chair: Sara Semmes  
Finance Chair: Mickey Ezell  
Projects Chair: Shannon Russell

## Next Meeting Dates:

Wednesday January 14, 2026  
9:30 am - Refreshments  
10:00 am - Meeting

## BCMG Merchandise

Maria Curow and Dianne Robinson-Hill, BCMG Merchandise Coordinators will be selling BCMG Aprons, notebooks, hats and t-shirts at monthly general meetings.