

From the Office.....

Hot off the presses (and in the midst of a Southern Maryland heatwave!) is the newest edition of our Master Gardener newsletter. This simplified (pruned, if you will) version will highlight one of our MG programs and shine the spotlight on one of our many outstanding volunteers each month. I humbly petition you all to nominate programs/volunteers for future editions. Additionally, anyone who would like to write a submission or send photos may count the time spent doing so in VMS. I'm honored to be back in the office steering the program while we wait for our new coordinator and look forward to connecting with each of you in the coming months!

Please mark your calendars for our summer pot-luck quarterly meeting on July 22, from 6-8 PM in the UME conference room.

-Liz

UNIVERSITY OF
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EXTENSION

MASTER
GARDENER

Upcoming Events

- **July 4:** Independence Day
- **July 9:** Landscaping for Cleaner Waterways (UME Watershed Program) @ Leonardtown Library
- **July 9, 16, 23:** Growing the Flavor Herbs & Spices series @ Lexington Park Library (Pre-register)
- **July 22:** MG quarterly meeting, 6-8 PM
- **Sept 18-21:** St. Mary's County Fair



Bee on milkweed, UME offices

Featured Program

DYNARD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

*“students would never miss a garden day
if they have any say in it.”*



Deb Pence with two fourth grade students at the Dynard Elementary school garden

This quote from 4th Grade teacher, Ann Marie Moses really encompasses the appreciation expressed in her end of year email to the Master Gardener volunteers who shared their love of gardening with the fourth grade students at Dynard Elementary School this year. She specifically mentions the impact the program has on the entire school community as the kids took their knowledge and experience planting, maintaining, and growing the garden home to their families, along with fresh produce.

“The community impact is vast and we receive so much feedback about the power of the garden -- families frequently comment about how much they love the garden and think it is a great program.”

Kudos and thanks to Frances Beale, Barbara Dobbins, and Deb Pence who have been spending Tuesday afternoons coordinating and improving the Dynard Elementary gardens for several years now. Each fourth grade class gets to spend a season learning the skills of gardening from planning to harvest.



Fran Beale and two students inspecting greens

Helping hands are always welcome and any interested Master Gardeners who would like to volunteer for this project in the coming school year should contact Deb Pence for more information.

Volunteer Spotlight

BOB ALDRIDGE

Bob Aldridge was one of the first people I met when I moved to St. Mary's County. As a stay-at-home mom with no local contacts, I needed an outlet. I knew I wanted to learn how to garden and on a trip to Historic Sotterley, I met some of the members of the Garden Guild. Volunteering there seemed like a convenient way to learn about gardens, get some fresh air, and socialize.... plus it's hard to beat the view!



Bob in veggie patch, Historic Sotterley, 2019

Upon arrival, I was greeted enthusiastically by all and told I could help “anywhere”, but I wasn't very confident identifying weeds or dividing perennials, so I found my way to the veggie patch, which was where I met Bob. He turned on his megawatt smile and welcomed me to his little pet project. Bob answered all my gardening questions with patience (and I had A LOT of questions), but mostly we worked in companionable silence because we both have bad hearing, haha! I never saw anyone else working in the veggie patch, besides Bob and myself, so I considered it quite an honor.

Bob was one of the first trained class of Master Gardeners in St. Mary's county, logging hundreds of hours for the program. It was no surprise when Bob stepped into the role of Garden Guild chair as he seemed to be an ever present figure at Sotterley; whether it was in the garden, giving tours of the house, or at any of their many community events. In recent years, Bob became “Inactive” as a Master Gardener, but I know he was still working in the garden, because I was there to see it! In fact, the years since he stopped officially logging his MG hours were the years he was serving as chair of the Garden Guild, only stepping down this past February.

Bob passed away on May 20, 2025 and we honor his legacy of service to our program by posthumously awarding him Master Gardener Emeritus status.

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