

Cabarrus County Extension Master Gardener Volunteer Association
April 5, 2016 Meeting Minutes

- President Scott Maxwell opened the meeting at 9:34 in the auditorium of the extension office.
- James Polk introduced our guest speaker for today's meeting, Sam Fleming. After forming "100 Gardens" with Ron Morgan, who has since deceased, Sam has been the lead designer for 100 Gardens' aquaponics installations in schools, correctional facilities, trade shows and in Haiti. Sam is the horticulture instructor at the Stonewall Jackson Youth development Center in Concord, NC and also currently sits on the Board of Directors for the Friends of St. Vincent's School for the Handicapped in Port au Prince, Haiti. Sam described some of the deplorable living conditions in Haiti and some of the history contributing to their issues. 100 Gardens was started as a means for helping Haiti rebuild after the devastating earthquake in 2010, focusing on aquaponics for sustainable food production. Aquaponics is the integration of Aquaculture (fish farming) and Hydroponics (soilless plant production). Basically, the fish waste product provides fertilizer for plants and plants break down the waste and absorb the nutrients. This method produces fish and vegetables/plants and recycles water. They primarily grow Tilapia and Catfish as they are more resistant to disease. It is ideal for installing in urban areas because of efficient use of space and water and does not require soil. It is very energy extensive because water has to be oxygenated and water kept moving. There are small systems available (3' x 6') for personal use. One pound of fish needs 2 gallons of water. When buying farm raised fish be sure to buy only fish from North or South America as these farmers have joined and agree to farm responsibly. The feed conversion ratio for aquaponics is 2-3 pounds of feed to gain one pound of fish compared to 9-10 pounds of feed to gain one pound of cow. Projects: Stonewall Jackson Youth Development Center where students manage 1500 sq ft aquaponics greenhouse and one acre of sustainable in-ground vegetable (collard greens, kale, beets, turnips, cabbage, chives and mustard greens) and fruit crops. The program won the 2015 USDA Best Practices Award for best farm-to-fork programs of any public institution in NC. For the past 3 years, they have provided 8000 pounds of food which is served in schools and Meals-on-Wheels. South Iredell High School manages a 1500 sq ft aquaponics greenhouse. The school French club created instructional aquaponics videos in French to send to French-speaking Haiti. In Garinger High School in Charlotte, 46% of the students live below poverty level and students are extremely diversified. Their greenhouse serves as the major farm for Friendship Trays. They produce about 200 heads of greens per week and 400 pounds of fish per year. Myers Park High School students raised \$25,000 to fund the aquaponics program.

It was conceived and funded by the students and their food production is similar to others. Mahanaim, Haiti - Aquaponics Training Center was built by the community in a partnership with 100 Gardens, Johnson C. Smith University, and Joseph's Exchange. It is a learning center and one of the biggest problems is the lack of electricity, thereby needing to use solar energy, which is expensive. St. Vincent's School for the Handicapped in Haiti is a school for deaf, blind, and physically handicapped children. The aquaponics program is small but successful in teaching the students. A large penitentiary in Massachusetts has installed a 30 ft. x 60 ft. greenhouse and hope to produce 10,000 pounds of tilapia and 203,000 heads of lettuce per year. All these programs allow students the experience and gratification of growing foods, finding success and purpose in life, and teaching them science, math, and technology.

- Ginny passed around a sign-in sheet for members to initial to indicate their presence at the meeting to record volunteer hours, as required.
- Ellen Vanderburg approved minutes from last meeting and Bob Wilber seconded. Members voted on and passed.
- Mary Quay delivered treasurer's report for March, 2016
- James announced that students from Wolf Meadow Elementary School, a MG grant recipient, will make a presentation at our May meeting describing their successful garden. Angel Hjarding from The Butterfly Highway will speak in June.
- Joe Ormsby discussed the successful tour of Pearl Fryar's Topiary Garden and possible upcoming tours. June 2 we will be able to tour 211 acre Laurel Hill Preserve, near Gastonia, home of the big-leafed magnolia and owned by the Catawba Lands Conservancy. More to follow in future emails.
- Pollinator Conservation Committee: Ginny Collier went over some of the Bee Committee activities. We are now called the Pollinator Conservation Committee (PCC). Ginny thanked Mary Quay and Renee Hedrick for their very successful growing of milkweed plants for the Herbfest. Ginny handed out a new pollinator plant list which includes plants gleaned from a few dozen reputable plant sites and articles. She will send it out as a separate email to all members. Some committee members have been reaching out to nurseries asking them to provide a pollinator display at their retail outlet. We will be visiting the City of Harrisburg and other municipalities in Cabarrus asking them to plant pollinator plants on their properties and Lauren Duncan is working with Kyle Belafer from Cabarrus County regarding planting pollinators on county property. Joe Ormsby described how one of the local realtors (Cathy Staskel) will be distributing 4500 copies(that he ordered) of the "Be a Friend to Pollinators" foldout from the USDA along with her realtor mailbox deliveries. A clipboard was passed around asking members to list local nurseries that they might contact and ask to provide a pollinator display.
- Mitch Hagler announced the approval of a grant for Forest Park Elementary School in Kannapolis. This will be a year-round garden as they also have summer school.

The committee will be meeting April 20th to go over scholarship applications for this year's graduating high school senior. Applications must be submitted by April.

- Scott and members decided to defer the discussion about the proposed by-law changes until May meeting because many members didn't receive the email regarding the changes. Email will be re-sent.
- Lauren Duncan answered some questions about problems using Google Docs. Lauren is currently working on a Reach Grant with Cabarrus Health Alliance and David Goforth, helping to set-up community gardens with non-profit and faith-based organizations and they have 7 gardens planned to date.
- Keep May 13th on your calendar. We will be having our annual cookout at Steve Mosier's home, weather permitting. Scott will email with further details.
- **HERBFEST: Cleanup** day before festivities is Monday, **April 11th** starting at 9:00 AM. Mary Quay and her husband will be mowing grass. Please bring gloves, rakes, need 2 push mowers, pruners, ladders, leaf blowers, brooms, weed eaters, trash bags. We will be setting up vendor's spaces and parking spaces. **Chris Fletcher** will be bringing BBQ, slaw and sauce. Scott will bring buns, plates, utensils and napkins. If you are able, please bring a side or dessert and your own beverage. Don't forget to bring a chair, beverage and hat (cankerworms!) **Set-up day is Friday April 15** starting at 9:00 AM. Please be sure plant containers ARE CLEAN and fully LABELED with description, if necessary. Scott will be grilling hot dogs and will provide dogs, buns, ketchup, mustard, slaw and chilli, and all eating utensils. Please bring any sides or desserts, if you are able. Bring chair and beverage and hats. **Thank you to** Wayne and Arlene Fisher for providing overnight security, thanks to Harry for providing port-a-johns, to Steve Mosier for lining up ham radio club to help with parking, Vicki for vendor setup which starts at 6 AM, Bob and Steve for parking, James for "answer question" booth, Renee Goodnight for PCC booth, **Mary Quay**: plant booth set-up starts at 7 AM. Please bring saleable garden items with suggested price marked, there is NO pre-buy on Friday for members and no credit given. *Be sure plants are in clean containers and labeled.* Cash only on day of sale. **DAY OF HERBFEST SALE IS SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016, 8AM-4PM., RAIN OR SHINE.** Any hours worked for HERBFEST count towards volunteer time. If you see anyone with a pet (snakes, bunnies, dogs or otherwise) we must ask the pet owner to leave. It is a health code violation if animals are present. **CLEANUP** starts at 4 PM. Everyone is requested to be there. There will be pizza afterwards. Have your own beverage and chair.
- Tickets were drawn for kitty and door prizes awarded.
- Meeting adjourned at 12:10.
- 36 members in attendance.

Respectively submitted,
Ginny Collier, Secretary