President's Annual Report - 2021

2021 demonstrated the resilience of the Coconino County Master Gardeners Association. After shutting down many of our in-person events in 2020 due to the pandemic, we were able to bring back some of our activities in 2021. Our membership grew to a record-breaking level, and we were able to bring our finances back to pre-pandemic levels.

Coconino County Master Gardens Association and Coconino County Extension Office continued to work hand-in-hand to promote the master gardener program and master gardener projects. The main reason for our success was Gayle Gratop and Hattie Braun developing online classes, Zoom meetings, and hybrid meetings that allowed members to participate at their comfort level. Gayle created an online class in 2020 and it was repeated twice in 2021. There was a Spring and Fall class, both of which were well attended. There was a total of 86 students representing four different counties. Doing an online class allowed for greater reach than in person classes ever could. The online class was so successful on the Navajo Reservation that first lady Nez offered a scholarship for future students. In addition to the online classes, Hattie created a hybrid Master Gardener Class, in person when possible, which had 16 students.

Gayle also put together two Beginning Gardener online classes. There was one for Page which had 37 participants and one for Flagstaff which had 99 participants. Each class was oriented to local conditions. Different master gardeners helped teach these classes. The information

went far beyond what would be expected in a beginning class. Classes were taught by Jim Mast, Hattie Braun, Jackee Alston, Gayle Gratop and Frank Branham. Gayle also taught an in person Native Plants class that was very successful. There were 10 students in the initial class and we look forward to repeating it in 2022.

Hattie and Gayle developed the format for Zoom Master Gardener meetings. That began in 2020 and carried on into early 2021. The Zoom meetings allowed us to continue our educational program and business meetings despite the pandemic. In April we began to use a hybrid format, where we met in-person but had a Zoom option. The in-person meetings were at Shepherd of the Hills Lutheran Church. Pam Garcia took on the role of "Greeter", welcoming people back. It was great to see folks, but we were still not able to do our usual snacks due to COVID. This format was very successful and allowed us once again to hold raffles. There was a bit of a learning curve regarding the technology but it all worked out fine.

We were able to hold the Fall Recognition Picnic in person this year after having to cancel it in 2020. We decided to have it catered by Bigfoot Barbecue rather than the usual potluck. We thought people would feel more comfortable considering the pandemic. We had 66 people in attendance. It was sunny and warm; everyone had a great time. Hattie handed out certificates to newly certified Master Gardeners, along with other awards and raffle prizes.

After four years of dedicated service Liz George retired from the Social Chair position. "Thank you" Liz for all your hard work. Mary Gaseau and Elaine Laemmich took over as co-chairs and their first duty was organizing the Christmas Party. The party was held at Viola's and it

featured an amazing potluck with so many great flavors. Mary and Elaine did a great job of decorating and planning. Hattie brought gifts and organized the White Elephant gift exchange which is always the highlight of the event; lots of friendly competition and laughs. It was great to have an in-person event and everything went well.

Every month our meeting features an educational program. Geoff Wood was the Education Chairperson. He was quite effective in securing interesting speakers and coordinating the schedule. Trust me, his programs were more popular than my business meeting.

We set a new record for membership in 2021 with a total of 107 members. This was the first time CMGA had broken 100. There were 54 certified members, 28 trainee members, 22 active or associate members, 2 honorary members, and 3 friend members. The Active or Associate membership goes to people that have been fully certified but did not report enough volunteer or education hours for the previous year. Friend members are locals that share our interests and want to attend our meetings, but have not taken the Master Gardener class.

We had to limit the number of garden grants in 2021, since we were unable to do any fundraising in 2020. The Executive Committee wanted to keep a safe bank balance to maintain the organization, in case we were unable to fundraise for another year. As a result, we only gave out three garden grants in 2021. One grant went to Olivia White Hospice Garden that was overseen by Frank Branham and Geoff Wood. The second grant went to Michael Moore Native Medicinal Garden and was overseen by Laura Davis and Gina Goegun. The third went to the Pioneer Museum and that project was overseen by Shannon Benjamin. All three projects were completed and the managers will make a presentation at the February

2022 meeting. Loni Shapiro did an exceptional job managing the Grant Program and there is more detail in her report on the Master Gardeners blog.

Loni also maintains the list of approved Master Gardener volunteer projects on the blog. There were 32 approved projects this year. Loni is in the process of updating the volunteer project list and will post that on the blog when it is completed.

After having to cancel all fundraising in 2020 we were very excited to be able to start raising money again, starting with our raffles. Members were very good about bringing in raffle prizes and buying raffle tickets. Over the course of the year the raffle and donations brought in about $600.

We also created "Flagstaff's Finest Vegetable Garden Tour" held on August 21st, featuring eight gardens. It was very well received by the 200+ attendees. Warner's Nursery was our co-sponsor and they were a great support. Ticket sales for the tour brought in $3260 and after expenses the tour netted $2581 to our treasury. Once again, Loni Shapiro stepped to the plate and did an amazing job leading our planning committee. The committee members were Frank Branham, Gayle Gratop Tina Gustafson, Marilyn Canteloupe, Lori Tamblinson and Sue Madden. We also had volunteers at each location from both the Master Gardeners Association and the Master Gardener classes. Everyone commented on how well the event was organized, and we are starting plans for a repeat this coming year.

We created a Fundraising Committee to find new ways to raise money. The group met several times and explored different products that we could create and sell to promote the Master Gardeners Association

while making money at the same time. The committee included Cheryl Blume, Hattie Braun , Pam Garcia, Mary Gaseau, and Frank Branham. We have ideas and will carry on in 2022.

Since we were able to once again raise money in 2021, our finances looked much better. The beginning balance for 2021 was $4063.24 and we finished the year with a balance of $6033.79. You can find more detail in the annual Treasurer's report on the blog. With the increased balance we will be able to do more Garden Grants in 2022. We are also planning more fundraisers this coming year.

Loni Shapiro continued to do an excellent job maintaining the Coconino County Master Gardeners Association blog. She kept it up to date with classes, webinars, and volunteer opportunities. The blog has a wealth of information including articles, recipes, contact information, applications, and documents. Cindy Murray added beautiful photographs. Page views for the blog reached 266,199 up 31,693 since last year. There were 957 articles entered this last year. There is more detailed information in the annual reports (on the blog).

Loni also sent a weekly email throughout the gardening season which kept everyone informed of new volunteer and educational opportunities as well as reminding us of upcoming meetings.

Tammy Valdovino kept our Facebook page up-to-date with great photographs, gardening ideas, and event reminders. The page has 629 friends.

Cindy Murray and Jackee Alston continued to edit our newspaper column, Gardening Etc., which runs in the Arizona Daily Sun every Saturday. They write many of the articles themselves, but also edit articles from other members. The articles are very educational/instructive

and the photographs are beautiful. Thanks to everyone who contributes to this valuable resource.

Pat Haeuser, our Chapter Secretary, kept the organization on track. She generated and distributed agendas for both the Executive Committee meetings and the general meetings. She recorded the business of the organization; invaluable work. Pam Garcia filled in for Pat a couple of times when she was out of town.

2021 turned out to be a great year for Coconino County Master Gardeners, despite the challenges. Thanks to my fellow officers, Pam Garcia, Pat Haeuser, and Andrea Guerrette. Our committee chairs also deserve a lot of credit for our success. These include Geoff Wood, Chrys Wells, Loni Shapiro, Jackee Alston, Cindy Murray, Tammy Valdovino, Mary Gaseau, and Elaine Laemmich. Special thanks to Hattie Braun, Gayle Gratop and Loni Shapiro who each do SO much to keep our organization on track.

- Submitted by President, Frank Branham