

2022 Arkansas Master Gardener State Conference Speakers and Presentations



**Keynote Speaker: Tony Avent - I Like It, I Love It,
I Want Some More of It: 100 Amazing Perennials
I Wouldn't Garden Without**

Tony Avent, a graduate of North Carolina State University, is well known as a horticulturist and plantsman. With his wife, Anita, he is the owner of [Plant Delights](#) retail and online nursery, a source for native, rare, and unique perennials, and [Juniper Level Botanic Garden](#), both located in Raleigh, North Carolina. Tony is an international plant explorer and a hybridizer of hostas, rare bulbs, and hardy aroids. As a garden writer, he contributes to *Fine Gardening* magazine. He has been featured on HGTV and North Carolina Public TV and in several garden books.



Charity Cox: Greetings from a Garden Center: Get the Dirt!

Charity Cox is the purchasing manager and education coordinator for White River Nursery, a small independent nursery in Fayetteville. She started as a part-time waterer, weeder, and general mover of plants over 10 years ago and has worked in all areas of the nursery, with many hours spent in the propagation and perennial house. Charity enjoys sharing her love for all things plant-related through White River Nursery's social media and is always happy to help someone find just the right plant. She does garden consulting and design work on the side, when she's not busy finding more spots for new plants on her farmstead.

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Still on the Hill - Words on Birds

Kelly and Donna Mulhollan of Fayetteville perform as Still on the Hill. They have received many awards for their work, including the Governor's Arts Award for Folklife and the Washington County Historical Society's Distinguished Citizen Award. With a dozen CDs under their belt, Still on the Hill has toured across the U.S., Canada, and Europe for 25 years and is widely recognized for their songwriting, musicianship, and infectious performance chemistry.

Educational Presenters:



Laura Brewer - Cut-Flower Production: Simple, Seasonal and Sustainably Grown

Laura Brewer is site manager for the [Peel Museum and Botanical Garden](#) in Bentonville.

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Steve Chyrchel - Saving the Ozark Chinquapin

Steve Chyrchel is an interpreter at [Hobbs State Park](#) (Arkansas's largest state park, spanning a 12,054-acre tract of Ozark landscape along the southern shore of Beaver Lake) and board member of the [Ozark Chinquapin Foundation](#).



Dr. Victor L. Ford - Growing Mushrooms at Home

Dr. Vic Ford is the Associate Vice President for Agriculture and Natural Resources with the University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture. A northeast Tennessee native, he earned B.S and M.S. degrees from the University of Tennessee and a PhD in forestry and forest products from Virginia Tech. He has studied forest soils, productivity, and weed control for 35 years. Dr. Ford and his wife, Cindy, live in Hope and share five children and six grandchildren. He loves music, sports, fly-fishing, hunting, computers, ham radio, and traveling.

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**Dr. Rose Gergerich - The Social Impact of Plant Diseases:
Famine, Dead Trees and LSD**

Rose Gergerich is emeritus professor in the Department of Plant Pathology at the University of Arkansas, where her 30-year career was focused on the study of plant virology. She grew up on a dairy farm in northern Wisconsin where she learned to grow and appreciate plants from her parents and grandparents. She now lives out in the boondocks in south Washington County on her piece (peace) of land in the Arkansas Ozarks. Dr. Gergerich is an active member of the Northwest Arkansas Master Naturalists, and she helped form the Native Plant Team and Book Club in that chapter. She enjoys working with fellow Master Naturalists in the greenhouse and nursery on her property where they propagate native plants for distribution in Northwest Arkansas.



**Cody and Lauren Gilstrap -
Choosing the Perfect Water Feature for Your Space**

Based in Northwest Arkansas, Cody and Lauren Gilstrap, owners of River Rock Water Gardens, design, build, and maintain water features across the U.S., including for animal conservationists and even zoos. Cody's degree in horticulture from the University of Arkansas and his experience as the perennials manager for Greenleaf Nursery Company, one of America's largest wholesale nurseries, have contributed to his gift of selecting plants to complement each of his water features. As Arkansas' only certified aquascapes contactors, the Gilstraps know the value of using quality equipment to produce first-rate designs. Cody and Lauren's passion for creating outdoor spaces with unique water features enables them to provide the perfect space for each of their amazing customers.

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**Casey Johannsen - The Night Shift in the Night Sky:
How Nocturnal Pollinators Are Being Threatened by
Our Desire to Light the Night**

Casey Johannsen is an interpretive park ranger at the Buffalo National River. She grew up on a small farm in rural Michigan and discovered her love of the national parks on a college service-learning trip to Acadia National Park. Casey was fortunate enough to get her foot in the door at Acadia and worked there, seasonally, for seven years. She then moved to sunny south Texas to secure a permanent job in the National Park Service at Amistad National Recreation Area. In 2011 she and her husband decided to leave the desert behind and headed for the beautiful waters of Buffalo National River. Casey is thoroughly enjoying her time in the Natural State and raising her son in the Ozarks.



Megan Lankford - Eat, Drink and Be Rosemary

Megan Lankford is the horticulture supervisor at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks in Fayetteville. Her love of nature and all things green began with a childhood spent camping, hiking, canoeing, and playing in rural upstate New York and the Adirondacks. Yet it wasn't until Megan was in her mid-twenties that she found her love of gardening. With the help of a lifelong gardener, Megan learned the art of horticulture. Shortly thereafter, she and her husband moved to Fayetteville where she learned the science of horticulture at the University of Arkansas. Megan graduated summa cum laude from the UA with a major in horticulture and a minor in sustainability. She resides in Fayetteville with her husband, Chris, their son, Vincent, two dogs, and a snake. Megan currently has a pollinator garden, Zen garden, vegetable garden, and various ornamental gardens throughout her yard. She is also adding natives to her gardens to increase food and habitat for native fauna.

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Paige Mizell - Tea, Books and Camellias

Paige Mizell is vice president of [Mizell's Camellia Hill Nursery](#) in Folsom, Louisiana, and the current president of the [Southeast Louisiana Nursery Association](#). Throughout her childhood, she worked with her parents in various horticultural endeavors and began working fulltime at the nursery in 2014. Prior to that she was a junior high and high school teacher. Paige has a bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in criminal justice from Southeastern Louisiana University and a master's degree in low incidence disabilities special education and applied clinical psychology from Valdosta State University. She is currently pursuing a Ph.D. in applied clinical sports psychology.



Lissa Morrison - Backyard Habitat Adventures

Lissa Morrison has worked in the field of horticulture for more than 35 years. She is the former owner of White River Nursery, a wholesale plant nursery and retail garden center in Fayetteville. She worked at the Botanical Garden of the Ozarks (BGO) for eight years, serving her last four years there as horticulture supervisor and designer. Currently Lissa dedicates her time and energy to educating and increasing the knowledge and use of native plants. She is volunteering with the Arkansas Native Plant Society Education Committee and is active in the Wild Ones Ozark Chapter that promotes landscaping with native plants.

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Joe Neal - Simple Things Help Birds

Joe Neal is a retired wildlife biologist with the U.S. Forest Service. He is known in the Ozarks as well as nationally for his expertise in and passion for birds. He is the author of many articles and books on birds, including *Birds of Northwest Arkansas: An Ecological Perspective* and *In the Province of Birds*. He is the co-author with Doug James of *Arkansas Birds: Their Distribution and Abundance*. Joe currently serves as field trip leader and secretary for the Northwest Arkansas Audubon Society.



Dr. Jason K. Norsworthy -

What is That Plant Growing in My Yard or Garden?

Dr. Jason Norsworthy is Distinguished Professor and Elms Farming Chair of Weed Science at the University of Arkansas. He was born and raised in south Arkansas, where he was involved in agriculture at an early age on his parents' truck patch farm focused mainly on sweet potatoes and purple hull (southern) peas. During these times, he developed a strong love for agriculture and a keen interest in the weeds that were an annual challenge to successful crop production. He received a B.S. in plant sciences/agronomy from Louisiana Tech University and an M.S. and Ph.D. in plant sciences/weed science from the University of Arkansas. He currently serves as the editor of *Weed Technology* journal.

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**Joanne Olszewski - Composting with Worms,
ie, Vermicomposting**

Joanne Olszewski is the co-author of the 35th anniversary edition of [*Worms Eat My Garbage*](#). A close friend of the original author, Mary Appelhof (1936-2005), Joanne taught middle school science and later made a career as a tax accountant. A retired CPA, Joanne is the owner of Worm Woman Inc. which manufactures and sells the Worm-A-Way worm bin. Patented by Mary Appelhof, the bin is ideal for use in the classroom. Today Joanne is known as “Worm Woman 2.0.” She lives in Northwest Arkansas and is a land steward in the Ozarks.