

Central Gorge Master Gardener™ Association
Executive Committee Meeting Minutes

Held via Zoom on Wednesday, October 8, 2025

Next meeting: Wednesday, November 12, 2025

Attendees: Bill Winfield, Donna DesRochers, Eric Bosler, Jen Harty, Jen Munroe, Joanne Willis, John Stevens, Kaeley Dawson, Mary Corl, Megan Wickersham, Sandi Rousseau, Shari Bosler, Tracy Willett

Jen H called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.

Secretary's Minutes: (Donna) The minutes were approved without corrections.

Treasurer Report (Jen) This was moved to later in the meeting after all members have arrived.

OMGA (Eric) At the OMGA executive meeting, new guidelines for the Master Gardener of the Year and Statewide Master Gardener of the Year awards were developed. The state will now handle all aspects of the awards process except nominations. Three new OSU awards will be added: Program Champion, Community Impact, and Distinguished Educator. Training and testing is being done on Volunteer Hub, a new web-based system designed to streamline paperwork processes for Master Gardeners. Megan clarified it will not replace existing volunteer reporting systems and commented that training is having mixed results. Progress is being made on expanding Spanish translation efforts for the Master Gardener program. Joy of Gardening will be celebrating its 50th Anniversary on July 10th and 11th in Corvallis. There are changes in OMGA leadership, with Shelby Shoup stepping up as president-elect. Mary Corl is resigning as OMGA Alternative Rep and CGMGA member due to health issues with her family. Many thanks were extended to Mary and it was noted she will be missed.

Coordinators Report (Megan) At the Extension Annual Conference, the importance of AI in the program and the use of a chatbot for plant clinic questions was highlighted. There is a statewide need to improve website accessibility and she shared her progress in updating the CGMGA website, which overall is in good shape. 21 trainees have completed the program with 15 expected to certify. An option for some trainees to roll over their certification to a second year was discussed. It was noted that it is a good retention strategy for trainees with life interruptions.

Volunteer Recruitment Megan discussed challenges with volunteer recruitment and retention, noting that people's availability for volunteer work has changed, with many finding it difficult to commit due to personal responsibilities. She suggested that offering specific, one-time tasks and making alternative scheduling options available could help increase participation. Sandi inquired about adding a greenhouse work party, and Megan agreed to help coordinate last-minute volunteers if specific requests

are made. The 2026 Master Gardener mentoring programs' future will be discussed at the November meeting.

Classes and Venue Plans are underway for 2026 classes, including a more extensive tree talk with Glenn Aarons and a drip irrigation session with Steve Casanoli, which will include hands-on practice using existing parts from the Learning Garden shed. The possibility of switching venues is being explored due to Wi-Fi and space limitations at the HR Valley Christian Church location. Options include the community college or fire station. Megan proposed a new approach to class location, suggesting smaller classes at alternative venues for core subjects while reserving the church space for larger classes like kickoffs and social events. The group discussed logistics like parking and accessibility. Sandi suggested the Hood River County Fair building as another potential venue, though concerns were raised about its distance for some members.

Megan announced that Wasco County will be hiring a new coordinator position.

Publicity (Jen) Margo is out of town and publicity is happening and they are doing their stuff.

Fish Food Bank (Tracy) Information on a grant from the National Association of Conservation Districts was shared. There are several grant opportunities to develop the garden for the Food Bank and continue ongoing education there. Spirit of Grace Church has a decreasing and aging membership and is exploring options of becoming a self-sustaining non profit. Ideas they are considering include a youth center and other functions for the garden area.

It was noted that Karen Jenkins won the auction for the lawnmower for \$35.

Education (Jen) Upcoming events include the Harvesting Pumpkins workshop this week. Both Hood River and White Salmon libraries have inquired about next year's class schedule. Rene at the Hood River Library plans to link library books to our classes. A movie is planned in July due to its popularity this year. There was discussion on the need for better tracking of swag income and expenses. No noxious weed seeds will be handed out in flower packets in the future.

Treasurer's Report (Joanne) Two members have completed 10 years and will receive a badge. Questions were raised about a 20 year badge.

The group reviewed the proposed 2026 budget, which includes reduced funding from OSU and potential applications for new grants. Joanne presented a detailed budget overview, highlighting changes in revenue sources and expenditures.

Revenue Highlights include:

- Applying for a \$1000 OMGA Karl Carlson grant again.
- OSU Foundation has \$15,000 in funds available and some will be requested to test the system.
- Spring Plant Sale has a \$13,000 income amount. This year more native plants will be potted for sale.
- Interest and dues income will decrease.
- One grant will not be available next year.

Expense Highlights include:

- No longer at Hood River County Fair but we will make donations for awards.
- Add Front Yard Garden Tour, it was not in last year's budget.
- Greenhouse costs are about the same.
- Liability insurance is going up a bit.
- Recognition Meeting does not include awards.
- Scholarships for Joy of Gardening have not been used much in the past.
- Scholarships for the cost of classes are \$150.
- Office Supplies include stamps and toner.
- Technical equipment will include AV equipment for recording classes.
- Training is for speakers and some minor expenses.
- Committees are based on actuals spent last year.
- Field Trips were not used but will be kept.
- Swag was below budget last year but we plan to upgrade Square to better track income streams and promotional materials such as fleece jackets, t-shirts and frisbees which are used for casual advertising.
- Publicity does not plan any big changes.
- Link Tree costs are under Tech and will be the same as last year.
- Spring Plant Sale increased.
- Fish Food Bank as per Tracy's input.
- Learning Garden based on actuals last year.
- Bees costs are shared with the Beekkeeper Association. Some years they do not bill us.
- Signage for the pollinator garden will complete the requirements for the grant.
- The Memorial Tree line item is waiting for an updated amount. It may turn out to be a Capital Investment.
- Outdoor Learning Center
 - Matt Farmer is working on a design, which Sandi will use to gather bids. A PowerPoint with a budget is planned to be presented to the membership at the recognition event. Concern about the financial coverage for the outdoor project was brought up and Joanne noted that there are sufficient funds, including approximately \$78,000 in CDs and interest-bearing accounts.
- Parkdale Garden remains the same.
- Seed to Supper will remain the same.
- Waterwise Garden wants to purchase gravel.
- OMGA expenses are about the same but could include more travel.
- Silent Auction items same as last year.

The executive committee approved the proposed budget for 2026. Joanne will send the finalized budget to the executive committee for their review, and after a week, it will be shared with the general membership to review before the November meeting.

Garden Sustainability Meeting (Jen) The meeting is tonight and will focus on addressing statewide and nationwide questions about local garden sustainability. Jen will order pizzas for the meeting.

2026 CGMGA Officers (Jen) The current officers have agreed to continue their roles for next year, with the exception of finding a new president-elect and alternate OMGA representative. Recruiting new leadership is an ongoing issue, particularly for the president role. In the past several members have expressed interest but the time commitment and learning curve involved are reasons for declining the role. Potential candidates including trainees Chris Nielsen and Cynthia Skogsborg were brought up. Jennifer shared her experience as a new member facing the challenge of lacking historical project knowledge. It was noted that one other Chapter has explored the option of shared positions and another has a President doing a second term.

Dirt Hugger Field Trip (Jen) A field trip to Dirt Huggers in The Dalles, coordinated with Mark Zandmiller, will be confirmed

The meeting was adjourned at 11:03 a.m.

Minutes taken by AI and edited by Donna DesRochers.

