

# OVER THE GARDEN FENCE

December 2023

## Events

- January 22—Master Gardener celebration

**Lunch and Learn and Happy Hour series** (weblink) <https://mastergardener.osu.edu/HHHLNL23-24>

- Dec. 6— Noon “Why Raised Bed Gardening”
- Dec. 14—4 PM “Top 10 Ways to Improve Your Garden
- Dec. 20—Noon “Insect Responses to Climate Change”
- Jan. 4—4 PM “What it Means to be Social in the Insect World”
- Feb. 7—Noon “Native vs. Non-native Landscape Plants”

## Celebrating Helen Slater –

*Lynda Berman*

Helen Slater had such a positive influence on many people's lives as she shared her love of plants throughout her life. She was generous with her knowledge and with her plants - and sometimes other people's plants! Long before Master Gardeners was established, she put gardeners in touch with each other to share specific perennials. She knew her friends' gardens and what thrived in each and which plants seeded off or needed to be divided and which could be shared.

Many of Helen's friends could share stories of their own friendship with Helen Slater and the ways she enriched their lives, but I'll tell my story.

I had the pleasure of maintaining the Plant of the Bible garden on Collage Avenue next to Athens First United Methodist Church with Helen for about 2 decades. The saucer sized red leaf plant is Castor Bean. Castor bean, was an answered prayer. Legend says that it was the plant that sprung up to shade Noah when the whale spit him out on land. Helen's documentable and legendary knowledge of plants which were named in the scriptures came from her books on

the topic. She was a preacher's wife. Helen's husband, Ken was in Methodist seminary with Martin Luther King, Jr. during that time, Helen worked in the office and sorted the mail. “All the students had a little pigeon hole for their mail but Martin had a big cardboard box. He got so much mail! And it would pile up because he would be out on speaking tours.” You can see a young fig tree behind Helen. How would I ever know these stories or think figs could grow in Ohio except through Helen! She enriched my life.

Helen worked in her own and several public gardens.

Helen and Linda Blazier, two very experienced gardeners, took charge of the Children's garden for several summers and created a lush, productive and flourishing place behind the Athens Community Center. It was a pleasure to visit it.

Nearly 40 years ago Helen started the Athens Herb Guild. “My favorite herb plant is lemon verbena,” she would say. “It was the FIRST herb plant I ever bought. And I got so excited. Ken and I ran an ad in the



## Helen Slater – *Cont.*

newspaper to start a club by seeking others who might be interested in sharing their love of herbs." Four people showed up at that first meeting.

The garden behind the Dairy Barn Arts Center was established shortly after and has been maintained for 30 some years. Scores of gardeners learned to differentiate weeds from some of the more obscure herbs plants by weeding alongside Helen. As we worked she would give you her recipe for comfrey salve, lemon thyme cookies and lavender sachets. She came to the garden during several work sessions as recently as this past summer. She sat on a bench and answered questions from the more novice gardeners. Her responses were never merely factual, they were inspirational and motivating!

When Helen dissolved her household and released her own garden, we were all impressed with her forethought and her plan to live in her 4 children's homes on a rotating basis. We were sorry to see her go but we were fortunate that one of her children, Mark Slater, lives in Athens so she continued to spend time in Athens. Some of the gardens were in raised beds or in pots on the deck but Helen continued to garden at each of her children's houses with the prerequisite trips to garden centers and nurseries in Nevada, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey.

Late last summer, Helen and I visited her Sunnyside house and garden. It had been sold and become a rental. I had chanced to meet the current tenant who, happily, was an avid gardener and she invited us for tea. She had lived in California for the past 20 years so she didn't know Ohio plants. Helen told her the names of all the bushes, vines, trees, flowers and plants around the house. So you see, well into her final year on earth she was actively gardening and, in her contagious way, teaching us, each, to love and take increased delight in the everyday miracles in our own gardens.



# Recipe

## Lemon Thyme Cookies

<p><b>PREP TIME</b></p> <hr/> <p><b>TOTAL TIME</b> 8 hrs.</p> <hr/> <p><b>OVEN TEMP</b> 350 degrees</p> <hr/> <p><b>SERVES</b></p> <hr/>	<p><b>INGREDIENTS</b></p> <hr/> <p>1 cup butter</p> <hr/> <p>1 ½ cup sugar</p> <hr/> <p>2 eggs</p> <hr/> <p>2 ½ cup unbleached flour</p> <hr/> <p>1 tsp. cream of tartar</p> <hr/> <p>½ tsp. salt</p> <hr/> <p>1 ½ tbsp. dried lemon thyme</p> <hr/>
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**FROM THE KITCHEN OF**  
Helen Slater/Linda Blazier

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**DIRECTION**

Shape into two cylinders about 1 1/2 inches in diameter.

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Wrap in waxed paper. Chill overnight.

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Slice and bake on a greased cookie sheet.

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Bake 10 minutes

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350 degrees

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Thin, crispy, a bit floral and delicious!

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There's a catch to this recipe.—You need to grow and harvest the lemon thyme.

This is **NOT** the internet recipe for lemon zest and lemon juice laden cookies containing “regular” thyme.



## Kids at the Children's Garden — Molly Gassaway

What a great semester of classes we have had in the Children's Garden! The Community Food Initiatives (CFI) Garden Education team has been taking the Community Center Preschool students out to the garden regularly since their school year began in late August. The kids are **so very excited** when they hear it is garden day! When the garden was abundant, they did garden scavenger hunts, helped harvest, made compost stews, learned how to use magnifying glasses, had cherry tomato taste tests, and more.

And once most of the plants were gone for the season, the kids were still thrilled to go outdoors and use the space's beautiful picnic table area to taste CFI's Discovery Kitchen recipes like pumpkin chocolate chip cookies and paw paw ice cream (all thumbs up!). At the outdoor table they also had the opportunity to make garden-related crafts such as seed necklaces and pumpkin turkeys, complete with "feathers" collected from around the garden. Thank you to all Master Gardener Volunteers that help keep this learning space so abundant



## Digging Deeper — Ceil Weldon

On a chilly November evening, the Master Gardeners held their last meeting for the 2023 year. The program was presented by Meghan Ellis, a naturalist with the Boch Hollow State Nature Preserve. Meghan was a professor at Hocking College and also worked on the Ora Anderson Trail. She works with the Division of Natural Areas (DNAP) whose mission is to preserve Ohio's unique natural heritage by protecting and restoring our finest land and water resources for future generations.

There are 144 Nature Preserves in the state amounting to 32,000 acres in 59 counties. Hocking County has 10 preserves, Adams 12, and Portage 13. Nature Preserves are not open to the general public and you must apply for an Access Permit at least 14 days prior to your visit.

Meghan spoke about the different nature preserves and DNAP's various program areas. Protecting Endangered Plants and enforcing the Endangered Plant Law as well as endangered species. Meghan encouraged interested volunteers to work at the different preserves in trail maintenance and invasive plant removal. Native plants are being out competed and the invasive plants are also causing loss of wildlife species. She gave us several specific examples such as Japanese barberry is a breeding ground for ticks and Purple Loosestrife in swampy areas will cause toads to have 50% mortality rate.

