

Pulaski County Master Minutes

May 2010

<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org>, <http://www.uaex.edu/pulaski/>

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Italian Arum

By Phyllis Barrier



Each fall, when the rest of my garden is looking tired and is coming to a close, Italian arum's first foliage starts to appear from tuberous roots. It is mainly grown for its arrowhead-shaped, semi-glossy, dark green leaves that grow 8 – 12 inches long and are marked with creamy white veins. The look is decidedly tropical and is an anachronism in the autumn and winter garden.

Arum is a relatively carefree tuberous perennial. It looks marvelous in masses along streams and pathways and in woodland-like gardens. It is best grown in medium moisture, humus-rich soils in part shade to full shade. It can also be used in shady pots and planters.

Amazingly, this foliage persists throughout our Pulaski County winters. Frost will cause the stalks to topple, but they will straighten up as the day warms. Arum shrugs off a snowfall, even the seven inches we had this winter. Remove withered or dead leaves to keep a tidy appearance. For a brilliant display of berries, do not deadhead flowers.

I cut one or three leaves and place in a narrow-necked Asian-inspired vase and have a beautiful arrangement for the dinner table, even in the dead of winter. The leaves can also be used in arrangements.

In early summer, arum's exotic bloom begins with a greenish white, hood-like spathe sheltering a narrow column known as the spadix. After bloom, the leaves and spathe die back, leaving only the thick spadix, which develops attractive, bright orange-red berries in summer. While the rest of the summer garden is peaking, Italian arum disappears to await its next fall arrival.

You can purchase tubers. Or if you know someone who has arum in their garden, ask for a "give-away plant." I got mine from a friend in Falls Church, Virginia. Divide the plant in early fall when the new foliage is just starting to emerge.



Choose a shady, fertile, and well-drained site and amend with compost or well-rotted manure and plant in early fall. Set the tubers into individual holes or larger planting areas dug 2-3 inches deep. Space the tubers 8-12 inches apart. Arum has no reported disease or pest problems.

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Water regularly and apply a balanced fertilizer during the growing season, but reduce watering as leaves wither. Do not water during dormancy.

Although arum causes severe discomfort if ingested raw, the early inhabitants of the Spanish Balearic islands in the Mediterranean made cakes with honey and the ground, cooked roots of arum. Contact with arum sap may cause skin irritation. Be careful when removing leaves or de-pulping berries for sowing.

WESSON GARDEN
Little Rock, April 2010
 By Bren Coop



A Lifetime Master Gardener, Kathleen Wesson, and her husband and fellow Master Gardener, Bruce Wesson, shared the serenity of their beautiful backyard with an impromptu tour in April. The evolution of the garden has taken many of the 40 years the Wessons have lived where they are. Kathleen says they could never have done it without the many "pass-along" plants shared by friends and relatives, and which represent fond stories and memories. Several large trees, including pine, shade the yard. Providing a further challenge, the backyard slope is relatively steep. But there were artists at work in creating color and pattern with wonderful variety. Rock pathways interspersed with **mondo grass** weave back and forth across the yard,

leading to "rooms" surrounded by **azaleas** in vibrant pinks and white. **Solomon's Seal** may be found from the front yard to several varieties in the back—some so loaded with blooms, they were dipping their branches to the ground. **Ferns** of many kinds (Cinnamon, Christmas, holly, autumn, etc.); **Lenten roses** (Hellebores); **Ajuga**; **Strawberry Begonias** and **English ivy** fill spaces around the restful bench or on the way to a creek at the bottom of the hill.



But it was **Hostas** which hooked Kathleen and have become a large collection – from the antique pots filled with hostas on their deck overlooking the garden, to giant, variegated leaf varieties, to tiny dwarves. **The Wessons** have used the colors, shapes and sizes of the hosta varieties, the lime green leaves of **Hydrangea** and **Bleeding heart**, deep greens and purples of azaleas and **Lorapetalum**, and "painted" ferns, to provide rich color everywhere. The overall result is a laid-back, tranquil oasis.



Choose your Green

By Lorraine Hensley



Sometimes we are faced with one too many decisions. And with many gardeners some of those decisions have to do with our landscaping efforts. As gardeners we pretty well know our own terrain and understand what it's like to have at least one area in our landscape that just isn't what it should be. This is the one we sort of avert our eyes and maybe turn sideways to avoid seeing full on when out in our yard. We also understand that if we have an area that is not so pretty the odds are other gardeners have one or more as well. We have tried everything we can think of to jazz that area up to par but haven't been successful. My particular area of avoidance can be defined pretty simply—it's the places where "the grass don't grow." So those spots will no longer have the ability to destroy any more carefully purchased and lovingly placed (did I say expensive) sod. That decision made I am now ready to look seriously at various groundcovers to gain extra pizzazz for those areas where the sod seems to cringe before it's even in the ground.

One important proviso to remember is that unlike grass most groundcovers cannot be walked upon. With that in mind it's time to look full on at areas of sparse lawn coverage in the yard and think hard about what your final purpose is. If there are any steep banks or slopes in your landscape or any place where mowing is hazardous and difficult to get to with a mower consider using a groundcover. Or, it could be a shady area under trees that doesn't get adequate sunlight for grass to grow. Perhaps tree roots are growing too close to the surface and interfere with your plans for a beautiful turf in those locations. These are perfect for groundcover use. All groundcovers are perennial and most of them are also evergreen.

If, for some reason, a soil test is not possible to obtain simply mix a balanced fertilizer (10-10-10) with the soil where you want to plant. The best time to plant your groundcovers is in the fall for the same reasons that shrubs and trees are planted at that time. New plants have time to establish a stronger root system to help them withstand the humid summer heat and they also have the advantage of generally adequate rainfall. The gardener also gets a bonus or two here as well: cooler temperatures mean a more enjoyable planting experience and less hand watering for the plants. Space according to size, growth rate and habit. Make those decisions while also considering just how much patience is required to wait for full coverage of the selected area. It truly is a trade-off because the more densely groundcover is planted the less time is required for that anticipated full coverage.



Layer mulch to a depth of 2 inches for weed control as your groundcover matures and spreads over the selected area. Look at big box stores, nurseries, or garden supply catalogs for the netting needed to better control weeds and protect those planted on slopes or steep banks. Four to six weeks after planting begin to feed them with a complete fertilizer that's high on the nitrogen end—like 12-4-8. Apply about 3 times a year for optimum growth and a more rapid coverage of those troublesome and unsightly areas where your plants are beginning to settle in and make themselves at home. All groundcovers don't like the same things where planting and care are concerned so be sure to read the nursery tags on those chosen. It's best to be sure that your choice is right for your needs and purpose.

Upcoming Events

By Libby Thalheimer



Saturday, May 8th

5:30-10:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 9th

1:00-5:00 p.m.

The Quapaw Quarter Association's 46th Annual Spring Tour of Historic Homes featuring the Evening Candlelight Gala on Saturday, and the Sunday afternoon tour of five historic homes located in the Governor's Mansion National Register Historic District of Little Rock. For more information, please visit www.quapaw.com or call 501-371-0075.

Saturday, May 15th

2010 Mount Holly Garden Series, suggested donation of \$5 to benefit Mount Holly Cemetery, 12th and Broadway, Little Rock, Walter Gardening with Green Thumb Nursery. Bring a lawn chair, wear your gardening hat and bring items from your garden to share. In the Victorian tradition we share plants, bulbs, seeds, seedlings, cuttings, fruits, vegetables, etc. For more information contact Kay Tatum at kay.tatum@yahoo.com

Saturday, May 15th

8:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m.

Van Buren County Plant Sale
Ed Leamon Park, Fairfield Bay
Arkansas Plants, vendors, food, compost and demos. Contact Mary Lou Horvath at 501-884-6934 or wezzie@ozarkisp.net

Tuesday, May 18th

PCMG meeting St. James Methodist Church
11:30 a.m.

May 20, 21 and 22nd

2010 Master Gardener State Convention
Magnolia

Saturday, May 22nd

Music in Bloom Tour presented by Mountain View Garden Club
Mountain View

Self-guided tours of beautiful gardens
10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

For more information, Call Paul White at 870-615-0129 or Linda McLeod at 870-213-8978.

Saturday, June 5th

NW Arkansas Through
The Garden Gate Tour

Tour a variety of lovely private gardens in
NW Arkansas. 9:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

For more information, call Louis at 479-442-4640, or email gloriamc@cox.net



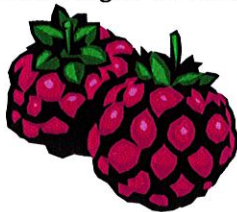
Checklist by Carol Randle

We have had an awesomely beautiful spring. Everything seems to have bloomed in a spectacular way. All the trees and shrubs that bloom seem to have been in a contest to see which could be the most breathtaking! (The pollen was also, literally, breathtaking.) If you have plants that had winter damage, please deal with them quickly. The later you wait to prune, the slower the recovery will be. Plants typically slow down in their growth rate as weather gets hotter and rainfall decreases.

VEGETABLES

If you planted vegetables this spring they should be beginning to bear fruit. Harvest regularly and scout your garden for problems. Aphids build up quickly and stinkbugs are harder to kill the bigger they get. To keep corn earworms away, watch for the sweet corn to begin to show silks,

then squirt a couple of drops of mineral oil on the silks weekly until the silks turn brown. Watch tomatoes for tomato fruit worms . . . they are the same as the insects that hurt corn; they can move from crop to crop. Mulch the garden to keep the weeds at bay and to give you a hand with watering. Mulching soils helps crops retain moisture and stay a little cooler when the temperatures heat up. There is still time to plant vegetables. You can also add to the plantings of tomatoes, peppers, eggplants and herbs. Water, mulch, and fertilize and you will be harvesting in no time.



BERRY SEASON

It is berry season. From Blackberries and Blueberries, fresh fruit is readily available this year. If you grow your own, you might want to consider bird netting around the Blueberries, because the birds love them as much as we do. There are many options today to buy fresh, locally grown produce.

SHRUBS

Spring blooming shrubs have finished blooming and all pruning chores need to get finished by mid-month. Late season pruning tends to slow down plant recovery, which can impact the number of flowers that they set. They set their flower buds in August and September. Summer blooming shrubs are showing flowers now. We are seeing flowers on Crape Myrtles, Rose of Sharon, and Oakleaf Hydrangeas. Gardenias and big leaf Hydrangeas that were not winter damaged are also blooming. If you want to try a new Hydrangea that won't be hurt by winter damage, try one of the improved smooth Hydrangeas Hydrangea Arborescens. Invincibelle Spirit is the first ever pink flowering form. Large showy pink flowers are born on the new growth, so even when plants get nipped back by a cold winter, they will still bloom. Buddleias are also

blooming and attracting butterflies and bees, and summer Spireas will keep blooming if you deadhead or shear them back after flowering.

ROSES

Knock-out Roses have been amazing this year. They have bloomed non-stop from mid April. Fertilize them once or twice a year and give them a little water and they will reward you with almost non-stop blooms. Other carefree roses: the Home Run Roses; David Austin Roses; the flower carpet for low growing plants and New Dawn and "Climbing Autumn Sunset" is a new yellow climber with disease resistance.

ANNUALS

For annuals, since we want to push the plants as much as possible, we need to remember to water and fertilize regularly. A slow release fertilizer is great to mix in when planting, and water soluble forms work well applied every ten days to two weeks. Deadhead plants that are setting seeds to keep energy directed to flower formation and not seeds. There are a lot of color options for Petunias, Lantana, Angelonia, Sun Coleus, and Zinnias.



PERENNIALS

Blooming well now are: Daylilies, Purple Coneflowers, Shasta Daisy, Gaillardia, Ruellia, and hardy Hibiscus. Watch the foliage on your hardy Hibiscus for the attack of the Mallow Sawfly. This insect can turn your leaves into lace, seemingly overnight. Spray at first signs of problems with Sevin, Pyrethrums or similar insecticide. Summer bulbs can still be planted in dry bulb form, or many nurseries sell potted, actively growing plants, including Caladiums, Elephant Ears (Colocasia and Alocasia), Dahlias, and Oxalis. Foliage can be as pretty as flowers on many of these plants.



DIG IN HERE...

For answers to your gardening and horticultural problems, try these helpful resources:

- Master Gardener Website:
<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/mastergardener/mastergardenersonly>
Username: mastergardener
Password: compost
- PC Cooperative Extensions Website:
<http://www.uaex.edu/pulaski/mastergardeners/default.asp>
- U of A Cooperative Extension Website:
<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org>

Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Service

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Little Rock, AR 72204
501-340-6650



Pulaski County Master Gardeners are trained volunteers working with the University of Arkansas Cooperative Service and Pulaski County Government to provide demonstration gardens and horticultural – related information to the residents of the county. In 2009, these volunteers gave **22,707** hours of service.
Elisabeth J. Phelps, County Extension Agent,
Staff Chair



Everyone is encouraged to submit interesting information, committee reports, newsworthy photos, etc. to the newsletter.

Bring your information to the Master Gardener meeting, or send it to:

Jennice Ratley
22 Cobble Hill Road
Little Rock, Ark. 72211
gardenrat@comcast.net
412-8299

The deadline is the **second Friday** of each month. For late breaking news after the deadline, send information to:

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