

## Pulaski County Master Minutes

July 2010

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

Volume 19 Issue 7

### MASTER GARDENER ICE CREAM SOCIAL

JULY 20, 2010  
10 -- 12

TOUR THREE GARDENS REFRESHMENTS AT  
EACH

JACKIE WALKER  
2308 Gunpowder

JUDY CHAPMAN  
2223 Breckenridge

GINNY SMITH  
77 Warwick Road

SHARE THE GARDENS OF THESE MASTER  
GARDENERS AND ENJOY THE REFRESHMENTS!



**Mosquito is out,  
it's the end of the day;  
she's humming and hunting  
her evening away.  
Who knows why such hunger  
arrives on such wings  
at sundown? I guess  
it's the nature of things."**

- N. M. Boedecker, *Midsummer  
Night Itch*

**"O beautiful for spacious skies  
For amber waves of grain,  
For purple mountains majesty  
Above thy fruited plain!  
America! America!  
God shed his grace on thee  
And crown thy good with brotherhood  
From sea to shining sea!"**



### *Arkansas Is Our Campus*

The Arkansas Cooperative Extension Service offers its programs to all eligible persons regardless of race, color, national origin, religion, gender, age, disability, marital or veteran status, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/ Equal Opportunity Employer.





### Checklist by Carol Randle

Summer is really here with a vengeance! It is hot, hot, hot!! It is hot, dry weather, so add mulch to your garden now and save time later. Mulching will help to keep out the weeds and pests, will preserve moisture so that you don't have to water as often, and will improve your soil and your garden's overall appearance. Continue to watch for and get rid of weeds before they go to seed. Water according to the weather. Remember to avoid peak hours when watering. Pay close attention to raised beds and container plants.

#### VEGETABLES

Try to get your gardening chores done early in the day. Most fruits and vegetables taste better if harvested before the heat of the day has set in. Many of our summer vegetables are at peak harvest.

Knowing what to look for can ensure that you get the most from your garden. Sweet corn is ripe when the silks begin to turn brown and dry. Take a peek on one or two of the ears by pulling back the shuck and pressing into a kernel or two. If it gives a milky liquid, and the ear is fully formed, harvest. The quicker you can go from garden to table, the sweeter the corn will be. Keep picking your cucumbers as they mature, because letting old fruit stay on the vines will slow down future production. Fresh okra is best when picked when they are small, no larger than two to three inches. The bigger they get, the tougher the pods are. If you have already harvested and some of your vegetables have played out, this is the season to replant for a fall harvest. Water and mulch will make your job easier, but also monitor for insects and diseases.

#### FRUITS

Rabbiteye blueberries, blackberries, and peaches are in season. Keep canes that are bearing fruit moist throughout the summer. Remove old canes after they have finished producing fruit. If your fruit trees appear to be producing too much

fruit, make sure you thin it out some. Keep grass around your fruit trees short. Grass deprives the trees of nitrogen. Throw away any fruit you find that has been affected by scab (a fungus). Cantaloupes and Watermelons tend to be at their sweetest if it is a bit on the dry side during harvest. Too much rainfall tends to dilute the sugars. When Cantaloupes are ripe, the stems should easily separate from the vine, the fruits should develop a light tan webbing pattern and the blossom end should be slightly soft and smell like Cantaloupe. Ripe Watermelons will have a dry curly brown tendril at stem end, a dullish sheen on the fruit and a white to yellow underbelly. We still have some great Arkansas fruit to be harvested or purchased at Farmer's Markets. Fresh figs are coming into ripeness now. Remember that birds and squirrels like them as much as you do. Bird netting can help, but you can also allow the trees to get taller to give them some of the fruit out of your reach and leave the bottom fruit for you. Peaches are in season and they are wonderful. If you are going to a u-pick farm, always call before driving out to make sure they are open. Again, with the heat, most people get there early, so you want to make sure the field isn't picked out before you arrive. Knowing when a peach is ripe is important. Peaches will have a good solid color, a strong peach aroma and separate easily from the tree when ripe. If they are green and hard, don't pick them. Peach flavor will not improve with time once they are picked.

#### FLOWERS

We have so many outstanding summer annuals that it is often hard to pick which ones to plant. Pay attention to those in your garden and make notes on which ones are taking the heat. The many wave and supertunias are outstanding and should be in full bloom, but only if you have kept up with fertilization. If you haven't given them enough fertilizer you may not see as many blooms. If they have stopped blooming, give them a haircut, fertilize and water and they should rebound with flowers through frost. Angelonia, Sweet Potato Vine, and some of the new Cupheas are outstanding.

"Flamenco Cha Cha" has great big red flowers and just doesn't stop. Remember that annuals are only around for one season, so keep up with watering and fertilizing. If they look bad, pinch them back or start over. Nurseries today keep annuals in stock almost year round, so replanting is a possibility. Keep flower beds well weeded. Remove faded blooms. Make sure you keep the soil moist but not soggy around ferns. They may become dormant if they get too dry. Now is the time to pick those beautiful perennials for a fresh bouquet indoors. This will also encourage more blooms on most perennials. Salt deposits can build up in the soil of container plants. This will cause the foliage to burn. Flush out these deposits with water once during the summer.

#### **TROPICALS**

Hand in hand with summer annuals are the summer tropicals. Hibiscus, Bananas, Mandevillas, and Plumerias all put on quite a show in the garden or in containers on the patio. They, too, thrive in heat and humidity but do like to be kept watered and fertilized. Especially if you are growing them in containers, you are constantly watering to keep them alive. Water leaches out the nutrition, so every week or two fertilize with a water soluble fertilizer. Monitor for pests. Remember to make sure there is ample water in the containers when using any pesticide or fertilizer when it is hot and dry. If the plants are stressed, they may get burned with any extra additions.

#### **HERBS**

Harvest blooms of Lavender now to keep the plant tidy and encourage more blooms. Cut sprigs of Rosemary and freeze whole for future use. Cut back about three-quarters of the new growth on your Thyme plants regularly throughout the summer. For a nice fragrance in your kitchen, tie several branches of Sage together and hang it upside down in your kitchen. Pinch the stems of Basil regularly to prevent flowering. Harvest about once a week. Clip the flower stalks off Garlic. Once the leaves have turned brown Garlic can be harvested.

#### **SHRUBS**

For most shrubs we have entered into the general maintenance of watering now. The exception would be for Gardenias and Bigleaf and Oak Leaf Hydrangeas (*Hydrangea Macrophylla* and *Hydrangea Quercifolia*, respectfully). These three summer bloomers set flower buds in late August and September. If they have overgrown their location or need some general shaping early July is the last time to get it done---as soon after flowering is best. Hydrangeas need older canes to be removed down to the ground line. Lightly fertilize after pruning. Avoid any pruning on spring blooming shrubs as they too will soon begin to set flower buds. Summer blooming shrubs should be in their prime. Deadhead spent flowers to ensure more blooms. Crape Myrtles, Althea, Butterfly Bush and Summer Spirea are all blooming along with Clethra Hydrangeas and still some Gardenias.

#### **LAWNS**

Mowing the lawn can become a tedious chore this time of year, but keeping the lawn healthy with regular watering is important. You can often tell who is and isn't watering by the look of the lawn. Daily watering is never good, but do make sure that an inch to an inch and a half are put down weekly. One last application of fertilizer can be applied in late August to early September on Bermuda, St. Augustine, and Zoysia lawns. Don't fertilize Centipede or Tall Fescue at this time.

#### **JULY BLOOMS**

Althea, Anise Mint, Artemisia, Balsam, Beautyberry, Belamcanda, Buddleia, Butterflyweed, Cannas, Chive, Cleome, Clerodendrum, Coneflower, Coreopsis, Crape Myrtle, Crinum, Dahlias, Daisies, Echeveria, Euphorbia, Feverfew, Gaura, Gladioli, Hibiscus, Hostas, Hydrangea, Kerria, Lantana, Liatris, Lilies, Lythrum, Lycoris, Marigolds, Marjoram, Miscanthus, Nicotiana, Oxalis, Petunias, Phlox, Portulaca, Roses, Rudbeckia, Salvia, Scabiosa, Snapdragon, Tuberosa, Verbena, and Zinnias.



## The Gardens of Alcatraz

By Debbie Moore



While on vacation to San Francisco, I had the chance to visit the gardens on Alcatraz. Alcatraz is not a location where I was expecting to find gardens so I was surprised to learn that the island has a history of gardens.

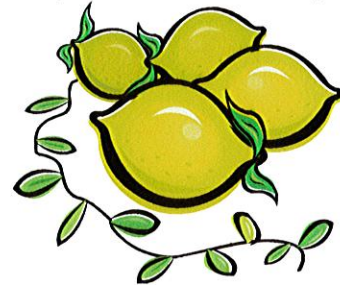
The army began construction of the island's fortifications in the 1850s. The army first lined the roads to the summit with surplus cannonballs, and then later used flowerbeds and rows of pots to beautify the approach to the prison. The army planted "Iceplant" which the island residents called "Persian carpet" to control erosion as well as to improve the views of "the Rock" from San Francisco.

The army devised an irrigation system, to use reclaimed water from the cell house showers to irrigate an area that was once the west lawn. Now on the bay side, the lawn has been overgrown by a thicket of fig and other garden plants that protect nesting waterbirds.

In 1933, when the Bureau of Prisons arrived, Fred Reichel, the new warden's secretary was so impressed by the army gardens that he began to maintain them himself. Mr. Reichel needed tough plants to survive on the island with little water and care. He asked the California Horticultural Society for seedlings that might do well on the island. Many of the plants species that he brought to the island came from Mediterranean climates. These plants flourished through forty years of neglect after the prison closed in 1963. In 2003, the Garden Conservatory, the Golden Gate National Parks Conservatory and the National Park Service began a joint effort to preserve the historic gardens. Volunteers work with staff year-round to plant and maintain these gardens.

I enjoyed the Gardens of Alcatraz with the old roses, fig trees, bulbs and succulents, historic examples of sustainable plantings.

## Earth Friendly---Lemons By Lorraine Hensley



Over decades songwriters and poets have shared and expressed opinions about lemons. They have done so by using their creative talents to generally malign this most useful and earth friendly fruit. Think we all are familiar with the statement concerning what to do when life "hands you a lemon" or, if an auto doesn't perform well, then "it's a lemon" or this one: the lemon tree is very pretty and the lemon flower is sweet but the fruit of the poor lemon is impossible to eat. All negative with but one exception—lemons form the base for that delightful summertime drink—lemonade. And that one is true.



But that 5% citric acid each fruit contains is a positive force to simply get things done and it works both in the home and in the garden. If you want to know what it does in the home pick up a copy of the Shea Zukowski book—"salt, lemons, vinegar, and baking soda, at your local bookstore.

Gardeners' generally like to be out in the yard doing one garden chore or another.

Depending, of course, on the seasonal needs. And that's where we are going with our magical lemons. One of the gardeners' new earth friendly best friends may well be the much maligned lemon.



Here's another method for getting rid of aphids using lemon juice instead of salt. Mix 1 tablespoon lemon juice with 2 cups water and 1 tablespoon baby shampoo and then pour into a big spray bottle. When you spray be sure to get both the upper /lower surfaces of the leaves and include the plant stems. Those aphids are pretty sneaky and probably believe they just got lucky when they discovered your healthy plants. It's best to get them under some kind of control before the infestation gets out of hand.

If ants are giving you a serious problem the lemon has an answer for you. Ants do not like the lemon at all and can be coaxed to another location by using the following recipe. Put 1 handful of chopped lemon peel into the food processor and while the machine is running slowly add 1 cup of warm water. Pour this solution into and over any problem anthills.

The author tells us that rubbing the outside (yellow side) of the lemon peel on your skin is a natural way of repelling mosquitoes. And this is one mosquito repellent that is

both user and earth friendly. Most gardeners' I know love to play in the dirt and we all know exactly what that means. Dirty hands all around and we like to clean up without using a cleansing agent that irritates our skin. Once more—lemons to the rescue. Put 1 teaspoon salt in the palm of one hand and squeeze half a lemon over it. Gently rub your hands together to get rid of all the crud. Rinse, pat dry and use a moisturizing hand cream. The author has one caveat concerning the use of this hand cleaning method. Don't use it if your hands have any cuts or ragged cuticles. Even those of us who can't abide dirty hands will not knowingly put acid on them—not even the 5% citric acid the lemon contains. And we all know what salt can do to open cuts.

Well—I've shared the information about salt and lemons so the next issue of Master Minutes will focus on that household standby—vinegar—for a little different use—in our garden.

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## Russian Rhapsody

By Phyllis Barrier

In May we spent nine days visiting Moscow and Saint Petersburg, an exceptionally interesting trip for a garden enthusiast. At the urging of our American friends living in Moscow who served as our guides, we timed our visit to include Sunday, May 9—Victory Day, when Russians celebrate the defeat of Nazi Germany in 1945. That was sixty-five years ago, and so the number of surviving veterans of what the Russians call the Great Patriotic War has dwindled sharply. Dozens of them came to Gorky Park on Victory Day, though, wearing their uniforms and their medals, as they do every year, to receive flowers and chocolate bars from their grateful countrymen. Below are pictures from Gorky Park. The apple trees were in bloom, along with large beds of tulips and pansies.

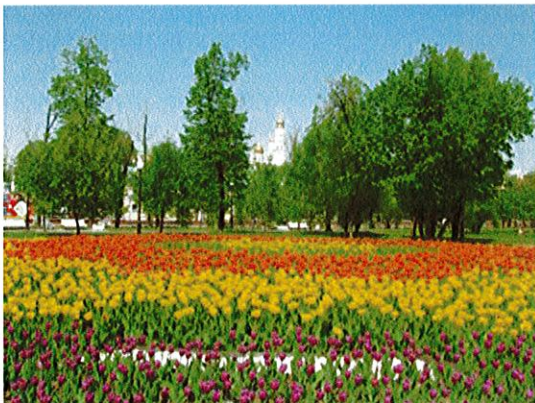




I was quite taken with the large lilac trees that were in bloom. They were large enough that we could stand under them to shade ourselves from the unseasonably warm weather.



Far from gray and dark, Moscow was beautiful with the parks filled with thousands of tulips in every color and arrangement.



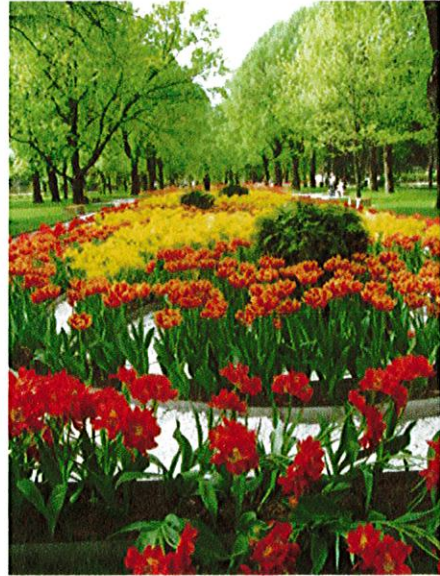
The pansies below were planted to mimic military ribbons.



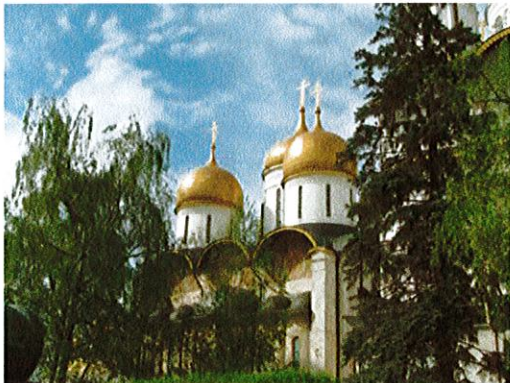
We spent a day at Red Square and inside the Kremlin. What a surprise to so many historic cathedrals, and the very large and manicured Kremlin Gardens within the Kremlin walls. There were beautiful trees, shrubs, and a profusion of spring flowers.



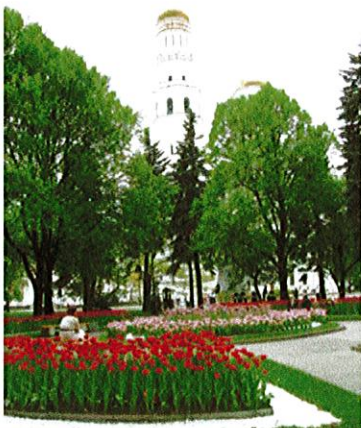




Note the large lilac trees above this bed of pansies.



Off to the Bolshi Ballet and more apple trees in bloom.





In four hours on the fast train, we were in Saint Petersburg. The highlight of our visit, from a gardener's point of view, was the Summer Palace with its extensive grounds.



Although there are no flowers in the picture below, I would be remiss to not include one picture of the Winter Palace (which now houses part of the Hermitage Art Museum) situated on the Neva River. The unusually warm weather brought out boats, fishermen, and bikinis on the beaches.



"July is the seventh month of the year according to the Gregorian calendar. It was the fifth month in the early calendar of the ancient Romans. The Romans called the month Quintilius, which means fifth. A Roman Senate renamed the month to Julius (July) in honor of Julius Caesar, who was born on 12 July. The Anglo-Saxon names for the month included *Heymonath* or *Maedmonath*, referring respectively to haymaking and the flowering of meadows."





## DIG IN HERE...

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

➤ Master Gardener Website:  
<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org/mastergardener/mastergardeneronly>

Username: mastergardener  
 Password: compost

➤ PC Cooperative Extensions Website:  
<http://www.uaex.edu/pulaski/mastergardeners/default.asp>

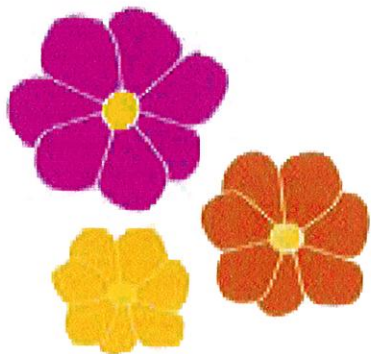
➤ U of A Cooperative Extension Website:  
<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org>

Pulaski County Cooperative Extension Service

2901 W. Roosevelt Road  
 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:

Beth Phelps  
 Pulaski County CES  
 2901 W. Roosevelt Road  
 Little Rock, Ark. 72204  
[bphelps@uaex.edu](mailto:bphelps@uaex.edu)  
 340-6650

### Master Minutes Staff



Bren Coop  
 Betty Deere  
 Lorraine Hensley  
 Helen Hronas  
 Phyllis Barrier

Jennice Ratley  
 Carol Randle  
 Debra Redding  
 Libby Thalheimer

### Photographers



Cheryl Kennedy  
 David Werling  
 Lynn Winningham  
 Bonnie Wells

Margaret Schultz  
 Herb Dicker  
 Ann Owen  
 Martha Bowden