



Pulaski County Master Minutes

February, 2011

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

Volume 20, Issue 1

February Meeting



Jon Zaweislak, with the University of Arkansas State Extension Office will be speaking at the February meeting and his topic will be on Bees.



ARKANSAS FLOWER & GARDEN SHOW

Arkansas Flower & Garden Show, 2011

By Mary Evans

The 2011 show will be held Feb 25-27 at the Statehouse Convention Center. This year's theme is "Gardening Through The Years." **This is our 20th anniversary!** Come celebrate with us! Check out the website at

www.arkansasflowerandgardenshow.org. Be sure to consult the website for new hours, changes in shuttle schedules, etc.

This year the **Home Show** is our same weekend..."One Weekend, Two Great Shows." Get \$1 off ticket price, by presenting a ticket stub at the other show. Shuttles will run from both,

Dickey Stephens Park & War Memorial Stadium. Shuttles \$1, totally worth it!

It's not too late to **volunteer** to work. Contact Beth Phelps or submit your volunteer sheets already sent out. Remember your volunteer badge is good for entry for the duration of the show.

Proceeds from the show go to fund scholarships & beautification/educational grants. For more details on how to apply for the "**Greening of Arkansas**" grants, contact Karin Briscoe at karinbriscoe@comcast.net or 225-8098. To enter a specimen for the **horticultural exhibits** contact Mary Latendresse at mlatendresse@gmail.com

Sunday is "**family day.**" Starting out with the Sunday brunch at the Peabody from 10:00-2:00. See the giant aquarium, bugs & more activities including a great line-up of children's speakers (school gardens, etc.)

Janet Carson will be there Saturday morning for her radio show. We will be taking questions live on the air. At 11:45 she speaks, then signs her new book afterwards. Be sure to purchase your book from the Master Gardeners & get it signed. Our friend Chris Olson will also be speaking.

Special Event: At "Arkansas Flavors," Deborah Madison will present "Why Farm To Table Is A Great Idea." Locally grown foods will be prepared by the Peabody chefs. Beth sent out a bio for her & info is on the website. See you there Friday, Feb 25, at 5:30 pm. Tickets \$60, must be purchased in advance (see website.) Proceeds to scholarships/grants.

Another fun event this year is the seed swap! Sat 2:15 they will show a documentary film in the Fulton Room. Check the website for the actual "seed swap" schedule. Some other attractions include Weiderkehr Wines, Silent auction, flower show, florist competition and a special exhibit sponsored by Greenleaf Nurseries. Greenleaf is also sponsoring a speaker on ornamentals.

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.

How To's Speakers: These speakers will be on the stage located on the show floor.

Friday, Feb 25

- 11:00 **"Durable, Do-able Plants & Habitat: For People & Wildlife"** Jane Gulley, Witt Stephens Nature Center
- 11:30 **"African Violets: Keep them Alive & Blooming"** Betty Ferguson, Central Arkansas African Violet Society
- 12:00 **Awards Ceremony**
- 12:30 **"War Memorial Gateway Renovation Partnership"** Leland Couch, Phoebe Stephens & Marilyn Mason, Little Rock Parks & Recreation and Barry Holt, Master Gardener
- 1:00 **"Critters In Your Garden"** Jim Spurlin, Critter Control of Central Arkansas
- 1:30 **"How To Get The Most Out of Your Sprinkler System"** Mark Brown, Pulaski County Extension Agent, Water Conservation/Horticulture
- 2:00 **"Keep Everyday Garden Tools in Shape"** David Dodson, Master Gardener
- 2:30 **"Perennials For The Shade"** Rand Retzliff, Grand Designs
- 3:00 **"Freezer Jam From Arkansas Berries"** Mary Wells, Faulkner County Master Gardener
- 3:30 **"Oldies, Goodies & New Comers- Perennials for Sun"** Polly Henderson, Culberson's Greenhouse
- 4:00 **Floral Demonstration** Scott Brents, Fairy Tale Florals
- 4:30 **"Build A Rain Barrel"** Mark Brown, Pulaski County Extension Agent, Water Conservation/Horticulture
- 5:00 **"The Bromellad Guy"** Michael Seal, The Funny Farm

Saturday, Feb 26

- 10:00-11:00 **"The Garden Show" Live on KARN**
Janet Carson, U of A Extension Service
- 11:30 **"Spring Garden Tour"** Fran Ables, Greater Little Rock Council of Garden Clubs
- 12:00 **" Make A Moss Basket"** Mary Evans, Master Gardener
- 12:30 **"Soil Testing, How, Why & What Does It Mean?"** Beth Phelps, Pulaski County Extension Agent/Horticulture
- 1:00 **"Let's Party!"** Ted Lewis, Floral Express
- 1:30 **"Pruning Young & Ornamental Trees"** Peter Rausch, Certified Arborist, Tree Health Care
- 2:00 **"Trash + Treasure + Hypertufa=Cheap Garden Art"** Kandy Jones, The Garage Sale Queen
- 2:30 **"Healthy Foods Produced Locally In Arkansas"** Julianne Bifely & Megan Moss, Arkansas Sustainability Network
- 3:00 **"Burning Questions About Horseradish, Herb of the Year 2011"** Tina Marie Wilcox, Ozark Folk Center
- 3:30 **"Wedding Flowers Through The Years"** Heather Wright, Distinctive Designs By Tanarah
- 4:00 **"Containers: An Easy Alternative For Growing Herbs"** Rosemary Arnold, Arkansas Unit Herb Society of America
- 4:30 **TBA**
- 5:00 **"The Pollinators-Honeybees In Your backyard"** Melissa Mencer & Larry Kichler, Central Arkansas Beekeepers Assoc.

Sunday, Feb 27

- 11:30 **"Fun With Bromeliads"** Michael Seal, The Funny Farm

- 12:00 **"Startup Ideas for a Good Youth Garden"** Julie Treat, Horticulture Program Technician, UA Cooperative Extension Service

- 12:30 **"Challenges For a School Garden in an Alternative Learning Environment."** Jonathan Buford, Felder Learning Academy

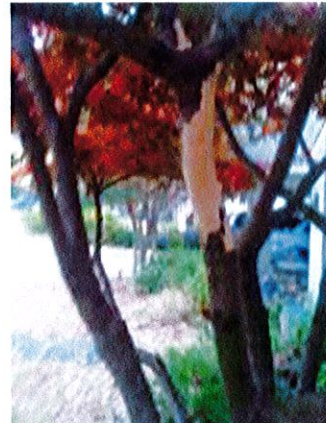
- 1:00 **"Dunbar Garden Project: Little Rock's Oldest Youth Experience in The School Garden"** Damian Thompson & Students, Dunbar Garden

- 1:30 **"Recycle Paper Into Plant Pots for your Seedlings"** Jet Cuffman, Master Gardener

- 2:00 **"Butterflies, Caterpillars...Help!"** Mrs. Dawson's 4th Grade class, Howard Perrin Elementary School, Benton & Pat Gipson, Saline Co. Master Gardener

- 2:30 **"Dirt Don't Hurt With our Green Team"** Carol Wooldridge, Master Gardener & the Clinton Elementary Magnet School Green Team, Sherwood

- 3:00 **"Gardening In Schools: Experiences From The Delta Garden Study,"** Andrew Carberry, Emily English & Rachel Schichtl, Mabelvale Magnet Middle School



Squirrels Damage Maple Trees
By Phyllis Barrier

While I was admiring the fall color on my neighbor's beautiful Japanese maple, I noticed damage to the tree bark. I emailed a photo of the damage to our expert, Beth Phelps. Beth wrote back, "it looks like squirrel damage. Squirrels will strip the bark. I have seen this damage on large maple trees as well. If they have totally girdled the branch, it will die from that point forward.

"The best thing to do is wrap the large branches and trunk to prevent the squirrels from getting to the bark. You can use just about anything - tree wrap would probably be the easiest. Don't wrap too tight. The wrap will have to be removed when it gets tight, because it can also girdle the tree. It should not get tight for a year or two.

"You could also try scare tactics: hang aluminum pie pans and/or strips of aluminum foil so they move in the wind. Hot pepper sprays may work but will need to be applied periodically."

My neighbor has wrapped parts of the damaged tree and hung strips of aluminum foil in the tree. So far there hasn't been any further damage to the tree bark.



Cammack Village Committee Meeting

"Every gardener knows that under the cloak of winter lies a miracle ... a seed waiting to sprout, a bulb opening to the light, a bud straining to unfurl. And the anticipation nurtures our dream."

- Barbara Winkler

PCMG Board & Meeting Summary By Bren Coop

January 18, 2011

President Jet Cuffman received secretary's minutes which were approved; as well as the treasurer's report for the year's end. Plans were made for the annual audit. Dues are now due for 2011. Discussion ensued regarding fundraising and record- keeping for donations and various projects.

An initial down-payment has been made for the greenhouse renovation, and work is expected to begin in February. Completion of the work will be scheduled when funds are made available.

Don Ford and Marcella Grimmett are spearheading the Chair Orientation meeting scheduled for January 25th. Important information will be presented for all Project and Committee Chairmen.

Resignations were received from Betty Heron and Don & Betty Henderson. Nancy Kirsch and the Retention Committee are contacting members with delinquent reporting of hours and are working on completion of the general roster.

During the **general meeting**, announcements of upcoming events include the Flower & Garden Show and the Little Rock Garden Council Spring Tour. Volunteers were requested to sign up to assist with these events.

Robin Connell Smith of Plantation Service presented an informative program about Indoor Plants and their requirements. She made suggestions for plants requiring various lighting conditions and also provided some beautiful door prizes!

I don't understand why Cupid was chosen to represent Valentine's Day. When I think about romance, the last thing on my mind is a short, chubby toddler coming at me with a weapon. ~Author Unknown

Upcoming Events



February, 2011

Advanced Master Gardener Class: Vegetable Gardening on February 1-2, 2011 at White County Fairgrounds, 802 Davis Dr, Searcy, AR 72143. Cost is \$60.00 per person. Registration: 9:30 -10 a.m. Feb. 1. Note: Registration Deadline: January 25. For more information contact Sherri Sanders: ssanders@uaex.edu or 501-268-5394.

Jefferson County Home and Garden Seminar and Show, Saturday, Feb. 12, 2011, Pine Bluff Convention Center. Four seminars, 6 How-To sessions and lots of vendors to visit and shop with. No Admission charge. Door prizes much of the day with Stihl blowers for seminar door prizes. For more information contact -- Don Plunkett, County Extension Agent-Staff Chair, [870-534-1033](tel:870-534-1033)
Pulaski County Master Gardener Meeting on Tuesday, February 15th, 11:30 a.m. - 1:00 p.m., at St. James United Methodist Church

The 2011 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show - "20 Years of Gardens" is just around the corner - February 25, 26, 27, 2011, at the Statehouse Convention Center.





Checklist by Carol Randle

BIRD HELP

Provide fresh water near the birds' shelter. To attract a variety of birds, feed them cornmeal mixed with peanut butter, cracked corn, chopped fruits, suet, or sunflower seeds. Or plant Barberry, Beautyberry, Coralberry, Cottoneaster, Dogwood, Hawthorn, Holly, Mahonia, Possum Haw, and Viburnum which all provide fruits and berries in a February landscape.

WINTER ANNUALS

Winter Annuals gave us a much needed boost of color this fall. Depending on where you live, they may or may not be looking great now. Clean them up on a mild day, removing any damaged leaves and deadhead spent flowers. Give them a boost of fertilizer and water if dry. They should perk back up. If yours have died, most nurseries and garden centers still have some. Buy and plant blooming Annuals now and they should last until you pull them out in June. Early blooming Perennials are beginning to bloom including Hellebores, Dianthus, and Columbine. Many of our summer blooming Annuals are beginning to show signs of life as well. Monitor for late cold snaps and cover as needed. The cool season Perennials thrive in cool weather, so should not need much protection. If you planted Larkspur, Shirley Poppies and Bachelor Buttons last fall, they are up and getting ready for their show.



BULBS

Spring bulbs are up and growing and early varieties are blooming or showing buds. Now is a great time to fertilize spring bulbs. This gets the fertilizer in the ground so the plants can use it right after bloom. The critical time for flower bud set is the six week period following flowering. A complete fertilizer like 13-13-13 is fine. Don't use Bone Meal. That helps with rooting at planting, but your bulbs need nitrogen, phosphorous, and potash for healthy growth. If your bulbs are too crowded, or in too much shade, dig and divide and immediately replant as soon as the flowers fade. Allow the foliage to grow until it dies back on these newly moved bulbs.

PLANNING

Place your orders now with mail-order plant nurseries. They tend to work on a first-come, first-serve basis. Not to worry . . . they will not ship your order until it is safe to do so. (Dreaming of your perfect flower bed or yard is a winter pastime . . . with the help of plant catalogs.)

YARD

Inspect your yard for winter damage. Take off damaged, dried or blackened branches. If you are unsure, wait. A dormant limb can look dead, but still have life in it. Use caution with outside plants if they are frozen, as they will break easily. Apply lime to lawns if not done in December or January. Fertilize trees with a high nitrogen fertilizer if not done in January. Apply pre-emergence Herbicides on established lawns and shrub beds to control weeds. Kill spurweed and other winter weeds now, before they have time to set seeds. Mow or shear to 4-6 inches winter creeper Euonymus, Japanese Honeysuckle, English Ivy, Mondo Grass, Monkey Grass, Pachysandra, Pampas Grass, Crown Vetch, and Vinca Minor. Shear to 6-8 inches Santolina, Lavender Cotton, and Junipers. Apply pre-emergence Herbicides in ground covers.



HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants are beginning to show signs of new growth, now that the days are getting longer and they seem to be getting used to the lack of humidity. Continue to water, but don't encourage new growth until you move them outside. DO NOT sun your houseplants on a mild day. Leave them inside until April. The same holds true for the tropical plants you may have stored under your house or in the garage. Leave them alone until all chance of frost is past. For indoor bloom: Cyclamen; Kalanchoe; Orchids; and pre-chilled bulbs (Hyacinths, Paper-whites, and Daffodils). Place cut branches of a spring flowering shrub (such as Forsythia, Fruit trees, Oriental Magnolia, or Quince) into one gallon of warm water with two tablespoons of ammonia. Enclose the container and stems in a tightly closed bag until blooms open.

ROSES

Place orders for bare root Roses. After the 15th of February is the best time to plant Roses. Water in Roses with "Superthrive" or other root stimulator. Top dress Roses with Cottonseed and Bone Meal and cover with a layer of compost or rotted manure. Dehydrated manure will limit nutgrass and weed seeds. All Roses

benefit from some type of pruning annually. Hybrid Teas need the most. They are normally pruned back to a height of 8-18 inches in late February. A good way to remember to prune is to do it on George Washington's birthday (at least, that is what old-timers will tell you). Prune to a bud that is on the outside of the stem, as that is the point from where the new branch will grow. You want to keep the centers of the plants as open as possible. If you are growing the Knock-outs or other "shrub" type Roses, they don't need the severe pruning of hybrid Teas, but they do need to be pruned. Prune them more like a shrub, removing up to one third of the old growth, but doing it selectively. They do bloom on the new growth, so we want to shape and encourage new foliage. Climbing Roses should be pruned after they flower for the first time in the year. Prune out up to one third of the older canes, close to the main trunk of the plant (avoid going beneath a graft union). This should encourage new canes which should be fuller and flower more.

SHRUBS

PLEASE REMAIN FROM COMMITTING CRAPE MYRTLE MURDER!

Cut back dwarf Crape Myrtles to within six inches of the ground. Only prune back larger Crape Myrtle Shrubs if needed to maintain size, or to remove suckers. Thin tree forms of Crape Myrtles every 3-5 years. ANNUAL PRUNING OF THIS TREE DESTROYS ITS NATURAL APPEARANCE AND IS NOT NEEDED. Remove largest third of Buddleia, Hydrangea, Nandina, and Spirea canes. Remove dead wood and branches that turn in or overlap in the center of broadleaf evergreens. Wherever the plant is cut it will thicken, so prune above a twig growing outward, not above a leaf bud. **DO NOT PRUNE FORSYTHIA OR FLOWERING QUINCE UNTIL AFTER BLOOM!** Plant hardwood cuttings of shrubs (8" with at least two buds underground) in a cold frame. Cut back and divide Ornamental Grasses.



PRUNING

Prune back by one-third to one-half tropical bloomers that are overwintering indoors. Apply a slow release fertilizer to Annuals and overwintering Tropical plants at the rate recommended on the label. Prune undesirable limbs and tip terminals on fruit trees and grapevines and thin out crowded shoots. Leave some branches of fruit and berry trees for small animals to eat this winter. Remove older canes of Blueberry plants. Cut back lateral branches of Blackberries to

one foot. Use a dormant oil on fruit trees and Ornamentals with insect problems.

TILLER TIME

Put out Asparagus crowns and Strawberry plants as soon as the soil is workable. Outdoors, sow Broccoli, Cabbage, Onion sets, English Peas, Snow Peas, and Spinach. Early season gardens are usually easier to manage because the insects and diseases don't grow well in cool weather. If you planted a cover crop and you are ready to plant, manage it now. Some cover crops like Greens can be harvested while others can be filled into the soil.

PROTECTING YOUR PLANTS

We always have some warm days interspersed with the cold ones, and some plants get tricked into thinking spring is officially here. The main culprit is the Big Leaf Hydrangea. A few days of warm weather and their top buds start to swell and begin to break dormancy. It is at this stage that they can be quite susceptible to a late hard freeze. If your plants haven't bloomed in years, this could be the problem. Have some large cardboard boxes handy to invert over them, or consider covering them on cold days if they are growing. Cover with only porous materials, avoiding plastic. Plastic actually would cause them to heat up even more during the day which would add to your problems. Sheets and blankets only give you a few degrees of protection. Also, make sure there is ample moisture in the ground prior to a hard freeze. If winter damage does occur on your shrubs, don't prune it off until all chances of frost have passed. Winter damaged plants may not be attractive, but the damaged materials will actually protect the plants more.



GET RID OF BUGS

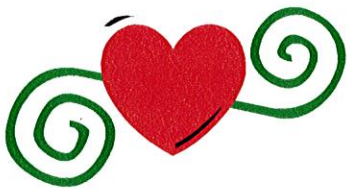
Use insecticidal soap to control Aphids on cool season Annuals and Vegetable plants. For Borers, Mites, Aphids, or Scale, apply dormant oil spray such as "Sun Oil" to trees and shrubs, both Evergreen and deciduous, Roses, and the Perennial border. The most effective spray of the year is before leaf buds start emerging. Check (Usually on a calm day when the temperature is expected to be above 40 degrees for three days and no rain is expected for 24 hours.) Spraying plants before leaf buds open avoids burning them. NOTE: Do not use oil spray on Sugar or Japanese Maples, Walnut, Beech, or Magnolia Trees.

DOGWOODS

February is the best time to plant Dogwoods. Pick an elevated site with soil on the acid side. Plant ball and burlap trees and shrubs and bare-root plant materials that are still dormant. Soak the roots in water overnight before planting. If you cannot plant right away, cover the roots with moist soil or compost and store in shady location. For new planting sites, test soil to determine the proper amendments. For existing sites, amend the entire area with mulch, compost, etc.

FEBRUARY BLOOMS

Flowering Almond, Anise Florida, Arum, Bridal Veil, Camellia, Chionodoxa, Crocus, Daffodil, Dogwood, Forsythia, Helleborus, Hyacinth, Iris (Stylosas and Reticulatas), Carolina Jasmine, Kerria, Loropetalum, Oriental Magnolia, Muscari, Pansies, Phlox, Primrose, Pussy Willow, Quince, Redbud, Scilla Sibirica, Snowdrops, Spirea Thunbergi, Viola, and Violet are in bloom this month.

**Think Green**

By Lorraine Hensley

The words "think green" currently evoke many different concepts which range from sustainable farming practices to eco-friendly buildings. For many gardeners the winter months are spent "thinking green" as they plan their gardens for the coming year. We think green and anticipate seeing those first green shoots marking winter's end and the beginnings of new life. Some of us, however, manage to enjoy that little something green even during the winter months. We "think green" and garden during those dreary months of cold weather with flowering house plants.

Sounds pretty simple and it is. As with all gardening there are a few basic rules to keep you and your plants out of trouble. Soil type, light, water, drainage and food are just as important to house plants as they are to those that thrive in your garden during the growing season.



Growing Hibiscus as a house plant is a pretty good place to start. We generally think of this plant as anything but something to pot for winter color in our homes-- but it works beautifully. A member of the Mallow family malvaceae, this plant's variations range from shrubs that can reach a height of 15 feet, if not pruned, to a variety known as hibiscus, esulentus, or the vegetable we know as okra. The variety works quite well as a houseplant is known as rosa sinensis. Native to China it can only be grown outside where temperatures remain above 50 degrees. This plant has pretty dark green ovate leaves with a toothy edge. Blossoms are borne singly and are just above the base of new leaf growth. Trumpet shaped and very showy they come in a variety of colors; red, yellow, salmon and pink. Although they only last a single day they are a wonderful treat for the winter weary gardener.

Hibiscus like a soil mix consisting of ½ potting soil and ¼ peat moss. Use sand/small gravel and a bit of dried cow dung for the remaining ¼ in equal parts to complete your mix. The need for dried cow poop troubled me due to the possible lack of availability but then I remembered having seen about 8 or 10 pound bags of the stuff in the garden section of several big box stores. This plant should be placed in a bright sunny area and kept a bit moist year round. Misting during the winter helps keep the buds from falling off. Remember to feed with a water soluble fertilizer on a monthly basis and a healthy plant is yours to admire. Although a house plant, this flowering hibiscus can seem more a young tree than a plant for your home. The good news is that its size can be controlled with a little judicious pruning.

Thinking green for the winter months gives the gardener beautiful showy blossoms in addition to those lovely fresh green leaves.

PLANTS FOR HEALING

By Betty Deere

Dr. Rachel Naomi Remen (physician, therapist and teacher), in her book Kitchen Table Wisdom, Stories That Heal – writes about noticing that plants in the windowless hospital office/rooms where she worked did not live long; they died. She tells of another psychiatrist getting a plant which had then promptly died. Challenged, she got another and installed grow lights and the plant took hold. This psychiatrist noticed that the patients took great interest in the plant, were upset when the first one died and delighted with the wellbeing of the new one, looking over at it, and commenting on it, often touching it or feeling the soil. Since that plant was such a hit she got several more, so that her office was alive with lots of growing plants. Encouraged by their interest, she got a few gardening tools and plant food and often spent the first few minutes of a session "talkin' yard" and tending the plants with her patients. Soon the plants grew big enough that the doc could give out cuttings for the patients when they went home, as many patients requested. If or when she saw them again, the first thing they would tell her was how well the cuttings were doing.

It occurred to the staff that the patients noticed if things lived, or if they died in this hospital. And that the patients identified strongly with the living, healthy plants and drew strength and hope from them. Because every patient was there because in some way they lived in a psychological environment that made growth difficult; emotionally speaking they were trying to live in a room without windows. So, watching the doc tend and grow healthy plants in her windowless office created a sense that they could find a way to tend their life, a way to grow despite difficulties.

My thoughts: tending plants is a lot like tending life; I always look askance at someone who tells me they can't grow a thing, that they kill plants. Hmmm, I wonder about them . . . how their life goes, how they feel inside. Maybe they need some "inner grow lights".

In Prince Charles' documentary Harmony, about protecting our environment, one speaker states: "We need to be not only protecting Mother Nature, but COPYING how she does things."

San Francisco Conservatory of Flowers

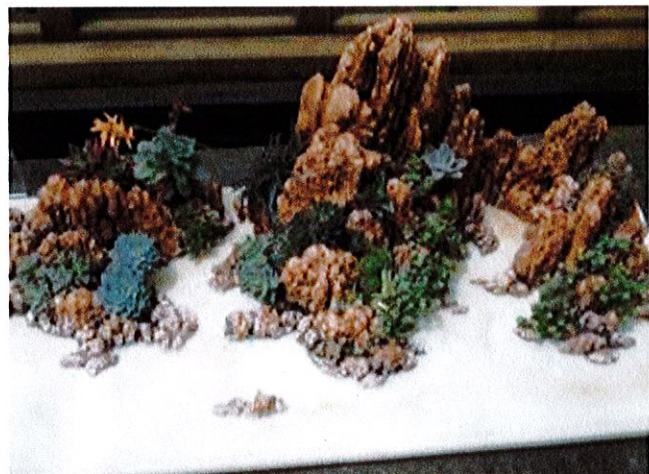
By Deborah Streiffert Moore

While in San Francisco, I had the chance to visit the Conservatory of Flowers located in Golden Gate Park.

This is the oldest existing public conservatory in the Western Hemisphere. It contains five sections; the lowland tropics, highland tropics, aquatic plants, potted plants and a special exhibit. The special exhibit while we were there was on carnivorous plants. A unique feature of the conservatory is the highland tropic display; only four institutions in the United States have a highland tropic display. This section contains a large collection of delicate high-altitude orchids.



While at the Conservatory we saw a couple examples of Penjing, Chinese miniature landscapes. There are two main categories of penjing; tree penjing and landscape penjing. Landscape penjing is "nature in a container." In landscape penjing, rocks and plants recreate a natural scene. Tree penjing in China is similar to what we refer to as Bonsai. I really enjoyed the penjing, the carnivorous plants and the orchids.



GARDENING FOR PEACE

By Betty Deere



The second week of November, it seems to me, starts the Season of Rush! As if we didn't already live life with the gas pedal jammed to the floor. My ordinary days flip by like the calendar pages in the old soap opera Days of Our Lives. (Or maybe it's not "old" . . . is it still on?) And then Lo, the holidays are upon us (yay?? maybe!) when we are supposed to love and be loved and give presents to all these loved ones (or maybe we don't **have** enough love in our lives, as many don't). And we attend gala parties (or maybe we **don't get invited** to enough parties). And we have musical events out the kazoo to enjoy (or maybe we **want** to enjoy but don't have anyone to go with). And we have families to please/schedule – maybe involving travel, divorced spouses, kids and step-kids – WHEW! Money pours out while fattening food pours in.

I'm just sayin' -- this Season of Joy can be traumatizing. It's hard to stay "grounded" any day, and triple hard during this season of love and joy, which can easily turn into anger and anxiety. We can move so fast it's easy to have the experience but miss the meaning!

So-o-o, how can we stay grounded and peaceful? My solution is to get out in my yard: maybe dig in the dirt abit; refill the bird feeders; take my little dog, Dolly, walking and bag her poop from the neighbor's grass (guaranteed to get one in touch with nature). It's crucial to experience "the rhythm of life", not articial stuff. A poem scrap says:

Being in sync

Asleep or awake

Always actively working

Every breath that we take

The rhythm of life

Unfolding before our eyes

The rotation of the earth

The morning sunrise

Understanding and clarity

All through the day

Continuously developing in the right way

All working in harmony

Balance and accord

Divine order

Compliments of the Lord.

Unknown poet from Unity Daily Word

I happened upon Nature's ability to help us "be in sync" when I was a young girl, during a trying time. Long, long ago, in a land far away (Dallas, TX), I unexpectedly experienced the gratifying, strengthening effect of dirt and plants. You see, at age nineteen I thought living/working in Dallas was far more appealing and glamorous than college, and talked my parents into letting me work there for a summer. (It was one of those times when I cavalierly set out on one path and found myself unexpectedly on a steep rocky road.) Working in the windy noisy city was no fun at all. There was nothing glamorous about getting up every morning at 6:00 a.m. and then walking three scorching hot blocks in pointed-toe high heels to catch a crowded smelly bus 23 blocks to my downtown boring job.

But! Along that miserable walk, there were three brave little Texas "trees" (Texans called them trees but to this Arkansas girl, they were more like shrubs), one on each block, tenaciously surviving in one square yard of dirt, surrounded by broiling hot concrete. Each square also held a few scraggly weeds. The only way I survived that walk to the bus stop was by using those little tree-squares as tiny oasis's . . . stopping at each tiny patch of weeds, bending down to chuck them under their dusty little chins. This somehow grounded me -- balanced me, and quieted my anxiety. These little squares of green life weren't artificial, as almost everything and everyone else in my Dallas-world was; and they managed to survive in an almost impossible environment (though at least they didn't have to wear high heels!). It is probably true that I identified with

them and drew on their courageous presence, which enabled me to "stick" with my Dallas adventure.



That was a long time ago, but the lesson remained. Nowadays what still keeps me grounded and walking forward (especially when the walk is scary, like when I had cancer) is fooling around with dirt and plants (notice I don't fool around with chemicals!). It was after my ovarian cancer experience that I first applied to be a Master Gardener, because I wanted to immerse myself more in gardening and "talkin' yard". I knew it would help me to heal my troubled mind and body. That was years ago; I'm well now.

The holiday season is certainly not as stressful as having cancer, but it IS a time when we often get out of sync with ourselves and the rhythm of life. (Incidentally, the suicide rate is high during the holidays.) We get unbalanced with:

<u>Too much</u>	<u>Too little</u>
Food/drink	veggies/fruit
Shopping	sleep
Money spent	gardening

In winter it's also cold outside so we don't garden as much, but we really need emotional grounding now and the best way to get it is to walk on the ground! Or even just "BE" in a green area (a garden center will do). I grieve to see so many concrete-paved parking lots, and new houses built with more concrete than trees, dirt, grass and plants. (Sigh) I believe that losing the ground beneath our feet plays a big role in our current state of mindlessness, as vs. **mindfulness**. Seems clear to me that we emotionally and spiritually start losing ground, and own unique GPS (global positioning system) – when we can't feel the ground beneath our feet.

In the NBC Special a few weeks ago on Prince Charles of England's life nowadays and his avid organic

gardening and environmental protection efforts, he clearly enjoyed "talkin' yard". (For the first time ever, I actually really liked him!) After his interview, his documentary entitled Harmony was shown, an excellent commentary about care-taking our earth. It's being re-released, having first been done 19 years ago. As he strolled among his huge organic vegetable gardens, pulling beautiful clumps of carrots out of the earth for Brian Williams to admire, he said: "I often stroll around in my gardens and talk to my plants -- it gives me so much pleasure and peace."

AMEN.



**"In winter's cold and sparkling snow,
The garden in my mind does grow.
I look outside to blinding white,
And see my tulips blooming bright.
And over there a sweet carnation,
Softly scents my imagination.**

**On this cold and freezing day,
The Russian sage does gently sway,
And miniature roses perfume the air,
I can see them blooming there.
Though days are short, my vision's clear.
And through the snow, the buds appear.**

**In my mind, clematis climbs,
And morning glories do entwine.
Woodland phlox and scarlet pinks,
Replace the frost, if I just blink.
My inner eye sees past the snow.
And in my mind, my garden grows."
- Cheryl Magic-Lady, *Winter Garden***



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:

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