

# Pulaski County Master Minutes

August, 2011

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

Volume 20, Issue 8



## August NO MEETING

### September 20th Meeting

Theo Witsell of the Arkansas Heritage Organization will be speaking at the August meeting. His topic will be Native Plants

## Mount Holly Garden Series for 2011



Lectures are at 9:00 on the 3rd Saturday morning of each month. We meet in the shade of the historic bell house in the middle of the cemetery.

Sponsored by the MORE Group, a downtown ladies group, a \$5.00 suggested donation benefits Mount Holly Cemetery.

Here is 2011's remaining schedule:

- August 20, Carnivorous Plants
- September 17, Beth Phelps, Getting Your Garden Ready For Winter
- October 15, Susan Rose, Bulbs In Your Garden For A Burst Of Color

## Interested in getting to know new Master Gardeners and help welcome them to the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program? Become a mentor.

Mentors are needed for the 2011 Master Gardener Trainees. You don't have to be a gardening expert. You don't have to be a Master Gardener expert. You just have to be willing to contact a trainee and welcome them to the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program. Offer to "be there" for them as they go through training - if they have questions about the projects, volunteer hours, meetings and in general how the program works. You may want to join your mentee for lunch one day of training. We also ask that mentors offer to meet their mentee at the November and January Master Gardener Meetings to be a friendly face and help them get signed - learn the routine.

The goal is to help the new Master Gardeners feel welcome.

We need 50 mentors. **If you are interested in helping please contact Rochelle Greenweed at [dfrgreen@aol.com](mailto:dfrgreen@aol.com) or 753-7853.** It is important that if you volunteer to be a mentor you follow through. Mentors serve as one of the first contacts with the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program for these new Master Gardener Volunteers.



## Arkansas Is Our Campus

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

## MG Canada



By Gail Vaughn

Every once in a while...well to be honest, every other day....I bite off more than I can chew! I once took the Myers-Briggs personality test and found that a trait of the category I fell in was: not being able to judge the amount of time that a task took....WOW, it is on my DNA. How about that?

So, friends, here I am in Canada, working in a vegetable garden 10 x 20 feet for a parochial school with 71 students and hoping for a bountiful harvest for their larder. The good news is there is an organic couple no, wait all couples are organic, right? They do organic gardening and they have brought straw and horseradish roots to plant near the potatoes to run off Colo. potato beetles and a magic potion bug-busters recipe for the ENEMY. When I arrived, the students had 34 potato plants, 19 tomato plants, radishes, and green onions in the ground already. Also included in the inventory were 9 tomato, and 5 bean plants in pots to be transplanted.

I now am beginning my 6<sup>th</sup> week here. To date we have gotten 6 beans and all the onions... the Sisters, whom I live with loved all those (The radishes turned out to be beets) Twice I have piled dirt on the potatoes. The transplanting is all done, except for one I missed and I have 2 hills of pumpkins, 5 of squash, a row of bush beans and one marigold that I planted. Also the priest wants some flowers in an area where only shade and tree trunks/roots exist, I have no clue what to plant, as it is also adjacent to a parking lot. So I filled a rectangular full of bachelor buttons and something else for a nearby sunny area, and hoping that their beauty will distract him and he won't notice the other area I missed.

To help you, here is some Canadian wisdom that I have gleaned: To deter bad bugs: mix ¼ cup each of the following: chopped marigold blossoms, geranium leaves or blossoms, and minced garlic. Add 2 T. lemon dish soap and tie in a hose and add to 5 gallons of hot water, Spray on the plants and

pour some at the roots. Obviously, we are attacking their sense of smell.

Another gardener boils rhubarb leaves and sprays the liquid on the plants, He swears by this.

In the Joy of Gardening book...I may quote him later.

Dick Raymond says: Leave small stones in the garden, they add minerals that our plants need. Plant radishes in every row. They are natural cultivators, leaving holes for water and expansions of other plans; they distract bugs, and come up before others and so act as row markers. Plant salad blocks: various lettuce seeds, onions, radishes, spinach, carrots. His block is huge, and how to gather without hanging from a helicopter rope, I do not know.

Glossary for those who think literally: straw... is not kind associated with drinks. Beetles are not the tiny VW variety, nor the 60" male vocalists. And don't get mad at me if you try to tie the spices in a garden hose!

This article took 1 hour and 45 minutes to compose... It is DNA, folks, DNA all the way.



May the wings of the butterfly kiss the sun  
And find your shoulder to light on,  
To bring you luck, happiness and riches  
Today, tomorrow and beyond.

~Irish Blessing



## Checklist by Carol Randle

I'm sure you are all suffering in the heat and humidity just as we are at Amy Sanders Library. We find it hard to choose between getting up earlier than we would like, hoping to be done before it gets so hot we can't stand it . . . or sleeping later and perspiring so much we look like waterfalls! We all share in this problem at this time of year. Herbs need to be harvested before the heat of the day has set in so if you are harvesting herbs you need to do it early. Herbs are best harvested after any dew has dried but before the heat of the day can be felt.



### ANNUALS

There are so many outstanding summer annuals we often have trouble picking the ones we want to plant. When we see new annuals in the stores, we want to try some of them in our own flower beds. Look at your flower beds and make notes on which ones are taking the heat well. The many Wave and Supertunias are wonderful and should be in full bloom . . . if you have kept up the fertilizing. 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 and if they look bad, pinch them back or start over.

Nurseries today keep annuals in stock almost year round, so replanting is a possibility.



### TROPICALS

Hand in hand with summer annuals are the summer tropicals. Hibiscus, Bananas, Mandevillas, and Plumerias all make our yards look terrific whether they are in containers on the patio or porch or set out in the garden. A great trait they share is their like for the heat and humidity. They do, however, like to be watered and

fertilized. If you are growing them in containers, you are constantly watering to keep them alive. Water leaches out the nutrition so once every week or two we need to fertilize with a water soluble fertilizer. Keep a careful watch out for pests. 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 be burned with any extra additions.



### SHRUBS

We have now entered into the period of watering as maintenance for our shrubs. The exception is Gardenias and Bigleaf and Oakleaf Hydrangeas (*Hydrangea Macrophylla* and *Hydrangea Quercifolia*, respectfully). These three summer bloomers set flower buds in late August and September. 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 are left.



### VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

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. Look at one or two of the ears by pulling back the shuck and pressing into a kernel or two. If it gives off a milky liquid, and the ear is fully formed, it is time to 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 if picked when it is small, no longer than two to three inches. The bigger they get, the longer 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 be sure to check for insects and diseases.

Cantaloupes and Watermelon tend to be at their sweetest if it is a bit on the dry side during harvest. Too much rain could 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 dull sheen on the fruit and a white to yellow underbelly.

## LAWNS

At this time of year, mowing the lawn is a chore that we don't enjoy. 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 is put down weekly. In late August to early September one last application of fertilizer can be applied to Bermuda, St. Augustine, and Zoysia lawns. Don't fertilize tall Fescue or Centipede at this time.



## MISCELLANEOUS

There is still time to enjoy some great Arkansas fruit. It can be purchased at Farmer's Markets or you can pick it yourself. If you are going to a u-pick-it farm, always call before driving out to make sure they are open. With this terrible heat you will want to get to the farm early so the fields will not be picked out before you arrive. Fresh figs are coming into ripeness now as are Peaches.

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. Remember that birds and squirrels like fruit as much as you do, so if you are growing them in your own space you can try bird netting. 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.

Always remember to take precautions in this heat. Take some water with you and remember your sunscreen. Work early. We want to lose NO Master Gardeners due to the heat.

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## Leftovers

By Lorraine Hensley

Seems that no matter what we do whether it's putting dinner on the table or planting annuals in the garden we usually end up with leftovers. Leftover food goes in the fridge while there is generally another spot in the garden for the one plant too many. We've been looking at plants and their complex relationship with oxygen using species for the past few months. It just wasn't possible to fit all that information in those articles. There was just so much I really wasn't sure what to do with it. And I'm still not real sure this is the way to share it—but—here goes. We are going to have a few leftovers in this article.

I know how to raid a fridge and how to find another spot for a few extra plants so maybe I can learn how to share leftovers from Wolverton's book. We will surely find out.

We pretty well know that plants are center stage in the role of controlling humidity levels and climatic conditions. Plant leaves release lots of different substances but we are most familiar (understand the most about) their disposition of water vapor. When there is a significant difference in leaf temperature and the temperature of the surrounding air convection currents are created. This causes an air flow even there is no other air movement. . This ability to produce air movement plays an important role in our houseplants ability to remove toxins from the air. Volatile chemicals released by plant leaves seem to play an important part in the control of airborne microbes and mold spores in the air around them. Because the conditioned air inside buildings is dry, plants have a higher transpiration rate, which in turn, helps the movement of toxin laden air to the root zone. And that's where microbes in the soil break down the gases into a source of food and energy.



Another snippet of good information for us is that phytochemicals—those substances produced in leaves or secreted by plant roots for one purpose—to protect those plants from competition from other plants and from microbes, insects and animals serves a completely different purpose for us. For" many of our current meds are derived from these same phytochemicals." Seems that the increased focus on plants has fostered a renewed interest in the medicinal properties of plants. In fact, the rediscovery of the beneficial uses of many herbs and phytochemicals and other plant products is one of the fastest growing fields of medicine and nutrition.

We have, by no means, given justice to this subject. If you would like more information please either buy a book on the subject or visit your local library. We do know that grandma had something going for her when she mixed teas or poultices from garden plants she used — they did the job. Just as other plants in your home can certainly help you to grow your own clean air. Do your research for there are books out there to tell you how well specific plants faired in removing specific chemical emissions from your indoor air.

Specific information for this article came from "How To Grow Fresh Air" by Dr. B C. Wolverton. Check your local bookseller for a copy. It is a wonderful read.



## What's New at the Library Beekeeping

By Phyllis Barrier

While I was looking for new 2011 gardening books at the library, I was very happy to see Hannah Nordhaus's book, *The Beekeeper's Lament, How One Man and Half a Billion Honey Bees Help Feed America*. This book isn't like other gardening books I written about, because its 269 pages are written more like a novel, and I got caught up by it and read the entire book. Nordhaus is an award-winning journalist who has written for the *Los Angeles Times*, the *Financial Times*, the *Village Voice*, *Outside* magazine, as well as other publications. Her writing skills and storytelling are evident throughout the book.

The author weaves a story about John Miller, born in 1954 into a beekeeping family. He's the "one man" whose "half a billion honey bees feed America." The book starts in February 2005 when hundreds of thousands of acres of almond trees were starting to flower in the Central Valley of California. Miller had trucked his fourteen thousand beehives from their winter quarters in the potato cellars of Idaho and unloaded them in the almond orchards in California. Almond pollen is too heavy for the wind to transport, so the almond farmers and their trees depend on honey bees to pollinate. Miller's family business was among the top 20 operations in America.

Unfortunately Miller lost about 40 percent of his hives, and some of his colleagues lost more than 60 percent of their hives that year.



I learned about all the problems that bees and beekeepers have to contend with: mites, weather, viruses, parasites, pesticides, and colony collapse disorder (CCD). CCD is a phenomenon in which worker bees from a bee colony abruptly disappear. I also learned about Lorenzo Langstroth and how he figured out how to allow access to a bee colony without destroying honeycombs. In the early 1850s

Langstroth filed a patent for his improved hive, which is not that different from the rectangular white boxes with hanging frames that beekeepers use today. I also learned about migratory beekeepers around the world. In fact, in ancient Egypt, beekeepers transported small numbers of colonies by boat up and down the Nile River.

I'd be remiss to not mention the interesting story on queen bees, how they are raised and then shipped to beekeepers around the country.

Just as I was finishing the last pages of *The Beekeeper's Lament*, the August issue of *Arkansas Life* ([www.arkansaslife.com](http://www.arkansaslife.com)) dropped into my mail box. It contains a lively story, *Liquid Sunshine – Beekeeping, A Centuries-Old Hobby, Yields Magical, and Golden Bounty* by Eric Francis. This story is about beekeepers Dave Ragan in Alexander and Nao Ueda in downtown Little Rock and their bee hives. There are also wonderful photos: *A Photographica, A Buzzworthy Photo Essay* by Sara Blancett.

Maybe you're like me and have always wanted to have a bee hive in your backyard, along with a half dozen chickens. If that's true, then you will find both of these publications worth reading.





## 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:

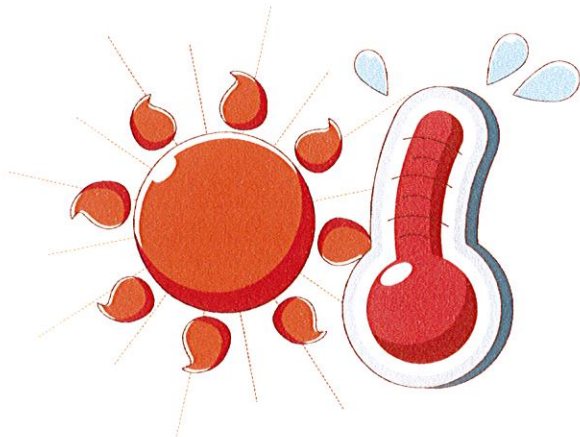
<http://www.arhomeandgarden.org>

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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 2010, these volunteers gave **22,987** 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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