

The Magnolia Chronicle

The newsletter for Pulaski County Master Gardeners

Donna Hardcastle and Jan Paulus at Argenta Project



U of A

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System



July/August 2017
Edition

Presidents Corner

The 2017 New Master Gardener Training Classes begin on Wednesdays starting August 23, and just like last year all of you are invited to sit in on the presentations, learn something new and accrue education hours. In addition to the core curriculum, there are several new elective classes on butterflies, tomatoes, and greenhouses that you won't want to miss. So, check your calendars and stop by the class to meet and greet the new enthusiastic class members.

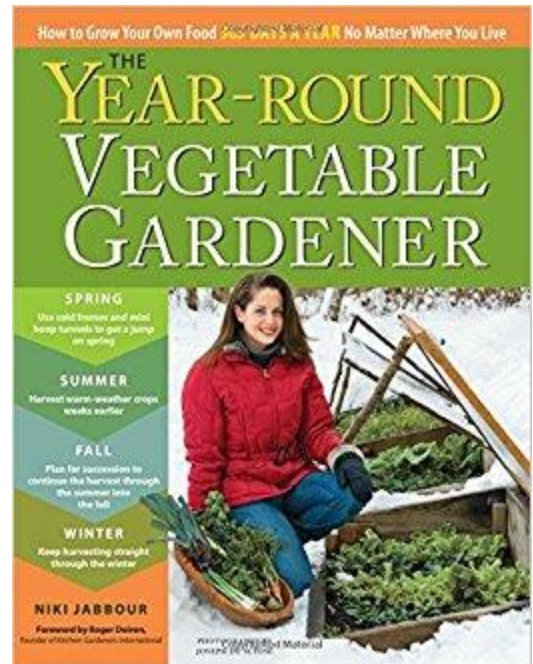
A detailed schedule will be sent via email.

August 23, 8-4:30	State Extension Office Auditorium
August 30, 8-4:30	Jones Hall, St James UMC
September 6, 8-4:30	State Extension Office Auditorium
September 13, 8-4:30	State Extension Office Auditorium
September 20, 8-4:30	State Extension Office Auditorium
September 27, 8-4:30	Pulaski County Extension Office
October 4, 8-12:30	State Extension Office Auditorium

BOOK REVIEW

The Year-Round Vegetable Gardener by Debra Redding

This is perhaps the best gardening book I own. Niki Jabbour has a way with words in addition to a passion for growing things, and the book is laid out in a very useful and easy-to-digest format. The "A Year in the Life Of" sections are brilliant and help illustrate how various aspects of the garden system change through the seasons. The photos are beautiful and the illustrations spot-on. The sidebars on various topics are well put-together and easy to understand. I can't recommend this book enough; it is a joy to read and has given me dozens of new things to try. Excellent reference book and it's well written.



SEPTEMBER MG SPEAKER

Our September speaker will be Dr. Elizabeth Horton, the paleobotanist at Toltec Mounds State Park. Her topic will be "Our Plant Heritage". She is a dynamite speaker and will be giving us a history of our plant heritage. Elizabeth Horton (Ph.D., Washington University in St. Louis, 2011) is the Survey's Research Station Archeologist for Toltec Mounds Archeological State Park, and Research Assistant Professor of Anthropology, University of Arkansas, Fayetteville. She came to the Survey in 2010 as a postdoctoral researcher at the coordinating office, and began the position at the Toltec Mounds research station in July 2011. Horton's doctoral research focused on Pre-Columbian fabric technology and plant fiber use in the Southeast, and Arkansas in particular, using assemblages from the University of Arkansas Museum Collections. Her specialization in paleoethnobotany brings much-needed skills to the Toltec station and to the entire Survey organization.

Argenta Project

By Jane Markham

The Argenta Master Gardener Project is located at the four corners of 4th and Main Streets in the North Little Rock Argenta Arts District in the historic heart of downtown North Little Rock. Our project goal and that of our sponsor, the Argenta Downtown Council, is to enhance the downtown area with seasonal flowers, planters and hanging baskets as part of an overall plan to revitalize the historic district. Even though my introduction to the Argenta community was through my love of gardening, the rewards of working on this project have been so much more.

Our project is located on the trolley line in the commercial corridor of the historic district, and we are within walking distance of both Verizon Arena and Dickey Stephens Park. Because of our location we benefit from the foot traffic of numerous tourists and shoppers who pass through this area every day. It is not uncommon for us to have three or more walkers stop to visit each work day and tell us how much our gardens mean to them. We have shared cuttings, answered gardening questions and even diagnosed plant issues from photographs brought to us. One woman told us that her mother insists on being driven by our gardens on her way to weekly chemo treatments. Because of our volunteer efforts I believe our project has become an integral part of the daily life in the Argenta community.

In addition to contact with visitors to our project, we benefit from the support of the Argenta arts community. The district is filled with art galleries, artist studios, and is home to the Argenta Arts Foundation. The Foundation is committed to the development of the visual, performance, landscape and culinary arts throughout the district. For example, the Foundation sponsored a utility box public art project selecting local artists to paint nine of the district's utility boxes, one of which is located on the Thea Foundation Gallery corner of our project. The following pictures are just a sampling of the designs scattered throughout the neighborhood.



4th and Main



Broadway and Poplar



5th and Main

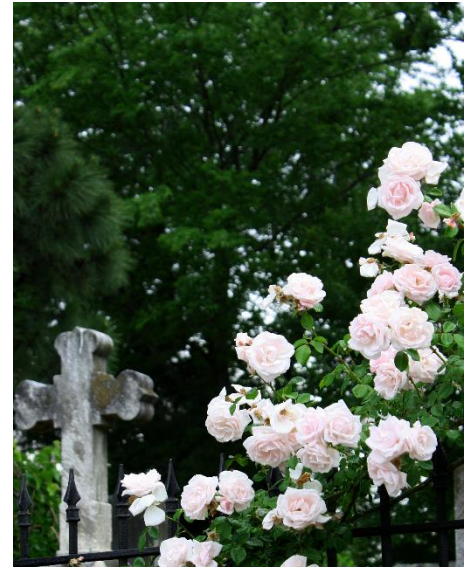


4th and Maple

Our project beds will be changing early next year. Sadly, the Knockout roses which have anchored our plantings the last five years have been infected with the rosette virus. Our sponsor will be replacing the diseased plants with something new before spring. We are excited to have a new look and the opportunity to select new and different bedding plants. We hope you will visit us next summer and see for yourself.

Mount Holly Cemetery

By Vicky Kessel



Mount Holly Cemetery, with its gentle slopes, lush plantings and large shade trees, is always a good place for a stroll. The hundreds of grave markers range from simple to elaborate to eccentric, and their ornamentation is often rich in symbolism. If you're interested in history, so much the better. Mount Holly was established in 1843, just seven years after Arkansas became a state, and much of the state's history can be traced through the stories of the people buried there. Mount Holly was one of the tours offered during the statewide Master Gardener Conference this past May,

If you happen to visit on a Thursday morning in the months of April through October, you may also see the Master Gardener crew at work. The Mount Holly volunteers don't take care of the entire cemetery -- it has a full time sexton and crew -- but they have two primary duties: maintaining the New Dawn climbers on the four walls surrounding the cemetery, and caring for the Victorian Fountain Garden. There are more than 150 New Dawn climbers on the walls, so keeping them fertilized, groomed and free of weeds is an ongoing project.

Mount Holly has been on the National Register of Historic Places since 1970 and has been a PCMG project since 1994. It is a municipal cemetery and is open to the public every day. The Master Gardeners on the project hope you will come downtown to visit!

+++++

Got ANTS? By Martha Coop

Well, yes actually, inside and out! Ants inside, Yuck! But outside, it can be good thing. I read that ants do more to aerate the soil than earthworms. When insect exoskeletons decompose, a product called chittim adds structure to the soil. So my goal is me first, ants second... endeavor to use organic control.

Each year we have ants in the kitchen. They come up from somewhere under the deck or perhaps foundation (can't find trail origin), go under the sunroom door, around the corner into the kitchen, up the cabinet and proceed to have a grand old time. Since I don't like pesticides, especially sprays, at my sister's

July/August 2017

recommendation I tried baits, thinking they would be less invasive than sprays. This worked tolerably for a couple of years. This year, they were having none of it.

I tried mixing powdered sugar with boric acid and placed the mixture in a saucer. That didn't work. But then I found an online article from Rodale's, <https://www.rodalesorganiclife.com/garden/safe-effective-ant-trap> . It seems, at least for now, to have worked! I couldn't believe it. The article said to be patient. I was prepared for weeks. Actually, I thought nothing was going to happen.

As per the article, I mixed: 1 teaspoon boric acid (available in drugstores); 6 tablespoons of sugar; and 2 cups of water.

The article directed to make bait containers by punching holes in lids of old plastic containers. I didn't have any plastic containers on hand so I used some pimento jars that I had saved for the Green Team to make votive candle holders. I punched holes in the lids.

The directions said to saturate cotton balls with the solution and place them in containers along the ant trails, inside or outside the house. Nothing happened. For two days it was business as usual.

The ants crawled around the jars. Then I noticed that the container in the corner by the cabinet was teeming with ants. They nearly sucked that cotton ball dry! Only one other jar had just a few ants. The recommendation was to clean the containers and change the cotton balls twice a week. I never even had to clean and change the cotton balls. Turns out I didn't need to make a whole recipe.

In three more days, the ants were gone. We've been free of ants in the house now for over two months. I can't believe it. I'm saving my jars.

Fire ants are another entirely different question. At Sherwood Elementary, we had a fire ant nest in the sign bed. The janitor did his job and used a Scott's product, not sure what it was. I chose not to have the children work in that bed. The warning on the bag was formidable. I later looked up the product on the Scott's website. (Can't remember the product name, but it's Scott in a yellow bag.) I read that the product is only permitted in 13 states, all Southern, and one of them is Arkansas. There was a precaution not to allow the product to enter runoff. If it harms frogs and toads, it certainly can harm children, I thought. And treatment was only recommended for every six months. If it harms aquatic life, it seems that it certainly could harm the kids, I thought! Our Master Gardener training did well to hammer in READ AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS ON THE PRODUCT LABEL.

I called Randy. What to do? The organic choice was spinosad. But our school district has channels and methods. The die was cast. I kept the children away from the sign bed and fretted. There was an infestation on the playground. The two step method is another choice Randy told me about. Spray and granules, carefully following product instructions. Our school had only been using the spray, so the queens must have survived to make other nests????? The UAEX website has a Fact Sheet, "MP426 Managing Imported Fire Ants in Urban Areas". You can look this up if you have need for the information. If you use the search engine with the descriptor "fire ant control", you'll find about five more good fact sheets. I like the one by Dr. Loftin that answers 20 questions about fire ants.

The question with which I am left is this: IF THE METHOD I USE FOR ABATEMENT KILLS THE NATURAL FIRE ANT PREDATORS, WHERE DOES THAT LEAVE THE ECO SYSTEM IN MY YARD? I DON'T WANT TO KILL FROGS, TOADS, DRAGONFLIES, DAMSELFLIES AND NATIVE ANTS

July/August 2017

SINCE THESE ARE NATURAL CONTROLS FOR FIRE ANTS not to mention other benefits of these critters. WHAT CONTROLS WILL BE LEFT WHEN FIRE ANTS BECOME RESISTANT?

For now, I'm crossing my fingers that fire ants won't become a problem for me because I only live about six blocks from the school. They're bound to be coming this way! I wonder what Rodale's has to say about organic fire ant control...

+++++

GRACE IN THE SHADE and My Basket of Adorables by Betty Deere



The above photo of Variegated Solomon's Seal (*Polygonatum* spp.) is one of the most beautiful and precious of shade-loving plants. I enjoyed these gorgeous plants for many years in my huge, shady yard-- BEFORE moving in December 2016, leaving my lovely flower gardens to move into my present "garden home". BUT there wasn't much "garden" to this home -- actually NO Garden at all in the small backyard. It had nothing, No Thing! in it. The previous owners had covered the "flowerbed" areas in white rocks only. Sadly, my backyard presented with thin measly-looking grass (Bermuda), white rocks, and a little pond every time it rained. A gardening challenge!

My Solomon's Seal plants made that move and took that challenge on! Before moving I laboriously potted most of my perennials (26 pots in all!). The movers had dumped them unceremoniously (some upright, some not) in the barren backyard to spend the winter. Very fortunately, when the winter damage was cleared away this March, I saw all had survived, AND my two Solomon's Seals were already struggling to stand up and view their new home. I was awed -- with their stamina, strength and resilience. They had endured a long hard winter with zero care -- surviving with grace! Is this why they're named after King Solomon?

So they were the first plants I planted and the first to show the lovely white blossoms hanging from their gracefully extended arms with variegated leaves. Now, after weeks of hard labor (white rocks removed), my

Solomon's Seal plants are the majestic "High Points" of the long total-shade flowerbed against the house, along with a few of the surviving ferns, clumps of yarrow, and pachysandra. But Solomon's Seals have a special


July/August 2017

place in my heart and the hearts of most gardeners, because they are among the few perennials that produce flowers and also do well in shade. Green is lovely but flowers are special! The old saying "One can see the face of God in flowers" is true. Flowers-in-the-shade—we like 'em!

But my Solomon's Seals weren't alone in "gracing" the barren orange bed into loveliness. And awed me with their energy and adaptability. Everything I planted appeared to enjoy the clayish soil, although I did amend with a small amount of compost and then sprinkled (like salt and pepper) a fantastic organic plant food with Mycorrhizae. The Pachysandra did remarkably well, specifically in the resilience and adaptability area. I took clippings from the over-flowing pot that had survived the move/winter, and rooted a row along the bed edge. They quickly accepted, adapted and began to grow in their new not-so-lovely environment (setting an example for me!). The native ferns against the house did their usual "Hey, no-sweat, we're natives!" thing.

Bravo! All these plants have proceeded to do their thing beautifully. The naked orangey no-flower-bed has now transformed into my "Basket of Adorables"!

PCMG Project information

A green rectangular graphic with yellow text and two line drawings of flowers. The text reads: "PCMG Tour of Projects Summer Challenge". Below this, a bulleted list contains: "June 20 – September 19", "Visit 20 Projects", "Turn in Project Booklet at September meeting", and "Entered in a drawing for prizes".

**PCMG Tour of Projects
Summer Challenge**

- June 20 – September 19
- Visit 20 Projects
- Turn in Project Booklet at September meeting
- Entered in a drawing for prizes

Prizes include: Gift cards to area nurseries, Gardening supplies, and more!

Check your volunteer manual for a listing of projects or stop by the County Extension Service Office on Roosevelt and pick up a project booklet. Hey, and tour the CES Office Project while you are there!

Visiting our projects is an opportunity to meet our yearly educational requirements. Fifteen minutes spent touring a project is equal to 15 minutes of education time.

If you have questions about this challenge, please contact Cindy Franklin (motherhitton@hotmail.com) or Ann Filiatreau (afiliatreau@sbcglobal.net)



I have 2 bloodleaf plants that I started by cuttings and 2 Mexican petunias that I potted up for give aways. The blood leaf likes shade and is an annual. (You can over winter in the garage) The Mexican petunias like sun and are perennial. **Please contact Paul Pilkington at paulpilkington@att.net**

14 separate clumps of healthy, blooming Stella Purple daylilies that need re-homing. I will dig, pot and even deliver for an interested MG. Also I wanted to renew my offer of the over 30-inch tall, healthy Calycanthus Floridus. It's a vegetative propagation from a very fragrant mother plant but due to lack of sun has never bloomed where I have it planted. Contact Kathleen Reynolds at kathleenreynolds@att.net

If you have “plants to trade” or even “plants to give away” please email me at: daffodilsrose555@gmail.com and they will be posted in our **Trading Post**.

+++++

AUGUST 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! This is a common problem at this time of the year.

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Tomatoes have started to slow down in production. When temperatures exceed 95 degrees during the day or stay above 75 at night, they quit ripening and setting fruit. If your cucumbers are bitter, they are getting stressed by water, harvesting in the cooler times of the day improves flavor on many herbs and vegetables. Keep picking your cucumbers as they mature because letting old fruit stay on the vines will slow down the future production. Knowing what to look for in your vegetable garden 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. Fresh okra is best if picked when they are small, no longer than two or three inches. The bigger they get, the tougher the pods are. Even though it isn't ideal gardening weather, this is the time to start replanting for a Fall garden. Mulch well and water and you will be harvesting well into Fall. Cantaloupes and watermelons 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.

ROSES

If Blackspot has reared its ugly head on your Roses or if you have Blackspot susceptible plants, continue to spray with fungicides. You do not have to use fungicides on the earth kind of Roses like "Home Run", "Knock Outs" and "Flower Carpet". If your Roses are looking a little leggy, try giving them a light pruning now and fertilize. Pruning may reduce some flowers in the short term, but most Roses could use a bit of a nap right now, to regroup, fill out and be able to give you a great Fall display. Of course, water is always important.

ANNUALS

There are so many outstanding Summer annuals that 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. Lantana loves heat and seems to explode when it gets hot. 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. The new Bubble Gum Petunia is also outstanding. Remember that annuals are usually around for only one season so keep up with watering and fertilizing. (I planted five Velvet Elvis plants last year and three of them came back. The fourth one I overwintered in a portable greenhouse.) If they look bad, pinch them back or start over. Most nurseries today keep annuals in stock almost year around, so replanting is a possibility. Since we had a mild Winter, many of our annuals acted like perennials this year and we have great plants. Deadheading . . . removing the spent flowers after they bloom, pruning back leggy plants, fertilizing and watering can keep these plants lush and full of flowers. If you have annuals that are not doing anything and seem to not recover from the heat, pull them and replace them with plants that add to your Fall color. Ornamental Peppers can take the heat and give you colorful fruit up until frost. Zinnias come in a range of colors, many have shades of orange and white, which blend well with Fall. You can also find some great bargains at nurseries and garden centers with tropical foliage and flowers. They have months of color to give and can perk up a heat stressed landscape.

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

July/August 2017

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 get burned with any extra additions.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Trees and shrubs are setting their flower buds now for next year's blooms. Don't let them get too dry now, or it could impact your flowers next Spring. To have great blooms next year do not prune these plants anymore this season. For most trees and shrubs, all you should be doing now is making sure they have water when it is dry. Fertilizations should have occurred in the Spring and we will be good to go until next Spring. 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. If they have overgrown their location or need some general shaping, early July is the LAST time to do it, as soon after flowering is best. Avoid any pruning on Spring blooming shrubs. (My Limelight Hydrangea is gorgeous, just now blooming.) Deadhead spent flowers to ensure more blooms. Crape Myrtles, Althea, Butterfly Bush and Summer Spirea are blooming, along with Clethra, Hydrangeas and still some Gardenias.

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 are put down weekly. In late August to 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. The main thing we are concerned with in our lawns is mowing and watering. If you have an automatic sprinkler system, you are probably watering the lawn more than it actually needs to keep up with flower and shrub irrigation. While we may all want a lush, bright green lawn, lawn grasses can get a bit dry in between watering and still survive. Many gardeners like to apply one last application of fertilizer in late August to early September. Pay attention to the weather. Applying fertilizer when it is extremely hot and dry can burn the grass.

If you are having problems in your garden and can't figure out what is causing the problem, take some good pictures and a plant sample to your local county extension office. If they can't identify it, they will send it to the disease diagnostic lab for a correct diagnosis.

University of Arkansas System Division of Agriculture offers all its Extension and Research programs to all eligible persons without regard to race, color, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, national origin, religion, age, disability, marital or veteran status, genetic information, or any other legally protected status, and is an Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer.