

The Magnolia Chronicle

The newsletter for Pulaski County Master Gardeners

U of A

DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE

RESEARCH & EXTENSION

University of Arkansas System



Common Ragweed
in bloom and constantly
producing pollen

Nov/Dec 2018



Presidents Corner

Ragweed: Much Maligned, and Rightfully – by Joellen Beard

From late summer to the first frost of autumn, many of us suffer with ragweed allergies. Ragweed is related to the daisy and aster but does not have any sort of noticeable flower, or pollen except by our eyes, noses, throats, and lungs! There are 17 varieties found in the Eastern United States, each of which produces 1,000,000,000 floating grains of pollen! (That is one billion!) It is just a nondescript weed! It is not sensitive to most herbicides and can live anywhere except deep shade. Look on the side of the road, along any field, meadow, gas station garden, crack in the sidewalk and there it is, constantly producing pollen so light it floats through the air to attack our eyes, noses, throats, and lungs.

According to Gerald Klingaman of UAEX, ragweed is a problem throughout the United States but is most concentrated in the eastern one third. He goes on to say interestingly, “Some people seem highly sensitive to allergens and are bothered by a wide variety of plant pollens, while others are specialists and only respond to one or a few kinds of pollen.” But, says the Arkansas Otolaryngology Center, “The most common producer of pollen in the late summer is ragweed. Ragweed is the most prevalent cause of outdoor fall allergy symptoms in the eastern third of the United States.” They are the nose people, they should know!

Poor goldenrod is usually blamed for our allergy symptoms, but its pollen is too heavy and too big to be carried on the air! Goldenrod has to be pollinated by insects and it grows in the same spaces as does ragweed. This has caused beautiful goldenrod to be deemed guilty by association. There is even a “Fall Print of Ragweed” for sale for \$10.00 on Etsy that is actually GOLDENROD, not ragweed! Let us spread the word that goldenrod is not the cause of our sneezing, coughing, and scratchy throats, let us blame it on the real culprit, ragweed. Aachooo! Cough, Cough.

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As we are all aware – Janet Carson, our fearless leader of the Master Gardeners will be retiring at the end of the year. WE ALL WISH HER THE BEST.. We know she will be busy with family and traveling.



HAPPY MEMORIES OF JANET CARSON

I first met Janet (Bierman) Carson in the early to mid-eighties. She presented a topic on gardening at a St James UMC Christian Mothers Fellowship meeting. I think we met in a garden, perhaps out at Two Rivers Park. I had my two young children with me and can still remember being so utterly impressed at this young mother who knew EVERYTHING about gardening and horticulture. She was able to answer EVERY question that was posed to her. Since then I have followed her in the newspaper, her blogs and I have heard her speak in person more times than I can count!

I felt so fortunate to be able to become a Master Gardener when the Saturday Class started July 12th 2014.

I thank Janet Carson for instilling in me, my love of gardening and digging in the dirt! By Jan Butenschoen.

Fun Times with Janet

By: Mary Russell Evans

Janet Carson is a one woman steam roller machine! A force of endless, boundless energy! She has created an army of horticultural fanatics, a veritable cult of zombies whose eyes glaze over when they go into garden trances, “possessing” an insatiable appetite for fresh plants. There are scads of them! I’ve been along for the ride to nurseries with Janet’s plant zombies who publicly & shamelessly fight over plants & filled up tour buses with boxes of plants & all that dirt! Poor drivers! Yep, we done Janet proud!

We got some looks in 2000 flying home from the Philadelphia Flower show with our purchases, horticultural implements, yard art - most of which could be considered weapons nowadays. Those days are gone. Once Janet was presenting a program on turf at the Cammack Garden, she was talking about litter. I crumpled my coke can & tossed it out onto the lawn. Janet’s face was priceless, but she never missed a beat- a true pro! No one knew who did it. I did pick it up later.

25 years ago we used to stay up all night at state meetings. One year in NW Arkansas we sang songs till 3:00 am in Janet’s room. Janet had a fast-paced song game with a phrase. You had to sing a song using that phrase. I can’t believe we weren’t kicked out.

Yeah, Janet, I remember that (out of state) speaker at the garden show you left me to babysit after we did your radio show! You still owe me for that one!

Since I was one out of only two folks driving to International in Saskatoon, Janet asked me to drive up some of our promotional materials. (International was in LR the next time-2007.) I got held up at the border crossing into Manitoba with the big boxes of assorted paper materials, Peabody duck shaped soaps & little rock lapel pins. I had lots of ‘splaining to do. “What is all this?” “What is a Master Gardener?” “Why do you have so much soap & why are they shaped like ducks?” The last box, the lapel pins, were just little rocks of various colors or varieties that were made onto lapel pins. “The next conference is in Little Rock- get it? ... Little rocks- get it?” Even though he never “got it” he finally let me cross the border. I was beginning to have visuals of me trying all the border crossings & them calling ahead, “Don’t let the crazy lady with the little rocks across!” I still have my little rock pin. It is on my famous MG hat. I remember my border crossing every time I see it, Janet! And I still have to ‘splain again & again why I have a little rock on my hat. I love my little rock pin. Janet has come up with “some good ones.”

Janet was a true pioneer & helped blaze the trail for women in the horticulture industry. Back in the day we compared notes about men on the phone wanting to talk to the “man in there.” Thanks for that, too & all the fun times, Janet.

MASTER GARDENER HISTORY **By Jane Gulley**

“Janet Carson did not know the impact the Master Garden Program would have when she started the program from a mustard seed.” That is a quote from Sally Garrison, the first President of the Pulaski County Master Gardeners. Sally was in the PCMG class of 1989. The first class of PCMGs was in 1988 and was part of a pilot program Janet Carson started that included trainees from Garland, Jefferson, Pulaski, and Saline Counties. This 4-county pilot program had 5 training sessions with 10 trainees from each county and cost \$25.00. Janet Carson, the Pulaski County Extension Agent for Agriculture, said, “The University of Arkansas Extension Service is looking for 40 people with green thumbs to help others solve their gardening problems. Those who complete the training will be used where they feel most comfortable. We primarily plan to use them on the telephone, answering consumer calls on horticulture.” Of the four counties in the pilot program, only Pulaski decided to have a training class in the fall of 1989. The other three counties waited until 1990 to start their programs. Technically, Pulaski County is the oldest of the “regular” Master Gardener programs in the state. The PCMGs began with great enthusiasm, and in their first couple of years started several community garden projects.

In 1989 and 1990 they started the Zoo Vegetable Garden, the Old State House, Trapnall Hall, The Hummingbird and Butterfly Garden at Pinnacle Mountain State Park, Project Learning Tree, and the Zoo Aviary. Besides those six gardening projects they started the PCMG newsletter, Master Minutes, and Kathleen Ragsdale designed the Master Gardener logo using the tree that “grows strong branching out to many areas of Pulaski Country.” The early membership also set the greatly appreciated precedent for fun and camaraderie with many social and travel events. The group had their bi-monthly meetings at the Pulaski County Extension Office. By 1992 the PCMG numbers had grown and they had to move their meetings to the Arkla Building Blue Flame Room. They had added more gardening projects and in 1992 helped with the first Flower and Garden Show, “Spring Comes Early to Arkansas”. In 1993 the PCMG Association became a non-profit corporation registered with the state of Arkansas, setting the stage for statewide expansion. That same year they faced a major change when Janet Carson became the State Extension Horticulture Specialist, and Beth Phelps replaced Janet as Pulaski County Extension Agent for Agriculture.

Beth and the PCMGs immediately developed the perfect working relationship and the PCMG program continued to grow. With their new leader, Beth, the PCMGs decided to have monthly instead of bi-monthly meetings. In 1994 the first 5 year service certificates were awarded, and the PCMGs decided to purchase good horticulture reference books and establish a MG Library at the Extension Office. In 1995 the membership had grown so much the group had to move their now monthly meetings to the Arkansas Cooperative Extension Building. The 1999 hours of service show how the 300 PCMGs were contributing to their community. 7,291 hours were put into their projects, 5,016 hours were spent in continuing education, 1,140 hours answering the phone at the Cooperative Extension Office, and 2,054 hours in community outreach. A total of 15,501 volunteer hours were given to the community by the PCMGs. You can see by the numbers, the growth of the PCMG group had gotten to the size that it was decided mentors were needed. In 2000 each new PCMG had a mentor to make certain the new trainee would not feel overwhelmed by the size of the group or the number of volunteer opportunities. The PCMG organization is set up so each member selects a primary project and is expected to be at that project on planned workdays. A second leadership change came in 2002 when Mrs. Ethelyn McKinney, the long time secretary at Extension, who shepherded the PCMGs’ retired.

Ann Ward, a former PCMG, stepped up as Beth's secretary in 2004. That same year a new MG organization to serve as the state Advisory Board called County 76 was formed. 2005 brought another change. Because the PCMG membership continued to grow, the monthly meetings were moved to St. James United Methodist Church. The PCMGs give two workdays each year to help St. James Church with the maintenance of their grounds and as a thank you for an excellent working relationship. 2008 was a banner year for the PCMGs. The group celebrated its 20th birthday and had grown so large it could support two greenhouses. In 2006 the Jacksonville Pathfinders Greenhouse became a sanctioned MG project.

A committee was formed to expand and renovate the PCMG Little Rock greenhouse. In 1991 the PCMGs were given permission to use a greenhouse on the grounds of the State Hospital in an agreement between Janet Carson and the State Hospital. Expanding and renovating the old Little Rock greenhouse involved a huge fund raising campaign. The campaign was helped by a \$10,000 donation from the Stella Boyle Smith Trust. The new Little Rock greenhouse was dedicated on April 24, 2012 and named the Stella Boyle Smith Greenhouse. The Pathfinder Greenhouse in Jacksonville, Argenta, Amy Sanders Library, Hay's Senior Center, Old Mill, Park Hill Water Works, Maumelle Community Center, and Jacksonville City Hall are examples of PCMG projects that spread the influence of the PCMGs across all of Pulaski County. 2013 was another banner year for Master Gardeners. It was the 25th Birthday year for the program. PCMGs gave \$500 to help pay for the celebration. A fun award was instituted in 2013. PCMGs who worked at least 40 hours on one of their projects received the Busy Bee Award. A small honeybee replica that could be attached to the MG membership badge was awarded. Another first started in 2013 was the debut of the PCMG Facebook Page. It required months of discussions between PC and the State Extension Office before it could be started. Another debut in communications in 2013 was the new state wide online reporting system for MG work and education hours. In 2014 the PCMGs had another change in leadership when Beth Phelps went to the State office as the State Director of the Ouachita District. Randy Forst came to Pulaski County as Pulaski County CEA- Staff Chair. Again, the perfect working relationship developed, and the PCMG organization continued to grow. Randy barely settled into his new position when he had to help the PCMGs start planning to host the 2017 State Master Gardener Conference, "Gardening a Capitol Idea". The conference was well attended by 615 people. Lessons learned by the PCMG group when they hosted the International Master Gardener Conference in Little Rock in 2006 helped them plan the 2017 conference. The International Conference, had an attendance of 1500 which represented 45 States and 3 Canadian Provinces. Randy made a major change in the focus of the PCMGs when he rescinded the Hot Line Phone Duty requirement. Because of changing times not as many people were calling the Extension Office to get gardening information. The project was scaled back and made voluntary. That is not the only thing that changed in 2015. The PCMG had a leadership addition when Katie Reddick became Randy's secretary and guardian of the PCMGs. A Bylaw change that same year changed the PC Board Member Terms to run Jan. 1 to Dec. 31 instead of Oct. 1 to the next year's Oct. 31. Another change was with the Master Minutes. After 25 years as the Master Minutes, the PCMG newsletter became the work project, and in 2009 a Magnolia Chronicle. Totally online MG training class was completed. Although the PCMGs don't offer treats at their monthly meetings, they provide a lavish new member's reception with all kinds of delicious finger foods for each year's graduates. By 2017 the PCMGs had 34 sanctioned work projects, and 13 standing committees. There are volunteer opportunities for all interests. Two of the newest PCMG projects are the DIG project at the Hillary Clinton Children's Library and Learning Center and the Demonstration Garden. The DIG project focuses on preschoolers and utilizes the greenhouse, raised beds, and audiovisual resources of the children's library. The Demonstration Garden is located at the C.A. Vines 4-H Center and will be completed in phases. Phases one and two that included grading, installing utilities, erecting fencing, constructing raised beds, building gravel paths, and planting fruit trees are almost complete.

The project will be a demonstration garden to teach adults and children how to grow vegetables, fruit, and deer resistant plants. There will be classes to teach maintaining beehives, utilizing composting bins, and creating pollinator gardens. Actually, the opportunities are limitless for educating the public about gardening at the new PCMG project. The entire 1/4 of an acre is fenced and has raised beds, and gravel paths. Both the Dig and Demonstration Garden projects give PCMGs unique opportunities to learn and to teach.

Over the years the PCMG has educated 1480 people through the MG program. That averages 51 people each year. In 2017 we had 509 MGs in the Pulaski County group and gave a total 20,204.75 Sanctioned Volunteer work hours, 3,563 Non-Sanctioned Volunteer work hours, and 13,948.50 Education hours to our community. At \$24.14 per hour that is a total of \$573,753.49 to beautify, educate, and improve Pulaski County. Those numbers are staggering when you consider the PCMG started with a handful of dedicated gardeners and a fledgling program. When you add the number of interactions among the public and the people running and involved with our project's hosts and the community lectures the PCMG outreach cannot be tallied. All from the promise of a mustard seed!

Thank you Vicky Keesel for taking your time to organize the PCMG History that was used for this summary. Submitted by Jane Gulley



FOND MEMORIES OF JANET CARSON

By Jane Gulley



Sally Garrison and her husband. First President of PCMG group in 1992. She also served in 1993.

My favorite memory of many! We had been meeting several years and Janet told us we had to have officers so we could be a recognized organization. We all complained because we thought we were doing just fine the way we were - all of the about 40 of us. She insisted but we didn't have elections that time, people just spoke up and volunteered. Sally Garrison was the first President, but the funniest part of the story was Breck Campbell who immediately volunteered to be First Past President! I used to tease him about having his name on all the official documents but never having to do any work. Actually he was an extremely hard working MG and was responsible for clearing the undergrowth when we took over the greenhouse at the state hospital. He died just months after these pictures were taken.



Left to right: Jane Druff President 2002; Jay Hill President 1995; Nancy Phillips - first PCMG class; Breck Campbell - first ever First Past President never was President (deceased); Suellen Roberts - President 2001; David Dodson - President 1997

NOVEMBER CHECKLIST by Carol Randle

Janet says, “We have had a taste of cool weather statewide and some areas have had a frost. Now is the transition time from active growth to dormancy. November also marks the beginning of the dormant season, which runs through February. Cleanup in the garden will go on, but we typically have a lot of plant material we can add to a compost pile in November. How happy and healthy your garden is now can determine how well it starts growing next Spring, so do your cleanup chores well.”

BULBS AND PERENNIALS

One of the easiest ways to add color in the home landscape is by planting spring flowering bulbs. It is bulb planting time. What could be easier than to dig a hole, drop in a bulb and wait for floral excitement next Spring? Even better, dig up a large circle or square, then layer in different bulbs. Mass planting gives a stronger statement next spring. Remember, we plant bulbs based on their size. The larger the bulb, the deeper in the ground it goes. A good rule of thumb is to plant two and one half times the size of the bulb, deep in the ground. Once you are done planting, place winter annuals on top for twice the color. Choose large, blemish-free bulbs. You can immediately plant, or store them in a cool place until you get around to planting them. Some spring bulbs, such as Tulips, need to go through a minimum of 12-14 weeks of cool weather before the stems can stretch and grow properly. Store these bulbs in a cool spot in the garage or in your refrigerator-away from other produce (NOT IN THE FREEZER). Plant all remaining bulbs by early January if you can. Tulips, Daffodils, Jonquils, Crocus and Hyacinths are the most common, but there are some unusual bulbs available as well. They do well in the ground or in containers. I am trying the Orienpet Lilies this year, Debbie Stults had them in her yard last year and they were gorgeous and huge.

Cut back perennials as they finish for the year, pull out the spent summer annuals and rake leaves. If you have hardy perennials that need to be moved from one part of your yard to another, now is a great time to move them. Be careful if digging plants when the temperatures are really low, so that you don't expose the roots to very cold air or to drying winds for very long. Plants, such as Hydrangeas, Azaleas and figs, that sometimes struggle in a cold winter should be moved at the end of the dormant season to allow the bulk of winter weather to pass first.

ANNUALS

When it comes to winter annuals, the later you plant the larger the plants should be: Hopefully, if they are flowering winter annuals (Pansies, Violas, and Panolas), they are blooming. Flowering Kale, Cabbage and Swiss chard are also available, but get them planted and mulched soon. If you planted earlier this fall, don't forget to fertilize periodically. Also, pay attention to moisture levels, especially if you have these plants in containers. Water as needed, especially prior to a hard freeze. If you didn't get all of your winter annuals planted, NOW is the time. They must have their root systems established before it gets too cold. Be sure to fertilize when you plant and side dress during the winter on warm days. In addition to Pansies, Violas and Panolas, consider Dianthus, Dusty Miller and Snapdragons. For vertical interest, try Mustard, Swiss Kale, Collards or Swiss chard. Look for healthy, large flowering annuals now.

Not only will you have instant gratification with flowers, but they should bloom well for you all winter. Fertilize at planting and every three to four weeks during the winter to keep them growing. If we do have dry spells, don't forget to water, especially newly planted plants.

VEGETABLES

Fall and winter are quieter times in our vegetable gardens, but there are still things to do. After you have planted the winter vegetables, cleaned up and composted, try to prepare some of the beds for spring planting. Then, in February, instead of waiting for the soil to dry out, you can plant Sugar and Snow Peas. Plant a cover crop in the other beds. More gardeners are planting a fall and winter vegetable garden. Season extenders in the form of covers or high tunnels make winter production even easier. Janet has grown, in the past, Cabbage, Kale and Bok Choy all winter outdoors with no added protection and still had a good harvest. Insects and diseases are not a challenge in the cool months, either.

TREES AND SHRUBS

November is the ideal time to plant a tree. If you need to plant some new trees, consider planting now. The soil temperature still has some heat left, so the root system can spend its time growing roots while the tree is dormant. You will end up with a stronger plant for next growing season. Some large shade tree choices are: Willow Oak (*Quercus Phellos*); Tulip Poplar (*Linodendron Tulipifera*) and Lacebark Elm (*Ulmus Parviflorus*). Some good mid-sized tree choices are: Little Leaf Linden (*Tilia Cordata*) Red Maple (*Acer Rubrum*) and Chinese Pistache (*Pistacia Chinensis*). Prepare the site well and amend in an area three times the width of the root ball, but only as deep as the depth of the root ball. You want the crown of the plant to be planted at the soil line or slightly more shallow. Don't dig out the planting soil and throw it away and plant in a bag of potting soil . . . that won't encourage root movement. Instead, mix the existing soil with compost and spread it out over a wide area. Once planted, mulch and water. **AVOID THE VOLCANO MULCHES**, use no more than two to three inches of mulch and be sure to leave an air pocket next to the trunk. Even the oldest and most drought tolerant plants benefit from regular water for at least the first year of establishment, but would prefer the first three years of growth.

HOUSEPLANTS

In central Arkansas, the average frost is early to mid-November, so pay attention to the weather forecasts and take whatever precautions are needed. If you have not moved your houseplants indoors, please move them in now. Don't be alarmed if they start dropping leaves because there will be a huge shift in their growing conditions. If you are storing houseplants or tropicals under the house or in the garage, make sure the move is made prior to a frost so you don't lose your plants. The consensus is that, by now, all houseplants and overwintering flowering tropical plants should have been indoors for at least a month. They may still be showing the signs of transplant shock. Houses are particularly dry indoors with heat and lower lights, coupled with a more static temperature, taking its toll. Cut off any yellow or damaged leaves and greatly reduce the amount of water you are giving them. Try to give them as much light as possible, but avoid fertilization. Our goal is to keep them alive and as healthy as possible. Overwatering is typically the number one killer of houseplants.

DECEMBER CHECKLIST by Carol Randle

While there is not so much to do in the garden, there are a few things that still need doing. It is time to get those bulbs planted, change your containers for your front porch to winter plants (if you have not already done so) and do general clean up and mulching.

BULBS

If you have not started with your bulbs, remember that your spring bulbs have to have a minimum of 12-14 weeks of cool weather before the stems can stretch and grow properly. Plant all remaining bulbs by early January, if possible. General guidelines for depth of planting are two to two and a half times the size of the bulb.

ANNUALS

Winter annuals can also be planted if you have gotten behind. The later you wait to plant, the larger the transplants should be: Janet looks for plants that are blooming, especially if she is planting Pansies, Violas and Dianthus. Swiss chard, Kale and Cabbage need time to get roots established before a hard frost, but the past few years they have done extremely well. Fertilize at planting and every three to four weeks during the winter to keep them growing. If we have dry spells, remember to water, especially newly planted plants.

CLEAN UP

Early winter is an important season for cleanup. As your plants drop their leaves or when you pull up spend annuals and cut back perennials, get any damaged plants out of the yard. Letting the spent debris remain in the garden invites disease spores and gives overwintering insects a place to live. This leads to more problems next growing season. Some cleanup may be needed if you have heavily diseased or infected plants. They may need some cleanup in the mulched area underneath them. Oils can be used to combat scale insects, but are tougher to use on evergreen plants since it is hard to get thorough coverage on both sides of the leaves and stems.

CHRISTMAS PLANTS

Christmas plants are arriving in all outlets now. Poinsettias are still the top sellers, but you have many more options on sizes and colors. From desktop miniatures to topiaries or hanging baskets Poinsettias, they all need the same type of care, bright sunlight and even moisture. With proper conditions, the colorful bracts can stay showy for months. Color choices range from the traditional reds to pink, white, plum and even a new orange variety. Speckled and bi-colored choices also abound.

If you want to try something different, Bromeliads can come in great shades of red and green and last inside with minimal care for months. There are also Gerber Daisies, Azaleas, Ornamental Peppers, Paper White Narcissus and Amaryllis from which to choose. Amaryllis come in many different colors, also. Christmas decorations often add an amazing amount of color inside without plants, but having something that can last after the season is over is also nice and they make great hostess gifts.

If you use fresh greenery or Christmas trees indoors, remember how quickly they dry out. Try to keep the plants fresh with ample moisture. If possible, redirect or close the heating vent closest to the tree to keep it from drying out. Once you are done with your tree, consider recycling it in a lake for the fish or as a haven for wildlife in a state park. Many parks collect them after the season. You can also decorate one for the birds outside. December blooms are: Camellias, Hollies, Nandina, Osmanthus, Aquifolium, Possum Haw, Rosehips, Tea Plant, Viburnums and Violets.



**Winner – River
Market Clinic**



The Pumpkin Challenge

From Karen Mauermann

I was so pleased with the results of the “The Pumpkin Challenge” held on October 5th at the 4H Center to celebrate our 30th PCMG anniversary. The goal was to raise money for the Demonstration Garden located at the 4H Center. The total from the auction was \$695.00. It paid for two raised garden beds. I suspect that if we had served wine it would have been higher! Janet Carson and Beth Phelps judged the contest for best design. First place went to the River Market Clinic designed by Arlene Jackson; second place went to Maumelle Community Center; third place went to Pathfinders which was designed by Rachel Richey.

Fifteen projects entered the contest and they were all outstanding. The participating groups were Historic Arkansas Museum, Hays Senior Center, Wildwood, BRI Rehab, River Market Clinic, State Hospital, Maumelle Community Center, Pathfinders Greenhouse, Argenta, Amy Sanders Library, Curran Hall, Little Rock Greenhouse, Parkhill Water Works, Old State House, and Jacksonville City Hall. Sandra Harrison with the help of Peggy Trokey did a terrific job of organizing the auction and collecting money. Betty Raley was the winning bidder and she donated the centerpiece to the Arkansas 4-H center at Ferndale.

ORGANIC KNOW-HOW

When and How To Feed A Fall Lawn

By Betty Deere

Summer is trying to be over. My lawn in my new neighborhood looks a bit pale and wispy, compared to the two lawns flanking mine. My neighbors both have commercial lawn services that arrive every 4-6 weeks to spray chemicals on their grass, to make it green and to kill the weeds. But I don't do that. (I won't even let my little bijon walk on my neighbor's chemically-saturated lawns.) I'm an organic gardener and I believe organic is the overall best way to garden.

There is a downside. The downside is I'm out sweating, pulling weeds throughout the seasons, and spreading organic fertilizer, while my neighbors are inside relaxing. The other downside is I *sometimes* don't get around to "tending" my grass as often as my neighbors' commercial services do. My lawn is definitely puny compared to my neighbors, it used up most its energy surviving our blistering summer. (And my inattention!) Now to be hit with freezing winter weather could be disastrous. I'm wondering -- is fall fertilizing a good way to rehab?

Nowadays I'm avidly, intensely interested in my grass being healthy, whereas in the past I had little interest in grass. I loved my flowers and as long as the grass framed my flower beds charmingly; then my philosophy was "let it be". I considered the grass much like the hair on our heads, its purpose being to "frame" our face as charmingly as possible. For me, grass only served the purpose of "framing" my flower beds. As long as it was somewhat green, I didn't care what kind it was or how to nurture it, or even if it had some weeds. They're green too!

But I'm really realizing in past few years as the summers have gotten scorchingly hotter, and the number of trees shorter, that a house surrounded with grass keeps both the flowers and the house cooler. Again, it IS like hair on our heads. . .it keeps us cooler. Lush vibrant grass and vibrant hair are both wonderful and pretty to look at, but grass is also fun to walk barefoot on! (Unless it's soaked with chemicals.) Research shows there's many health benefits from letting the

Grass also: (1) improves air quality (2) reduces heat by 20-23 degrees, and (3) generates OXYGEN! We could all do with a little more oxygen and deep breathing – as more and more of our Little Rock green spaces and trees/forests are replaced with concrete surfaces.

It seems fall fertilizing (organically, of course) is one of the best ways to keep lawns vibrant and healthy, building a strong immune system and roots. And fall **it the most important** fertilization of the year – not spring! For cool weather grasses, like bluegrass, fescues and ryegrass, that can be either spring or fall—or both. When the summer heat is scorching (ours is!) then fall fertilizing warm season grasses like bermuda and zoysia is important. Fall provides the perfect cooler environment for grass to regain strength. A perfect time to add the **oomph** (fertilizer) for a stronger spring growth.

How and when to fall fertilize is important. When do you do it? Should you mow first? Wait until after it rains, or when it's raining? What is the best time of day?

- Fertilize as the weather cools into late fall, a 2-3 weeks **before the ground freezes**.
- The morning fall dew provides moisture to help turf's ability to ABSORB fertilizer. (Let dry first.)
- Organic fall feeding supports grass roots. Supporting root growth in fall leads to a stronger and greener lawn in spring.

Is there a best time of day to fertilize your lawn? Yep there is. Early morning or late afternoon avoids the warmer temperatures that work against fertilizer. Fertilize before or after mowing? After! Start with a clean slate by mowing first, and leave a few grass clippings to help the roots.

Should you fertilize before rain? Generally speaking – no. Unless you somehow just KNOW it's going to be a light shower rain. A heavy rain simply washes the fertilizer away. If the grass blades are still wet after a recent rain, then wait until they dry.

How to do it? Feed the lawn, and the soil, by top-dressing it with fine-textured finished compost from your compost pile -- about ½ inch. Or apply organic granular organic fertilizer formulated for lawns. Using a broadcast spreader, you can set/deliver the amount recommended on the fertilizer label. If your compost is too chunky or moist to move easily through a spreader, make piles about (3) feet apart around your lawn; then use a rake to spread.

Why organic lawn fertilizer? And why fall? First, no toxic chemicals. Second, using an organic fertilizer in the fall avoids the dramatic flush of growth that spring-feeding with high nitrogen products promotes. If you build the soil, and promote steady healthy growth, your lawn will need **much less mowing** and be less dependent on sprinkler-watering. An organic non-toxic lawn creates a safe inviting place for play and leisure for children, dogs, cats, butterflies, birds and grown-ups too!

Perhaps it's time for us all to take a step back. Barefoot!!!

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Mind Body Green: [Health Benefits of Going Barefoot](#) by Dr. Issaac Eliaz



**Maplewood Cemetery
Harrison, Arkansas - November 2018**

Photos and story by Debra Redding

Located just a few minutes from downtown Harrison AR, Maplewood Cemetery is planted with over 733 Sugar Maple trees that explode in an array of vivid colors every autumn. The peak of color is usually in mid to late October or early November depending on environmental conditions. This year, the peak seems to be poised to occur from the last weekend in October extending to the first weekend in November or beyond. By nature, Sugar Maples turn many different colors with their own individual personalities which mean that they turn the same each year. From deep reds, to vibrant oranges and bright yellows, the sugar maples in Maplewood Cemetery offer a wide array of colors and a terrific setting for walking, driving, photography or just absorbing the peaceful surroundings.

Organized in 1901, the “20th Century Club” is an important ingredient in the life of Maplewood Cemetery. The club has been selflessly dedicated to the maintenance and beautification of Maplewood Cemetery and Rose Hill Cemetery, a smaller burial ground within the Harrison city limits. They are critical to the success of the property and have been so for over 110 years.

The latest project undertaken at Maplewood Cemetery was the complete restoration and beautification of some of the 733 trees. After the 2009 ice storm that hit Harrison extremely hard, some of the trees sustained damage that had to be fixed. Phase I of the restoration project was completed and was a survey of all the maple trees that included a tag. Phase II was completed early in 2011 and included trimming bad limbs on trees, mulching all trees, weeding and the removal and replacement of some 75 severely damaged trees. Over 10,135 hours of labor was recorded for this project.

Maplewood Cemetery is located on Maplewood Road, just south of Hwy 43 East in Harrison, Arkansas.



FREE

Beautiful Cement Planter

3 feet across – very heavy. Will need 3 people to lift and transport. Please call Marjem Gill for more information. 501-666-1654.

Nov/Dec 2018

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