



# The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

## President's Report

**APRIL 2020**

As I sit enjoying the sun and watching my brush pile burn, I am wishing that I could burn this darn corona virus. I am sure many of you feel the same! But this is a time when I have been trying to get caught up on my gardening. I have trimmed and mowed and picked up sticks. If this goes on much longer, I will have to consider opening up to



the public. Soon we celebrate Easter, a time of resurrection and this gives me time to meditate in my blessings. I am blessed to be a part of a great organization of people who share a love of the earth and what renews every spring. I am blessed to have the energy to work this garden. As spring turns into summer I will be happy to enjoy the fruits of my labor.

So in the words of Brian Clough "*Don't send me flowers when I'm dead. If you like me send them while I'm alive.*"

Happy gardening and stay healthy.

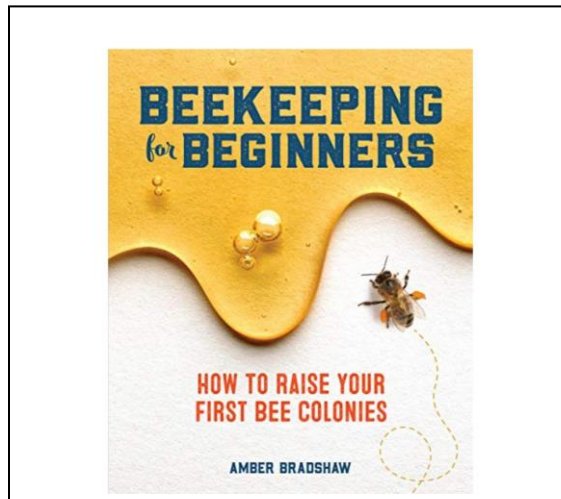
**Sharon Priest**

PCMG President

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## **Beekeeping for Beginners: How To Raise Your First Bee Colonies**

**Author: Amber Bradshaw**

**Book Review by Debra Redding**

Wouldn't it be great to raise your own bees, have a fresh supply of honey, and bring thousands of healthy pollinators into your yard? *Beekeeping for Beginners* is a simple, step-by-step guide that helps you learn the fundamentals of modern beekeeping. You (and your bees) will be buzzing with delight. From picking the right hive and bringing your bees home to surviving winter and collecting honey, experienced beekeeper Amber Bradshaw takes you on an easy-to-follow journey through your first year of beekeeping and beyond.

This is a must for beginners. Highly recommended!

Amber lives off-grid in the mountains of East Tennessee with her family. However, she began her beekeeping journey in an urban tourist area in South Carolina. Learning by trial, and mostly error, she learned how to become one with nature instead of trying to conform nature. Amber is a natural beekeeper and provides her bees with a safe, toxin-free environment. Bees and beekeeping have been an essential part of her gardening and farmers market success.

## 2020: A Garden Odyssey – Garden Show 2020

By: Mary Russell- Evans

What a great theme! And what great interpretations of it! We really cut it close, barely squeaking through before the Coronavirus disaster set in! Shew! Most of the smaller garden shows in Arkansas were cancelled. We had a really great show.

First, I want to thank all the volunteers who helped make the train garden happen again! It means a lot to so many people. At the end of the show I was targeted by one of the train guys. He ran to me, gave me the biggest hug & wouldn't let go. When he finally pulled back, he was weeping. He wanted to thank me "for helping to make so many kids so happy this weekend." Wow! That was my moment! I never get to see it in action as I am always tied up at the How To stage. Check out Murph's 2020 video.

[YouTube of the Arkansas Flower and Garden Show](#)

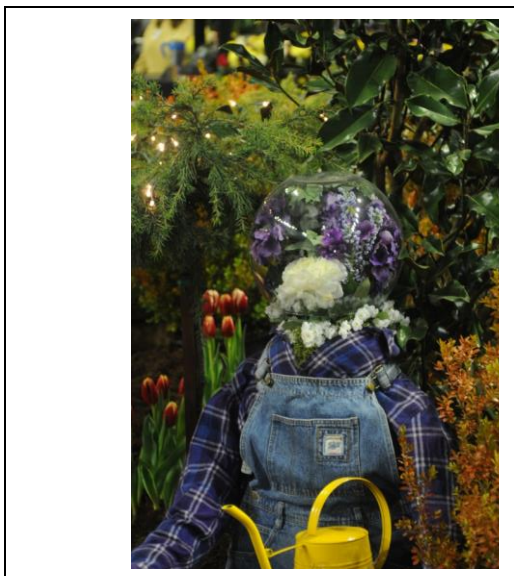
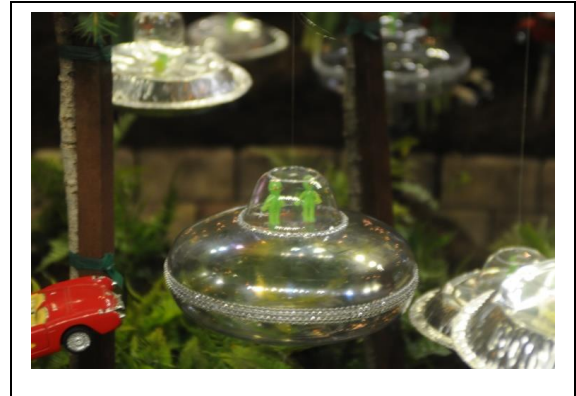


My interpretation of the theme was futuristic. I fell in love with the Deodora topiaries from River Valley. They looked like an alien forest that screamed alien abductions & flying saucers.

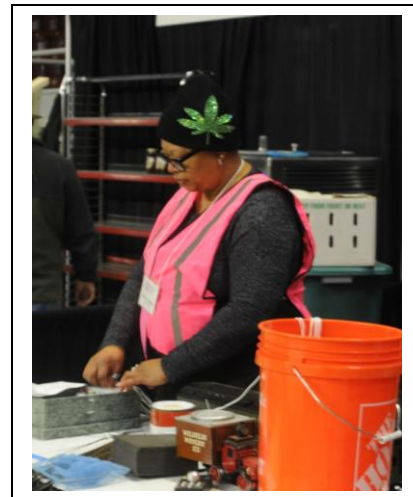




The flying saucer making team did a great job on the cheesy sci fi props, which continued on to have another life at the train garden at Garvan Gardens. Good job ladies!



Penny Talbert & her crew from UAMS came up with the lady astronaut. I think if my head was cracked open that's what my brain would look like.



Master Gardener Marion Lewis-Lognion sorting name tags. Love her hat!



**We MUST thank River Valley for their sponsorship! Be sure to let them know. See April about those beautiful bronze boxwoods.**



P Allen's cottage looked like some of the exhibits I've seen at the Philadelphia Flower Show!



**Arts and Crafts Building**



Arkansas Federation of Garden Clubs held a judged Flower Show with almost 300 horticulture entries.



Entrance to the Flower Show



My favorite- the hats display also reminded me of the “quality” exhibits in Philadelphia, too.



These tulips looked identical when we put them in the pots. Interesting, eh?



**The Arts & Crafts Building was made possible-sponsored by Frances Flower Shop.**



The *Arkansas Diamonds* exhibit was by the stage, provided by The Arkansas Green Industry Assoc. Learn more at [www.argia.org](http://www.argia.org)



Master Gardener Cindy Franklin presents “Drip Irrigation” at The How to Stage.

## GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR MARCH

By Carol Randle  
APRIL CHECKLIST

### A TIME TO SOW

Sow these seeds early: aster, basil, canterbury bells, celosia, columbine, cosmos, foxglove, gomphrena, grasses, hollyhock, marigolds, melampodium, morning glories, petunias, sunflowers, sweet peas, sweet William and zinnias.

### SPRING IS HERE!

We are welcoming spring with open arms! The blooming trees, shrubs and plants are renewing our spirits. The white of the Bradford pear with the pink of the flowering fruit trees, the yellow of the daffodils (think Wye Mountain) and forsythia, the red and pink of the camellias . . . these all make us want to head to the yard and work in the flower beds. If the rain would stop for a little while, we could do some clean up in the flower beds! Many of our plants should begin to grow now. Pruning after our spring blooming plants have finished their bloom is the best way to go. Hydrangeas should be growing from the old wood, not from the base if you expect flowers this summer. Wait until mid to late in the month to give the plants a chance to start growing on their own. If you see no signs of new growth by the end of the month or early May, it won't be coming. Unless you grow the reblooming hydrangeas like 'Endless Summer', you won't have many ( if any ) flowers on any plants that have winter damage. Know what kind of hydrangeas you are growing, so you will know when to prune. If you grow forsythia, remove one third of the older canes at the soil line now to rejuvenate the plant for better flowering next Spring. Azaleas that need pruning should have it done as soon after flowering as possible. Then fertilize all spring bloomers with a slow release fertilizer. On established plants, one application a year is all that is needed.

### ROSES

Do not plant dormant roses after April 15th or potted roses after May 15th. Lightly feed roses with cottonseed meal or commercial rose food. Use a complete rose food. Begin chemical control of black spot as foliage starts to expand and continue every 7 to 10 days through the growing season. The best fungicides for black spot control are Funginex or Daconil or Bayer Advanced.

If you are looking for a plant that will give you several seasons of color, look at some of the earth kind roses. From the series of 'Knock-outs', to 'Home Run' and the 'Flower Carpet' series, there are some fabulous plants that will bloom from late April until frost, with little care.

### BULBS

Leave foliage on spring bulbs at least 6 weeks or until they die back. They need to replenish their strength for next year. Check for thrips on your daffodils. If you find an infestation, remove and destroy the infested part.

Harden off summer bedding plants. Slowly acclimate to outside conditions. Plant water plants now. Plant snapdragons and dianthus now.



## **PERENNIALS AND ANNUALS**

It seems that many pansies and violas are just now hitting their prime and it is almost time to replace them with summer color. If your winter annuals are doing well, enjoy them for another month and plant them. There are plenty of options to choose from. Perennials that are blooming now include: bleeding heart, foxgloves, verbena, peonies, and dianthus. If you are shopping the garden centers for young perennial plants this time of the year, look for the ones that have the fullest, sturdiest growth and the best foliage color. You will find either divisions or spring-sown seedlings. The divisions may be more expensive, but they do produce larger plants the first year. Apply bone meal to crocus as the flowers fade. Don't cut the greenery back as the flowers fade for it will weaken the bulbs. Plant new lily of the valley pips. Mulch well with compost to protect against cold spells.

Annuals that can take a little cool weather, plus summer heat include: petunias, calibrachoa, geraniums and begonias. Hold off on the heat loving impatiens, lantana and zinnias until mid to late April or even into May. Planting in cool soil won't spur them on to growth, so don't get too anxious. For annuals, we want to push the plants as much as we can to encourage rapid growth and plenty of flowers. Good soil, plus regular watering and fertilization should give you large free-flowering plants.

## **INDOORS**

Keep your houseplants indoors until the middle or end of the month. Then slowly acclimate them to the sun. Otherwise, they can sunburn. As you move the tropical flowers like hibiscus, mandevilla and bougainvillea outside, repot them and prune them back by at least one third if not more. These summer tropical plants bloom on new growth and you need to encourage that by alleviating root-bound conditions and encouraging rapid new growth. If you don't repot or prune, you will see limited new growth. Limited new growth means less flowers as well. Start fertilizing every three to four weeks and your plants should be blooming again in no time. Or, if you buy new plants every year, start shopping. New colors, new plants and old favorites are all available now and will continue to arrive in nurseries and garden centers on a regular basis. After the winter, we are all ready for lots of color!

## **VEGETABLES**

Plant warm season vegetables (tomatoes and peppers) inside until the chance of frost has passed. April is the best month for vegetable gardening. You have until mid-month to plant or replant all the cool season crops. Rotate vegetable crops to help control pests. Combining flower plants with vegetables helps deter most insects. Examples are: henbit, geranium, asters, calendula, chrysanthemums and marigolds. You can still plant cool season vegetables (lettuce, broccoli, cabbage, radishes, and spinach). Edible gardening has never been as popular as it is now, but use caution with the size of your garden . . . especially if you are a beginning gardener. Start small and build on success. A large garden may seem like a good idea this month, but be a challenge by late June or July. All vegetables and herbs can be grown in containers. If you live in an apartment or condo, or simply have a yard with all shade, find a sunny spot on the patio and plant your garden there. When starting a vegetable garden, choose a site that gets plenty of sunlight and that is well drained, but near a water source. Gardens in Arkansas won't survive without supplemental water, and if it is difficult to do, many gardeners either don't have the time or the energy to make it work. Raised beds are an excellent way to deal with rocky soils. (Perhaps our cities' names give us a clue . . . Little ROCK and North Little ROCK..) You bring in the compost and soil yourself. Plant perennial plants such as asparagus and strawberries on the edge of the garden, to keep them undisturbed. Divide the garden into thirds and practice crop rotation, not planting in the same quadrant with the same vegetable for at least three years. You have until mid-month to plant even the cool season crops, like broccoli, lettuce, kale, along with green beans and early sweet corn. Hold off on tomatoes, peppers and eggplant until mid to late April . . . giving the soil time to warm up. Plant corn in several short rows to aid in pollination, versus one long row.

### **CLEAR AND PRESENT DANGER**

Inspect the buds and undersides of leaves for signs of aphids. Control white fly, aphids, and Lacebugs with insecticidal soap. Mulch all new plants, trees, shrubs at the time of planting to reduce weeds and help retain moisture. If a late freeze is forecast, cover tomato plants with paper bags, baskets, straw or something to hold warmth. Remove all covering as soon as the weather warms up again.

### **GENERAL YARD CARE**

Check trellis and support wires on climbers before the plants are fully developed. During the winter these supports often become dislodged. Check the brackets used for hanging baskets to ensure they will support the baskets full of moist soil. Dig in compost, manure and other amendments in planting areas when the soil is dry enough. If you have planted cover crops for the winter, turn them under now. Water new plants and early blooming plants regularly.

### **LAWNS**

Lawns are greening up all over, but some of it is still winter weeds. The lawn grasses are almost all actively growing as well. It is during the transition period between dormancy and growth that you need to use caution when applying herbicides. Wait for your lawn grass to be totally green before you apply your first application of fertilizer. Mow any remaining winter weeds to prevent seed set and start monitoring for summer weeds. Clip back established ground cover. Repair dead patches in ground cover by tearing them out. Add compost and peat moss into the soil, then replant bare areas with divisions taken from outer areas.



Wye Mountain Daffodil Festival

“Dear Susan, After three years of writing the *Back Page Column* (aka “*Only in Arkansas*”) for *Arkansas Gardener Magazine*- they closed all of the magazines. I was so sad. I was just getting warmed up. After forty years as a florist, I have seen & heard it all. Flowers make people happy. It has been & continues to be a fun ride in the “happy business.” “**Delta Dawn**” is one of my favorite florist stories to tell. I found it only fitting to share this story, that I had at the ready for the magazine, at this time when we could all use a little uplift & sunshine that only flowers can bring. I hope everyone enjoys it.”

## Delta Dawn

By: Mary Russell Evans

Final submission for “*Only in Arkansas*” column in the now “extinct” *Arkansas Gardener Magazine*.

Reader’s Digest had a column titled “Laughter is the Best Medicine.” That was my favorite section and I totally believe that. I also believe that flowers make people better, too. Forty years as a floral designer, both “making and taking” flowers will show you that. People are always glad to see you-very rewarding and fun.

We had a weekly standing order for a corsage. I have long forgotten the lady’s name. Every week on Friday we made a corsage for her. I often wondered “why a corsage?” We made the order and oftentimes I would deliver it. The corsage went to the mental/lock-up ward. She was a permanent resident there. She seemed to be about 70. In the beginning I would ring the buzzer at the entrance and hand the corsage through the big door to an orderly. One day a tall, heavily bearded orderly that looked like Thomas Chong opened the door and said “Come on in.” What? I was very reluctant to enter... What if there was no escape? What if I belonged in there?” Was I afraid I’d fit in too well? Then that big metal door clanked shut, with a thud that echoed down the hall. No escape now.

He led me down the hall to her room. I presented the delivery to her like any other hospital delivery. Several times later, the orderly asked me if I could “Please pin it on her.” Sure! I had pinned on hundreds of corsages! She thoroughly enjoyed it and he appreciated it immensely. It was a simple gesture. After that, I insisted on taking that delivery.

**“Delta Dawn” was the title and subject of a song in the 70’s by Tanya Tucker.**

Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?  
Could it be a faded rose from days gone by?  
And did I hear you say he was a-meeting you here today  
To take you to his mansion in the sky?

She's forty-one and her daddy still calls her "baby"  
All the folks around Brownsville say she's crazy  
'Cause she walks downtown with a suitcase in her hand  
Looking for a mysterious dark-haired man

In her younger days they called her Delta Dawn  
Prettiest woman you ever laid eyes on  
Then a man of low degree stood by her side  
And promised her he'd take her for his bride

Delta Dawn, what's that flower you have on?  
Could it be a faded rose from days gone by?  
And did I hear you say he was a-meeting you here today  
To take you to his mansion in the sky?  
Delta Dawn.....



From that time forward, that was the routine. Though I never got used to that door shutting behind me, I enjoyed seeing the absolute joy she got from those flowers. Though the orderly had limited time, she & I had short conversations. The day I met her, she became “Delta Dawn.” I even changed her name to “Delta Dawn” on our paper ticket that we kept hanging on the order wall on Friday’s clip.

One day the orderly led me in a different direction. There was Delta Dawn in a big room, performing in a band with some old geezers. She was the only female. It sounded awful, but everyone was having a fabulous time- including myself! She was having a blast up there on stage, all dressed up, playing a tambourine and dancing. The orderly gestured for me to go up there and pin the corsage. She lit up when she saw me, ran to the edge of the stage, and for a moment forgot she was “supposed” to be playing the tambourine. I pinned on the corsage and she resumed her act but paraded around a little bit more. I watched her for a spell. Not a care in the world. I never forgot how “free” she was up there- absolute bliss....

“Why a corsage?” I never knew who the sender was, or the significance of the “corsage.” A bouquet would sit in her room, not seen or shared. Of course no glass was allowed. Maybe a “portable” flower arrangement was a way to share her flowers. Perhaps the corsage was a way she could show she was loved, evidence she was not “forgotten” or perhaps a way to “show off.” What was her story? Maybe she was like “Delta Dawn.” She was “looking good” wearing her flowers. I often wondered if she kept them and had a big pile of dried corsages in her bedside table.

Thirty years later I walked into an assisted living looking for a client (for 20 years) in her new digs. She was not in her apartment. I tracked her down in the community room, along with about thirty-five others, watching “some lady” playing piano. There was zero enthusiasm. I knew the words to the song. I don’t know what came over me. I sauntered up to the piano leaned on my elbow, and started belting out the lyrics. I felt like I had on a low-cut, slit up the side, red sequined gown instead of my shorts and sandals, “been working in the dirt all day clothes.” When I finished my song, the audience applauded, I curtsied and asked my lady for the key to her apartment. She was falling out of her chair, clapping insanely and gasping for air. She loved it. (I called her daughter-in-law just in case she reported my “stunt” so she wouldn’t think she was losing it- she loved it, too.)

Driving home after, I thought of Delta Dawn playing her tambourine. (Hmmm my eyebrow went up when I wrote that.) Flowers truly are “chicken soup for the soul”..... Maybe “FLOWERS are the Best Medicine.....” I will always remember Delta Dawn. We sometimes never know the value of the smallest gestures in everyday life.....

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