



The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

May 2020

Well, things have sure changed since the last newsletter. I hope you are all safe and plan to stay that way. Remember, just because they can open doesn't mean you have to go out and about. We all need to make our own decisions.

That said, I'm guessing that you have been working in your garden as I have. With 5 acres, I can assure you that there is not a lack of things to do. I'm getting close to not having

much to do but weed 😞.

Meanwhile, some of you may know that I have had some ducks show up. Don't know where they came from and don't know when they will leave. It's been fun watching them though.

I have so been teaching my grandson how to mow and use the weed eater. It has been great fun. Nothing like being around a kid to give you hope.

Speaking of hope, there is an old saying, "He who plants a tree plants hope".

We need hope now, so go out and plant a tree.

Hope to see you at the General meeting via Zoom. In the meantime, happy gardening and please stay healthy.

Sharon Priest

PCMG President

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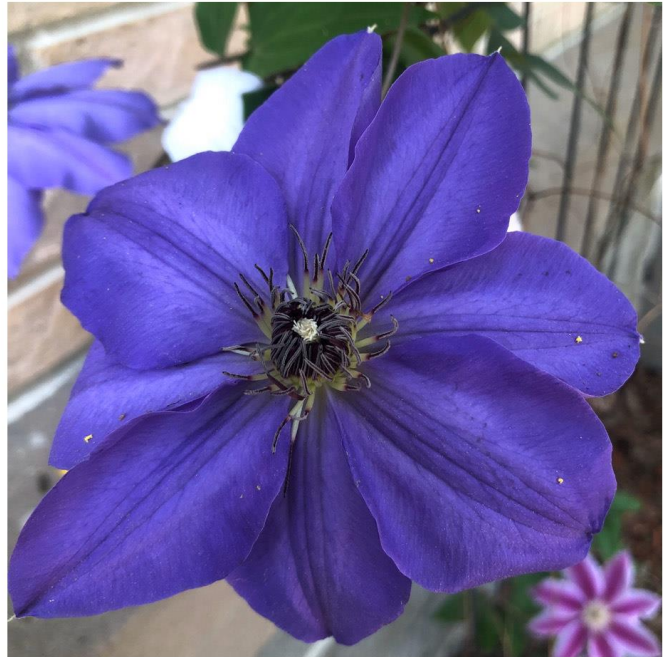
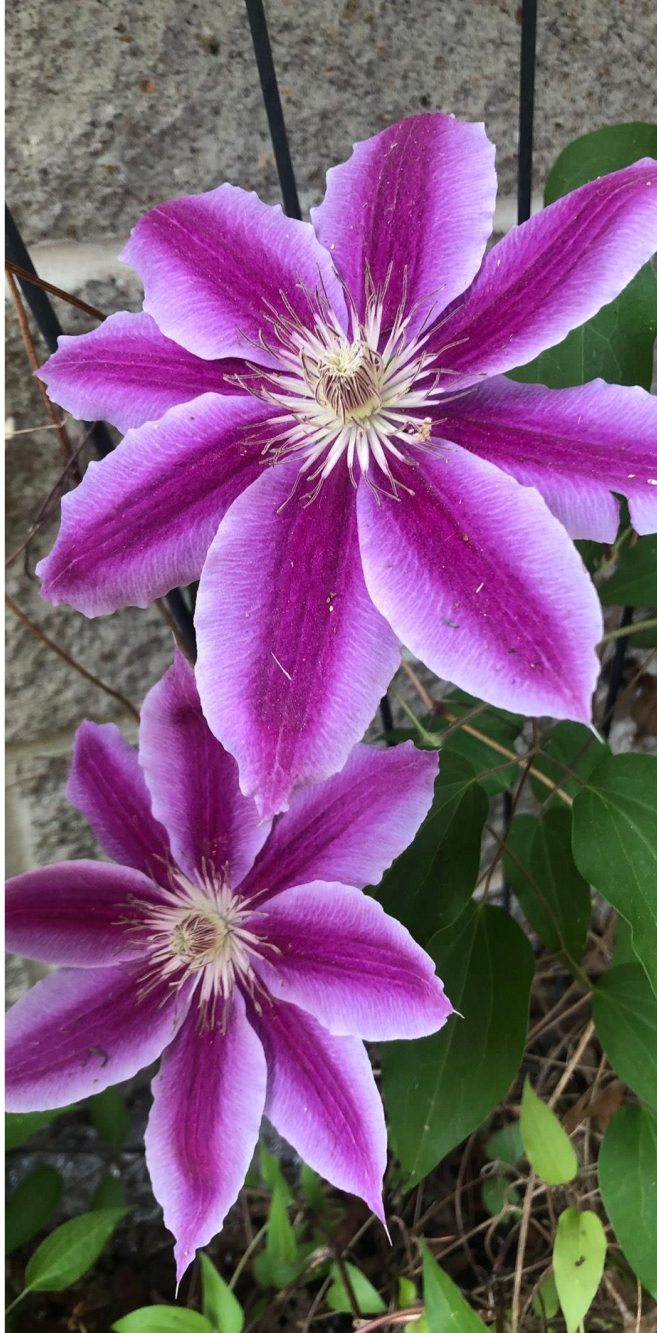
The Earth in Her Hands: 75 Extraordinary Women Working In the World of Plants

Author: Jennifer Jewell

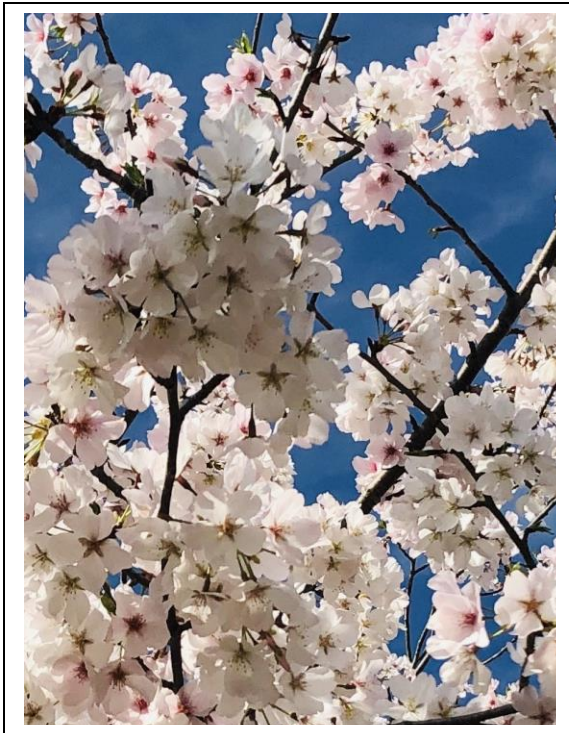
Book Review by Debra Redding

What a fabulous book. Jennifer Jewell not only touched upon the women of note in horticulture but to the women who also simply garden in the community. Featured were women who are involved by profession as well as those who saw a need and decided that it was important to do something about connecting humans to this earth. The work of these women, their plant choices, and the story of their journey into the plant world keep it simple. What a terrific way to share, encourage other women, as well as the next generation to embrace the world of gardening.

I am glad to have this book to read, read and read again!



Clematis – lots of colors to choose from. Photos supplied by Debra Redding.



Top to bottom: forsythia, cherry blossoms, and redbud
SPRING HAS ARRIVED!
Special thanks to Debra Redding for providing these beautiful pictures
for our May newsletter.

Easy and Carefree Groundcovers

By Susan Rose

Definition of a groundcover: Any plant that grows over an area of ground. Groundcovers provide protection of the topsoil from erosion and drought. Low growing, spreading plants that help to stop weeds from growing.

Groundcovers must be vigorous enough to fill in an area of the landscape that you need to dress up or where you need to keep weeds down. They must **not** be so vigorous that it will become a problem plant. Some spreading can be nice, but too much becomes a nuisance. Always research plant choices to find out if it is invasive in your region. The plant also must be pretty enough (or at least, unusual enough) to draw attention and offer some sort of visual interest in the garden. Some gardeners enjoy using white plants or white/green plants to accent an area of their garden. White shows up very nice at night. Using a variation of groundcovers in your garden will give your garden an overall “finished” effect and provide lasting areas that are free from weeds! Houseplants can even be used in the garden as “groundcovers”. Pothos and airplane plant (spider plant) are some examples. Dianthus (considered an annual for some parts of Arkansas) does well as a groundcover and keeps on blooming every spring. Purple heart – a beautiful purple leaved plant with small pink flowers is a great addition to any garden area. Just don’t forget to bring it in or take cuttings for next year. You can even heavily mulch it and it returns every year.

Groundcovers for Arkansas

Ajuga (bugleweed) – sun or shade, moderate water, some have variegated leaves with pink, yellow colors. ‘Bronze beauty’, ‘Chocolate chip’, ‘Burgundy glow’ are some good varieties. Blue or purple flowers in the spring. Evergreen.

Artemisia – full sun, moderate water. Wormwood and Dusty Miller are also under this category that provide a white to grey plant.

Asian star jasmine – sun or shade, moderate water

Big blue liriop (monkey grass) – sun or shade, can survive dry conditions and virtually “no care”. Evergreen.

Bishop’s weed – sun or shade, moderate water, white edged leaves



Ajuga ‘Burgundy glow’



Artemisia ‘Powis castle’



Variegated Bishop’s weed

Blue fescue – prefers sun, mounding plant, regular water, considered a grass. Evergreen

Candytuft – full sun, perennial with white flowers. Grows from 8” to 1’ tall. Smaller varieties are available, regular water. Well drained soil.

Catmint – prefers shade, medium water, blue or white flowers. ‘Six Hills Giant” blooms all summer with purple flowers. Well drained soil.

English ivy – or other ivies – sun or shade, evergreen foliage. Don’t allow it to go rampant and climb trees. Holds soil well on slopes.



Blue fescue



Candytuft ‘Snowflake’

Epimedium – several varieties available. Partial to full shade, medium water.

Holly fern – part or full shade, regular water, coarse textured leaves. Evergreen.

Hosta – lots of varieties to choose from and different sizes. Part to full shade, regular water, different leaf shapes and colors provide a wonderful addition to the garden. The yellow leaved hostas can take more sun than the blue or green varieties.

Houttuynia cordata – sun or shade, regular water. White blossoms resemble dogwood blossoms. Variegated variety has pink, cream, yellow and red foliage.

Japanese pachysandra (spurge) – light to heavy shade, hardy to cold. Moist soil well amended with organic material is recommended. Evergreen.



Houttuynia cordata



Japanese pachysandra

Lamb's ear – full sun, moderate water, soft, wooly leaves with spike like clusters of small purple flowers. Tough, tolerate plants. Evergreen.

Lenten rose (hellebores) – part to full shade, regular water, long lived blooms (some lasting three months). Blooms in the winter. Prefers good soil with organic material. Evergreen.

Lily of the Valley – part shade, regular water, white bell-shaped flowers. Attractive green foliage with red berries in the fall. Variegated plants available with pink bell flowers.

Lungwort (pulmonaria) – part to full shade, some have green leaves with grey or silver splotches, bear drooping clusters of funnel-shaped blue flowers.

Mondo grass – shade, moderate water, blue fruit in the fall, black or green variety. There is also a dwarf variety that looks great planted among pavers. Evergreen.

Moneywort (creeping Jenny) – light green leaves, moderate water, full sun to part shade. Great to use in hanging baskets as well as ground cover.

Periwinkle – part to full shade. V. major has large 3” leaves, aggressive. V. minor smaller leaves with white/green variation, blue flowers. Evergreen.

Spotted dead nettle (lamium) – part to full shade, heart shaped leaves, grayish green leaves, pink flowers. Well drained, acid soil.

St. Johnswort – part to full shade, regular to moderate water, yellow flowers resembling single roses.

Stonecrop (sedum) – full sun to light shade, star-like clusters of flowers, most propagate by stem cuttings. ‘Angelina sedum’ succulent foliage, golden flowers, well-drained soil.

Thrift (phlox subulata) - full sun to light shade, blooms in spring, provide loose, rich soil, moderate water. Rose, lavender, white or pink flowers.

Thyme (creeping types) – full sun to part shade, heavily scented leaves and masses of colorful flowers in late spring. Well drained soil. Attracts butterflies. Evergreen.

Reference: Floyd, Jr. JA, editor. **The Southern Living Garden Book**. **The Complete Encyclopedia of more than 5,000 southern plants**. Oxmoor House, 1998.



Lamb's ear



Lenten rose



Pulmonaria 'Mrs. Moon'

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR MAY

By Carol Randle

One thing about this quarantine, it has given me more time in my flower and herb beds, which I have enjoyed. We had a mild winter and we have had a lot of rain, so everything is nice and green. We are having a beautiful spring. By now, some of our spring blooming plants have finished blooming. If they need pruning, now is the time to do it. After bloom is also a great time to fertilize all the trees and shrubs in your garden. Have a reason to prune before you pick up those tools. Consider what you want the plants to look like when you are finished pruning.

BULBS

You can remove the foliage from spring bulbs approximately six weeks or so after they've bloomed. Now is a good time to start planting summer bulbs such as caladiums, elephant ears, dahlias and pineapple lilies (eucomis). Lift and store bulbs that are not cold hardy in central Arkansas; otherwise you will need to replace them the following year.

ANNUALS

Our winter annuals quit blooming a little earlier than usual and it is time to plant their summer replacements. Heat lovers can go in, including lantana, ornamental sweet potato vine, zinnias and coleus. It is also time to put in angelonia and dianthus. If you want to try new annuals try the new *Arkansas Diamond* plants. You can identify them by the blue diamond logo, they are grown in Arkansas by local growers and are tough performers statewide. The new Diamond plants for 2020 are: Persian shield, "Bandana White" lantana, and Solar Power "Black Heart" ipomea (sweet potato plant). 2019 Diamond plants were sunpatiens "Compact Royal Magenta", golden shrimp plant, coleus "Lava Rose" and dichondra "Silver Falls".

PERENNIALS

Perennials are looking great right now. Peonies are blooming beautifully along with baptisia, amsonia and foxglove (*Digitalis* spp.). Taller flowering perennials often need a little extra support from stakes to help hold their blooms upright, especially in heavy rains. (If my Orienpet Lilies get any taller I may have to stake them.) Know which of your plants need fertilizer and which don't. Most spring bloomers will benefit from an application of fertilizer after bloom. Hosta plants need fertilization two or three times a season. My caramel and purple heucheras (I don't remember their names!) are looking great now and my hellebores (Lenten roses) are still going strong. In fact, I have baby hellebores everywhere.

HERBS

Fresh herbs are a wonderful addition to your cooking talents, but they also make great ornamental plants. Herbs are easy to grow whether you are interspersing them with flowers in the vegetable garden or in a stand alone planting. (My Greek oregano is taking over one half of my herb garden! So is my lemon thyme!) My rosemary is just kind of sitting there. My bee balm is coming up. Perennial rosemary, sage, oregano and lemon thyme do well year-round, while the annual basil and dill thrive in our summers. Fennel, both green and bronze, is showy and adds great interest to cut flower displays.

VEGETABLES

Vegetable gardening becomes more popular every year. If you are a vegetable gardener and you planted an early garden, you are in the midst of harvest. May is a great month to plant vegetables. Harvesting of cool season crops is going on now, but all of the warm season vegetables can still be planted, from snap beans and corn, to tomatoes, peppers, squash and eggplants. By May, our soil is warming up and we can begin to plant okra, southern peas, and even watermelons and cantaloupes. As temperatures heat up, so do pest problems. Monitor for insects and diseases and catch them early. Mulch your vegetables with shredded leaves, newspaper or a similar product. Not only does mulch maintain soil moisture and helps to keep weeds away, but it also keeps soil from splashing on the stems which can impact diseases. As one plant finishes its life cycle, remove it and replace with another. Utilize your space to get the most from your garden. Diseases and insects thrive in warmer temperatures so walk your garden daily and scout for problems, weeding as you go so they won't compete for water and nutrients.

BERRIES

Berry season is great. Strawberries, an easy perennial fruit for the home garden, need annual maintenance. Thin the dense mats of foliage after the spring harvest to discourage fruit rot and increase fruit size and quality. Mulch, fertilize and water for the best production. Strawberries start in May and the berry season ends in October with muscadines. These small fruits are easy to grow in a home garden, provided you have at least six hours of sunlight a day. Blueberries are another easy plant for the home gardener. They need at least six hours of sunlight. They have white flowers and exceptional red fall foliage. Most blueberries require two different varieties for cross-pollination, but the new small fruit container series are self fruitful. Thornless blackberries produce abundant fruit with minimal care.

HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants and heat-loving tropical flowering plants can all go outdoors safely now. Most tropical flowering plants need bright light to bloom well. If you are growing plants that you have kept for several years, repot them now and fertilize regularly or you won't see as many flowers this growing season. Tropicals such as mandevilla, hibiscus and others bloom on new growth and if they are old and root-bound, you won't see much new growth and you won't see as many flowers. (The Senior Citizens' Center has a beautiful mandevilla that has red and white blooms on it). As temperatures heat up, watering needs increase. The more you water, the more fertilizer you need.

INSECTS

In addition to plants growing, insects and diseases are also showing their ugly heads, in fact, insects have been pretty active for a while. Aphids multiply faster during drier days (they must not be multiplying right now with all this rain!), but lace bugs are hitting the azaleas. It is time to begin spraying/monitoring for bagworms. Bagworms construct a sack from the plant they are feeding upon. The sack protects the crawling larvae from predators and insecticides, so the key is to catch them as they begin. If you had a bad case of them last season, you might consider a preventative spray starting mid-May and once a week until mid-June. An organic approach is to spray with BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). Don't forget about weeds, either. The chambers bitters is up and running. This weed looks a little like a small Mimosa tree and it sets its seeds almost immediately on the underside of the plant. Mulberry weed, pigweed and nutsedge are also getting started. Don't ignore them or they will take over the garden. A sharp hoe is a gardener's best friend.

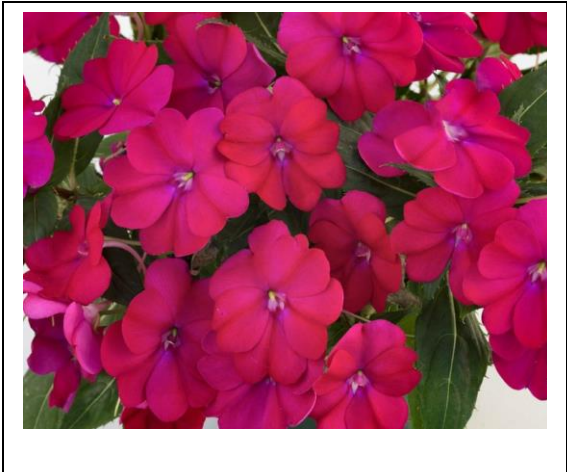
LAWNS

Most of the weeds that were in our winter and early spring lawns now appear to be dead; however, they are simply dormant and will return with Fall's cooler temperatures. We currently have Summer weeds, such as nutgrass and crabgrass to manage. Lawn lovers also contend with moss that grows in areas with too much shade, compacted soil or wet conditions. Most grasses do not grow well in the shade, which is a welcome treat in Arkansas summers.

HAPPY GROWING!



Golden Shrimp plant



Sunpatiens 'Compact Royal Magenta'

LOCALLY GROWN ARKANSAS TOUGH

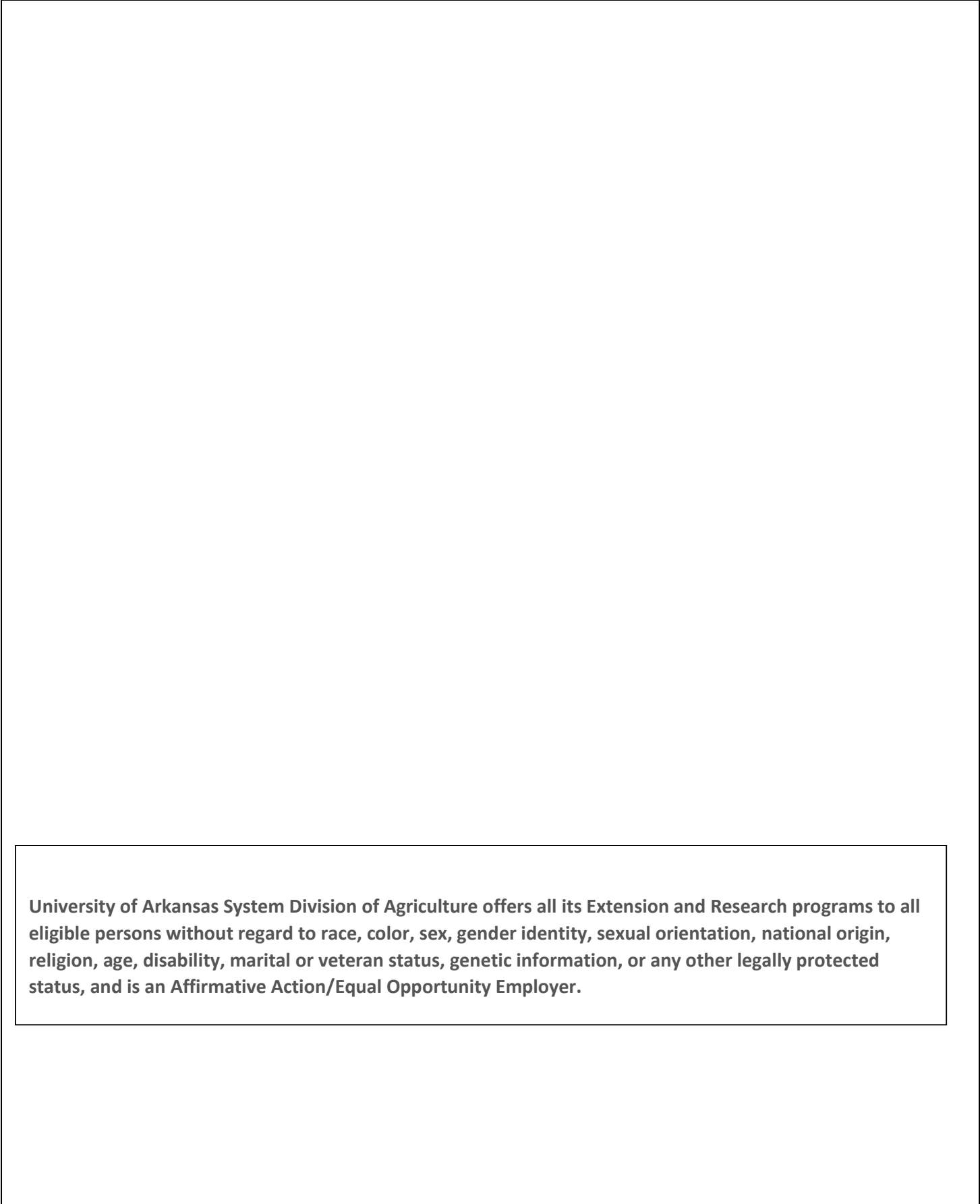
Red Dragonwing Begonia Purple Angelonia

Corn Cascade Petals Dogwood Redhead Coleus

Blue Skyway Panflower Gold Yellow Lantana

Arkansas Diamonds plants have been carefully selected by local growers to highlight outstanding plants that consistently perform well in Arkansas. Look for the Arkansas Diamonds logo when shopping, and feel confident that you are supporting both local growers and independent garden centers AND purchasing a plant that will be successful in your garden.

Arkansas Diamonds
Locally Grown- Arkansas Tough
A partnership of local growers.



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