



The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

Sept/Oct 2020

Well here we are about 6 months into the coronavirus pandemic. By now, I guess all our homes are spic and span and our yards are picture perfect. 😁. My containers are looking a little tired and I'm thinking of ways to freshen them up. Fortunately, the nurseries have things that can help.

I have always wondered why mums are available so early. By the time Fall comes along, they are done. While I am ready for Fall the weather hasn't turned the calendar yet, neither has the weather turned down the thermostat. Maybe we can take some time to plan for a fall vegetable garden. There are lots of things that can be planted for cold weather harvesting. Maybe it's a good time to reassess our flower beds for next spring. And it's always time to declare a war on weeds.

Autumn is my favorite time of year. Here's a little poem I found, the writer is not known. In "box" on right.

As it appears we are in the quarantine mode for another great while, I encourage you to mask, distance and wash your hands frequently.

When my son was young and I would prepare his lunch I would often write a little poem for him. Given my creative nature it would always start the same way. Here's one for you:

**Roses are red
Violets are blue
I'm sick of covid
How about you?**

Stay well and Happy Gardening.

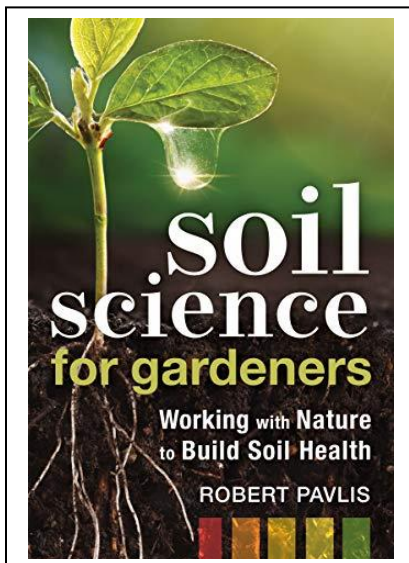
Sharon Priest, PCMG President

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*October's the month
When the smallest breeze
Gives us a shower
Of autumn leaves
Bonfires and pumpkins
Leaves sailing down
October is red
And golden and brown.*





Soil Science for Gardeners: Working with Nature To Build Soil Health

Author: Robert Pavlis

Book Review by Debra Redding

Build healthy soil and grow better plants

Healthy soil means thriving plants. Yet untangling the soil food web and optimizing your soil health is beyond most gardeners, many of whom lack an in-depth knowledge of the soil ecosystem.

Soil Science for Gardeners is an accessible, science-based guide to understanding soil fertility and, in particular, the rhizosphere – the thin layer of liquid and soil surrounding plant roots, so vital to plant health. Robert Pavlis, a gardener for over four decades, debunks common soil myths, explores the rhizosphere, and provides a personalized soil fertility improvement program in this three-part popular science guidebook.

Coverage includes:

- Soil biology and chemistry and how plants and soil interact
- Common soil health problems, including analyzing soil's fertility and plant nutrients
- The creation of a personalized plan for improving your soil fertility, including setting priorities and goals in a cost-effective, realistic time frame.
- Creating the optimal conditions for nature to do the heavy lifting of building soil fertility

Written for the home gardener, market gardener, and micro-farmer, *Soil Science for Gardeners* is packed with information to help you grow thriving plants.

CHECKLIST FOR SEPTEMBER

By Carol Randle

September is a critical month for preparing plants for the winter ahead. **Water is still a primary concern, so monitor local rainfall amounts.** Spring blooming plants are setting or have set flower buds for next spring's display, so no more fertilization is needed. If you fertilize now, you may encourage new growth too late in this season.

BULBS

Spring bulbs are showing up at local nurseries. It is time to buy them to get the best selection, but don't plant until it gets cooler. Keep them in a cool place for another few weeks before planting. If you plan to dig up and store your caladium bulbs, make sure you are fertilizing them now. The more energy they can store in their roots, the larger the bulb will be and the bigger your plants next year. Make sure you dig them up prior to a killing frost.

VEGETABLES

If your vegetable garden is still producing, then you are properly maintaining it. Vegetable gardens quickly turn to ruin if left untended. We are still growing peppers, eggplant and harvesting melons. Now is a great time to replant. You can still plant some fall crops including lettuce, radishes and fall greens. Water is a vital component for survival and mulch is always a plus.

FLOWERS

If early season perennials, such as peonies and lilies are looking ragged, don't wait for a killing frost to begin clean up. Start cutting them back now. They have finished their lifecycle and will be heading into dormancy. **The key to gardening success now is to clean up and water.** Mid September through October is the ideal time to divide peonies. Herbaceous crowns are set one to two inches below soil level. Now is also the time that many perennials can be divided. Mulch is important the first winter after division to prevent the plants from heaving out of the ground.

If your garden needs late-summer color, consider planting some late summer bloomers. Perennials include Japanese anemones, turtle head, toad lilies and Joe-Pie weed. Ornamental grasses are beginning to set their plumage and will continue to grace our fall and winter landscapes.

Summer annuals that got regular applications of fertilizer and water are still performing nicely. Wait to get pansies until the temperatures begin to cool off. Pansies that get exposed to warm weather tend to stretch and get leggy, resulting in weaker plants all winter. Calendulas, snapdragons, callibrachos, flowering kale, ornamental peppers are a great way to add color in the fall garden.

LAWNS

You can apply one last application of fertilizer until mid month, then no more until next spring. If you want to use a pre-emergent herbicide to prevent Winter weeds, now would be a good time to apply. Continue to mow and water as needed.

HERBS

Fresh herbs are showing up in flower gardens, containers and stand-alone vegetable gardens. If you have annual herbs, such as basil and dill, harvest them regularly to keep them producing foliage. As we near Fall, be a bit more sparing in your pruning of the perennial herbs, rosemary, thyme and sage. They can continue to be harvested and used in cooking, but don't butcher them, since they are permanent plants in

the garden and won't put on a lot of new growth this late. Unless you want to have an abundance of garlic and chives in your garden, you may want to deadhead these plants now, as they can be quite aggressive. If you don't have herbs growing in your garden, they can be planted now, as well. Don't forget to water to get them established.

SHRUBS

Shrubs that are blooming now include: butterfly bush (*Buddleia* spa.), crapemyrtles if deadheaded (not "crape-murdered"), althea, and caryopteris with lovely purple flowers. Summer spirea may set more flowers if they continue to put on new growth, as may the reblooming hydrangeas such as Endless Summer and Blushing Bride. Knock Out Roses are still blooming and beautyberry will soon be showing off purple or white berries.

INDOORS

Dig up your begonias now and bring them indoors as a houseplant. They will bloom all winter, so you can use the cuttings outdoors next spring. Feed your houseplants less frequently as the days get shorter. Houseplants that have had a summer siesta outside need to be prepared for the move back indoors. Late summer to early October is the ideal time to do so. Clean up the pots, check for ants and other insects and spray as needed with insecticidal soap before you bring them in, and once again after they are in to control hitchhiking bugs. Moving them in before really cool weather starts will be an easier transition for them. Cut back on the amount of water you give them and don't be alarmed with a little leaf dropping.

CONTAINERS

Container gardens should have color in them year round. Some may need refreshing now with the addition of new plants, while others may simply need some pruning and/or fertilizing to spruce them up. You can also add some fall plants into the mix to keep the color going. Remember, water is even more critical with a finite amount of soil and roots. Frequent watering also leaches out nutrition, so don't forget to fertilize, also.



OCTOBER CHECKLIST by Carol Randle

Crisp, cool mornings often turn into warm afternoons, but fall is definitely here. Fall is a great time to garden in Arkansas, with plenty of options. Harvesting pumpkins and gourds, to summer vegetables if they were well tended or replanted, to ornamental seeds, October is harvest season. Leaves are beginning to fall, so it is also the perfect time to replenish your compost pile. Bulbs are there to be planted and many perennials benefit from fall division. You can also plant your winter seasonal color. Grab your shovel and your work gloves and start gardening.

How well your garden goes to bed for the season can predict in many ways how healthy it will be by next growing season. When cleaning up the vegetable or annual flower beds, don't add diseased or insect infested plants to the compost pile, but simply worn out plant materials are great additions. While compost piles do get hot in the center, most home compost piles aren't uniformly hot throughout, and disease organisms and insect eggs, may not get killed out. You don't want to add them back to your garden next season. Once you have harvested everything in the vegetable garden, consider mulching the space for the winter, or growing a cover crop. Leaving the soil fallow all winter invites winter weeds which you have to contend with before planting next Spring.

PERENNIALS AND BULBS

Starting in October, you can plant and transplant perennials. Enrich your beds with organic soil amendment. List and divide plants that have finished blooming. Most perennials bloom better if they are divided and replanted every three years or so. Remove suckers from roses and lilacs. Winterize. protect or lift tender perennials for winter storage. Mark dormant bulbs so they won't be destroyed when the ground is prepared for spring planting. Be ready when shipments of bulbs such as crocus, daffodils, irises, daylilies, freesias, hyacinth and tulips arrive at nurseries, then plant immediately. Note: Some tulips require a cooling period before planting. Be sure you follow the directions given with the bulbs. Water well to encourage root development and cover with plenty of mulch.

VEGETABLES AND HERBS

By mid October, or if frost is predicted, pick all tomatoes whether they are ripe or not. Store ripe tomatoes on the counter and wrap green Tomatoes in newspaper and store in a cool dark pantry or closet. They will ripen slowly. If you have more ripe tomatoes than you can eat, freeze them to use in sauces. Or hang the entire plants (with unpicked fruit) upside down in the garage. In late October, cut back asparagus stalks to the ground. Mark the location. Mulch three or four inches. Prepare vegetable beds for spring and remove all debris. Cool weather annual herbs such as cilantro and parsley can be planted now. Warm weather herbs such as basil and dill should be gathered now and dried. Tarragon should be divided annually. Chives and sweet woodruff should be divided every three or four years.

HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants that need to come inside for the winter need to be there now. The transition from outside to inside can be tough on plants. They go from high humidity to no humidity and light levels also drop dramatically. Moving them when inside and outside conditions are more similar can make transition easier. Check them for insects before making the move and spray with insecticidal soap before bringing inside. Often a nice spray of water can remove some insect issues and clean them up. Be sure you have some means of tapping the overflow of water; also be sure you let your plants dry out between watering. Overwatering is the leading cause of death in houseplants. Don't be alarmed if you see some yellowing of leaves or leaf dropping while they make the transition. For tropical plants that you store in the garage or in the crawl space of your house, you are simply keeping them alive, not thriving and growing.

HAPPY FALL GARDENING!

Bentonville – A Trip in Our Own Backyard

By Jeffrey McKinley

When we travel, I often think that we should take advantage of opportunities “in our own back yard”. This mantra certainly rings loudly in times of quarantine and limited travel. In the past few weeks, I have been moving my daughter MK to Bentonville from Fayetteville. My confession is that trips Northwest usually terminated near her home and at the familiar places – except for an occasional trip to Crystal Bridges.

Well!! While relocating her, exploration of the Bentonville area began. Much to my delight the home she purchased is about a three block walk from the downtown square. Not only is it charming and beautifully landscaped but the vibe is inescapably energetic.

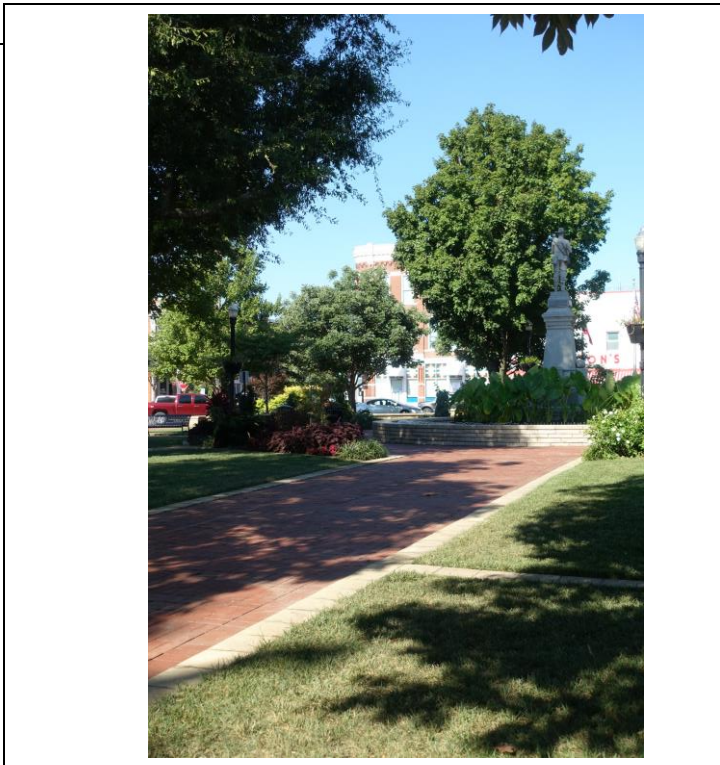
High on my family’s priority is food and beverage. You just can’t go wrong here. The Pedaler’s Pub offers great sandwiches, wood fired pizzas along and my favorite the Pedaler’s Favorite Salad. Plan on a nice beverage from the brews and cocktails. Who cannot like a place where the cute host calls me “love”. Onyx Coffee serves a delicious brew and pastries both at The Momentary and at a 2nd Street Shop. The list goes on: Preacher’ Son (in an old church), the Pressroom, Tusk and Trotter, The Hive, Table Mesa, Crepes Paulette.....

Where to start on what to do? The North Forest Lights Exhibit opens at Crystal Bridges on September 4th; and the Ansel Adams exhibit, September 18th. The Momentary, a contemporary art satellite, is a fun place to stop and have coffee. Add the Walmart Museum and Museum of Native American History to your tour. On my to see list is the The Peel Mansion Museum and Heritage Gardens. Built in 1875, this is an Italianate structure with magnificent gardens – maintained by MGS and perfect for MGs (not to mention hours).

Finally, walkers, cyclists of all levels and those on scooters probably equal the number of drivers. Beaver Lake is nearby for fishing and watersports. So, bring your tennis or hiking shoes and enjoy all or a prat of the Razorback Regional Greenway – the 36 mile trail system that stretches from Bentonville to Fayetteville. No worries about equipment. Outfitters and cycle shops will meet your needs.

Being busy moving, we’ve just begun to explore the shops and cultural events. One of my new favorites is Two Friends Books – an interesting and eclectic assortment of books, coffee and wine – the perfect combination for me. The charming, well-read proprietress Monica turns out to be a friend of my LR neighbor. Small world. A nice “vinyl” shop intrigues me. The First Friday of the month “is a giant block party” on the square with music and much more. And, the Farmer’s Market is supposed to be fab.

Whether you need to break for a day or a few days, the Bentonville area is in our own back door. “Stay opportunities” abound including the 21C Hotel on the square, bed and breakfasts and camping. The Bentonville Tourism Bureau on the square has maps and information (the hours have not been regular due to COVID). Also, check schedules as restaurants may be closed on Mondays and some museums, closed on Tuesdays. And keep your eyes open as the Benton County Master Gardeners are everywhere. I haven’t shared with MK yet but she may not really have a guest suite but a VRBO for yours truly!



Bentonville Gardens in downtown area.

BASIL PESTO RECIPE PROVIDED BY DEBRA REDDING

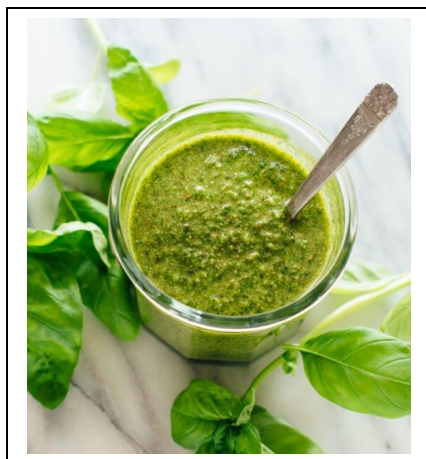
- $\frac{1}{3}$ cup raw pine nuts, almonds, walnuts, pecans or pepitas
- 2 cups packed fresh basil leaves (about 3 ounces or 2 large bunches)
 - $\frac{1}{4}$ cup grated Parmesan cheese
 - 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic, roughly chopped
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon fine sea salt
 - $\frac{1}{2}$ cup extra-virgin olive oil

Optional) Toast the nuts or seeds for extra flavor: In a medium skillet, toast the nuts/seeds over medium heat, stirring frequently (don't let them burn!), until nice and fragrant, 3 to 5 minutes. Pour them into a bowl to cool for a few minutes.

To make the pesto, combine the basil, cooled nuts/seeds, Parmesan, lemon juice, garlic and salt in a food processor or blender. With the machine running, slowly drizzle in the olive oil. Continue processing until the mixture is well blended but still has some texture, pausing to scrape down the sides as necessary.

Taste, and adjust if necessary. Add a pinch of salt if the basil tastes too bitter or the pesto needs more zing. Add more Parmesan if you'd like a creamier/cheesier pesto. If desired, you can thin out the pesto with more olive oil. (Consider, however, that if you're serving the pesto on pasta, you can thin it with small splashes of reserved pasta cooking water to bring it all together. See notes for details.)

- Store leftover pesto in the refrigerator, covered, for up to 1 week. You can also freeze pesto—my favorite way is in an ice cube tray. Once frozen, transfer to a freezer bag, then you can thaw only as needed.





THE CENTRAL IRIS SOCIETY
IRIS RHIZOME SALE
(and Plant sale#)

Saturday, September 12, 2020

8 am until sold out - Come early for best selection!

Unitarian Universalist Church
1818 Reservoir Rd – LR

Wear a mask – we keep social distance!
(#Japanese maple, lenten rose, and others)

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