

# The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

## President's Report

A Chinese Proverb: Spring is sooner recognized by plants than by man.

Spring is definitely here! I'm ready and I'm pretty sure you are too.

After surveying my yard, I have some azaleas, gardenia and nandina that look pretty bad. On the optimistic side, my hydrangeas are putting out. Dogwoods will be at their best just in time for Easter. We are getting out a little more since we are fully vaccinated now. New Beginnings!

Hopefully, as we turn the corner on the pandemic (fingers crossed) we can start to slowly return to some sort of normal. One step at a time. Like waiting to see if the winter storm damaged plants come back to life, we will have to be patient and take it slow.

So enjoy the pretty weather, keep your masks on, wash your hands and social distance.

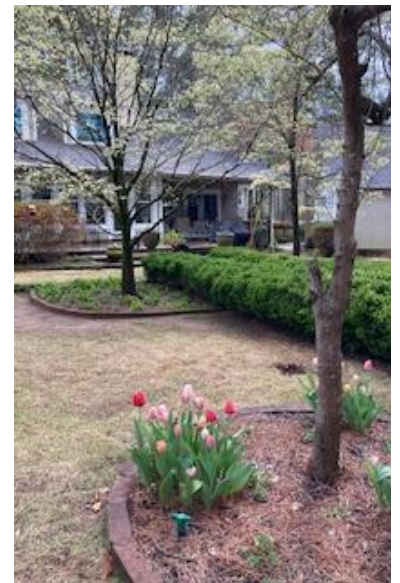
**Happy Easter and Happy Gardening!**

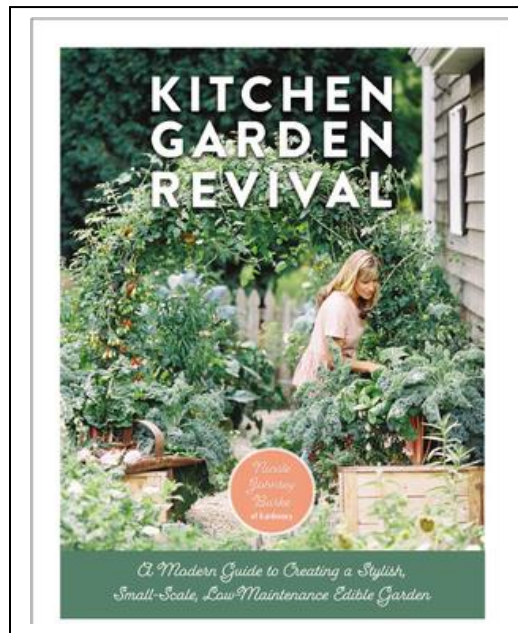
*Sharon Priest,*  
PCMG President

**April 2021**

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**Kitchen Garden Revival: A modern guide to creating a stylish, small scale, low-maintenance, edible garden**  
**Author: Nicole Burke**

Book Review: Debra Redding

Kitchen Garden Revival is the voice of experience across the kitchen table. Encouraging new gardeners and reinvigorating the experienced.

The book has everything to create a raised kitchen garden- discusses new and more traditional products, methods and solutions for problems. Maintains a focus on cost - what is affordable as well as "the skies the limit."

The illustrations and charts are superb, pleasing to the eye, with easily accessible information.

This is a restful and peaceful read, pulling me to explore my own garden space and pursue a Vegetable Eden.

Plant family classification is one of many standout sections, providing descriptions, lists, and charts - breaking the different vegetables into group characteristics-something any gardener will use and appreciate. Photography is so lovely and coffee table worthy!

## GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR APRIL Carol Randle

I think we are all agonizing over some of our plants in the yard after all the snow and very cold temperatures. It is hard to overlook the terrible brown leaves on my loropetalum. I did see some little purple buds on it the other day, so I am praying it will come back out and recover.

Janet said, in Saturday's column in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, to refrain from ripping up the entire yard because things are brown. It is still too early to tell if our gardenias, azaleas, loropetalum, and others, will recover. We have a camellia at the Sherwood Senior Center that was full of buds before the snow hit, but most of the buds are brown. However, I did find two buds that are showing pink on the top, so I am hoping some of the buds will still bloom. My "Kaleidoscope Abielias" came through with little damage and look almost normal. I had them covered. **If you have not read Janet's column in Saturday's paper, go back and look it up. She covers many of our annual shrubs and plants.**

Our spring flowering bulbs at the Sherwood Senior Center are up and beautiful. They were not bothered by the snow and extremely cold weather. Remember, spring-flowering plants are always pruned **AFTER** they bloom.

### 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!

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 all make us want to head to the yard and work in the flower beds and shrubs. Pruning **AFTER** our spring blooming plants have finished their bloom is what Janet recommends. 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.



L-  
hollyhocks  
R-morning  
glories



## **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. 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 infestation, remove and destroy the infected part.

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

## **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 them 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 colors. Don't forget to check out the Arkansas Diamond plants. There are many past Diamonds that are gorgeous and many of the new plants will catch your eye, as well.

## **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 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 . . . Sherwood has the rocks, also.) You bring in 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 fourths 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 lettuce, broccoli, 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, and 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.

## *Food for thought:*

Get creative this Spring with these 'easy to make' Polka Dot Pots.

Coffee cans and your favorite paint colors will do the trick....hope this inspires you!

By Debra Redding



### **UPCOMING MASTER GARDENER PLANT SALES**

#### **LR Greenhouse Sale – April 24<sup>th</sup>**

Inventory will be published closer to that date. Online ordering (like last year). Contact Pat Freeman for questions. [Pat.freeman3@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Pat.freeman3@sbcglobal.net)

#### **Pathfinder Greenhouse Sale – April 12-16**

Preview plants on April 5-9 for sale on the PCMG Facebook page with flier of pictures and plants. Place online order and arrange for pickup April 12-16. Contact Theresa for more information. [tmsf@sbcglobal.net](mailto:tmsf@sbcglobal.net)

REMINDER EMAILS WILL BE SENT OUT.



## **54th Annual Iris Show**

**SATURDAY, MAY 1<sup>ST</sup>, 2021**

**1:00 TO 4:00 PM**

**UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST CHURCH  
OF LITTLE ROCK  
1818 RESERVOIR ROAD LITTLE ROCK,  
AR**

**FREE ADMISSION**

**Note: Social distancing will be honored and masks will be worn.**

## **Blast from the Past**

**By Jane Gulley**

I have mentioned that our projects have been, for the most part, long term. Our first sanctioned project was the Old State House followed by Pinnacle Mountain State Park visitor center in 1989. We also had the Old Mill in North Little Rock, and the Contemplation Garden in MacArthur Park.

We learned last month that the Master Gardeners would have to give up the Contemplation Garden because of changes in plans by the new Arkansas Museum of Fine Arts. The Contemplation Garden committee did extensive research and decided to move as a group to an exciting new project at the Arkansas Children's Hospital called The Children's Way Garden.

The first Contemplation garden was in 1991 and it got washed away shortly after all the hard work the PCMG did getting the site ready and planting the plants. A huge spring rain washed away all the plants. Breck Campbell, our first PCMG Past President, took his tiller and fixed the drainage problems. Breck was an engineer by profession. In fact, he was chief engineer for the Cromwell group so his expertise had lasting results.

We also had the State Hospital Greenhouse and Baptist Rehab.

There are several interesting stories about the early days of the greenhouse. In September of 1991 Janet told us she thought she had worked out a deal with the Arkansas State Hospital in Little Rock. They would let us use the greenhouse in exchange for us planting and maintaining flowerbeds on their grounds on West Markham Street. With greenhouse space we could raise plants during the winter and possibly force bulbs for spring sale. This drew overwhelming support from those present at the September 14th PCMG meeting!

The Greenhouse committee members, with Ruth Owen in charge of greenhouse production, planted 60 to 70 flats of marigolds and portulaca seeds. They also pruned and re-potted 300 to 400 wax begonias that were left over from the Flower and Garden show.



The following story is from Sally Garrison's History of the PCMG.

"Darlene Younts reports a funny story told to her by Roxy Adams about the perils of working on government property. The Master Gardener volunteers were unloading soil to take to the greenhouse but found the gate was locked. Dorothy Wilks and Roxy Adams walked to the back to find someone to let them in, but Marcy Holder decided to climb the fence. She was pulling the bags of soil under the fence and storing them in the greenhouse. When she had finished she climbed the fence to get out when the security guards drove up. They had a hard time convincing the guards they were putting the soil in and not taking it out. The guards finally believed them and let them go. Another exciting day in the life of a Master Gardener!"

Please remember you can visit [armgs.org](http://armgs.org) to get all the PCMG history. Use the sign in information you normally use to log in your PCMG hours.

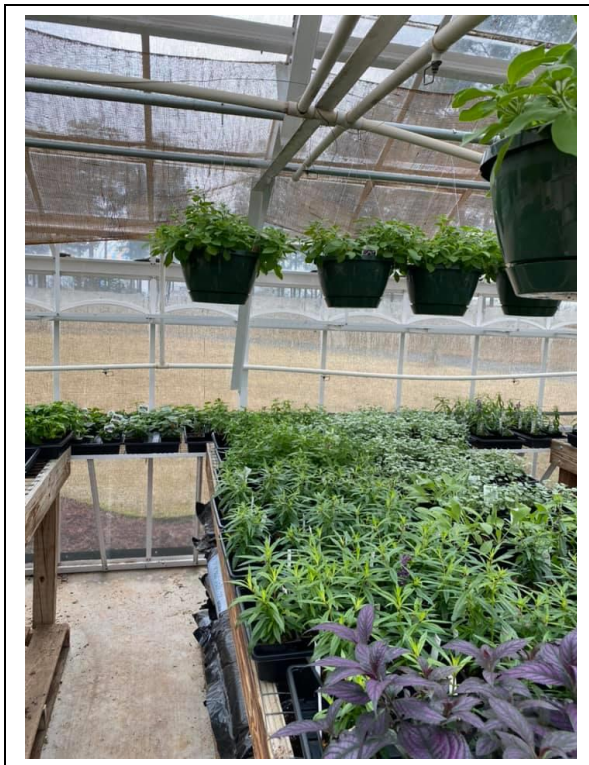


Photo of LR Greenhouse in June 2020

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