



The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

May 2021

We have had about 3 “blackberry winters” this year. It seems that climate change is an issue for us gardeners. What can we do to help?

The National Wildlife Federation has some suggestions.

1. Improve your energy efficiency.
2. Reduce the use of gasoline powered garden tools.
3. Reduce the threat of invasive species expansion and incorporate native species.
4. Reduce water consumption
5. Compost kitchen waste
6. Plant lots of trees
7. Connect places for wildlife by certifying your backyard or neighborhood as a Certified Wildlife Habitat.

For more information go to www.nwf.org

There is much we can do to slow climate change. It is a global problem as is Covid 19. Keep your masks on, wash your hands and practice social distancing.

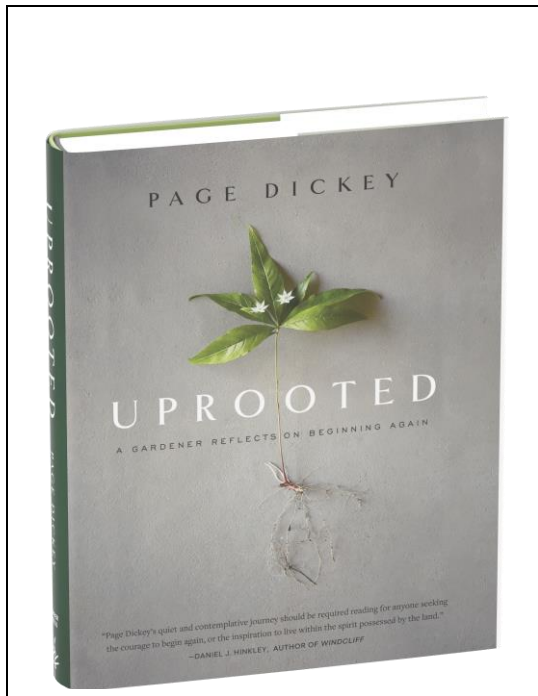
Stay healthy and Happy Gardening.

Sharon Priest,
PCMG President

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Uprooted: A Gardener Reflects on Beginning Again

Author: Page Dickey

Book Review: Debra Redding

When Page Dickey moved away from her celebrated garden at Duck Hill, she left a landscape she had spent thirty-four years making, nurturing, and loving. She found her next chapter in northwestern Connecticut, on 17 acres of rolling fields and woodland around a former Methodist church. In *Uprooted*, Dickey reflects on this transition and on what it means for a gardener to start again.

In these pages, follow her journey: searching for a new home, discovering the ins and outs of the landscape surrounding her new garden, establishing the garden, and learning how to be a different kind of gardener. The surprise at the heart of the book? Although Dickey was sad to leave her beloved garden, she found herself thrilled to begin a new garden in a wilder, larger landscape.

Written with humor and elegance, *Uprooted* is an endearing story about transitions—and the satisfaction and joy that new horizons can bring.

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR MAY

By Carol Randle

Despite the old saying, “April showers bring May flowers”, wise gardeners must still think about unpredictable heat and drought conditions when planting spring gardens. With winter annuals nearly finished, this is an excellent time to plant blocks of summer annuals for a splashy impact. Heat-tolerant plants include angelonia, sweet potato vines, pentas, lantana, melampodium and periwinkle. The newer sunpatiens do well with heat and sun. I tried some in my east facing flower bed last year and they did well. One of my neighbors even remarked about them.

After the coldest winter on record with the low making a record at -1 degree and our snow total the highest in several years, many of us are concerned about our shrubs, especially gardenias and loropetalums. Janet says to wait and don't start pruning or pulling plants up just yet. My loropetalum looked awful. The leaves were brown and all curled up. It is full of new leaves and purple blossoms! I am thanking God for saving it! I saw one down the street that looked just as bad as mine and it is just beginning to have blossoms on it, so don't get in a hurry to pull your plants up.

BULBS

You can remove the foliage from spring bulbs approximately six weeks or so after they've bloomed. For better blooms next year, resist the temptation to cut back your Daffodils until they have almost completely died back. The soil around Stargazer lilies and daffodils should be kept moist and mulched during the growing period. Later, throughout the summer a thorough drying will do them good. 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

Summer annuals arrive weekly at nurseries and garden centers. If possible, purchase smaller plants without flowers or pinch off the blooms when you plant. This will allow the plants to build good roots instead of spending their energy on blooms. Choose shorter, bushy plants because the larger ones are more established already and may not transplant as well. A dark green color is generally a good indicator of a strong healthy plant. Start pulling out the pansies and violas and replacing them with plants for the summer. Whether you have sun or shade there are so many options to choose from. In her April 16, 2021 column in the *Arkansas Democrat Gazette*, Janet talked about the Arkansas Diamond series of plants for this year. They include the Flame Thrower series of coleus, Cuphea “Honeybells”, Lemongrass, and for fall the Cool Wave series of pansies, including the rose pink pansies from the Nature Series. Also included are the “Glamour Red Kale” and “Bright Lights” swiss chard. For pictures, look up Janet's article and see them for yourselves.

When choosing annuals, mix in one to three colors and group plants in blocks to make the “wow” factor. Annuals need regular fertilization to get the most out of them. Start with a complete slow release fertilizer at planting, then use a water soluble form every two to three weeks throughout the season.

VEGETABLES

Vegetable gardening becomes more popular every year. 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 help 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 so they won't compete for water and nutrients.

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 herb planting. 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.

PERENNIALS

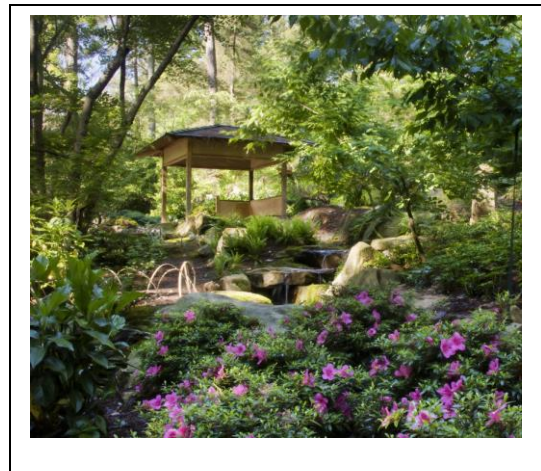
Perennials are looking great right now. Peonies are blooming beautifully along with baptisia, amsonia and foxglove (*Digitalis* spp.). Taller flowering perennials often need a little extra support from stakes to help hold their blooms upright, especially in heavy rains. Know which of your plants need fertilizer after bloom. Hosta plants need fertilization two or three times a season. Heucheras and hellebores are looking great, now.

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, replot 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. As temperatures heat up, watering needs increase. The more you water, the more fertilizer you need.

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. 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 small fruit container series are self fruitful. Thornless blackberries produce abundant fruit with minimal care.



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.



Food for Thought:

Enjoy Spring, it don't last long!

By Debra Redding



Blast from the Past

By Jane Gulley

First, remember you can read about the history of the PCMG by visiting armgs.org and using the information you use to record your hours. Many of you did not know the PCMG have not always had meetings at St. James United Methodist Church.

The PCMGs started in 1989 and we met bimonthly at the Pulaski County Extension Office. In 1992 We moved our meetings to the Arkla Gas Blue Flame room. Janet was giving talks there and asked if we could meet there for free and fortunately they said yes! The next year, in 1993, we started meeting monthly.

Four years later in September of 1996, we moved to the brand new Arkansas Cooperative Extension Administration Building on South University Avenue. I was President for that first meeting and read in the minutes that we had \$5,898.31 in our budget, we would have our first booth at the River Market to answer consumer questions, and the new MG class would have 66 people-56 from Pulaski County and 10 from Lonoke County.

Sounds glorious but almost from the beginning parking was a problem-when UALR was in session the extension employees could not use the UALR lot so there were fewer spaces available for MG.

We moved to the new building in 1996, but in Sept 2001 when Suellen Roberts was PCMG President, it was announced that in 2002 that PCMG could not use the auditorium at the State Extension Office for free. We would be charged \$75.00 a meeting plus there were going to be other restrictions - our meetings would have to have a new time- we would have to meet from 12 to 1:30 and we had to be out of the room by 1:30 or pay more. Also, we could not use the room across the hall for our new members reception unless we paid for it. Suellen told our membership that we had options. We could check into finding a new location or increase membership dues or both. A motion was made to try to renegotiate with Dr. Lyles of the State Extension Office.

Suellen Roberts was our negotiator so I interviewed her. The next month, October, due to Suellen's great negotiating skills we voted to accept a new deal. We would pay \$75 for the 9 months we used the auditorium, we would meet from 12 to 1:30 and we would get to use the room across the hall for our new members reception! We also voted to increase our yearly dues. Our dues would go from \$10 to \$15 a month but an anonymous donor paid our fees for that first year, 2002!

Even with those change parking was the main problem. In 2002 there were numerous mentions in meeting minutes and board minutes about the parking situation.

You probably never thought of us as being an unruly group but these problems were mentioned over and over in the Meeting and Board Minutes:

"Only use exit from the Extension parking lot; quit going through the UALR lot." That was in the Minutes several times and then you will get a fine was added. Also, numerous times in the minutes the MG were reminded not to park where curbs were painted red, those were fire lanes. The fire lane reminder was in the minutes several times plus one time there was a reminder that parking in the fire lane could get you a \$95 dollar fine. The next reminder mentioned the fine plus you could be towed.

The Feb. 11, 2003 minutes had the message that too many MG were STILL using the back door to enter the building so the back door would be locked. MG were to wear their badges and use the front door for security reasons. Employees would park in the back lot and MG in the front lot-do not park in back lot! There were several reminders that the back lots were for employees only!

On Sept. 16th there was the “straw that broke the camel’s back”. Beth Phelps announced a building was going to be built on part of the parking lot so there would be fewer parking spaces and many more headaches. The Facilities Committee was formed that same month.

The Facilities Committee consisted of Suellen Roberts, Jim Tyler, and Sandy Harrison. It had been formed and they were checking out possible new meeting sites. They turned in their findings and made their suggestion at the July board meeting and the board was going to decide and make the announcement to the membership in September about where the PCMG were going to meet in 2004.

This is from my interview with Suellen Roberts.

Suellen said:

I remember it was difficult because of the criteria—adequate size for a large number of people, adequate parking/ free preferably, reservations every month for a year at a designated time with no changes and free. The location needed to be easily accessible to the membership.

We checked out almost every church, Second Baptist was very receptive but parking downtown was a problem. We discovered most of the churches had at least one church wide activity, like Vacation Bible School or a festival, that was scheduled each year during our meeting months. The special activity would require the MG to cancel our meeting or find another meeting place for that month/or months.

UAMS was eager to accommodate us. We already had the greenhouse working relationship with them but their auditorium had the speakers on the ground level and the MG would have to negotiate very steep narrow steps to get down to the seating area. It was a disaster in the making. Plus there were parking problems. Suellen was a member at St. James and knew the minister well and approached him about the PCMG meeting there. He was very agreeable and the deal was made!

This was the proposal made to the PC Board by the facilities committee: There would be a committee of St. James parishioners to act as liaisons, and we could go back to our 11:30 meeting time. The proposal was approved by the Board and voted on by the membership. There were a couple of concerns like what if there was funeral at St James, and did we need an official contract? Those concerns were addressed.

Suellen said, “You name a place with a meeting room and we talked to them about hosting us. We made no telling how many in person visits and evaluated every suggestion we received. Be nice to St James, we are up a creek without them!”

Our first meeting in Jan 2004 was at St James United Methodist Church with President Nancy Kirsch presiding-remember Nancy is now our new history organizer.

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