



The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

August 2021

It has been an amazing summer. Unless it happens in the last few days of July, we haven't hit 100 degrees, humidity notwithstanding. Summer gardening has been going strong, at least in the early morning. Weeds are growing very well. Garden produce is being harvested and shared. Lucky are those who benefit from your bounty.

Pests are also plentiful. According to The Curious Gardener's Almanac by Niall Edworthy, 'Don't kill the centipede, for it goes for your enemies - small slugs, worms and insects. The friendly centipede moves very quickly while the millipede - a nasty sort of chap - moves slowly, though he has got two pair of legs to every section, as against the centipede's one. You cannot go very wrong if you kill the slow movers and let the fast movers live. Anyhow, it's death to the millipede that attacks the roots of most of your plants!' so check for the good insects versus the bad ones.

Unfortunately, Covid is still very much a part of our lives. I am still wearing a mask when I go to stores. It won't hurt to keep up the practices we learned regarding social distancing, handwashing and masking.

Enjoy the lazy, hazy days of summer. Stay healthy and

Happy Gardening.

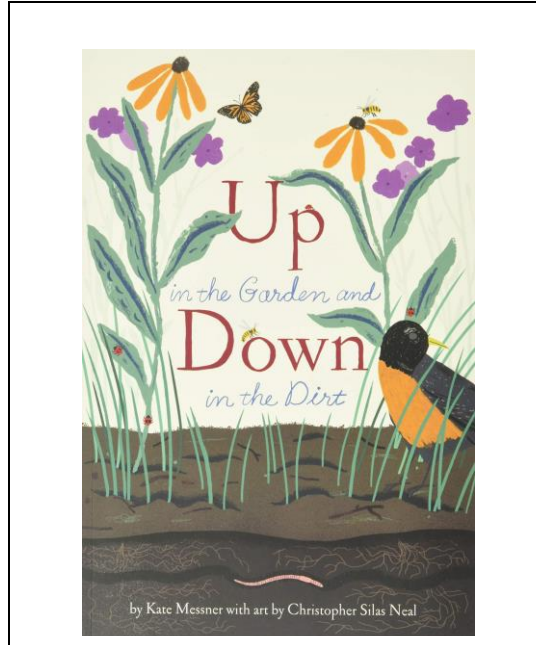
Sharon Priest,
PCMG President

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Friendly centipede



Up in the Garden and Down in the Dirt

Author: Kate Messner

Art: Christopher Neal

Book Review: Debra Redding

The beautifully composed story is about a girl and her grandmother through a year- from planning a garden, through all the stages until the next winter. But there's a catch! It alternates what they see above the ground with what is happening below the ground- all the bugs and creatures who live there and how they affect the soil and plants. The basic story is very simple and easy to understand and will keep your children or grandchildren interested the whole time.

The skilled detail in all the descriptions of the insect world and living soil, predators and prey outside and how they all affect the environment, the care in tending a garden, just basic cause and effect, and the cyclical nature of nature- makes this book a brilliant education on the natural world. The pictures on every page are also highly detailed and full of feeling. The ground is not a sterile environment- it's intricate and full of all kinds of life with their own vital roles. It will help children to understand this when they're outside and embrace it.

Share this garden education book with any child in your life. It helps them to explore the hidden world and many lives in a garden...Beautiful, Beautiful Book!

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR AUGUST

By Carol Randle

None of us particularly want to garden in 90° weather, but we have had to do that some this summer. We are lucky that we are not having 100° weather, at least not yet. It has been a long time since we have had weather that hot for a prolonged period. The weatherman was telling how many days it's been since we have had 100° weather. I hope we add a whole bunch more! Somehow, it seems harder to get up and go to the project early in the morning to keep from working in hot, muggy weather.

VEGETABLES AND FRUIT

Tomatoes will start to slow down in production when temperatures exceed 95° during the day or stay above 75 degrees at night. This is when they quit ripening and setting fruit. If your cucumbers are bitter, they are getting stressed by water. Harvesting in the cooler times of the day improves flavor on many herbs and vegetables. Keep picking your cucumbers as they mature because letting old fruit stay on the vines will slow down the future production. Knowing what to look for in your vegetable garden can ensure that you get the most from your garden. Sweet corn is ripe when the silks begin to turn brown and dry. Look at one or two of the ears by pulling back the shuck and pressing into a kernel or two. If it gives off a milky liquid and the ear is fully formed, it is time to harvest. The quicker you can go from garden to table, the sweeter the corn will be. Fresh okra is best if picked when they are small, no longer than two or three inches. The bigger they get, the tougher the pods are. Even though it isn't ideal gardening weather, this is the time to start replanting for a fall garden. Mulch well and water and you will be harvesting well into fall.

Cantaloupes and watermelons tend to be at their sweetest if it is a bit on the dry side during harvest. Too much rain could dilute the sugars. When cantaloupes are ripe, the stems should easily separate from the vine. The fruits should develop a light tan webbing pattern and the blossom end should be slightly soft and smell like cantaloupe. Ripe watermelons will have a dry, curly brown tendril at stem end, a dull sheen on the fruit and a white to yellow underbelly.

ROSES

If blackspot has reared its ugly head on your roses or if you have Blackspot susceptible plants, continue to spray with fungicides. You do not have to use fungicides on the earth kind of roses - "Home Run", "Knock Outs" and "Flower Carpet". If your roses are looking a little leggy, try giving them a light pruning now and fertilize. Pruning may reduce some flowers in the short term, but most roses could use a bit of a nap right now, to regroup, fill out and be able to give you a great fall display. Of course, water is always important.

ANNUALS

There are so many outstanding summer annuals that we often have trouble picking the ones we want to plant. When we see new annuals in the stores, we want to try some of them in our own flower beds. I bought three of the new Arkansas Diamond 'Flame Thrower' Coleus. The habenero has gotten so big, you can't see the siracho or serrano behind it! I love trying the new Arkansas Diamond plants. You find some new plants you really love this way. When pansy weather gets here, there is a new series of pansy 'Cool Waves'. My 2021 picture of the Arkansas Diamonds shows 14 varieties of 'Cool Waves' and 3 mixes. Look at your flower beds and make notes on which ones are taking the heat. Lantana loves heat and seems to explode when it gets hot. If they have stopped blooming, give them a haircut, fertilizer and water and they should rebound with flowers through frost. Angelonia, sweet potato vine and the new 'Honeybells' Cuphea are outstanding. Remember that annuals are usually around for only one season, so keep up with watering and fertilizing. My red 'Sunpatiens' have "exploded". I tried them for the first time last year, those were orange, and I will do this every year because they are so beautiful and easy to grow. Not everything grows well on the hot East side of my house.

Most nurseries today keep annuals in stock almost year around, so replanting is possible. Deadheading . . . removing the spent flowers after they bloom, pruning back leggy plants, fertilizing and watering can keep these plants lush and full of flowers. If you have annuals that are not doing anything and seem to not recover from the heat, pull them and replace them with plants that add to your fall color. Ornamental peppers can take the heat and give you colorful fruit up until frost. Zinnias come in a range of colors, many have shades of orange and white, which blend well with fall. You can also find some great bargains at nurseries and garden centers with tropical foliage and flowers. They have months of color to give and can perk up a heat stressed landscape.

TROPICALS

Hand in hand with summer annuals are summer tropicals. Hibiscus, bananas, mandevillas and plumerias all make our yards look terrific whether they are in containers on the patio or porch or set out in the garden. A great trait they share is their like for the heat and humidity. They do, however, like to be watered and fertilized. If you are growing them in containers, you are constantly watering to keep them alive. Water leaches out the nutrition, so once every week or two, we need to fertilize with a watersoluble fertilizer. Keep a careful watch out for pests. Make sure there is ample water in the containers when using any pesticide or fertilizer when it is hot and dry. If the plants are stressed, they may get burned with any extra additions.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Trees and shrubs are setting their flower buds now for next year's blooms. Don't let them get too dry now, or it could impact your flowers next spring. To have great blooms next year, do not prune these plants anymore this season. For most trees and shrubs, all you should be doing now is making sure they have water when it is dry. Fertilizations should have occurred in the spring and we will be good to go until next spring. We have now entered into the period of watering as maintenance for our shrubs. The exception is gardenias and bigleaf and oakleaf hydrangeas (*Hydrangea Macrophylla* and *Hydrangea Quercifolia*, respectfully). These three summer bloomers set flower buds in late August and September. If they have overgrown their location or need some general shaping, early July is the LAST time to do it, as soon after flowering is best. Avoid any pruning on spring blooming shrubs. My 'Limelight' hydrangea is just now blooming and the blooms are gorgeous. Deadhead spent flowers to ensure more blooms. Crape myrtles, althea, butterfly bush and summer spirea are blooming along with clethra, hydrangeas and still some gardenias.

LAWNS

At this time of year, mowing the lawn is a chore that we don't enjoy. Keeping the lawn healthy with regular watering is important. You can often tell who is and isn't watering by the look of the lawn. Daily watering is never good, but make sure that an inch to an inch and a half are put down weekly. In late August to September one last application of fertilizer can be applied to Bermuda. St. Augustine and Zoysia lawns. Don't fertilize Tall Fescue or Centipede at this time. The main thing we are concerned with in our lawns is mowing and watering. If you have an automatic sprinkler system, you are probably watering the lawn more than it actually needs to keep up with flower and shrub irrigation. While we may all want a lush, bright green lawn, lawn grasses can get a bit dry in between watering and still survive. Many gardeners like to apply one last application of fertilizer in late August to early September. Pay attention to the weather. Applying fertilizer when it is extremely hot and dry can burn the grass.

If you are having problems in your garden and can't figure out what is causing the problem, take some good pictures and a plant sample to your local county extension office. If they can't identify it, they will send it to the disease diagnostic lab for a correct diagnosis.

Are your PCMG annual dues
paid? If not, make
check payable to PCMG in the
amount of \$30.00
and send to our Assistant
Treasurer:

Susan Stewart
1440 Rockwater Lane
N. Little Rock AR 72114

Have your hours been reported in the data base? Please be sure to put in all your project work and education hours as soon as possible. We know you are working hard to keep the projects looking beautiful but the hours are not in the data base! Reports are made throughout the year and it is so helpful when your time is documented on them.



Sunpatiens from
Carol Randle's
garden.

Arkansas Flower and Garden Show: In the Beginning.....

By: Mary Russell- Evans

The first garden show was held at Robinson Center on the lower level. I was distraught I couldn't work the whole show because it was so close to Valentine's Day. My first garden show job was selling tickets at the bottom of the escalator with Janet Carson's parents- she even recruited her parents to help. I remember her mom telling me "I don't know where Janet got her green thumb, but it wasn't from me!" It was total mayhem! People were SO excited to see a real flower and garden show in ARKANSAS! The whole place was electric! I was hooked by the electricity and excitement of it all. I was "all in" for the duration (30 years). The show was a totally packed- full house! I was in heaven in there, totally blown away by it all and 'bonus'- I got to help. The gardens were incredible. The exhibit hall was full of beautiful garden displays and I remember one even had an extensive, some very large, taxidermy collection incorporated in the design. Outside on the approach to the entrance was Bemis's giant tree spade. It caused a major bottleneck at the entrance- everyone was in awe of the massive size. No one had ever seen such an animal. It became a staple for all future shows, sometimes inside, sometimes outside. It never lost its appeal or fascination by the public.

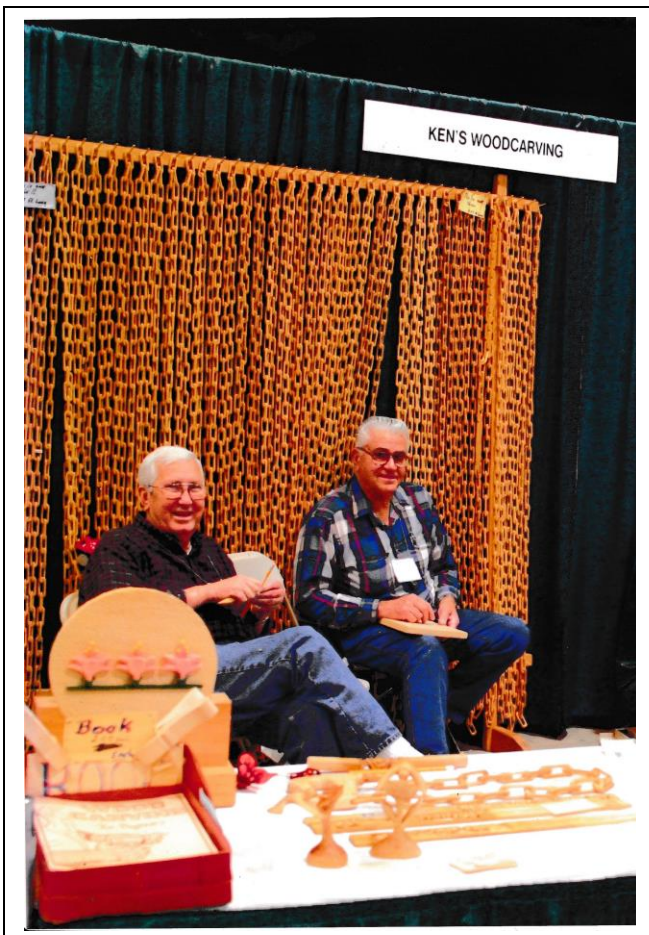
Inside the entrance was a big room full of screaming children! I looked in on that briefly, but didn't stick around. That only happened a couple of times. People were "dropping off" their children at the children's activities & leaving them there for hours. Janet referred to it as "babysitting." That idea ended pretty quickly. The result was a gap of many years before children's activities of that sort came back. Mary Wells, Faulkner County MG, retired teacher put together a series of wonderful children's activities for years. She had a ready pool of teachers that could handle all that chaos! In the meanwhile, we had two butterfly houses and countless train gardens (see future stories on those) to entertain the "children."

Key sponsors were Arkansas Farm Bureau, the Extension Service, Master Gardeners, Arkansas Florist's Association, Arkansas Federation of Garden Clubs, Arkansas Nurseryman's Association, (now the Arkansas Green Industry Association).

Extension always had the Plant Doctor along with various other exhibits. We MGs always had our own separate booth. My earliest memories of these always had the Master Gardener textbook and pictures of projects, for folks to see what we do. This included lots of recruiting. The promotions and advertising were overseen by the state extension office. Printing was done by David Dodson (MG) at Arkansas Farm Bureau. Another big (big-hearted) sponsor was Clark Trim (MG) of Colonial Wine and Spirits. Clark hosted many wine tastings, garden tours, and garden parties. Clark also served as show treasurer for several years.

Janet Carson always did a huge spread for her article in her newspaper column. Janet's radio show was broadcast LIVE! from the convention center. There are still a few survivors from the very first show. Tina Marie Wilcox of the Ozark Folk Center participated in the first show and all shows thereafter. Bemis Tree Farm was there every year with their giant tree spade. We watched Jeremy grow up at the show, he definitely qualifies as an oldie. Rand Retzloff has been at every show, some as a MG. He later started his own business, Grand Designs. Rand was a staple with his shade gardens, water gardens, exhibits and plants. Scott Smith came very close, only missing a couple shows in his transition from Birnum Wood to River Valley. Janet Carson and I were there for the duration.

The pink azalea had been designated as our logo. Ken Scott took the logo and used it in his woodcarvings. Ken was well known for his woodcarvings, his whittling classes and a small book. He was a fixture at War Eagle, Silver Dollar City and the 4H Center. He had a chain that was (as I remember) over 300' long, made from one continuous piece of wood. He always brought it along to display in his booth at our show. The kids at 4H were amazed by his chain. He sold his carvings at the show. He used the pink azalea logo on his hand carved trophies for the "Volunteer of the Year" awards, as well as the pink azalea pins still worn by lots of old timers. One of the trophies can be seen in the picture here.



“Ken Scott (left) in his booth whittling away the time with Vernon. One of his hand carved trophies is on the table in front of him. Hanging behind him is the 300' chain.”

Arkansas Flower & Garden Show History, cont.

An early project for the MG greenhouse was growing all the trademark pink azaleas, always seen at the show. I co-chaired the greenhouse committee with Lois Corley for about ten years. I picked them up at the airport many times. They were used as decorations everywhere; tables in the food court, ticket windows, entrances, stages, etc. We also used them in our theme gardens. (Azaleas will be seen throughout this history of the show.) Failure on the part of the greenhouse committee was not an option. I went to check on the azaleas on a Sunday morning and the entire greenhouse was wilted. I panicked. "Not on my watch!" I frantically set about watering. I watered the azaleas, the floor, the ceiling, the windows, the gravel- then watered the azaleas again. My only thoughts were "humidity." It was February and cold outside. I had to go to work. I placed an emergency call to Laura Lasiter. She repeated the process. When I returned later, they were fine! Close call. Did I mention that Lois was out of town? For the last ten years or so the azaleas were purchased "ready to go" from Shults Greenhouse in Hot Springs.

To be clear, we were the **Arkansas Flower and Garden Show**.... Not a 'lawn and garden show' or a 'home and garden show'. We had an active flower show and an active garden show, separate entities- blended together. I think most of the nurseries around central Arkansas have participated at some point. Arkansas Garden Center, Arkansas Gardens, The Good Earth, Cantrell Gardens, Hocott's, Lakewood Gardens, Horticare, Botanica, Birnam Wood, Ozark Folk Center, River Valley Horticultural Products and probably more I didn't think of. Jeff Rollins had Rollins Nursery on 107- (he was also Ken Scott's son -in-law.) Jeff may have been the taxidermy garden- but don't hold me to that. River Valley Horticultural Products became the biggest, bestest sponsors ever! Not only were they the plant sponsor for the train garden in latter years (more on that later) behind the scenes they sponsored many of the gardens. Kudos to River Valley!

The gardens were always an integral part of the "garden show" portion of the show- the "wow" factor. No gardens= no show. Obviously, besides being a lot of work, it cost thousands of dollars to put it in, tear it all down and haul it back. Lots of manhours to do it- lots of "overtime pay" and more people to mind the store. The MGs were always willing to help. This required an immense crew doing the work- hauling load after load of materials, building, loading and unloading, installing, watering plants, filling ponds with water, mopping, cleaning up. Countless hours of design work, ordering, logistics, acquiring inventory and finding plant materials in February. By far the hardest part was after all the hard work and love that goes into the creations- Tearing it all down.....

The Arkansas Federation of Garden Clubs were also there from the beginning. They provided the “flower show” portion. They began in the meeting rooms at the far end of the hall at the convention center, then were moved upstairs into one of the salons along with the speakers. At one point they were along the front windows in the upstairs atrium, alongside the escalators. My favorite place for them was along the long corridor downstairs between the entrances of the show.

After we moved to the fairgrounds, they were in the Arts and Crafts Building in partnership with the Gardening How To Stage. It was the perfect marriage for the two. In my opinion it was by far the prettiest part of the entire show, best setting ever for the flower show and the stage finally had a backdrop to die for. (More on this later)

Sometimes the themes chosen for the garden show were not always translatable to what they needed, so the flower show would adapt with their own themes. Strict criteria were followed in the many classes of entries. It was quite the production happening concurrently with the other ongoing setups. The Men’s Garden Club from Hot Springs were an invaluable help for setup. All the ladies were coming in, signing in, dragging all their props and fresh flowers. Everyone striving for perfection and that blue ribbon. This, like the other setups, created a delightful huge mess. Dinners were held for the judges. Professional flower show judges were brought in from afar to do the judging, a really big deal. The Federation received many national awards for their flower show. Some of the prolific leaders were Pat Haering, Jo Krallman, Bobbie Verser and Betty Henderson (MG).

One of the favorite flower show attractions were the horticulture exhibits. Anyone could exhibit plant cuttings, terrariums, potted plants, etc.... some things were just weird... all reflective of the creators of course. Everything was labeled for educational purposes. The last two years there was a particularly photogenic, phallic cactus. Other displays included African Violets, bonsai, dish gardens, plant societies, horticulture societies, school projects, fairy gardens, etc. One year they had gorgeous pictures of every kind of bird done by school children. It was always fun to go through and see who won which color ribbon.

Everything the Arkansas Florist’s Association ever did was a huge draw. Their displays were magnets! They always had the most glorious booth, some years a “constructed” structure. Always in consideration of the theme, always dripping with orchids, roses, garlands, bouquets, swags, flower covered columns, roofs, etc. Huge urns containing giant flower arrangements, some 8-9’ tall from floor to top. Always the most intimate settings. At the end of the show they gave away all the fresh flowers to the volunteers (aka “scavengers”- ha!)

The AFA held a professional florist competition every year. Designers statewide came to Little Rock to compete. For one of the earlier shows the theme was “Through the Garden Gate” the designers decorated gates. Then they did doors for a couple years. Finally, they evolved to the tabletop- tablesapes. Like the flower show, the theme was of utmost importance. Unlike the flower show, the tablesapes gave them more freedom. Even with difficult show themes, the show’s main theme always came through in the designs. The 8’ tables gave them room for more and bigger props as well. Themes are part of a florist’s everyday routine.

The last couple shows at the convention center, instead of doing the designs during setup on Thursday, we moved to LIVE design. The designers came in on Friday morning and created their designs LIVE- after the show opened. I, myself still enjoy watching “other” people design and it was a huge hit with the public. The tables were judged by the AFA’s judges and one ribbon, “Best Tabletop Design” was awarded by the garden show. I enjoyed being a judge for this ribbon. I never had time (too many hats) to enter the competition myself. Some years they offered Make ‘n Take events. There were always florists on the Q and A Gardening How To stage.

Trivia question: How many of you know that for a (very) short time, there were once two garden shows in Little Rock? It started out at Ricks Armory then moved out to I -30 where the Memphis Flea market used to be. You know it was small if it fit inside Ricks Armory. It later became a lawn and garden show and it didn’t last very long. Guess the competition was too tough.



Botanical art design – using all plant material. Exhibited at the 2020 Arkansas Flower and Garden Show – Artistic Design Division

Always searching for PCMG to provide interesting and educational articles and pictures for our Magnolia Chronicle newsletter. Please submit for publication. The last two issues for 2021 will be double issues. Next issue for Sept/October with a deadline for publication by last week of August.

Thanks for your interest and articles. Submit to:

Daffodilsrose555@gmail.com

Looking for new home. Medium and small size yuccas. Drought tolerant, evergreen and make an architectural statement in a tall slender flower pot. You really “can’t kill them”.

Free! Please email me for more information if interested.

Daffodilsrose555@gmail.com



Local Farmers Markets

Argenta Farmers Market

7th and Main Streets – NLR

Open Saturdays from 7 am until 12 noon

Bernice Gardens Farmers Market

1401 S. Main – LR

Open Sundays from 10 am until 2 pm

Little Rock Farmers Market

400 President Clinton Avenue - LR

Open Saturdays 7 am until 3 pm

(August thru September 24)

Hillcrest Farmers Market

2200 Kavanaugh – LR

Open Saturdays 7 am until 12 noon

The Bramble Market

9325 Ferndale Cut Off Rd. - LR

Open Wed thru Saturday 9 am until 4 pm

Me and McGee Market

10409 Hwy 70 – NLR

Open daily 10 am until 5 pm

St. Joseph Farm Stand

6800 Camp Robinson Rd. – NLR

Open Wed the Saturday 10 am until 6 pm

(Sundays open at 12 noon)

Visit one of many farmers markets in the area that have fresh produce, plants, and other items.



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