

The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

As this is my last post in the Magnolia and with the holidays fast approaching, I want to focus on the positive.

For almost two years, over 100 of you have joined us for our general meetings on Zoom. We have learned so much from our speakers and thank Jodie Mahoney for his diligence in finding our speakers.

We have 33 projects and our chairs and co-chairs have worked really hard to keep projects beautiful and a credit to the PCMG. You have kept your groups together. Great job!

The PCMG Board has worked hard to find ways to keep things going. I thank each of you for your commitment to serve the past two years.

Thanks to Susan Rose who despite family health issues kept the newsletter published. And thanks to the contributors who have provided great educational information.

Thanks to Randy, Katie and the extension office staff for their support of our organization.

For each of your contributions, I thank you.

Perhaps the pandemic has had a silver lining for you. It has for me. So as I pass on the presidency of PCMG I leave you with this written by Roy Croft – see box on the right. →

All the best for happy holidays. Stay well and as always happy gardening!

Sharon Priest,
PCMG President

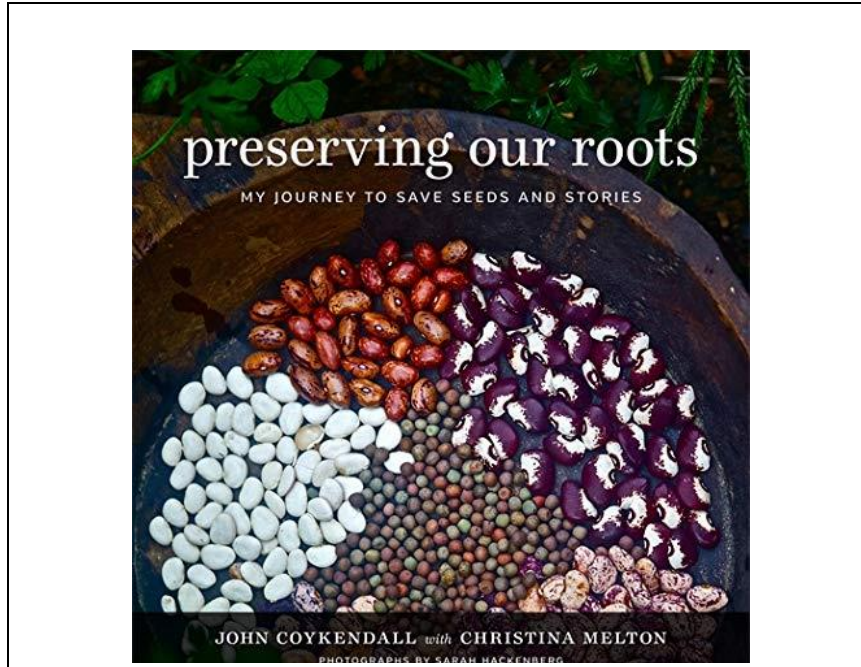
November/December 2021

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***“ You have done it
Without a touch,
Without a word,
Without a sign.
You have done it
By being yourself.
Perhaps that is what
Being a friend means,
After all.”***

By Roy Croft



**Preserving Our Roots
My Journey to Save Seeds and Stories**

Authors: John Coykendall and Christina Melton

Book Review by Debra Redding

For over four decades, John Coykendall's passion has been preserving the farm heritage of a small community in rural southeastern Louisiana. A Tennessee native and longtime Master Gardener at Blackberry Farm, Coykendall has become a celebrity in a growing movement that places a premium on farm-to-table cuisine with locally sourced, organic, and heirloom foods and flavors. While his work takes him around the world searching for seeds and the cultural knowledge of how to grow them, what inspires him most is his annual pilgrimage to Louisiana.

Drawn to the Washington Parish area as a college student, Coykendall forged long-lasting friendships with local farmers and gardeners. Over the decades, he has recorded oral histories, recipes, tall tales, agricultural knowledge, and wisdom from generations past in more than eighty illustrated and handwritten journals. At the same time, he has unearthed and safeguarded rare varieties of food crops once grown in the area, then handed them back to the community.

In ***Preserving Our Roots: My Journey to Save Seeds and Stories***, Coykendall shares a wealth of materials collected in his journals, ensuring they are passed on to future generations. Organized by season, the book offers a narrative chronicle of Coykendall's visits to Washington Parish since 1973. He highlights staple crops, agricultural practices, and favorite recipes from the families and friends who have hosted him. Accompanied by a rich selection of drawings, journal pages, and photographs—along with over forty recipes—***Preserving Our Roots*** chronicles Coykendall's passion for recording foods and narratives that capture the rhythms of daily life on farms, in kitchens, and across generations.

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR November/December

By Carol Randle

CHECKLIST FOR NOVEMBER

November is prime gardening weather. You may have heard the slogan, “Fall is for planting” and it is! From hardy shrubs to trees, bulbs and more, this is a great time to plant. Our plants are beginning to go dormant, so demands for water and nutrition will be down, plus the cooler weather and ample rainfall lets the root system begin to establish, this all results in tougher plants heading into summer. Not all plants are great candidates for fall planting, however. Hydrangeas, gardenias, crape myrtle and other tender plants that can potentially suffer winter damage, should be planted in late winter to early spring. When planting, prepare the site well, removing as many rocks as you can and incorporating your compost or topsoil in with the existing soil to create an even mix for your plants to grow in. Water and mulch and your plants should be good to go. Hold off on any fertilizer or root stimulator until spring.

BULBS

One of the easiest ways to add color in the home landscape is by planting spring flowering bulbs. It is bulb planting time. What could be easier than to dig a hole, drop in a bulb and wait for floral excitement next spring! Even better, dig up a large circle or square, then layer in different bulbs. Mass planting gives a stronger statement next spring. Remember, we plant bulbs based on their size. The larger the bulb, the deeper in the ground it goes. A good rule of thumb is to plant two and one half times the size of the bulb, deep in the ground. Once you are done planting, place winter annuals on top for twice the color. Choose large, blemish-free bulbs. You can immediately plant or store them in a cool place until you get around to planting them. Spring bulbs need to go through a minimum of 12-14 weeks of cool weather before the stems can stretch and grow properly. If you can't plant quickly, then store the bulbs in a cool spot in the garage or in your refrigerator—away from other produce (NOT THE FREEZER). Plant all remaining bulbs by early January if you can. Tulips, daffodils, jonquils, crocus and hyacinths are the most common, but there are some unusual bulbs available as well.

ANNUALS

When it comes to winter annuals, the later you plant, the larger the plants should be. Hopefully, if they are flowering winter annuals (pansies, violas, and panolas) they are blooming. If they are small, non-blooming plants, chances are good that you won't see a flower until spring. Flowering kale, cabbage and Swiss chard are also available, but get them planted and mulched soon. If you planted earlier this fall, don't forget to fertilize periodically. Also, pay attention to moisture levels, especially if you have these plants in containers. Water as needed, especially before a hard freeze. If you didn't get all of your winter annuals planted, NOW is the time. They must have their root systems established before it gets too cold. Be sure to fertilize when you plant and side dress during the winter on warm days. In addition to pansies, violas and panolas, consider dianthus, dusty miller and snapdragons. For vertical interest, try mustard, kale, collards, or Swiss chard. Look for healthy, large flowering annuals now. Not only will you have instant gratification with flowers, but they would bloom well for you all winter. Fertilize at planting and every three to four weeks during the winter to keep them growing. If we do have dry spells, don't forget to water —especially newly planted plants.

VEGETABLES AND HERBS

Fall and winter are quieter times in our vegetable gardens, but there are still things to do. After you have planted the winter vegetables, cleaned up and composted, try to prepare some of the beds for spring planting. Then, in February, instead of waiting for the soil to dry out, you can plant sugar and snow Peas. Plant a cover crop in the other beds. With our great production this past summer, more gardeners have planted a fall and winter vegetable garden. Season extenders in the form of covers or high tunnels

can make winter production even easier, but Janet has grown cabbage, kale, and bok choy all winter outdoors with no added protection and still had good harvest. Insects and diseases are not a challenge in the cool months, either.

HOUSEPLANTS

In central Arkansas, the average frost is early to mid-November, so pay attention to the weather forecasts and take whatever precautions are needed. If you have not moved your houseplants indoors, please move them in now. Don't be alarmed if they start dropping leaves, because there will be a huge shift in their growing conditions. If you are storing houseplants or tropicals in the garage or under the house, make sure the move is made prior to a frost, so you don't lose your plants. By now, all houseplants and overwintering flowering tropical plants should have been indoors for at least a month. They may still be showing the signs of transplant shock. Houses are particularly dry indoors with heat and lower lights, coupled with a more static temperature, taking its toll, cut off any yellow or damaged leaves, and greatly reduce the amount of water you are giving them. Try to give them as much light as possible, but avoid fertilization. Our goal is to keep them alive and as healthy as possible. Overwatering is typically the number one killer of houseplants.

CHECKLIST FOR DECEMBER

BULBS

If you have not started with your bulbs, remember that your spring bulbs have to have a minimum of 12-14 weeks of cool weather before the stems can stretch and grow properly. If you can't plant quickly, then store the bulbs in a cool spot in the garage or in your refrigerator (NOT THE FREEZER). Plant all remaining bulbs by early January, if possible. General guidelines for depth of planting are two to two and one half times the size of the bulb.

ANNUALS

Winter annuals can also be planted if you have gotten behind. The later you wait to plant, the larger the transplants should be. Look for plants that are blooming, especially if you are planting pansies, violas and dianthus. Swiss chard, kale and cabbage need time to get roots established before a hard frost, but the past few years (until last year) they have done extremely well. Fertilize at planting and every three to four weeks during the winter to keep them growing. If we have dry spells, remember to water, especially newly planted plants.

VEGETABLES

Vegetable gardening continues to grow in popularity. With our good production this past summer, more gardeners are planting a fall and winter vegetable garden. You may want to use covers or high tunnels as season extenders; this can make winter production even easier. Insects and diseases are not a challenge in the cool months, either.

CLEAN UP

Early winter is an important season for cleanup. As your plants drop their leaves or when you pull up spent annuals and cut back perennials, get any damaged plants out of the yard. Letting the spent debris remain in the garden invites disease spores and gives overwintering insects a place to live. This leads to more problems next season. Some cleanup may be needed if you have heavily diseased or insect infested plants. They may need some cleanup in the mulched area underneath them. Oils can be used to combat scale insects, but are tougher to use on evergreen plants since it is hard to get thorough coverage on both sides of the leaves and stems.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Plant camellias for winter colors. They come in colors ranging from whites to pinks to reds and mixtures. Plant in a well drained area out of the afternoon sun. Evergreen trees and shrubs will drop some of their older leaves. If the flower buds and newer foliage at the end of the branch are okay, don't worry. It is normal. Be sure to water regularly if it doesn't rain.

LAWNS

Remove or mulch fallen leaves that may smother grass and plants. Apply lime to lawn.

INDOORS

Enjoy the blooms of forced bulbs such as hyacinth and paperwhites. Amaryllis bulbs will add more color. Pot them and give a little water after you get them home. After growth starts, water well and keep in the sunlight. They will bloom in six to eight weeks. Stake because they will get tall and top heavy (especially the Amaryllis). If you are going to over winter poinsettias, place them in a sunny window in a cooler area of the house now. Poinsettias now come in many different colors. Last fall I received a poinsettia that was gold and white. I spent a lot of time trying to decide if it was a white one that was painted or if, somehow, they managed to get it to grow like that. I feel sure it was painted, but I never could tell for sure.

Now is the time to order seed catalogs.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS AND HAPPY NEW YEAR!



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ARKANSAS FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW

Trains: A Garden Show Legacy! **By Mary Evans**

So, I know you're all wondering how long it would take me to get around to the trains! The trains were the absolute best "kid" attraction ever! And I mean kids of all ages. Not to mention a long -lasting legacy of the show. Lots of people came for the trains and were disappointed the years we didn't have them. The first train was in 2003 "America's Backyard." Other attractions that year included lots of outdoor kitchens/grilling, etc. and even cooking classes. Janet Carson knew about a garden train guy and hooked me up with Bruce Stockbridge. Instant pals! (We later restored his home train garden.) That was one of the years we had bad weather on the front end, during setup. I believe that was when I first met Judy Bradsher. She stayed overnight in the hotel. I went home after. My other helper, Jan King didn't come till the next day. We were glad to see more train guy volunteers the next day. Bruce had a lot of trestles to assemble. It took forever. We had to screw the tracks onto all of them. Someone asked if I'd seen Judy. I said, "She is over there screwing on the railroad tracks." That is to this day a standing funny on Judy. It was a huge success and Bruce took home the "Volunteer of the Year" award, the only "civilian" to ever win. That one is the mother of all awards. The always popular "Thomas the Train" came every year. The trains were such a success we did more of them. I cannot truly say how many we did. The second one was a winter wonderland. For the garden design I decided it should be winter. Once again it really was winter in the "real" world. It snowed just before the show. Everything that came in, like plant materials, mulch, etc. - had snow in them. Once they got warmed up inside, the snow melted everywhere, creating a huge mess! Everyone did lots of mopping that year for setup- mops, squeegees and buckets everywhere. We all mopped. How to create a winter scene for the trains? I had experience with flocking Christmas trees. I lined up with Lakewood Gardens to bring over their flocking machine to make it snow. I had a well-thought-out plan. Of course, there was plastic on the floor. We set up visqueen barriers around our area to keep our "snow" from drifting onto our neighbors. Everyone was curious about what was going on inside. They excitedly waited for the "unveiling." Most of the decorations were a simple forest of pine saplings of various heights and some "naked" hardwoods I cut down at a friend's house. We recut the stems and inserted them in floral foam in plastic containers of all kinds (junk/trash.) Covered the tracks. Then we turned the flocker loose! It turned out gorgeous. This, my friends, was the only time EVER at the show I wondered, "What the heck were you thinking?" Over the years I came up with some pretty crazy stuff! (FYI we never failed!) The executive director, Nancy Leonhardt, told me the "snow" was being sucked into the ventilation system. Oops! We had to finish! They (convention center) never said anything, but Nancy and I were sweating it. just a little. I had visuals of snow (corn starch) encrusted air filters. I wonder what one of those costs. Shew!

It all turned out fine, another success story. And the easiest cleanup ever. We got all the trains and accessories off the plastic, pulled off a few other props. Then proceeded to roll the whole thing up; plastic, pine trees, trash and all. We brought in a rolling dumpster, threw our giant piece of plastic in it, wiped our hands and went home. Bam! As I recall the only costs involved in this one, were the floral foam & visqueen.

We had to follow all the same rules as everyone else. Safety. At every garden show there was something to learn. I wanted my helpers to learn something new (more on that in future episodes.) “Real” gardeners are naturally genius at invention, make what you need, recycling and thriftiness. We needed a better child’s armlength barrier from the garden, to keep them out and for the safety and security of the trains. Danny Murdaugh came up with the bamboo tripod/pole idea. We used 25-gallon flower buckets as the base, set up the tripods in them. Then adapted a potting technique I knew called “hole in one.” (Hole in ones were typically done with English ivy. Example: a 10” pot with a 6” pot in the center. The ivy was planted around the 6” pot, leaving the empty hole in the center for a blooming plant.) We poured concrete between the pots, creating a heavy- stable base to support the bamboo pole rails. We used the trademark pink azaleas in the center holes, covered the black pots with Spanish moss. Annual cost was fresh Spanish moss. Bamboo was free. Chris Kotoun was on the bamboo harvesting crew. This technique never failed us. I stored them and we used them for several years. The bamboo poles even got recycled to the Ozark Folk Center.

Every year Richard Davis, Ziege and his train crew came in, and put down the plastic. Then they set up the train layout. Then they turned it over to us. We really had it down to a science and got pretty quick at it. I had a long-standing crew that helped with this, plus my other decorating projects, for years. They were really good at following my lead, planted everything in the mulch, created accessories, then tweaked the results. Richard swept the tracks. Last up was the bamboo poles.

My primary partners in crime were Judy Bradsher, Jan King and Sharon Mayes. Judy’s daughter Becky Pruitt. Margaret Regnier, Bertie Monson and Carolyn Medlock from Saline County. All others Pulaski County; Danny Murdaugh, Dana Downes, Peri Doubleday, Chris Kotoun, Frank & Joan Howard, Susan Rose, Mary Wildgen and more. Last year I added Dustin Lane (a civilian) and PCMG Marian Lognion.



Mary Evans – left; Chris Kotoun – right
Assembling the train garden.



Bruce Stockbridge only “civilian” to ever win “Volunteer of the Year”.

Tripod with hole. The garbage bags held the Quikrete while drying and covered the “whiteness” when Spanish moss was added to top.



Finished hole in one with snapshot of “audience”.



Judy Bradsher screwing on the railroad tracks.



Danny Murdaugh – left
Winter wonderland - right



Chris Kotoun came up with solution to hold the railroad crossing sign – a Christmas tree stand.



Gardeners often confuse Pansies, Violas, and Panolas with each other. All are wonderful fall and winter, as well as early spring, plants but they have slight differences that are worth noting.

Pansies vs. Violas

In the fall, winter and early spring season there are few flowers that will bloom and produce lots of color despite the cold weather. Surprisingly, one of the sturdiest plants are pansies. Pansies look and act a lot like violas but they have a much larger flower, and larger leaves as well. Another difference between the two fall favorites is that pansies usually only have a few flowers at a time whereas violas have a smaller flower but more blooms.

Panolas: A Hybrid

To further complicate things and confuse gardeners, in between these two plants is a hybrid called Panolas. Panolas have flowers that are between the two sizes and tend to have the larger leaf-like pansies.

Different Plants, Different Series

Pansies (below on the left), violas, and panolas (below on the right) all have different series. Essentially, they're bred into groups for certain traits like unusual color combinations, greater cold tolerance, or larger flower size. For example, Colossus pansies have a significantly larger flower than Matrix, but there are usually fewer flowers, so the Matrix are planted more commonly.

Similarities Between Pansies, Violas, and Panolas

Despite their differences, all have a mounding habit and tend to spread a bit, but they should stay 4 to 6 inches tall through the cooler weather. All of these winter flowers can handle full shade to full sun, but prefer part sun. They don't like to dry out completely but are also pretty forgiving if that happens; they prefer to stay moist. Whichever plants you choose, Pansies, Violas and Panolas will provide months of color in cooler temperatures and take center stage in a seasonal color display, colorfully border a landscaped planting bed, or liven up fall and winter container arrangements. From www.Patuxentnursery.com



Telephone Time By Jane Gulley

Have you ever thought about why we have Master Gardeners-why did Master Gardeners get started? In 1988 Janet Carson put an ad in the newspaper saying, "The University of Arkansas Extension Service is looking for 40 people with green thumbs to help others solve their gardening problems. Those who complete the training will be used where they feel most comfortable. We primarily plan to use them on the telephone, answering consumer calls on horticulture." The cost of the training would be \$25.00. Janet was not the first to have the idea of using volunteers to help Extension service with the huge number of gardening questions from the public. In our April 1999 Master Minutes there was an excellent summary of the MG organization. Here are the highlights from the article.

Master gardeners are in all 50 states, the district of Columbia, and four Canadian provinces. Washington state started the Master Gardener program in the early 1970s. Dr. David Gibby, an extension agent in the Seattle area had been experimenting with mass media to reach the public, but that only increased demand. He had even more people to reach on a very low budget. After more brainstorming, he decided to offer training to gardeners and in exchange for that training they would provide gardening answers to the public. The first Master Gardener class of 120, trained in 1973, was a success. The program quickly spread around the state of Washington and later to other states. Most Master Gardener training was held on weekdays because it was presumed that people who could train on weekdays would also be available to volunteer during the week when help was most needed. Most states had an open book exam, but some states also had a practical exam in which master gardener trainees had to identify plant, insects, and diseases. No matter where the program is offered, there are always more applicants than classrooms space. So how are potential MGs chosen? Dr. Gibby said, "You want people who are giving in their nature. The number one criterion is not gardening interest or knowledge but previous volunteer experience, something that displays a volunteer ethic. We can train people in gardening, but we can't instill that volunteer ethic in them." Of course, all MGs know that volunteering is a two way street. We may donate our time, but we are also gaining experience and knowledge that is not readily available outside Master Gardening, not to mention the ability to landscape from snippets or coveted plants and shared bulbs, or the long-term friendships we make, or the great trips we take together. In Pulaski County, MGs receive 40+ hours of training, and in return have a commitment to give back 40 hours of volunteer service. During their first year, master gardeners give 20 of their volunteer time to staff the daily horticulture clinic at the extension office (that means answering the telephone) and the other 20 hours to work on MG sanctioned projects throughout Central Arkansas. Remember that was written in 1999. This is from the Master Minutes Feb 1991: Payback phone time: Phone time for new Master Gardeners will be scheduled on Thursdays and Fridays during February. You may have your choice of 12:30 to 4:30 or 1 to 5 PM. Returning MGs are not required to have phone time, but may volunteer to do so. We would especially like volunteers to assist new MGs during their first phone answering time.

When Randy Forst became our Extension agent in 2014 he eliminated the required 20 hours of pay back phone time for new MGs. The number of calls had diminished greatly with the public's ability to find gardening information on the internet, but Randy soon realized there were still many people wanting to get information they could trust from the Cooperative Extension Office. We now have the Horticulture Hotline Project so interested MGs can answer the phone at the Pulaski County Extension Office. Interestingly, if you are on that committee you can count your hours for either education or work. It is the perfect work opportunity if you have difficulty doing the physical labor of a gardening project. If you are interested in the phone answering opportunity contact Katie Reddick at the PC Extension Office 501-340-6650.

MASTER MINUTES – Fun Entries

By Jane Gulley

The Master Minutes, the first PCMG newsletters, are an amazing read! They are packed with helpful information even though they were started in 1990. I mentioned all the recipes in the Master Minutes, there was a possibility we would compile a cookbook to sell as a fundraiser, but there are lots of other interesting articles-lots of education hours. A unique entry in the early Master Minutes was a list of MG sponsors-basically our families who gave money to keep the program going. But the first thing you will notice in the Master Minutes is the presentation. Computers were not in most homes until the mid to late 1990's. The majority of MGs got their newsletters by slow mail and filled out sheets with their hours. If you were on the Master Minutes Committee you could fax your article to the chairman, Celia Buck. We had computer classes in MGs to help us learn to access gardening information online. Later the Master Minutes became much more uniform and professional looking. One of the most interesting parts of the Master Minutes was the MG biographies-it was a wonderful way to learn about each other's interests. The biographies stopped in 1997 but started again 1999 and were titled "Low Profile." For several years the new MGs were listed not only by name but by their favorite plant and gardening tool!

Another monthly article in the Master Minutes was the summary of work on each MG project. It is a fun and enlightening way to learn the history of your project and the obstacles and victories that were faced to get the project to where you recognize it today. Along with a monthly summary of each project was a monthly calendar of events and special news. The time of our bi-monthly meetings was posted because the time varied from noon, to one o'clock and even 6:30 in the evenings! Other announcements were weddings and new babies. Each issue had a book review and many of the books are available on Amazon and some can be borrowed from Central Arkansas Library System. Of course there is the gardening check list for monthly gardening activities and articles about MG trips and speakers. One of the most used sections of the Master Minutes was the Trading Post. It really took off in 1994 when David Dodson got interested in it and worked to get people to participate. I know when I got my newsletter I would go directly to the Trading Post to see if there were any plants I wanted. I hoped I would be one of the first to call so I would be sure to get the treasure. Plus it meant getting a chance to have a good visit with a fellow gardener and getting gardening tips while enjoying a garden tour.

In 1994 a Plant of the Month section was started. It has excellent pertinent information for today. In one year, 1998, the Master Minutes included an interview with a person from each of the local nurseries. I was always a fan of the now gone Arkanwood Nursery, and had a few pleasant nostalgic memories reading about it. There seems to be a tidbit of trivia in each edition that is fun to read. Do you know the flower of your birth month-read the 1999 edition of Master Minutes. Birth flowers: Jan. Narcissus, Feb. Forsythia, March Azalea, April Iris, May Rose, June Hydrangea, July Crape Myrtle, August Phlox, Sept. Canna, Oct. Daylily, Nov. Chrysanthemum, Dec. Camellia There are lots of other lists in the Master Minutes- you can learn so much by spending time going over the lists and using the lists as a spring board for internet searches. In the Sept 1998 issue Julia Loyall reported on Arkansas plant societies and in the the December 1998 issue Bob Byers, who used to be the director of Garvan Woodland Gardens, shared a list of state and local societies, National plant societies, state agencies, and regional gardens. I used the information to surf the web and visit the sites that were still viable. You can get all this from past PCMG newsletters.