



# The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

## President's Report

I am sentimental about trees. When my son was small our family went to a local home show here in Little Rock. A vendor gave us an oak sapling, just a twig with roots. We took it home and planted it in our backyard. Today my son is 29 and the small twig has grown into quite a large oak tree. We always call it Matthew's tree because it is near his age and he helped plant it. That home had an old pink dogwood in the front yard that we used as a backdrop every spring when it was in bloom to take a family photo. I also had a pretty good size fig tree in our yard that was started from one my aunt had in her garden many years ago. We moved from that home almost 7 years ago to a newer home with a blank canvas of a yard. One of the first things I did was call Bemis Tree Farm to put a Shumard oak in the front yard, I planted a fig in the back yard and this past spring was delighted to find a beautiful pink dogwood at Good Earth. It is planted in the side front yard of my home, hoping it flourishes as they are hard to get established.

Our Master Gardener symbol is a tree, a fitting symbol. It is a large tree with, I imagine, a lot of shade. We provide as Master Gardeners through our projects shade, respite as you would, from the busy and hectic world in which we live. Our gardens bring a calm joy to others, a fact that makes it all worth the hot, dirty days we work. I hope during these winter months you take time to walk in nature and enjoy the leafless trees when you can truly see the "bones" of their structure. It has been said that to plant a tree is hope for the future. My hope is our year will be one of planting, learning, gardening side by side and enjoying the beauty we bring by our labors. I look forward to serving this year as your president, hoping to meet and get to know all of you.

Go forth and Garden,

**CINDY STRAUSS**  
MG PRESIDENT

### January/February 2022

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The Shumard oak has beautiful fall foliage.



## Take It Outside: A Guide to Designing Beautiful Spaces Just Beyond Your Door

**Authors: Mel Brasier, Garrett Magee and James Desantis**

### Book Review by Debra Redding

Dubbed the "plantfluencers" by the *New York Times*, Mel Brasier, Garrett Magee, and James DeSantis, owners of the Manscapers landscaping company, do more than plant, mulch, and manicure a garden; they look at the space just as interior designers do a room, considering the aesthetics and the way people live in it. Now they show you how to apply familiar interior design principles to your outdoors, including:

- **Deciding on a concept** to help direct the mood of your space
- **"Zoning" your space** into functional areas, such as for lounging, cooking, or entertaining
- **Defining the areas** with furniture and hardscaping like fencing, decking, pools, planters, pergolas, and pathways
- **Bringing in the green**, including plants that are both functional (privacy shrubs and shade trees) and decorative (pretty perennials, climbers, and textural grasses)
- **Adding the finishing touches:** the pillows, throws, hurricane lanterns, and other details that will make you want to linger long after sunset

Plus, you'll have information on hiring a contractor and landscaper and the specific materials and plants the Manscapers love to use in their designs. No matter how big or small your exterior space, this ultimate guide to landscape design will help you bring the comfort of the indoors outside.

## **GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR January/February** **By Carol Randle**

### **JANUARY CHECKLIST**

I received a wonderful Christmas present, The Southern Living Garden Book, 2015 edition. It contains the following parts: The Essentials of Southern Gardening; Plant Finder; The South's Best Plants, A to Z; A Practical Guide to Gardening; Seasonal Garden Checklist; Solving the Mystery of Botanical Plant Names. The Practical Guide to Gardening is "chock-full" of wonderful hints and guides, such as "Prune Like A Pro". There are 2,000 color pictures and interest and great reading on every page. Well worth the price, it is the Southern gardeners' "Bible".

### **ANNUALS**

Fertilize winter annuals regularly when we have any warm spell. Water regularly, especially before a winter freeze.

### **PERENNIALS AND BULBS**

If you are planning any major changes to your garden, it is best to do it now while the soil is damp, but not if the soil is still frozen or waterlogged. Make changes from now until early spring. Remove dead stalks and other debris, destroying infested material and adding the rest to compost. Cut back frost-nipped perennials now, leaving 2-3 inch stalks to help locate dormant crowns when planting in early Spring.

This is your last chance to plant those spring blooming bulbs. When planting, be sure to pick a site with well-drained soil. Plant two to three times the size of the bulb, deep in the ground. Make sure no skins from bulbs are left on the ground to encourage the squirrels to dig up the bulbs.

### **ROSES**

Wait until late February (I was always told to do it on George Washington's birthday.) early spring to prune your roses.

### **VEGETABLES**

Start cool weather vegetable seeds indoors in January for transplanting in six to eight weeks. In late January, sweet peas can be planted directly in the ground. Turn cover crops into the soil with a fork or tiller during January to give the green material time to break down before planting time. Prepare soil for new beds by adding compost, manure, or other organic matter. Although growth of leafy greens will stop in cold weather, if plants are mulched, the growth will resume in spring and produce greens into May. Add a 6 to 8 inch layer of mulch to root crops so the vegetables can be harvested as needed.

### **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 newest 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.

### **GENERAL YARD**

Winter has always been considered the slowest time in the garden, but it can be very busy if you start planning for next year's garden. Now is the time to order seed catalogs. Remove plants that aren't thriving in the current locations. Try to ascertain the reason for the lack of success. Often, it's a matter of planting depth or an over-accumulation of mulch or a diseased root system.

## INDOORS

Enjoy the blooms of forced bulbs such as hyacinth and paper whites. Amaryllis bulbs will add more color. Pot them and give them a little water after you get them home. After growth starts, water well and keep in the sunlight. They will bloom in six or eight weeks. Stake because they will get tall and top heavy (especially the amaryllis). If you are going to overwinter poinsettias, place them in a sunny window in a cooler area of the house now.

## FEBRUARY CHECKLIST

### TILLER TIME

Put out asparagus crowns and strawberry plants as soon as the soil is workable. Outdoors, sow broccoli, cabbage, onion sets, English peas, and seed potatoes. Place orders for seeds early to ensure availability.

### GET RID OF BUGS

Use insecticidal soap to control aphids on cool season annuals and vegetable plants. For borers, mites, aphids, or scale, apply dormant oil spray to trees and shrubs, both evergreens and deciduous, roses and the perennial border. The most effective spray of the year is before leaf buds start emerging. Check the label for optimum temperature conditions. (Usually on a calm day when the temperature is expected to be above 40 degrees for three days and no rain is expected for 24 hours.) Spraying plants before leaf buds open also avoids burning them. Note: Do not use oil spray on sugar or Japanese maple, walnut, beech or magnolia trees.

### BIRD HELP

Provide fresh water near the birds' shelter. To attract a variety of birds, feed them cornmeal mixed with peanut butter, cracked corn, doughnuts, chopped fruits, suet, or sunflower seeds. Or plant barberry, beautyberry, coralberry, cottoneaster, dogwood, hawthorn, holly, mahonia, possum haw and viburnum which all provide fruits and berries in a February landscape.

### DOGWOODS

February is the best time to plant dogwoods. Pick an elevated site with soil on the acid side. Plant ball and burlap trees and shrubs and bare-root plant material that are still dormant. Soak the roots in water overnight before planting. If you cannot plant right away, cover the roots with moist soil or compost and store in shady location. For new planting sites, test soil to determine the proper amendments. For existing sites, amend the entire area with mulch, compost, etc.

### ROSE TIME

Place orders for bare root roses. After the 15th of February is the best time to plant roses. Water in roses with "Superthrive" or other root stimulator. Top dress roses with cottonseed and bone meal and cover with a layer of compost or rotted manure. Dehydrated manure will limit nutgrass and weed seeds. Mid-February, prune roses (hybrid teas 8" to 18") to maintain their size and vigor. Only prune ever-blooming climbers to invigorate older plants or to remove weak canes, not annually.

### LAWNS

Apply lime to lawns if not done in December or January. Fertilize trees with a high nitrogen fertilizer if not done in January. Apply pre-emergence herbicides on established lawns and shrub beds to control weeds. Kill spurweed and other winter weeds now, before they have time to set seeds. Mow or shear to 4-6 inches winter-creeper, euonymus, Japanese honeysuckle, English ivy, mondo grass, monkey grass, pachysandra, pampas grass, crown vetch, and vinca minor. Shear to 6-8 inches santolina, lavender, and junipers. Apply pre-emergence herbicides to ground covers.

### OUTDOORS

Outdoors, sow candytuft, cornflowers, larkspur, and phlox. In a cold frame, plant annual and perennial salvias, chrysanthemums, feverfew, lupine, nicotiana, scabiosa, snapdragon, and verbena. Indoors at 65 to 75 degrees, 6 inches under artificial light, sow annual flowers and vegetables. Keep the light on for 10-12 hours a day and keep the soil moist. It takes six to eight weeks to grow a viable transplant. Plant broad-leaved evergreens, such as magnolias and hollies. All newly planted or transplanted material should be watered in with a root stimulator.

### SHOOTS

Prune back by one-third to one-half, tropical bloomers that are over-wintering indoors. Apply a slow-release fertilizer to annuals and over-wintering tropical plants at the rate recommended on the label. Prune undesirable limbs and tip terminals on fruit trees and grapevines and thin out crowded shoots. Leave some branches of fruit and berry trees for small animals to eat this winter. Remove older canes of blueberry plants. Cut back lateral branches of blackberries to one foot.

### SHRUBS

**PLEASE DO NOT COMMIT CRAPE MYRTLE MURDER!**

Cut back dwarf crape myrtles to within six inches of the ground. Only prune back larger crape myrtle shrubs if needed to maintain size, or to remove suckers. Thin tree forms of crape myrtles every 3-5 years.

**ANNUAL PRUNING OF THIS TREE DESTROYS ITS NATURAL APPEARANCE AND IS NOT NEEDED.** Remove largest third of buddleia, hydrangea, nandina and spirea canes. Remove dead wood and branches that turn in or overlap in the center of broadleaf evergreens. Wherever the plant is cut, it will thicken, so prune above a twig growing outward, not above a leaf bud. **DO NOT PRUNE FORSYTHIA OR FLOWERING QUINCE UNTIL AFTER BLOOM.** Plant hardwood cuttings of shrubs (8" with at least two buds underground) in a cold frame.

Pink dogwood



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# ARKANSAS FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW

## **Trains: A Garden Show Legacy! – Part II** **By Mary Evans**

2016 Train- Richard Davis was the train guy in charge. I told Richard we would help set up the train garden. We were setting up decorations at the entrance to the show. River Valley Horticultural Products was sponsoring the plant materials and mulch for it. They were supposed to let me know when the materials arrived. Danny Murdaugh and Chris Kotoun went over to help. Before long, (I think it was Danny) came back to say they were needing me to help with the design. “They have no design.” WHAT? I went over, looked at the materials, came up with a design on the spot and my volunteers set it up as I came up with a plan. I called it “Speed Design.” Challenge! Yay! I insisted from that point forward, April Higgins at River Valley and I picked the plants and it only got better from there. I was always true to the theme. [ Side bar: A few months later Janet was decorating for a national extension agents convention, also at the Statehouse Convention Center. I agreed to “help.” She did the same- River Valley delivered the materials- while she was gone on a bus tour. She told me to “wing it.” Yep- another Speed Design! She picked out some nice stuff, had no design- just some ideas. At least she told me her ideas ahead of time. Apparently, she figured I could pull it off- again- ha! We were almost finished when she got back. I even brought duck decoys from my own pond. I was beginning to see a pattern here- or perhaps a challenge!] 2019 train. We were at the Fairgrounds in the Hall of Industry. We really enjoyed it in there. It felt intimate somehow. We had space to really have a big showing in there and it didn’t matter how much noise the trains made. This time we introduced bridges, tunnels, a sizable water feature- complete with bridge and goldfish and seasonal areas.

There was a “funny business” deal negotiated with the beekeepers. They needed water to make their honey shakes. I had good water at the stage in the Arts & Crafts Building. The deal was they could get all the water they needed-long as they didn’t interrupt my speakers and they had to bring me honey shakes in exchange. Essentially, I was holding the water hostage in exchange for my own personal honey shakes.... I became the “water troll.” Pay up. And they did-though not every time. All in fun. Early on Saturday morning, Richard and I came in early, walking through and the honey guys were already set up. We went over to “collect” a shake. He gave me two.... “One for you and one for your Dad.” That was the moment, Richard became “Dad!” He didn’t think it was nearly as funny as I did.

“2020: A Garden Odyssey.” I was tickled about the theme, as I had suggested it as a payoff of “2020: A Space Odyssey.” Immediately I was leaning toward a science fiction angle, as did most of the other garden designers. We all agree we knocked it out of the park on this one. Again, April and I picked out plants.... I chose some deodara cedar topiaries that looked like trees from science fiction planets. I knew I wanted aliens landing in those- they were too cool. My crew and Alecia Flaherty created alien spaceships out of salad bar containers and pie pans, complete with little green men. The aliens were beaming up cars from the deodaras. Mass instrument failure resulted in various aircraft crashed in the tops. Christmas lights in the deodaras added to the aura and provided additional lighting underneath. What was I thinking? I surprised Dad with the aliens, but it ended up being his favorite ever! Other planets have dinosaurs, right? Murphy Tetley took the alien crafts, plus the dinosaurs, back to the train garden at Garvan Gardens- more recycling. Sadly, we lost Murphy this year.

Penny Talbert and her crew from UAMS were a big help in later years. Penny designed a large toy train and built it out of “found” objects. She brought it at least three times. “Ziggy” (named after Ziege) had bells, whistles, knobs, noise makers and decorated with live flowers. The kids loved climbing over it. For the Garden Odyssey, she created a futuristic astronaut scarecrow. Her head was a fishbowl full of artificial flowers. My Mom always said if I fell and cracked my head open it would be full of flowers. Her head was full of flowers! I thought she was amazing! Apparently, Penny was thinking sci fi also! Cost? Penny bought the little green men. I spent \$17 on dinosaurs.

Always at the finish, my special treat (reward) was getting to park all the cars. In 2020 some were abducted by aliens. A special perk was getting to drive the trains. Not many were allowed to drive the trains. At Bruce’s house I also learned all the various whistles that apply to real trains, like at crossings, etc. It was fun adding the appropriate whistles to my train driving. Bruce is now playing with trains in Orlando. Richard still has an annual open house in his train garden in Little Rock. Ziege introduced Richard to the whole train thing. She has no one to blame but herself. She loves it, too. Sadly, I don’t have any pictures from the older show exhibits. A special thanks to River Valley Horticultural Products for their tremendous sponsorship.

OPTIONAL/ addendum

Side bar: In 1975 I signed up for auto mechanics class at Metro. On the first day the principal came in to inform me that I would NOT be taking auto mechanics class because I am a GIRL! The teacher of the class was Richard! I was so disappointed and then moved into the “typing class.” He remembers it, too. I got over it, but I tease him- he let them kick me out. Now we play trains together.



Heap of mulch!  
Richard strolling through the plants (left)



Aliens and dinosaurs



Space craft and cars floating around the design.



Penny's space woman with fishbowl head filled with flowers.





Penny's space woman



No fish were harmed. Notice the PCMG sign on the left.

Penny's train made from left over wood, barrel, etc.

