

The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

Gardeners are some of the most generous people around. Not only do we share our love and knowledge of gardening, but we also share plants from our gardens.

My son is an Eagle Scout and when he was a young Boy Scout his dad was very involved in the program as an adult leader. On their way home one day they passed a box in a front yard down the street. They just caught a glimpse of the words “free rope” written on the box and knew they had to go back; rope is a handy thing to have in scouting. My son got back in the truck with my husband and with sadness reported it was just a box of grass. What the box had written on it was “Free Liriope”, a neighbor sharing plants.

I hope you are sharing plants from your garden with others. The Pathfinder and LR Greenhouse projects start working early in the year and would love any pass along plants from PCMG for their sale. You may contact either project chairs, Theresa Funkhouser or Jody Jackson, to arrange plant donations. I am anxiously awaiting both sales in April and I know you all are too.

Happy sharing.

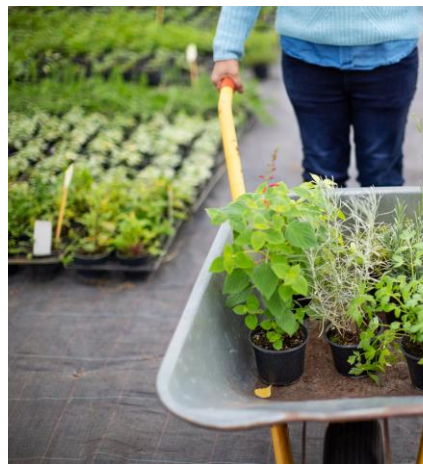
Go forth and Garden,

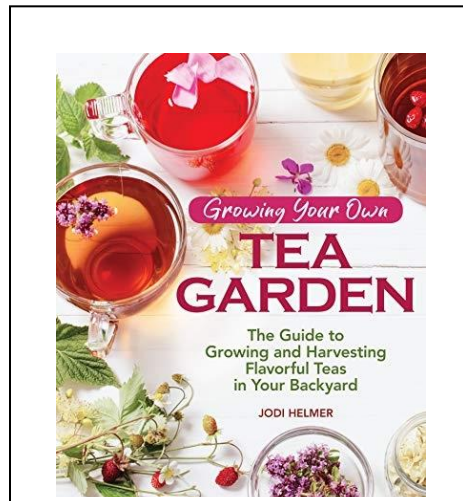
CINDY STRAUSS
MG PRESIDENT

March/April 2022

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Growing Your Own Tea Garden: The Guide to Growing & Harvesting Flavorful Teas in Your Backyard

Author: Jodi Helmer

Book Review: Debra Redding

This charming paperback is chock full of information on herbal teas made from many of the plants we grow in our gardens, including herbs. And many of these teas have medicinal qualities that can benefit us all. The best news is most teas can be made from fresh leaves and/or flowers, so brewing a cup is a snap. You harvest the fresh leaves or flowers, drop them in a cup of hot water, give them a few minutes to steep and sip away. What could be easier? Helmer gives advice on how to dry and store tea for yearlong use, brewing tips and creative recipes along with growing tips. The chapter that intrigued me the most is Garden Designs. These themed gardens include plants that look good together and make good neighbors. There's a sleepy-time tea garden, a fatigue-fighting tea garden, a relaxing tea garden and a headache tea garden. For those who like to party, there's a hangover cure tea garden....Tea Time!

About The Author:

Jodi Helmer writes about food, farming and the environment. Her articles have appeared in *National Geographic*, *Traveler*, *NPR*, Smithsonian.com, *Modern Farmer*, *Sierra*, *FFA New Horizons*, *Farm Life*, *Farming and Hobby Farms* among others; she is also the author of six books, including the latest releases, **Protecting Pollinators: How to Save the Creatures that Feed Us** (Island Press 2019) and **Growing Your Own Tea Garden: The Guide to Growing and Harvesting Flavorful Teas in Your Backyard** (Companion House Books, 2019).

When Jodi isn't writing, she raises chickens, goats, bees and one very spoiled donkey on a small homestead in rural North Carolina. Learn more about her work at www.jodihelmer.com.

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR March/April **By Carol Randle**

MARCH CHECKLIST

I think everyone is ready for Spring.

VEGETABLES

March is a prime planting season. Vegetable gardens are up and running. It is a great time to plant cool season crops such as lettuce, broccoli, potatoes, onions, radishes, turnips, kale, cabbage and spinach. Cabbage, broccoli, and cauliflower are planted as transplants, small plants, not seeds. Onions are planted using sets or transplants, rarely as seeds. Most feed stores sell them in bundles of small plants which are then set out in the garden. Remember to fertilize at planting and then side dress six weeks later. Cool season vegetables have less disease and insect issues and give you a great start to the gardening season. We tend to have more energy now and sometimes we have ample moisture. Diseases and insects have not become firmly entrenched yet, so grab your shovel and start planting. If you don't have a space for a large garden, plant some vegetables in pots or among your flowers. A minimum of six hours of sunlight is all you need. If you want to grow your own tomato transplants, they should be started now. You can't get quality transplants in an ordinary home window. You need either a greenhouse or a supplemental light source. The light source needs to be on for up to 12 hours a day. It typically takes 8 to 10 weeks before a transplant can safely be planted outdoors. Tomato planting time shouldn't happen before mid-April. If you didn't prepare your beds in January, do it as soon as possible. Cool season crops, from carrots to turnips, can be planted until mid-April. Sweet corn can be planted about the middle of the month. Seeds for warm weather crops, such as peppers, can be started in the greenhouse or your windowsills. It takes six to eight weeks to get good size transplants. Our last frost date is March 20 to April 1, depending on what part of the county you live in. Potatoes should be planted from certified seed potatoes. Fertilize, water and mulch after planting.

ANNUALS

Fertilizing and dead-heading all these winter annuals will give them a boost and help them to rebound. If you lost your winter color, or you never got around to planting any, buy some geraniums, English primroses and ranunculus now. They make great transitional color for the garden and can tolerate light freezes with ease. Start planning your summer color, but don't actually buy any until mid-April.

BULBS

Bulbs are blooming now and extra care is needed to replenish them for another season. Fertilize your bulbs with a complete fertilizer and let the foliage remain healthy and growing for at least six weeks after bloom. Summer bulbs are popping up at nurseries and garden centers all over the state. You can buy these bulbs, but don't plant them. They like warm soils, and if planted in such cool soils, they could rot or deteriorate. I would not plant caladiums until at least May. Remember, the important time for bulb growth is right after bloom. If bulbs are overcrowded or in too much shade, they won't be able to store the energy they need to bloom next year. They need at least six to eight weeks of green foliage AFTER flowering to set flowers for the following year. Once the foliage begins to die, their season is over. They will be dormant until the following season.

PERENNIALS

As summer and fall blooming perennials begin to grow, assess whether or not they need dividing. Crowded plants don't bloom as well. If they do need dividing, now is the time to do so. Dig up the plant and divide, leaving two or three crowns per division.

When choosing new plants, you don't have to plant exactly the same thing that died. If we have a season with little rain, you may want to opt for more drought tolerant plants. Even the most drought tolerant plants need water during establishment and would benefit from supplemental irrigations when we have a miserable season. Soil preparation can go a long way in building a stronger root system which will, in the long term, give you a stronger plant. Many perennials are up and growing. Hellebores are in full bloom, along with bleeding heart, columbine and foxglove. Peonies are up and growing and you may even see the beginning of flower buds. Now is a great time to put some perennial stakes around your peonies. These wire rings need to be in place before the plant gets much size. That way, the foliage grows up into the rings and is supported when heavy rains try to topple the blooms. Spring ephemerals like bloodroot, trilliums and trout lilies are a great addition to the early spring garden. They are called ephemerals because they are here today and gone tomorrow. They often complete their life cycle before the trees have fully leafed out. If you have many early season perennials in your garden that do so, plant and move on. Summer and fall blooming perennials can be divided now, if needed. Divide established perennials and replant at their depth in an enlarged area with organic matter and fertilizer. Keep mulch handy for a late freeze.

HOUSEPLANTS

Houseplants don't look all that perky indoors, so many gardeners think they would benefit from some sunshine on a mild March day. While it is a nice thought, it isn't a good idea. Plants should stay put where they are now and make their move outside in late April. Now that the days are getting longer and temperatures are warming up, you will see some new growth appearing. If you have tropical flowering plants inside, you can give them a haircut now, but hold off on repotting until you move them outdoors.

TREES AND SHRUBS

Most plants that bloom in the summer set their flowers on new growth, with the exception of big leaf hydrangeas, oak leaf hydrangeas and gardenias. Leave these three alone, since their flower buds are already set. If you have peegee hydrangeas or smooth hydrangeas, butterfly bush, Crape myrtles, althea or rose of Sharon, clethra, roses and abelia and you haven't pruned them yet, grab your pruning shears and get going. While new growth is beginning, it isn't too late to prune. **CAUTION; PLEASE DO NOT COMMIT CRAPE MYRTLE MURDER. They don't need severe pruning every year.**

All roses need annual pruning, including *Knock Out* roses. Hold off on pruning climbing roses until after their first bloom. Some antique shrub roses only bloom once a year, so let them flower and then prune. For all-season-blooming shrubs, prune them back to 18 inches above the ground. Pruning encourages continuous blooming and removes the mites, which overwinter in the upper portions of the bush and spread Rose Rosetta Virus.

LAWNS

Winter weeds were growing long before winter weather arrived this year. The weeds are blooming their hearts out and many have set seeds and are ending their season. It is too late to worry with herbicides. In lawns, try to mow the weeds to prevent seed set. If your lawn is showing signs of green, it is from winter weeds. Spray with a broad leaf killer, if you have an abundance of them or spot spray or pull them. A few clumps of wild onions (or garlic) can easily be dug. Applying fertilizer now before the grass is fully awake is a waste. You will actually end up fertilizing all those winter weeds that are in your lawn now. There is still time to use a pre-emergent herbicide, but do so very soon. Try to find a stand alone product without fertilizer. Your fertilizer application should be no sooner than mid-April, when the lawn is totally green. Waiting until May is not a bad idea.

APRIL CHECKLIST

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 is recommended. 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.

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 of 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 year, look for the ones that have the fullest, sturdiest growth and the best foliage color. 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. Slowly acclimate to outside conditions. (cont. on p. 9)



ARKANSAS FLOWER AND GARDEN SHOW

Garden Show History: David Dodson & the High School Art Competition

By Mary Evans

My original plan was to dedicate this episode to the high school art competition. With the recent news of the passing of David Dodson, I decided to dedicate this article to him and focus (as planned) on his involvement with this project, as well as some of his other contributions to the garden show and Master Gardeners in general over many years.

One of my favorite stories about David was the year he asked me to haul back a very large-HUGE- metal dinosaur from the state meeting, I think it was in Magnolia. Back at home, everyone thought “I” had lost my mind buying a dinosaur! I kept it at my house until he was back from vacation. Meanwhile, we had gotten attached to it and everyone was sad to see it go-including the neighbors. His magnificent fossil collection explained the attraction to the dinosaur.

Jane Gulley recently told me a story of David asking her if he could borrow a dress for his pot lady. First, I thought it was hysterical that he asked Jane for a dress. Second, I’m sure his wife, Sarah, didn’t have one either. Third, he didn’t bother calling me! Thus, I decided to share early, my picture of David making a pot person on the Q & A stage at the 2003 show.... This pot lady wears no “clothes.”

He was also an outstanding photographer. He no doubt has thousands of photos of the show, as well as Master Gardener events over the state. His favorite plant group was hostas. He had an extensive collection of hostas, Japanese maples and the most amazing rock and fossil collections you ever saw! (He and Sarah were both rockhounds.)

David served as president and show chair of the Arkansas Flower and Garden Show. He served behind the scenes for the duration (all years) of the show, wearing many different hats. He and Tom Flammang helped me put together (the frame design) for the first butterfly house. David served on the crew that taped off the boundaries for all the gardens before anything could happen.

David retired from Arkansas Farm Bureau where he was in charge of their massive print shop. The Arkansas Farm Bureau was a long-standing sponsor of the garden show. David produced the tickets, programs, printed framed awards for the garden competition, signage and banners for the show. He also supplied show floor/street, yard signs and probably lots more items. He was a busy guy. He also printed note tablets for state Master Gardener meetings. (I still have lots of these around)

Printed materials included the printed posters for the high school art competition. Jeanne Spencer was the chair. The art competition ran for most of a decade and the whole enterprise education, encourage their art and promote their art. Criteria? The art had to be poster-able and t-shirt-able. The winning art was used for show posters & t-shirts that were sold in the atrium during the show. The art was also used in some of the advertising. In spite of the criteria, some of the art was “too busy” for t-shirts. All other entries were attached to a very attractive, giant black wall, made out of something like felt and/or Velcro perhaps. David also created the black wall. With his “photographer eye” he was very intent on them being showcased properly and we were all very proud of what he came up with. It was a very popular exhibit. There were always LOTS of entries. Second and third were featured prominently. The competition included prize money for 1st, 2nd and 3rd places.

Sadly, I only have names for two of the artists. The 2005 red tulip was done by student Lana Williams. The 2006 sunflower was done by Lauren Ascher. A few digital images of the posters are included here.

For more about David, you can visit his obituary here.....

[David Milton Dodson - Obituary & Service Details \(rollerfuneralhomes.com\)](http://rollerfuneralhomes.com)





AFGS Art Poster "Dream Gardens-2009"
On entry stage. Photo by Darrell Leonhardt

2005 AFGS Poster and T-shirt sale.
Tulip was drawn by Lana Williams
Photo by Darrell Leonhardt



2006 AFGS Art Competition
Lauren Ascher on the right.
Photo by Darrell Leonhardt

APRIL CHECKLIST – continued

Plant water plants now. Plant snapdragons and dianthus now.

INDOORS

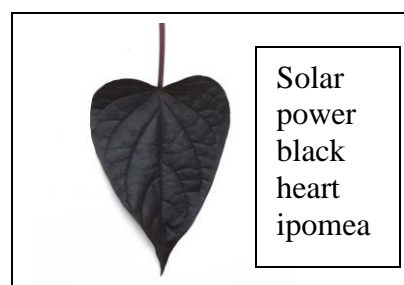
Keep your houseplants indoors until the middle or end of the month. Then slowly acclimate them to the sun. Otherwise, they can sunburn. As you move the tropical flowers like hibiscus, mandevilla and bougainvillea outside, replot them and prune them back by at least one third, if not more. These summer 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 replot 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 *Arkansas 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. 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. 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. You bring in compost and soil yourself. Plant perennial plants such as asparagus and strawberries on the edge of your 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.

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.



Tomato and Cucumber Recipes
From Jane Gulley's archives

Tomato and Cucumber Salad by Monica Davis

2/3 cup diced celery,
two small onions diced,
1 tablespoon salt,
1/4 teaspoon black pepper,
1/4 cup vinegar,
1/4 cup sugar,
1 cup cold water,
three cucumbers sliced thin, three tomatoes sliced. Combine first eight ingredients and pour over cucumbers and tomatoes, Cover and chill 3 to 4 hours. Yield eight servings.

Tomato Mozzarella Salad by Hayley Elder

Mix:

1/4 cup red wine or apple cider vinegar
1/2 teaspoon minced garlic
1/2 teaspoon salt
black pepper to taste.

Add slowly:

2 tablespoons olive oil stir constantly with fork until mixture is blended.

Pour above mixture over

3 cups chunked tomatoes or halved cherry tomatoes

1/2 cup coarsely chopped red onion

3 tablespoons finely chopped fresh basil or 1 tablespoon dried basil,

6 ounces mozzarella cheese, cubed

add sliced olives, green or black to taste. Cover and refrigerate at least eight hours, stirring occasionally. Keeps up to two days. Makes 5 to 6 servings.

Overnight Old-South Cucumber Lime Pickles -no name

7 pounds cucumber sliced crosswise

1 cup pickling lime

2 gallons water

8 cups distilled white vinegar

8 cups sugar

1 tablespoon salt

2 teaspoons mixed pickling spices

Wash cucumbers. Mix pickling lime and water in a crockery or enamelware container. Do not use aluminum. Add cucumbers and soak in water and lime mixture for 12 hours or overnight. Remove cucumber slices from lime water. Discard the lime water. Rinse cucumbers three times in fresh cold water. Soak three hours in fresh ice water. In a large pan, combine vinegar, sugar, salt, and mixed pickling spices. Bring to a low boil, stirring until sugar dissolves. Remove syrup from heat and add sliced cucumbers. Soak five or six hours or overnight. Boil cucumber slices in syrup 35 minutes. Fill sterilized jars with hot slices. Pour hot syrup over the slices. Leaving 1/2 inch head space. Cap and seal each jar when filled. Process in a boiling water bath 10 minutes for pints, 15 minutes for quarts.

Plant Shows and Sales – Central Little Rock area

An NGC Small Standard Flower Show

Faith United Methodist Church
9820 W. Markham
Little Rock, AR

Wednesday, March 2, 2022

**Free and open to the public
1:30-2:30**

Sponsored by Designers Study Club

(Artistic designs and horticulture displayed and judged)

MG PLANT SALES

April 16 - Pulaski County – Greenhouse
April 16 – Saline Country

April 10-16 – Pathfinder online ordering
April 24-30 – Pathfinder distributing orders

April 22-24 Garland County Flower and Garden Show – Hot Springs Convention Center (downtown)

IRIS SHOWS

**Hot Springs Iris Show
Saturday, April 23
1-4 pm (free)**

**Prince of Peace Lutheran Church
109 Hobson Ave.
Hot Springs, AR**

**Central Arkansas Iris Show
Saturday, April 30
1-4 pm (free admission)**

**Unitarian Universalist Church
1818 Reservoir Rd.
Little Rock, AR**

Potted plants and art for sale.

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