

# The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

## President's Report

You know how a song is in your head and you sing it all day? Well today I have the words to one of my favorite hymns running through my brain. The lyrics "Then Sings My Soul" are speaking to me today.

For me I have three hobbies that make my soul sing. The three hobbies somehow seem to intersect in some way. I love quilting and making things with fabric. There are books on my shelf containing flower embroidery patterns, floral fabric on other shelves and garden themed quilts on my beds and walls.

There may also be a collection of antique quilts at my house. A second hobby of mine is antique hunting, I love a good estate sale or antique store. I have a collection of old watering cans, old metal garden sprinklers (they have the most interesting shapes), old garden tools and antique flower frogs.

Then there is the obvious hobby, gardening. My gardening love is for flowers, I am not so good with vegetables. The only vegetable I usually grow other than herbs is a couple of tomato plants. The horn worms are great entertainment to squish. In my garden are the old watering cans as well as a collection of old birdhouses.

Another thing that makes my soul sing is the wonderful people in the Pulaski County Master Gardener Program. We have such a wonderful mix of members with many different gifts and talents and I so very much appreciate all of you. I hope you find what makes your "Soul Sing" today and enjoy the most beautiful spring.

I am sharing a photo of one of my three lilac bushes. It is right off my screened patio and the scent is wonderful.

Go forth and Garden,

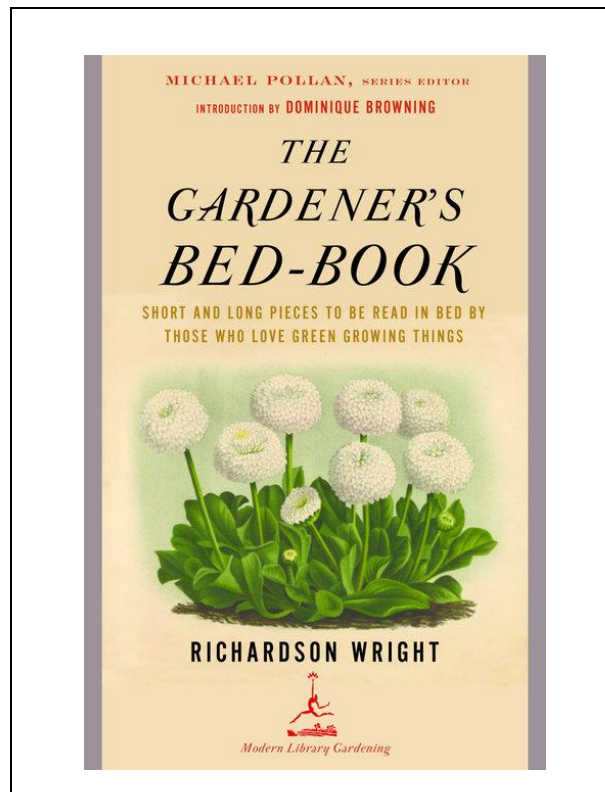
**CINDY STRAUSS**  
MG PRESIDENT

**May 2022**

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The Gardener's Bed Book  
Author: Richardson Wright

Book Review: Debra Redding

First published in 1929, *The Gardener's Bed-Book* is a much beloved gardening classic by the renowned editor of *House & Garden* magazine in the 1920s and '30s. Each of its 365 perfectly sized little essays is meant to be read in bed at night after a long day's work, either real or imagined, in the garden. A charming and mischievously funny companion to curl up with, Wright ranges comfortably—and lyrically—from giving gardening advice to meditating on such topics as antique collecting and travel, great literature and architecture. He is an addictive delight, as memorable describing the challenges of growing plume poppies as he is the simple pleasure of hanging up the dish towel once the housework is done. Written in language that is as timeless as it is seductive, *The Gardener's Bed-Book* will appeal to gardening experts and armchair enthusiasts alike.

This modern library edition is published with a new introduction by Dominique Browning, the editor in chief of *House & Garden* and author of *Around the House and in the Garden* and the forthcoming *Paths of Desire: The Passions of a Suburban Gardener*. I thought this book was charming and I breezed right through it!

## **GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR MAY** **By Carol Randle**

### **CLEANUP**

By now, all plants should be up and growing in your landscape. Anything that hasn't shown any signs of life needs to be replaced. Consider maximum size you want the new plant to be, how much sunlight or shade and what is growing around it. What type of maintenance are you willing to provide? What season in your garden needs some extra color? You don't have to replant the exact same thing that was there, branch out and try something new. **Arkansas Diamond Plants** are always good choices. Consider plants that have more than one season of interest, or that bloom for an extended period of time. Consider doing some edible landscaping. Plant two varieties of blueberries in your landscape. They have pretty white flowers in the spring, great edible blueberries in the summer and outstanding red fall foliage. If you don't like to water much, consider the drought-tolerant ornamental grasses. Other than needing to be sheared back before new growth begins in late February, they pretty much take care of themselves once established.

### **BULBS**

You can remove the foliage from spring bulbs approximately six weeks or so after they've bloomed. Now is a good time to start planting summer bulbs, such as caladiums, elephant ears, dahlias and pineapple lilies (eucomis). Lift and store bulbs that are not cold hardy in central Arkansas, otherwise you will need to replace them the following year.

### **HERBS**

Fresh herbs are a wonderful addition to your cooking talents, but they also make great ornamental plants. Herbs are easy to grow whether you are interspersing them with flowers in the vegetable garden or in a stand alone herb planting. Perennial rosemary, sage and oregano do well year-round, while the annual basil and dill thrive in our summers. Fennel, both green and bronze is showy and adds great interest to cut flower displays.

### **ANNUALS**

New **Arkansas Diamond Plants** for 2022 are the Portulaca Color Blast Series and the Caladium Postman Joyner (warm weather plants). Last year I tried some of the flame thrower coleus and they were spectacular.

There are so many wonderful **Arkansas Diamond Plants**. We used the Redhead Coleus at Sherwood Senior Citizens' Center and they are spectacular. Get on the internet and look up the **Arkansas Diamonds Plants**. You'll be sure to find some you want to try. Start pulling out the pansies and violas and replace them with your new choices for summer plants. There are so many color choices these days for coleus and they will grow in full sun to total shade. I have had Sunpatiens in my front flower bed (it faces the east and gets a lot of sun) for two years and am highly satisfied with them. (last summer, our Ring doorbell went off and we saw a lady park in front of the house, get out of her car, walk to the flower bed and start taking pictures of those Sunpatiens! Then she came up on the porch and looked at my plants I had there! She eventually went back to her car and drove away without ringing the doorbell. (Angelonia) Summer Snapdragon is a showstopper also. Start with a slow-release fertilizer at planting, then use a water soluble form every two to three weeks throughout the season.

### **VEGETABLES**

Vegetable gardening becomes more popular every year. If you are a vegetable gardener and planted an early garden, you are in the midst of harvest. You can choose from broccoli, spinach, lettuce and onions. As you harvest, replant with heat loving vegetables and herbs. Mulch your vegetables with shredded leaves, newspaper, or a similar product. Not only does mulch maintain soil moisture and helps to keep weeds away, but it also keeps soil from splashing on the stems, which can impact diseases. All of the warm season vegetables can still be planted, from snap beans and corn to tomatoes, peppers, squash and eggplants. By

May, our soil is warming up and we can begin to plant Okra, Southern peas, and even watermelons and cantaloupes. As one plant finishes its life cycle, remove it and replace with another. As temperatures heat up, so do pest problems. Monitor for insects and diseases and catch them early. Strawberries, an easy perennial fruit for the home garden, need annual maintenance. Thin the dense mats of foliage after the Spring harvest to discourage fruit rot and increase fruit size and quality.

### **PERENNIALS**

Perennials are looking great right now. Peonies are blooming beautifully along with baptisia, amsonia and foxglove (*Digitalis* spp.). Taller flowering perennials often need a little extra support from stakes to help hold their blooms upright, especially in heavy rains. Know which of your plants need fertilizer and which don't. Most spring bloomers will benefit from a application of fertilizer after bloom. Hosta plants need fertilization two or three times a season.

### **HOUSEPLANTS**

Houseplants and heat-loving tropical flowering plants can all go outdoors safely now. Most tropical flowering plants need bright light to bloom well. If you are growing plants that you have kept for several years, repot them now and fertilize regularly or you won't see as many flowers this growing season. tropicals such as Mandevilla, hibiscus and others bloom on new growth and if they are old and root-bound, you won't see much new growth and if they are old and root-bound, you won't see much new growth and you won't see as many flowers. As temperatures heat up, watering needs increase. The more you water, the more fertilizer you need.

### **PRUNING**

Pay attention now to any pruning needs. After flowering, prune to correct any winter damage. Pruning after flowering allows the plants plenty of time to recover and start growing before the weather gets too hot. Don't prune past June, however, the warmer the weather, the slower the plant's recovery. Do the once annual application of fertilizer now before the summer growth begins, as well. Water as needed throughout the summer. Make sure your gardens have 2 to 3 inches of mulch to conserve moisture, cool the soil temperature and control weeds. Gardenias and hydrangeas bloom in the summer, you don't want to prune unless absolutely necessary. Remove any branches that have not shown any signs of new life.

### **INSECTS**

In addition to plants growing, insects and diseases are also showing their ugly heads, in fact, insects have been pretty active for a while. Aphids multiply faster during drier days, but lacebugs are hitting the azaleas, and it is time to begin spraying/monitoring for bagworms. These insects construct a sack from the plant they are feeding upon. The sack protects the crawling larvae from predators and insecticides, so the key is to catch them as they begin. If you had a bad case of them last season, you might consider a preventative spray starting mid-May and once a week until mid-June. An organic approach is to spray with BT (*Bacillus thuringiensis*). Don't forget about weeds, either. The chambers bitters is up and running. This weed looks like a little mimosa tree and sets its seeds almost immediately on the underside of the plant. Mulberry weed, pigweed, and nutsedge are also getting started. Don't ignore them or they will take over the garden. A sharp hoe is a gardener's best friend.

### **LAWNS**

Most of the weeds that were in our winter and early spring lawns now appear to be dead; however, they are simply dormant and will return with the fall's cooler temperatures. Currently, we have summer weeds, such as nutgrass and crabgrass to manage. Lawn lovers also contend with moss that grows in areas with too much shade, compacted soil or wet conditions. Most grasses do not grow well in the shade, which is a welcome treat in Arkansas summers. On the other hand, if you have shady areas, moss is an excellent ground cover and requires less maintenance than grass.

## MG Bios By Jane Gulley

Remember this site - [armgs.org](http://armgs.org) - use the information that you normally use to log in your hours to visit this site. You will find a complete PCMG Directory plus a list of PCMG projects, committees, by-laws and past newsletters including the old Master Minutes. The Master Minutes are from 1990 through 2014 before our newsletter became the Magnolia Chronicle, and can be found under ABOUT on the title bar. Scroll down to About Pulaski County Master Gardeners. They are a little hard to find but worth the search. You can get an education hour for your time. Now you can also find all the recipes that have been included in the PCMG newsletters over the years. You can get another MG hour that counts toward education by trying a recipe! You can find the recipes under PCMG info on the title bar. Scroll down to PCMG cookbook.

To continue our History Moments we are interviewing PCMG members this year. In our past Master Minutes, the early PCMG newsletter, we interviewed members, and it was a fun way to get to know each other. Since we have not been able to meet in person because of COVID we thought this year we would use some of the questions from the past historic interviews and get to know more about our members. Last month March, I randomly passed out sheets of paper asking people if they would agree to be interviewed and if a "yes" to please come see me after the monthly meeting. I was pleased with the participation and the number of willing responses matched our number of meetings!

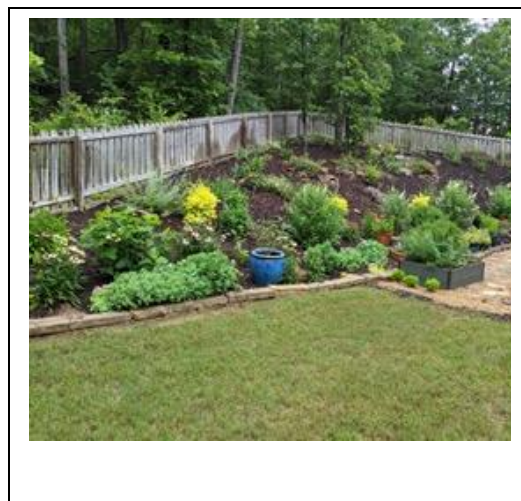
**Cindy Strauss** – Age 64 (Headed to Medicare age in April!)

1. A brief history of your life that might include how long you have lived in Little Rock, family, education, work history, where you garden now/yard-community garden-shade, sun, wet, dry/irrigated. Just some basics

**My husband and I moved to Little Rock in 1989. We lived in the Heights for 23 years, then moved to west Little Rock almost 7 years ago. I am a graduate of Morrilton High and UCA. We have one son that lives in Hillcrest and absolutely does not garden. I have worked several jobs over the years but work part time at my dream/fun job now at The Stitchin' Post here in Little Rock. When we moved my current yard had only a few shrubs the builder planted. I have removed all but two crepe myrtles, two small trees and a large Viburnum. It is a work in progress. My favorite area is my very private back yard. There was nothing there except for some low growing Junipers. It is a challenge to plant because of the rock so I use planters where I cannot dig.**

2. Who got you interested in gardening? **Both my grandfathers gardened as well as my dad. My mom's father had the most beautiful vegetable garden in his back yard with a concrete block compost area and a worm bed for worm castings (the worms were occasionally harvested for fishing too). You had to be very good to enter his garden gate.**
3. Your favorite garden plant- why - **My favorite plant is a Camellia Japonica. Growing up in Smackover there was one outside my bedroom window, then we had a large red one in the front yard of our Heights home. One of the first things I planted at my new house was a large white Camellia, I have since put in a couple of red ones.**
4. Your favorite garden tool- why == **My favorite (well most used) is a pickaxe. The rocks make it challenging to dig a plant hole in west Little Rock.**

5. Your most memorable plant success or failure. **The failures, too many to count. My best success is rooting a cutting from the New Dawn roses at my project Mt. Holly.**
6. Do you have a gardening goal or fun gardening plant or activity you want to try this year?  
**My goal is to have less and less grass and more plants in my back yard.**
7. Your favorite gardening book or website. **Favorite website [www.awaytogarden.com](http://www.awaytogarden.com) Sign up for her emails – she sends great information and interviews of wonderful gardeners. I also rather enjoy on Instagram - Claus Dalby from Denmark, James Farmer from Georgia, River Road Farm (riverroad59) from New England, Clove Brook Farm from New York and Garden Answer from Oregon. Favorite books - Southern Living Garden Book, Arkansas Wildflowers by Don Kurz, A Way to Garden by Margaret Roach and On Garden Style by Bunny Williams (a girl can dream about her gardens).**
8. Do you grow any plants that you consider, “out of the ordinary?” **Not really, I do plant my Amaryllis bulbs in the yard in the spring.**
9. What would you grow if you could that does not grow in Arkansas! **Rhubarb**
10. What gardening advice would you give a new gardener? **Get in and get dirty, educate yourself and have fun.**
11. What is your favorite hobby when not gardening? **Quilting and needlework.**
12. Which PCMG sanctioned project are you on now? **Mount Holly. I just have to shout out to a wonderful group I work with. We get in there and get bloody most work days (those roses have thorns) and can party with the best of them. We are a great group of friends, as I suspect all projects are. Pictures below are from Cindy’s garden.**





Randy Forst



1. A brief history of your life that might include how long you have lived in Little Rock, family, education, work history, where you garden now/yard-community garden-shade, sun, wet, dry/irrigated. Just some basics

**Born on a Cattle/Row crop farm. Agriculture/Hort Agent for Pulaski County Extension. Transferred to Little Rock eight years ago. I have a farm where I raise sheep/cattle/chickens in Little Rock. I have a large mix perennial garden of natives and ornamental plants. I have about 100 thornless blackberries.**

2. Who got you interested in gardening? **My grandfather. I started gardening with him when I was 5 years old.**

3. Your favorite garden plant- why? **The miniature jonquil variety “Tete a Tete”. Blooms early and I know that Spring is on its way.**

4. Your favorite garden tool- **The ROOT SLAYER! My back loves it! It also makes dividing perennials an easy task.**

5. Your most memorable plant success or failure. **When I was six, I planted a whole bed of mixed petunias in a large, rusted metal tractor tire hub. It bloomed all summer long. I thought it was the greatest display bed ever!**

6. Do you have a gardening goal or fun gardening plant or activity you want to try this year? **As I get older, I realize the importance of having plant labels. I am getting forgetful! LOL! My goal is to start labeling my plants.**

7. Your favorite gardening book or website. **The latest Baker Creek Heirloom Seed catalog.**

8. Do you grow any plants that you consider, “out of the ordinary?” **Mango Tree. No Mangos yet!**

9. What would you grow if you could that does not grow in Arkansas! **Jacaranda Tree. I love the purple color! Pictured above.**

10. What gardening advice would you give a new gardener? **Don’t fret if a plant dies. It just gives you an excuse to try something new.**

11. What is your favorite hobby when not gardening? **Watching and listening to my colony of Purple Martins swooping around their nesting condos and gourds.**

12. Which PCMG sanctioned project are you on now? **With my work position, I guess more or less all of them!**

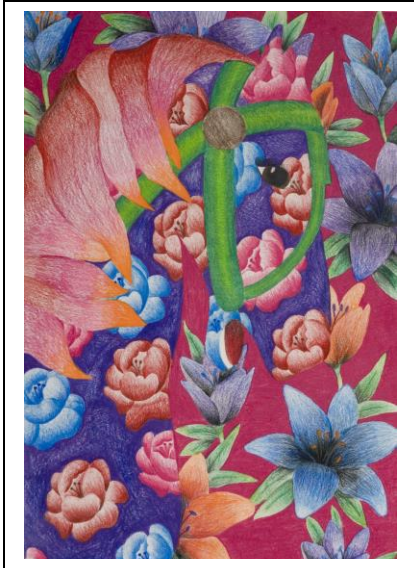


## Origins of the Q & A Café: The Gardening How To Stage

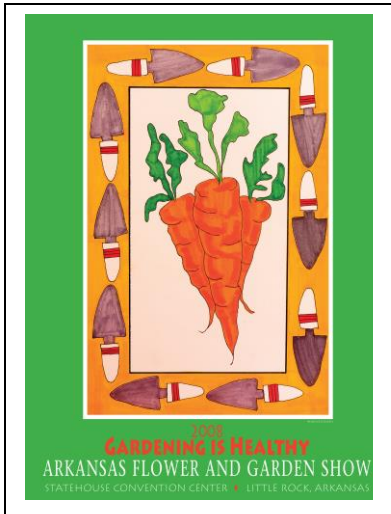
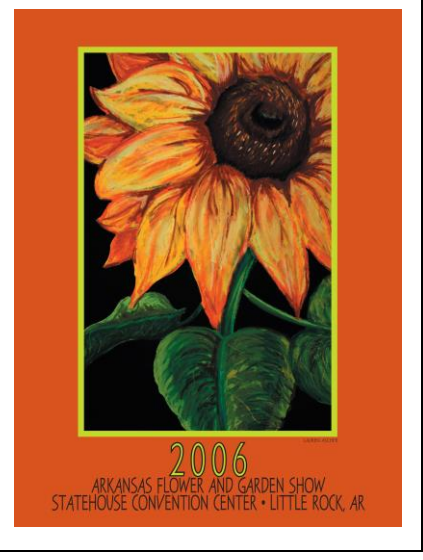
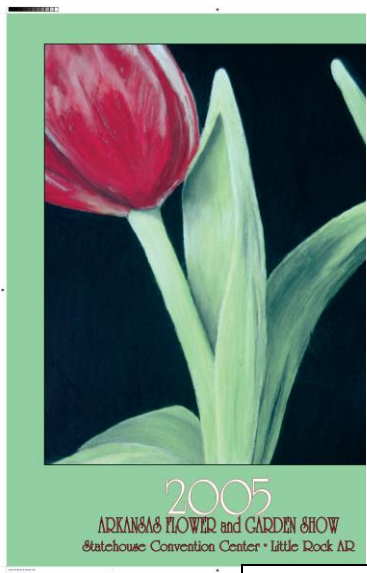
By: Mary Russell- Evans

The original idea for a hands-on speaker on the show floor was the “Potting- Shed.” My story last month featured a picture of David Dodson on the Potting Shed stage. In 2000, I went to the Philadelphia Flower Show with Janet Carson and 52 others. They had a similar setup they were calling the “Q & A Café.” I loved it. I totally stole their idea and the next year we had our first Q & A stage. We had a very large attractive, eye-catching background that was the show logo, pink azaleas. We decorated all around it with, of course, pink azaleas. We had a simple table in front for live demos. We got moved around and stuck in all manner of crevices and corners. One year we were very close to the train garden and had to endure train whistles the entire time- a fun problem to have. Another year, there was a piano player that played piano the whole time. The piano was a little tougher to compete with. There was a booth that sold high powered water nozzles. Impossible to compete with. The show floor at the convention center was always noisy, many distractions, people talking, screaming kids. But we endured. We finally found a home under the low part of the ceiling. It was somewhat more intimate and cut down on some of the background noise. Our stage became increasingly popular over the years. People learned to look for it. We were promoted in Janet’s column in the *Arkansas Democrat*, Janet’s radio show on KARN, my MG newsletter articles, the speaker’s own links, the show program, website, Facebook, Extension outlets, etc. I did interviews with Janet during her show highlighting our activities, then we would chat about other things at the show. Janet would answer garden questions live on the air from the radio show and I would work the audience with a microphone for her to answer questions live from the garden show! Folks loved it. Sometimes I had to convince them that no one could “see” them on the “radio.” Sometimes I made a total fool of myself! (Yeah, I can hear you all laughing) But we all had a lot of fun! At some point we evolved into the “Gardening How To Stage.” The programs were always short, a new one starting every half hour, with a myriad of topics. Folks could walk up, stay for a minute or stay all day. The schedule was in-hand, in their program and we always had a large poster with the day’s events at the stage. They planned their day or weekend activities by the speaker lists. Vendors asked to be assigned booths by the How To, due to high volume foot traffic and the over-the-top fun level. Our stage was a “How To” situation. No matter where or how we were located, there was never a possibility to do any kind of slide show presentation- not an easy thing to do or sell to the speakers. All speakers had to do hands-on, talk with their hands, bring something to show, use posters, use their imagination or assemble something. My favorite/ most popular presentation to do was assembling something- drip irrigation. WHAT? Folks loved it, so I kept doing it! Cindy Franklin did it in 2020. (Thanks Cindy)





Horse - 2007



How To Stage 2020  
Arts and Crafts Bldg.



Cindy Franklin -  
Birds  
How To 2020



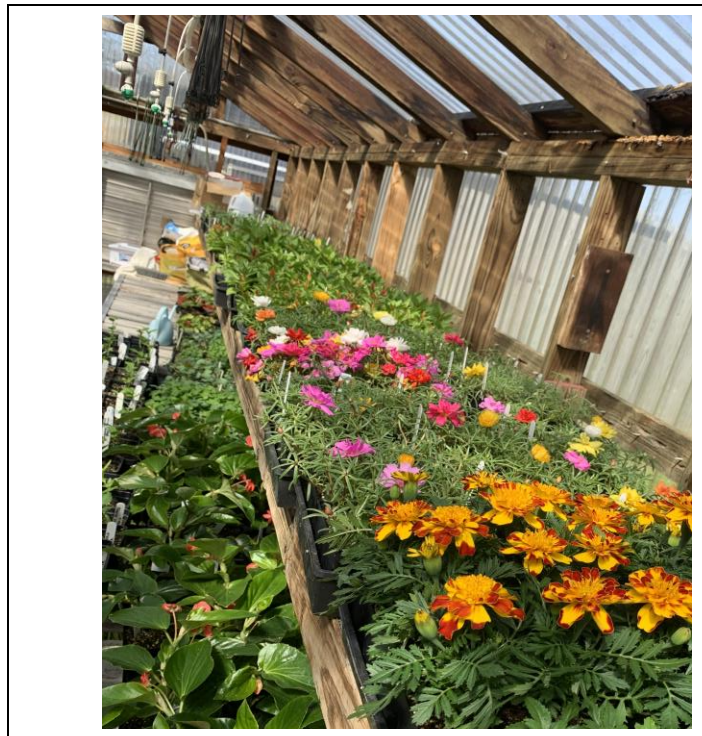
Judy Bradsher with Dunbar School chicken, How To Stage, Convention Center 2017



Jan King talking about herbals oils and vinegars at Q & A 2004



KARN Garden Show 2004  
Janet Carson and Mary Evans



Special thanks to both greenhouse groups – Little Rock and Jacksonville. The plants were in great shape and great prices. I was thrilled by the huge selection of plants as well. LOTS of plants for everyone to share with their neighbors and friends. We are so happy to get more plants for our gardens. All their hard work paid off!  
Pulaski County Greenhouse shown above.

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