

The Magnolia Chronicle

Pulaski County Master Gardener Newsletter

President's Report

As a gardener I look forward to the winter months for rest, by now I am tired of grass mowing. It is a time to take stock of what did and did not work in my yard, leaf through gardening catalogs and dream of what my garden could be. I love the color of the trees currently as they prepare for their months of rest, I even enjoy them in the winter for their structure without leaves. I think it very fitting our Master Gardener logo is of a strong tree.

My year as President is winding down, I have to say thank you to all Pulaski County Master Gardeners for your kindness and support this year. I tell people often just what a great organization we have. There is so much knowledge, generosity, and friendship in our group. It has been my privilege to work with board members Carol Mendel, Sara Jordan, Sharon Priest, Pam Gadberry, Susan Stewart, Jill Bloom, Deana Montgomery, Pam Abrams, Blanca Hernandez, Jan Brandeburg and Nancy Archer. They have worked long hours making our organization run smoothly, thank you to each. I would be remiss if I did not thank Randy Forst, my go to for questions, for keeping me on the straight and narrow. A special thanks to Tina Coley for always sending emails and keeping us all informed.

I want to thank Susan Rose for her many outstanding years as editor of this publication, she sends gentle reminders and keeps me on track for her deadlines. A huge thank you to Jane Gulley for her wonderful monthly meeting segments. To all of you that serve as project chairs, co-chairs, committee chairs or members thank you, we run smooth because of you also.

I have so very much enjoyed my four years on the board and look forward to one more as PEST chair. I have had a lot of fun, met, and gotten to know so many of you and found new and close friends as President. It has been an honor and a privilege.

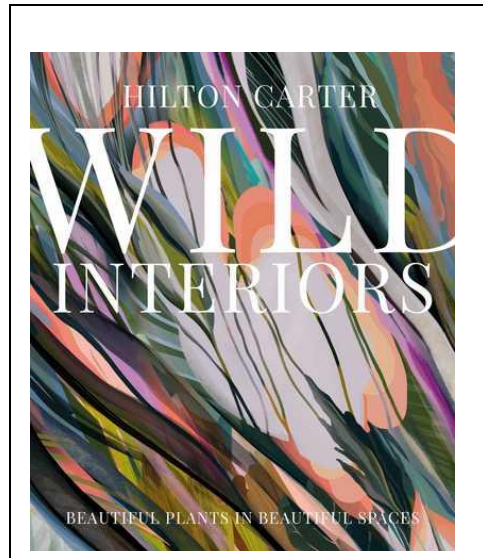
Thank you all.
Your friend,
Cindy Strauss

November-December 2022

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Wild Interiors: Beautiful Plants in Beautiful Spaces

Author: Hilton Carter

Book Reviewer: Debra Redding

Bestselling author Hilton Carter brings his unique eye and love of plants to show you how to create luscious interiors that not only look amazing but are good for your well-being, too. Hilton first guides you through his own plant journey, his inspirations, and his top ten favorite house plants. He then takes you on a Journey in Greenery where he showcases the homes of 12 inspiring plant parents that demonstrate the versatility of decorating with plants. From a tiny house in Venice, California and a light-filled loft in New York City, to a Berlin apartment decorated with vintage finds, and the Barcelona home of a ceramic artist, there are ideas for all types of spaces and budgets. Hilton then sets you off on your very own plant journey, taking you room by room, profiling the plants that are most suited to each: those that thrive in the tropical humidity of bathrooms, the erratic heat changes of kitchens, and plants that can live happily in the indirect light of an entryway or bedroom. Packed full of interior design advice such as using “statement plants” like Fiddle-leaf figs to create a focal point, how to layer your greenery by using hanging baskets, and how to assemble the perfect plant shelf, Hilton shows you how bringing houseplants into your home creates instant impact. Be inspired to create your own *Wild Interiors* with Hilton’s expert styling advice, plus his hints and tips on plant care that take the mystery out of looking after your green friends.

(Information provided by Amazon website)

GARDENING CHECKLIST FOR NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER

By Carol Randle

NOVEMBER CHECKLIST

The following is from a column Janet wrote in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette last year.

“Now is the transition time from active growth to dormancy. November also marks the beginning of the dormant season, which runs through February. Cleanup in the garden will go on, but we typically have a lot of plant material we can add to the compost pile in November. How happy and healthy your garden is now can determine how well it starts growing next spring, so do your cleanup chores.”

“Cut back perennials as they finish for the year, pull out the spent summer annuals and rake leaves. If you have hardy trees, shrubs or perennials that need to be moved from one part of your yard to another, now is a great time to move them. Be careful if digging plants when the temperatures are really low, so that you don’t expose the roots to very cold air or to drying winds for very long. Have the new hole ready before moving the plant.”

“Plants that sometimes struggle in a cold winter —such as hydrangeas, azaleas and figs—should be moved at the end of the dormant season to allow the bulk of winter weather to pass first.”

ANNUALS

If you didn’t get all of your winter annuals planted, now is the time. The later you plant, the larger the plants should be. They must have their root system established before it gets cold. Be sure to fertilize when you plant and side dress during the winter on warm days. In addition to pansies, consider dianthus, dusty miller, snapdragons, and violas. For vertical interest, try mustard, kale, collards or chard. If you didn’t get any plants from the Master Gardeners Greenhouse, check out the local nurseries for other winter annuals. Look for healthy, large flowering annuals now. Not only will you have instant gratification with flowers, but they should bloom well for you all winter. If we do have dry spells, don’t forget to water, especially newly planted plants.

PERENNIALS AND BULBS

Are you cleaning and dividing your perennials? Don’t throw the extra plants away, pass them along. After a killing frost, mulch your beds three inches deep. Plant any bulbs now through December. Planting in masses looks better than planting in rows.

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. More gardeners are planting a fall and winter vegetable garden. Season extenders in the form of covers or high tunnels can make winter production even easier. Janet has grown, in the past, cabbage, kale and Bok choy all winter outdoors with no added protection and still had a 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 prior to a frost, so you don’t lose your plants. The consensus is that, by now, all houseplants and overwintering flowering tropical plants should have been indoors for at least a month. They may still be showing signs of transplant shock.

Houses are particularly dry indoors with heat and lower lights, coupled with 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.

DECEMBER CHECKLIST

BULBS

If you have not started with your bulbs, remember that your spring bulbs must have a minimum of 12-14 weeks of cool weather before the stems can stretch and grow properly. Plant all remaining bulbs by early January, if possible.

ANNUALS

Winter annuals can also be planted if you have gotten behind. The later you wait to plant, the larger the transplants should be. Janet looks for plants that are blooming, especially if she is planting pansies, violas, panolas, and dianthus. Swiss chard, kale and cabbage need time to get roots established before a hard frost, but the past few years 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.

HOLIDAY HINTS

Holiday plants are arriving in all outlets now. Poinsettias still reign as the top seller, but you do have more options on sizes and colors. From desktop miniatures to topiary or hanging basket poinsettias, they all need the same type of care . . . bright sunlight and even moisture. With proper conditions the colorful bracts can stay showy for months. Color choices are the traditional reds to pink, white, plum and even a new orange variety. Also, speckled and bi-colored choices abound. If you want to try something different, bromeliads can come in great shades of red and green and last inside, easily, with minimal care for months. There are also ornamental peppers, paper white narcissus and amaryllis from which to choose. Holiday decorations often add an amazing amount of color inside without plants, but having something that can last after the season is nice, too, and they make great hostess gifts. If you use fresh greenery or Christmas trees indoors, remember how quickly they dry out. Try to keep the plants fresh with ample moisture. If possible, redirect or close the heating vent closest to the tree to keep it from drying out. Once you are done with your tree, consider recycling in a lake for the fish or as a haven for wildlife in a state park. Many parks collect them after the season. You can also decorate one for the birds outdoors. December blooms are: camellias, hollies, nandina, osmanthus, possum haw, rosehips, tea plant, viburnums and violets.

HAPPY THANKSGIVING AND MERRY CHRISTMAS

Thank you, Susan, for the years of good Magnolia Chronicles. We will miss you.

Note from the editor.

I have truly enjoyed the last 5 to 6 years editing the Magnolia Chronicle for the PCMG. This has been a rewarding and educational opportunity for me. It has been great meeting many master gardeners over the years and working with them getting articles ready for the deadlines. Everyone has been wonderful!

Susan Rose

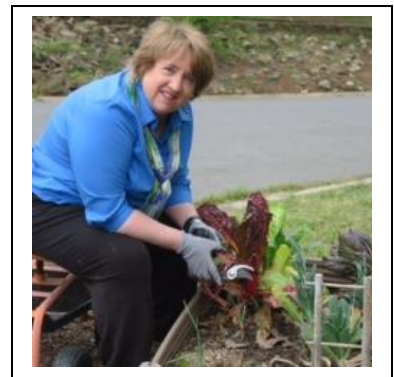


Interview with Dana Downs, September 2022 **By Jane Gulley**

I had the opportunity to interview Dana Downs this month. Dana has had an interesting life. She grew up in Connecticut and joined the military where she served in the medical field.

During that period of time she married and moved to Texas. She did some gardening and credits her mother for instilling a love of gardening in her life. Dana helped her mother in the garden and although Dana hated weeding, she loved the peacefulness and sense of accomplishment. She did not have much time to garden after moving to Texas because she started her family-4 children. In fact, not only was she the mother of four children she went back to school to fulfill her lifelong dream of becoming a nurse. She was also working full time. Dana said she did not have time to garden, and I wondered when she had time to sleep or eat. After her children were grown Dana made time in her life for gardening. She and her husband moved again and later in Dana's words, "her life ebbed and flowed." Dana and her husband divorced and later her life changed again when she met the love of her life and remarried. Her husband is not a gardener and is happiest with plain, simple, and green. Opposites attract! Even though Dana and her husband have differing gardening styles, Dana has maintained her involvement in Master Gardeners. She joined in 2002 but had to take a leave of absence to care for her parents who are now deceased. Dana said again how much her late mother influenced her life. Her mother's love of flowers, especially geraniums, has stayed with Dana. Dana loves the red blooms, ease of care, and the wonderful memories.

To help Dana with her gardening chores she likes to use a root slayer. Several of the MG that have been interviewed have chosen the root slayer as their favorite gardening helper. I asked Dana what her favorite gardening success was and she said it was when she threw wildflower seeds mixed with tomato and cucumber plants into a new garden plot. The plot turned into a beautiful spot with delicious veggies and fruit. Another success of Dana's was one she did not realize. Mary Evans sang Dana's praises about Dana's hard work for the Arkansas Flower and Garden Shows. Mary sent me this nice tribute to Dana, "She came every year for the early work. She helped build so many things, froze her rear off with us, helped at the show for set and take down. Gladly accepted her assignments, no matter how horrible. She helped lots around the whole show. Always smiling and a great attitude in spite of whatever was going on around us." Dana gives the same commitment to her present MG Project, Pinnacle Mountain, but Dana has interests besides gardening. She enjoys playing with animals, sewing, reading, and helping with her 21-yes 21-grandchildren! It was a pleasure to get to know Dana better-I appreciate her taking the time to volunteer to be interviewed.



Interview with Janet Carson By Jane Gulley

Sally Garrison, our first PCMG President, said: “Janet built a wonderful organization from a mustard seed”. We all know the parable of the mustard seed. Humble beginnings and faith can flourish into full-fledged success. Janet believed in the MG program and all of us, and then convinced us we could succeed.

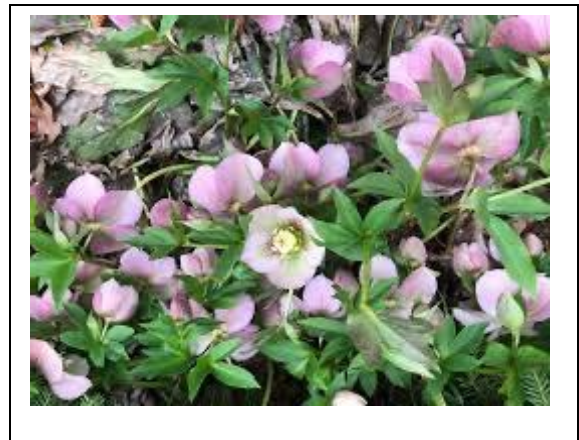
Janet was born in St. Louis, Missouri but because her father worked for the telephone company the family moved every three years. Janet came to Little Rock when she was in the 10th grade and went to U of A Fayetteville to get her horticulture degree. She started work as a county agent 2 months after she graduated and although the County Extension Office has changed from the early days, Janet was the first full time female agricultural agent in Arkansas. In 1982 the PCMG lost Janet because she moved to the State Extension Office. The PCMG got Beth Phelps and over the years Janet and Beth have become very dear friends. Even though Janet left us for the State Extension Office she has been a constant support for us. She came back when we honored our first 10 PCMG past presidents.

Janet has a sweet husband, Clay, who can do all kinds of home improvement projects and two grown children, a son-in-law and a dog named Petals. Oh she also has two grand dogs. Clay, her husband, retired in January of 2022 after 42 years with the Arkansas Democrat Gazette. Janet was with Extension 38 years. They both loved their jobs and in Janet’s words, “Our jobs were a big part of who we were as people.”

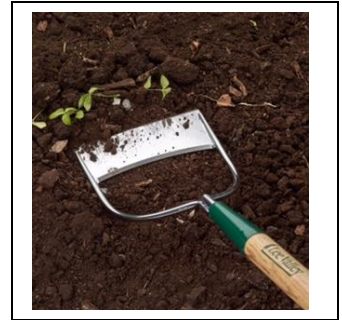
Janet gardens in the rocks of Leawood but like several of the other people who have been interviewed, her grandparents got her interested in gardening-I am thinking of Randy and Cindy. That is something for all of us need to keep in mind. We can help others develop a love of gardening. As always Janet has true words of wisdom. When I asked what her favorite plant was she said favorites change with the seasons. I thought that was a good way to keep interested in gardening all year long. She did add she likes hellebores because of their easy care and they give color December through April. More words of wisdom. Janet said she tries not to remember her gardening failures and she mentioned her tuberous begonias. They challenge her but are so rewarding when she gets blooms! Remember that old saying: “Whoever wants to reach a distant goal must take small steps”. When I asked Janet about her favorite book or website she joked and said **In the Garden with Janet**-her real answer was Michael Dirrs book of woody plants. Her first answer **In the Garden with Janet** you are all familiar with because it is her question and answer article in the newspaper every Saturday. You also know about her Blog, **Plannit Janet**, but did you know that over the years she has done numerous television spots and had her own television program for 8 years. The very first year she worked for the County Extension Office she had a radio show called “Ask the Expert.” It was on KARN the Arkansas Radio Network and was local for an hour. Later it went to two hours. The first hour was local and the second hour was statewide. It ran until KARN was purchased and the new owners changed the station format.

Even though my mother and I both lived in Little Rock, we talked every morning on the phone. Back in the “old” days there was no such thing as email or texting. Mother and I never talked on Saturday mornings during Janet’s program because we were both glued to the radio getting the latest gardening tips and solving gardening problems. One Saturday morning my sister called me from her home in Seattle, Washington upset after mother had asked sister if anything was wrong and after finding out all was well told sister to callback later because Janet Carson was on the radio. My sister wanted to know who in the world was Janet Carson and what was she talking about!

Janet is actually growing an edible olive tree and a pineapple guave plant but wishes she could grow lupines even though they do not grow in Arkansas. She does have interests besides gardening-hard to imagine. She enjoys cooking and reading. Have you noticed how many gardeners enjoy reading-I guess we need an activity to let our bodies rest. I thought Janet’s advice to new gardeners was more words of wisdom: “Start small, and build on success- try, try again and have fun!” Janet has certainly been helping all of us do that over the many years she has taken her time to share her knowledge and love of gardening with us through articles, classes, radio, television and now the new-fangled internet.



Interview with Bernice Ufford By Jane Gulley



We have a special treat for this interview. One of our members, Bernice Ufford, came to our group from many miles away - New Zealand! Bernice moved to the United States in 1982, but before she moved here she worked in a plant nursery with her mother. She started her nursing training in 1975 and getting her nursing degree changed the direction of her life. She came to America and has worked at the Arkansas Heart Hospital for 25 years. She and her husband live on 5 acres in Saline County. Bernice sent pictures of the long driveway at her home that has flowering trees, daylilies, roses, and other plants lining the way.

Like many of us, Bernice's gardening experiences started with her mother-I noticed in the interview Bernice says Mum and not mom - as they walked around the garden. Bernice's Mum taught Bernice the botanical names for the plants. Those early experiences influenced Bernice's garden choices. She favors an English garden look and loves roses and daylilies. She is disappointed she has not had the luck her Mum had starting roses from cuttings. Like the rest of us her goal is to get the weeds out of her gardens. Her weeding is helped by her Dutch hoe. A picture is included, but a Dutch hoe uses a push pull motion instead of a chopping motion. Bernice brought the head of her favorite hoe in her luggage on her trip from New Zealand! I laughed when I saw the plant Bernice would like to grow in Arkansas. It is Rhubarb. Cindy Strauss had the same wish. Bernice has been successful growing Vitex and Golden rain trees on her property although she has many visiting deer. Her advice to new gardeners would be good for all of us to remember: Realize that gardening is work and that plants die sometimes no matter what you do... just keep trying. Bernice has beautiful gardens but her absolutely gorgeous handwork and paintings are a rare and special talent. She enjoys both pastimes when she is not gardening or reading Secret Gardens of England.

Bernice had a trip to England this summer. She and a fellow nurse- the nurse friend was from England- had a whirlwind trip. On their trip Bernice and her friend had a special treat. They got to meet Prince Charles and Camila. Bernice actually spoke to Prince Charles. What an experience!

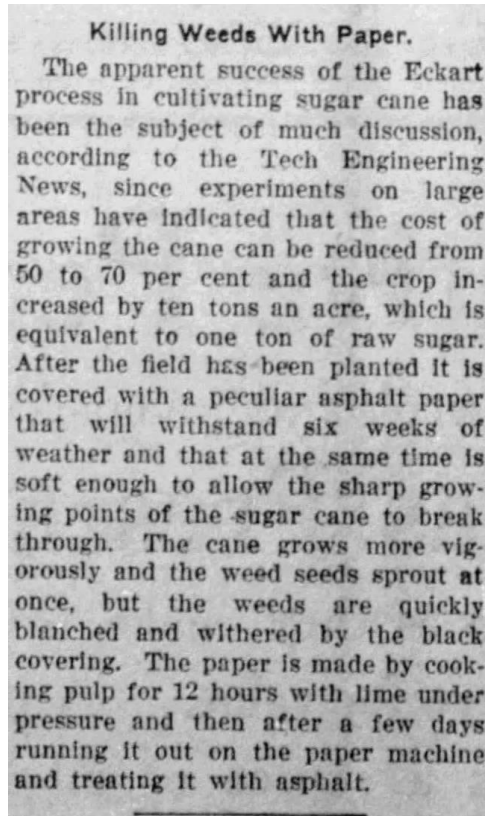
Oh, I almost forgot, Bernice's love of roses shows in her choice of her MG work. She is on the Mount Holly project.



“Killing Weeds with Paper”

By: Mary Russell- Evans

In 1998 I read Pat Lanza’s new book **Lasagna Gardening: A New Layering System for Bountiful Gardens: No Digging, No Tilling, No Weeding, No Kidding!** I went crazy for it and immediately started practicing her methods. It really works. Try it yourself! I had discovered the latest, greatest new thing! Throw on the brakes. Recently on newspapers.com, the most interesting article caught my eye. “Killing Weeds with Paper.” This appeared in **The Crane Chronicle** (Crane, MO- Branson area) on December 16, 1920.



Nineteen20? They were using paper 100 years ago? What? Who was Eckart? And what was he doing with paper mulch? Being an avid lasagna gardener, off I went down another rabbit hole. From 1914-1921, Charles Eckart was the manager of Olaa Sugar Company, located nine miles from Hilo, Hawaii. They knew that weeds sapped the life out of crops. Traditional weed control methods involved heaping crop refuse between rows, creating a blanket to cover the weeds and conserve moisture. In 1919, Charles abandoned that and developed an idea using bagasse (dry, pulpy residue left over after extracting the sugar) in an on-site paper mill to create paper suitable for mulching pineapple fields. This papermill was the first such operation in the Territory and the only one in the US. Eckart came up with a plan to impregnate the paper with asphalt to make it last longer. One article showed the machinery necessary to lay down rows of it. (Hawaiian Sugar Planter’s Assoc/ Plantation Archives.) This paper mill made enough paper daily to cover 9-11 acres, 1,600 pounds paper per acre. The young sugar cane ratoons and seed cane could easily pierce the paper, whereas the weeds could not. They blanched underneath and promptly died. Charles discovered that the black paper raised the daytime soil temperature by 10’ and night temps were 5’ cooler, resulting in bigger, earlier crops with less labor. Read on.

Eckart's idea was catching on. In a 1914 newspaper article Florida State Horticultural Association was using paper for roses. 1923 sugar cane trials in the Virgin Islands concluded: not worth the cost of the paper.

1924 USDA trials had good results. They trialed tomatoes, sweet corn, green peas, sweet potatoes, beets, carrots, peppers, eggplant, celery and cucumbers. An August 1928 article in Scientific American reported that 90% of Hawaii's pineapples were under paper. They updated the USDA's trails, now running four years. Every crop performed nicely, except peanuts. USDA only entertained the idea of trialing with cotton. They experimented with papers of different colors. These papers were never covered. Ohio trials experienced moisture shortages. Hmm..

In 1932 Michigan State College of Agriculture studied the use of paper on peach trees. They had seen the trials with pineapples in Hawaii and forest trees in Canada. Their conclusions: the paper could be recommended for smaller vegetable plots. For weed control around young cherry trees in Wisconsin, they determined the high cost of the paper wasn't worth it. (Remember Olaa had their own onsite paper mill, including raw materials.) 1933- University of Michigan- Agricultural Experiment Station included trials in Ohio, Michigan, Canada and at Cornell. Some trials were inconclusive- most determined not worth the cost of paper, but with a recommendation for vegetable crops. In 1929- 1930 they trialed 28 species of vegetables, studied total yields, rainfall amounts, temperatures and compared varieties in both years. Like Hawaii, the paper delivered earlier crops.

The paper was held down by piling soil on the edges which consistently caused the edges to rot, becoming loose, often blowing away before it could be fixed. This added to the expense, re-laying old paper, buying new paper and ongoing damage to the crop. Staples were necessary. Their conclusion? Best suited for home gardens, useful to keep weeds in check while a gardener might be "vacationing for a few weeks." 100 years later, Pat Lanza is covering newspaper with all kinds of materials and planting directly into it- the same day. Too bad Eckart didn't figure out to pile the plant refuse "on top of" the paper. **Lasagna Gardening** is a MUST read. Heck, I am so into it, I felt compelled to "do all this."

So, now the question you are all dying to know! (drum roll...)
From Google: "Does asphalt leach into soil?"

"This material is so non-toxic, in fact, it frequently is used in fish hatcheries as a barrier to keep out contaminants from hazardous landfills. Contrary to popular belief, asphalt does not dissolve in water, nor does it leach chemicals into the soil."

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