

# The Dirt



Carroll County Master Gardener Newsletter

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS:

- NEXT CCMG meeting is Saturday, October 11, 2008, 10 a.m., at Carroll County Electric.
- Seed exchange at the October meeting.
- CCMG meeting will be November 8, 2008, at Carroll Electric.
- Carroll County Fair earnings: Country Store = \$316.65; Education Booth = \$12.50
- County Extension Agent Linda Chappell was the raffle winner of the beautiful wall hanging made and donated by Merrily Ward.
- Neta Sue now has hardy poinsettias ready @ \$1.50 each. Money will be donated to CCMG. Call her for more info at 423- 5678.

If you have questions or concerns about anything contained within this newsletter, please feel free to contact me at 870.423.2958.

Sincerely yours,

Leon Duncan

# The Dirt for Carroll County Master Gardeners

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## CCMG Officers for 2009:

Jean Erikson - President

Lavonna Schell - Vice President (timekeeper and program chairperson)

Richard Knight - Secretary

Anita Engert - Treasurer



## October Seed Exchange

If you have seeds you'd like to exchange please bring them to the October meeting as we will be having a seed exchange. Be prepared to tell us how to plant and care for the seeds you bring. Dave's Garden has seed packet forms that you can download. Log onto <http://www.davesgarden.com> to print them out. You can print them with or without pictures on the front of the packet and the pre-designated spaces to include your seed information are very handy.

## Messages from Out-Going & In-Coming CCMG Officers:

### From 2008 Vice President:

*"If your hours didn't reach me by September 30<sup>th</sup> they were not included in this fiscal year. There is no carry-over of hours. Thanks to all of you who have been so faithful in getting your time reported monthly. It really does help the timekeeper. Remember, we have a new timekeeper beginning October 1<sup>st</sup>. Good luck, Lavonna, you get this position next.*

*"Happy New Fiscal Year to all!"-- Neta Sue Stamps*

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### Message from 2009 President:

*"If anyone has extra plants, please bring them to the seed exchange at our October meeting. I will be bringing some plants as we have been rearranging our garden and separating plants here." -- Jean Ericksen*

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### Message from 2008-2009 Treasurer:

*"Anyone who has book titles and/or magazines to suggest for purchase and donation to the three Carroll County libraries, please contact me or bring these suggestions to our October meeting. We have \$300 to use for book/magazine donations. I will be giving a fiscal, year-end treasurer's report at the October 11<sup>th</sup> meeting."*

*-- Anita Engert*

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## Upcoming Events Calendar

- Oct 8**      **Fall Native Plant Workshop**  
Winthrop Rockefeller Inst., Morrillton;  
\$20. [www.uawi.org](http://www.uawi.org)
- Oct 10 –11**    **Garvan Gardens Plant Sale**  
Hot Springs. 800-366-4663
- Oct 11**      **Master Gardener Day**  
Botanical Garden of the Ozarks,  
Fayetteville. Demonstrations,  
dedication of gardens.  
[www.bgozarks.org/location/directions](http://www.bgozarks.org/location/directions)
- Oct 11**      **CCMG Meeting**  
Carroll Electric, 10 a.m.
- Oct 12**      **County 76 Meeting**  
4-H Center, Ferndale
- Oct 13**      **20<sup>th</sup> Birthday Celebration of AR  
MG Program** 4-H Center Ferndale,  
9:30-noon or 2-4:30. RSVP  
[jcarson@uaex.edu](mailto:jcarson@uaex.edu)

## County 76 General Meeting

October 12 is the general County 76 Membership meeting. County 76 is the statewide advisory group for the Arkansas Master Gardener program. It is open to any Master Gardener who is in good standing in his/her county program. The meeting will be held at the C.A Vines Arkansas 4-H Center in Ferndale, AR. (Directions can be found on our website at

<http://www.arkansas4hcenter.org/FindUs/default.asp> )

We encourage all members to attend and support County 76. We will have a general membership meeting as well as prepare for the 20<sup>th</sup> Master Gardener Birthday Celebration on the following day – Monday, October 13.

### Herbal Event at Governor's Mansion:

The Arkansas Unit of the Herb Society of America welcomes you to its 42nd Anniversary Celebration at the Arkansas Governor's Mansion, November 8 at 10:30 a.m. The event will feature the sale of their new cookbook, [Celebrating Herbs - Forty Plus Years in the Herbarium and Kitchen](#), and a cooking demonstration by Scott McGehee, chef and proprietor of Boulevard Bread, and Jason Knapp, executive chef of the Arkansas Governor's Mansion.

The demonstration will be Saturday, November 8, at 10:30 a.m. and will feature a tasting of cookbook recipes. The cost is \$30 and includes a \$5 discount on one cookbook. Scott McGehee, proprietor of Boulevard Bread and the recently opened Zaza, trained with Alice Waters of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California. Chef James Knapp delights in using the herbarium's organic crop for meals and special events at the Mansion. They will prepare herbal recipes they contributed to the cookbook for tasting. Tasting will feature popular member recipes, too.

### PLANT OF THE WEEK: Red Spider Orchid, *Latin: xMiltassia shelob 'Red Spider'*

Orchids attract me because of their beauty and exotic nature, but my record with growing them is pretty dismal. I'm a one-size-fits-all kind of caregiver and orchids just don't fit that mold. They have specific requirements, and if not given what they need they sulk and die. But there are exceptions. One that has bloomed for me several years in a row is a hybrid called *x Miltassia shelob* 'Red Spider.'

This beautiful orchid is a bigeneric hybrid between two South American orchids, *Brassia* 'Edvah Loo' and *Miltonia* 'Olmec.' Both are in the *Oncidium* alliance of the large orchid family. Many orchids are sexually compatible, a characteristic that would often result in plants being lumped together in one genus in other plants. But, because orchids often coevolved with a specific pollinator, the flowers of these sexually compatible plants may be strikingly different in appearance.

This *Miltassia* is a clumping epiphyte with smooth, thin, foot-long medium green leaves arising from smooth pseudobulbs. In a 6-inch pot plants can grow a foot wide and 16 inches high.

Blooms appear in warm weather, for me usually in June and July. The spikes usually contain six buds that open to 4-inch diameter

spidery flowers. The light maroon-tinged, flattened lip is to 1.5-inch long with conspicuous dark maroon spots. Below it are five slender and tapered maroon tepals marked with bands of yellow. Individual flowers remain open for several weeks and, just before they wither away, they do turn reddish.

This orchid hybrid speaks of spiders. The *Brassia* side of the hybrid has spidery flowers with long, slender 6-inch long tepals that in nature are pollinated by a wasp called the tarantula hawk. In a splendid example of co-evolutionary mimicry, this 2-inch long, orange-winged wasp sees the orchid flowers as spiders and, in the process of setting up to sting the flower, pushes its head into position to receive a dab of pollen. As the wasp visits other flowers cross-pollination is assured.

But the spidery allusion doesn't end there. The *Shelob* hybrids are named for the giant and evil spider that J.R.R. Tolkien brings to life high in the mountains on the border of Mordor in his "Lord of the Rings" volumes. A cultivar sold as 'Tolkien,' and certainly a sibling of 'Red Spider,' was hybridized in 1998 and received awards from the American Orchid Society in 2004.

The *Shelob* hybrids are vigorous and easy to grow by orchid standards. They are epiphytic so must be grown in a coarse orchid bark mix. Because the pseudobulbs don't hold much moisture and the roots are fairly slender, the growing media should not be allowed to dry out between waterings. In the summertime, watering once every five to seven days seems adequate.

Fertilize with a liquid solution twice a month during the spring and summer when plants are making active growth. They should have bright light but not direct sun. Too much sunlight, even in the winter, can burn the thin, sword-shaped leaves.

Over winter plants can be kept in a cool greenhouse with nighttime temperatures between 45-50 degrees Fahrenheit. Or, if kept in the home, give them a bright windowsill location but protect the foliage from sunburn by means of a light curtain liner. Like most orchids, this species can go several years without division. But, when the pot becomes overly crowded with pseudobulbs, divide in the spring just before new growth starts.

By: Gerald Klingaman,  
retired  
Extension Horticulturist -  
Ornamentals