



The Dirt

Carroll County Master Gardener Newsletter

May, 2008

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From the President's Desk:

Since we did not have a May meeting, I'll try to fill you in as I remember.

We had a very good turnout Saturday for our annual plant sale. Plants looked good and sold quickly. We were out of there by shortly after noon. A big "thank you" to all who contributed in any way. We cleared \$462.50. How about that? Have also begun to sell chances on Merrily's quilt.

Merrily did her show-and-tell for the EHC ladies May 15 at Carroll Electric. As always, she did a bang up job. Six MGs joined several club members as well as several working girls for a luncheon featuring dishes using herbs and spices prepared by the EHC ladies.

Workdays have come and gone with

good progress considering the unstable and unpredictable weather we've been having. Much more to be done, but until the weather stabilizes, we will just have to call our work-days. Linda Rogers has also had several delays on the Little Lake Eureka project but will need much help. Work has been done at the fairgrounds, library and butterfly garden. Mary and Karen have big plans at the butterfly garden, so stay tuned. We did get it cleaned and the bushes transplanted from their winter home at Neta Sue's.

Progress on the T-Shirt order has slowed. We must have an order of twenty-four before she will set the screen. We have only seventeen to date but possibly some have not been contacted, so we aren't giving up yet. Call me if

you want one and haven't been contacted.

As you may recall, our group was contacted to join in the Eureka Garden Tour in June. It falls on our regular meeting date, so I feel we need to conduct business as we did not have a May meeting or will we have a July meeting, as that is our family picnic. Some of our members are interested, however, so they will be going. Merrilee Joy is the chairperson, if you are interested.

Remember--Linda Chappell will be conducting a fair-judging class on July 19 on horticulture and floriculture. She reminded me today that we need to have samples so we can have hands-on experience in what judges look for. Even if you are not interested in judging, you learn what to do or not with your own

From the President's Desk continued



exhibits. Let's make up our minds to have a great MG representation this year at the fair. The Grand and the Reserve ribbons are worth \$75 and \$50 so that should give us all an incentive.

Shirley Clark and crew have the hanging baskets for the Berryville Square ready for hanging. They have been in the care of the floricultural

class at Berryville High School's greenhouse. The city will be hanging them before Memorial Day, and the downtown merchants agreed to care for them. Be sure to check them out when you pass through the city.

I have one last thought; election of officers will soon be upon us, so if you're

interested in serving as president, please let someone know. I believe the secretary and treasurer still have a year remaining. We can't survive without you! See you in June at Carroll Electric.

Happy Gardening.
Lavonna

WHAT IS THIS?!

That plant you had come up in the garden that came from who knows where?

The one that's growing in a neighbor's garden that you would like to grow yourself, but you don't know the name?

The one you got as a gift and would like more information about?

You know the one.

The plant that grabbed your attention and for some reason you just can't forget about it, but you don't know what it is.

We are here to help! Don't forget to give us all the clues you can.

Does it grow in shade or sun?

Is the soil moist, soggy or dry?

What time of the year does it bloom?

Tell us everything you can about the plant. A photograph is a must. Include a clear picture of the flower, stem and leaves. (If you need help getting a picture, let me know.)

Send your picture and information to lynn@parade-homes.com.

Or bring it to a meeting. I will enter it in the newsletter and give everyone a chance to identify it.

~I vnn Reiss



If you have any questions or concerns regarding any of the information contained within this newsletter, please feel free to contact me at 870.423.2958.

Sincerely yours,

Leon Duncan
County Extension Agent-Staff Chair

Meet Lynn Reiss

Lynn grew up digging in the dirt. Her mud pies were often decorated with flowers from the neighbors' gardens.

Highlights from growing up are filled with reminiscences of visits to her aunt and uncle. The vegetable garden was the first stop. A plump ripe

good, some stank. Many had a purpose; some were there only because they were pretty.

As she grew up and moved away, gardening became a memory almost forgotten.

Lynn married Ed Reiss in 1968. They had four daughters. Early in their marriage, they moved to Denver, Colorado, away

forget the cucumbers from that garden."

After explaining how to plant cucumbers in hills Ed left her to the job and went out to repair fence. After the first few hills Lynn decided cucumbers could be planted in rows just like everything else. It would be easier and quicker. By the time Ed returned

One exhausted night the cucumbers started floating to the top of the tank and their little mouths were yelling, "Help me, help me." I did just that. At two o'clock in the morning, with car lights shining down the rows, every cucumber plant in the garden was pulled up by the roots and

"Why do you let the Banta hens hide in the garden?"

tomato in one hand and a crisp cucumber in the other were necessities for the tour through the garden. Inspections of all the different vegetables were much more exciting when her uncle would accompany her and show her the hidden secrets of each plant. "Why do

from friends and family. Something she would suggest every young couple do. "It makes it necessary to depend on one another, develop a relationship, and get to know each other without the influence of outside opinions."

After eight years in Denver, they bought a farm in Green Forest

to the house the cucumbers were planted in rows. Seeds spaced four inches apart—three-and-a-half rows, 60 feet long. Ed's only comment when he learned this fact was a smile.

Twenty-five gallons of cucumbers a day - seven days a week! The canner can't keep up. I can't keep up. The

deposited in a pile.

Yes, I still plant cucumbers, and I eat them. Two short rows."

After several years of enjoyable gardening, Lynn developed an allergy to something that left her unable to use her hands for six weeks. Deciding the risk was too great, the

"Twenty-five gallons of cucumbers a day - seven days a week!?"

you let the Banta hens hide in the garden?"

"Why do you put fences around the tomatoes?" Many questions were all patiently answered.

From the vegetable garden they moved on to the flowers. Bright colors, soft colors, tall, short, some smelled

with her parents. It would be a return to her father's family roots, the fulfillment of her husband's dreams and the first vegetable garden. A garden Lynn remembers with great fondness. "It is the innocent mistakes that we remember the longest, and I will never

pickle recipe said to soak them overnight in cold water. I scrubbed out the horse's water tank, disinfected it and dumped in the cucumbers. I threw everything over 3-and-s-half inches long into the woods. And every morning, I picked another 25 gallons of cucumbers.

garden was not planted the following year. That year turned to several without a garden.

Then life made some surprising turns: A divorce after thirty-three years of marriage; two darling granddaughters to be

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JUNE CALENDAR

- June 18-21** It's not too late to register for the **Southern Region Master Gardener Conference** scheduled for June 18-21, 2008, in Oklahoma City. The early registration fee of \$150 is good until May 23. After May 23 the registration fee will be \$200; for reservations call 405.942.8511.
- May 17** **Music in Bloom Garden Tour**, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m., Mountain View, Arkansas, 870.615.0129 or 870.2269.5923
- May 17-18** **Arkansas Native Plant Workshop**, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute
- June 24** **Fruit Field Day**, U of A Research Station, Clarksville, Arkansas, 479.754.2406
- June 28** **Tomatoes: From the Seed to the Plate Workshop**, Winthrop Rockefeller Institute, 501.215.7990
- July 31** **Night Gardening Workshop**, Garvin Woodland Gardens, Hot Springs, Arkansas, 800.366.4664, <http://www.garvangardens.org>

Meet Lynn Reiss continued

raised, six more visiting when time and parents cooperate. The four chicken houses were sold, and Lynn became the sole owner of the 200-acre farm and lost her only source of income.

"Right now, my life is out of balance. There have been so many changes and things I have to learn. It is necessary for me to begin a new career, at a time I should be able to think about retiring."

Once again Lynn has

turned to gardening. Gardening gives you the quiet needed to find yourself, or calm your fears. It sparks creativity, ingenuity and an appreciation for the beauty around us. It teaches us that the things we enjoy come with a price to be paid. Where better to learn that the things we do may not be a total failure, they may just need to be rearranged to make them work.

"I sit out on the deck each morning and evening. The color is

amazing - the red, blue orange, black, rose and brown of the birds; and the yellow, red, purple, blue, green orange, pink and white of the flowers. How could anyone see this and doubt that there is a supreme God to care for us and wants only beauty and prosperity for us all?"

IN OUR GARDENS:

HERB: Basil

If you like the fragrance of basil in Italian sauces, why not grow the plant in your garden and enjoy it fresh? Sweet basil and its many kin are as much at home in the perennial border as they are in the herb garden.

Seeds may be started indoors 4 - 6 weeks before time to transplant. Sprinkle seeds on a soil-less medium in shallow flats or starting pans. Lightly moisten the soil. Cover with plastic. Keep the pans warm but out of direct sunlight.

When the first seeds sprout, place them in direct sunlight or 2-3 inches below grow lights. Basil seedlings will not tolerate over-watering. Allow the growing medium to almost dry between watering. Feed them with a liquid fertilizer once a week.

When the seedlings develop their first true leaves (2-3 weeks) transplant into 2-inch pots. Continue with watering and fertilizing schedule. When outside temperatures warm, begin hardening off the plants.

Transplant basil into the garden well past last frost date (mid May); fertilize and water each plant at transplanting. Continue to fertilize each plant every 2-3 weeks; water as necessary. Basil does not like to dry out.

It is important to keep basil cut back to have a continual harvest of fresh leaves throughout the season. Immediately after planting, prune basil back to just above the bottom two sets of leaves. This early pruning stimulates growth. Continue to prune the plants to just above the bottom two sets of leaves about every four weeks. It is important not to let the plants flower or the leaves will become bitter.

FLOWER: Red Trillium

Latin: Trillium erectu

Trillium was the genus name selected by Linnaeus because all parts of the plant - the leaves, the sepals, the flowers and the seed pod - are all divided into segments of three. Though primarily a New World species, four species are found in Asia. Traditionally, trilliums have been considered a part of the huge lily family, but modern taxonomic treatments now classify them



in their own family.

A single un-branched stem arises from an underground rhizome in mid-spring to produce a triplet of elliptical leaves. In some of the 40 or so species, the leaves are a respectable green, but in others, they are marked with a camouflaged blend of green, gray, purple and brown. Plant height varies from about 6 inches in some of the more diminutive species to about 18 inches in some larger kinds. Trilliums are considered spring ephemerals, but the foliage doesn't die down until mid-summer.

The more ornamental types grown for their showy flowers produce their single blossom at the end of a slender peduncle. The large white trillium (*T. grandiflorum*) is the most common in cultivation, with white petals that merge into a funnel-shaped blossom, 2 inches across. *T. erectum* (red trillium or "Stinking Benjamin") has a broad-spreading red flower atop an erect-to-nodding peduncle.

By many, *T. undulatum*, the painted trillium, is considered the most beautiful of the group. It has white flowers marked with pink or red lines at the throat of the flower. This species is seldom seen today because its beauty and high demand led to over-collecting of wild populations in the middle of the last century.

Even though slow, trilliums are remarkably easy to grow in a well-drained, humus-rich woodland soil. Newly-planted trillium rhizomes usually will not flower for a year or two after being moved, but once they resume blooming will continue to do so for generations to come. The size of the colony will slowly increase from plantlets that arise from the original rhizome. Trilliums produce fleshy seeds that are highly-prized by ants that carry them off to eat the sweet aril attached to the seed coat. This ant dispersal mechanism is called myrmecochory—literally ant farming—and is an example of mutualism where both species benefit from the exchange. To ensure a compact colony of the species I grow, I simply remove the seeds from the capsule and plant them around the base of the original plant. First flowers usually occur on these seedlings in about 5 years.

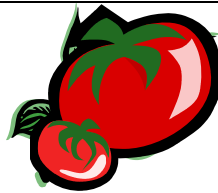


VEGETABLE: Tomato

Family: Solanaceae

Genus and Species:

Lycopersicon lycopersicum



Sometimes, we need to check our habits on old favorites. Tomatoes are a hot weather crop. Tomatoes came from the tropics, so it stands to reason that they like heat and humidity. Tomatoes need light and fertile soil with a lot of organic matter. Too much nitrogen can reduce tomato yields. Make sure the soil is deep (at least 12") and loose. Tomatoes are heavy feeders so mix in compost or chopped leaves to enhance the soil. Tomatoes do well in soils with a pH of 5.8 to 7.0. Tomatoes need high amounts of nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium.

Tomato plants have two distinct growing habits—determinate or indeterminate. Determinate tomato plants require staking or cages to help hold the tomato plant up, so spacing should include room for the stakes or cages. In general, space the tomato plants 12"–24" apart. You should allow for some air circulation between your tomato plants.

Indeterminate tomato plants will spread out on the ground or climb a trellis if offered one. Space indeterminate tomato plants 24"–36" apart, if unsupported. If you trellis your indeterminate tomatoes, space them at 14"–20" apart—keep at least 2' between the rows of tomatoes.

Tomatoes thrive on even moisture. Use straw mulch on the tomato beds to help retain soil moisture. Water tomatoes deeply during dry spells. Water the base of the tomato plant, not the foliage. Watering the foliage when tomatoes are maturing can cause the fruits to crack.

Most tomato plants will need pruning. Pruning reduces the amount of space your tomato plants will take up. Pruning your tomato plant will encourage higher yields of tomatoes. But pruning does take more work.

Pruning involves snapping off the branch that grows in the middle of two others—often referred to as a sucker. Snap the suckers off your tomato plants as they appear. If the sucker has flowers on it—leave it. Leave a few suckers toward the top of the plant to protect the tomatoes from the sun with their leaves. But keep an eye on them, and prune them as needed to keep them from

growing new branches. If un-pruned, your tomato vines will become unwieldy and your tomato harvest will be less. Studies have shown that a pruned tomato plant will produce tomatoes up to 2 weeks earlier than un-pruned. Tomatoes are heavy feeders. Occasionally, fertilize tomatoes with fish emulsion.

Ripe tomatoes stored at room temperature will last 4–7 days. For longer storage life, keep tomatoes at 62° to 68°F with a relative humidity of 90% to 95%. Do not store tomatoes in a refrigerator as the cold will alter the tomato flavor.

Tomatoes are very sensitive to ethylene gas so do not store tomatoes with vegetables and fruits that give off ethylene gas such as apples and pears.

Tomatoes are mature when they reach their mature color. Keep a close eye on the unripe tomatoes once the first ripe tomato has been seen on a tomato plant. The rest will follow soon after.

As the end of the season approaches, pick the remaining tomato flowers to encourage maturation of the existing tomatoes before the killing frosts arrive.

Harvest tomatoes often, and remove all over-ripe tomatoes from the bed. Harvest by clipping the tomatoes from their vines.

Harvest all your tomatoes the night before the first hard frost. Place un-ripened tomatoes on newspaper in a cool, dark room. Some gardeners harvest the entire tomato plant before the first frost and hang it upside down in a cool, dark room. The tomatoes will continue to mature.