Red Dirt Master Memos

If you have any questions regarding anything in this newsletter, please feel free to call (870) 779-3609 or visit Room 215 in the Miller Co. Courthouse, 400 Laurel.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Caraway
County Extension Agent - Agriculture
JWC:jds

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Our very own Red Dirt Master Gardener, James Lamb, gave a great presentation on honeybees to the Bowie Co. Master Gardeners.

Our Next Meeting: April 9, 2015

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The International MG Conference for 2015 will be held in Council Bluffs, Iowa. Janet Carson is working to get a bus for a group to attend the conference from Arkansas. (Let them know if you are interested to travel to the conference on a bus. Cost to travel on the bus is not finalized.)

Date: September 22nd-25th, 2015
Location: Mid America Center, Council Bluffs, Iowa
Early Registration Deadline: April 30th
Standard Registration: May 1st-June 30th
Visit http://www.uaex.edu/yard-garden/master-gardeners/conferences.aspx for the conference schedule and registration.

Cooking Well with Diabetes Cooking School
Join us for a fun, hands-on cooking class that will teach you how to enjoy the foods you love by making a few substitutions.

Classes will be held on Thursdays, April 9th, 16th, 23rd, & 30th, from 2:00-4:00 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church, Texarkana, Arkansas

Cost is $40 per person or $50 for couples. You must pre-register by calling Courtney at 903-628-6702 or email cmdavis@ag.tamu.edu
**Prevent blight, blossom end rot & other common tomato diseases by sprinkling a nonfat dry milk powder in the holes before setting in the tomato plants, adding calcium into the soil.**

*Add Epsom salts along with some compost and mix it in the soil before planting your tomatoes.*

*Put a layer of compost mixed with one teaspoon of Epsom salts and ½ cup of bone meal to the soil before planting tomatoes.*

*You can fertilize tomato plants by sprinkling instant powdered tea around the base of the plants.*

*You can grow sweeter, juicier tomatoes by adding a teaspoon of powdered sugar to the watering can just as the color begins to show.*

I hope everyone is plugged in by now with your Master Gardener project of choice. If you are not, we have plenty to choose from. We have all kinds of projects from teaching kids at the library to pulling to pulling all the weeds you want to pull – some say a great stress reliever!

We are also enjoying some wonderful Monthly Meetings. If you are not making the monthly meetings, you are missing out on great food, great fellowship and great programs. Our meetings are your opportunity to stay informed as to what is going on and for you to have an input in the organization. Hope to see you at our next monthly meeting!

As I have said before, just find your passion and jump right in. There is something in Master Gardeners for everyone.

Happy Master Gardening!

Teresa Slack

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**Planning is Underway for Basic Training**

Planning is underway for Basic Training; the first meeting was March 19th. The dates have been set (Oct. 27th, 29th, 30th, and Nov. 3rd, 5th, & 6th, 2015) and speakers are being contacted.

The next meeting will be Friday, April 10th.

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**Vegetable and Flower Gardening**

April is prime time for vegetable gardening. There is still time to plant cool season vegetables and we can now begin planting warm season vegetables.

Don’t be too quick to plant tomatoes, peppers and eggplant. Mid to late April is the earliest they should be in the ground. Many like to plant tomatoes in relation to Easter, but Easter is early this year and too early for the warm season vegetable. You typically won’t gain any ground with early planting, as the soil & air temperatures just aren’t conductive to fast growth yet. Let everything warm, up, be sure its frost free, then plant.

Pansies and other winter annuals should continue to shine through April and May; violas even longer. Summer bedding plants are in the markets. Some summer annuals will tolerate cool conditions better than others. Petunias, calibrachoa, verbena, and sweet alyssum can be planted now, but hold off a week or two for lantana, periwinkle, coleus and penta. They prefer warm soil.
Thanks to Gayle, we are now celebrating MG birthdays at our monthly meetings. In March we had to catch up, so we celebrated January, February, and March birthdays. If it is your birthday during the month of our meeting, you will be acknowledged and get to pick out a present, but you must be at the meeting.

Garvan Woodland Gardens

550 Arkridge Road, Hot Springs National Park, AR 71913 • 800-366-4664

Herbs for the Black Thumb

APRIL 12th • 1:30-3:30 • Registration Required • Magnolia Room

Despite their reputation, most herbs are tough, easy to grow, & provide bountiful harvests in pretty humble conditions, if you know their “secrets.” Debbie Tripp, nursery owner and herbalist, takes the mystery out of growing herbs and gets you off to a great start with specifics you need for each of your favorites.

Free Members - $15 Non-Members. Reservations required.

The Succulent Garden

APRIL 13th • Carson/Byers Workshop • 9:30-2:00 • Magnolia Room

Join State Horticulture Specialist Janet Carson and Garvan Woodland Gardens Landscape Architect Bob Byers to learn everything you need to know for success in gardening with succulents. Learn about everything from recommended varieties for Arkansas through best cultural practices and designs using these amazingly tough plants to create beautiful water wise gardens. And, take home your own mini-succulent garden.

$75 members
$90 non-members
Reservations required.

Advanced MG Class – Garden Art at the Gateway

The Advanced MG Program is open to any Master Gardener who has been a member in good standing in his/her county program for at least 3 years (2012).

When: May 30, 2015 ~ Where: First National Bank Community Center, 11 E Main St., Paris, AR ~ Cost: $60 (includes all training materials, lunch and other refreshments) ~ Registration deadline is May 1, 2015

Class registration & agenda can be found at http://uaex.edu/yard-garden/mastergardeners/mgonly/advanced-mg.aspx. This program is designed to train volunteers to develop simple garden art projects using inexpensive materials to enhance their gardens. Topics include flea market gardening, totems, glass flowers, fairy gardens, plant markers, and more. Participants make and take two projects home and compete in a fun totem contest. Trainers will be Lori Spencer and Robin Stauffer. Training begins at 9:00 and ends by 4:30 p.m. Contact Lori Spencer at 479-963-8870 or bflyspencer8@gmail.com for more information.
Part 3 in a series of 3

By Martha Bean

Weeds Bring Beneficial Bugs

Weed species of Solanum, Amaranthus, and Solidago are the favored housing for a variety of beneficial ground beetles, and their flowers provide excellent sources of pollen and nectar for beneficial insects. Having a food source not only encourages beneficial insects to stay around, but it also makes them healthier and increases their effectiveness: They lay more eggs and so are better able to control the bad bugs. In general, small flowers attract small bugs and large flowers attract large bugs.

Small-flowered weeds, such as clover, fennel, goldenrod, lamb’s quarter, mint, Queen Anne’s lace, solanum, and wild mustard attract tiny parasitic wasps; lacewings, hover flies (that feast on caterpillars, aphids, & leaf-hoppers); and tachinid flies – voracious destroyers of pests such as Japanese beetles, Mexican bean beetles, cutworms, and grasshoppers.

Large-flowered weeds, such as Amaranth, calendula, cosmos, and daisies attract large predatory insects, such as ground beetles, that gorge on cucumber beetles, caterpillars, and grasshoppers.

So, the next time you’re thinking about pulling those weeds, remember that they may actually be of benefit – and can help you to grow your best garden ever!

First Spring Cleaning Day Held at HCFM

Three Master Gardeners and four Howard County inmates started the spring cleaning at Howard County Farmers’ Market, March 28th. Master Gardeners Gary Driver, Monica Stallsworth and Debra Bolding worked with the inmates to clean out the beds at the Market’s garden Nashville Demonstration Organic Garden (NDOG). Shelving was also added to the storeroom that MGs built last year.

NDOG will be planted at the next workday, scheduled for Saturday, April 18th. Plans are to add a greenhouse to the site this season, if anticipated funding is received.

The market opens May 1st, 2015.

Farmers Market NDOG Spring Cleaning Workdays

Howard County Farmers’ Market Nashville Demonstration Organic Garden
Spring Cleaning Workdays - Saturday, April 18 - 8:00 a.m.–noon

Howard County Farmers’ Market opens May 1st and Master Gardeners will be holding a second “Spring Cleaning” workday to get the demonstration garden ready for this season’s activities ... Anyone interested in helping get the garden and market ready is invited (and needed)!!!

Howard County Farmers’ Market is located at 110 South Washington, between Howard and Hempstead Streets, adjacent to the Howard Co. Health Unit and Senior Citizens Center.

Please contact Debra Bolding at 870-557-2352 or Mary Hartness at 501-472-8092 if you can come out and help (or just show up at 8:00 a.m.)