begins in November for five 8-hour days. The topics covered are quite interesting, and you will get a notebook full of information about gardening, pruning, aquaculture, composting, and more. It’s a terrific way to learn more and meet some great people in a four-county area. For more information about the 2015 training, you may phone the County Extension Office at 448-3981.

Of course, you are always welcome to visit with us at our monthly meetings. We are transitioning from 10 a.m. on the third Thursday of the month to the third Wednesday of the month beginning in August.

DATES TO REMEMBER

June 4th: Work in Marshall Elementary School garden from 9-11 a.m. every other Thursday beginning June 4th

June 8th: Work at Marshall High School garden from 9-11 a.m. every Monday harvesting for Feeding the Kids on Tuesday.

June 18th: Master Gardener monthly meeting at County Extension Office at 10 a.m.
A good news item this year as concerns pruning—it was not too late when the calendar read March. The late winter weather had set back the work we gardeners would have done in mid-to-late February. While some hardy souls may have sawed through a quarter inch of ice and slogged through 6 inches of snow, I did not. Now in late April I have seen signs that the March pruning was good for this season’s flowering plants.

The arrival of new foliage was slowed on fruit trees, summer flowering and evergreen shrubs, roses and blueberries. So I had extra time for pruning, something a procrastinator loves. Some plants, like the crape myrtle, were cut back after leaves started to appear. But since they were not in full leaf the pruning will not delay the first blooms.

To help with pruning later this year and next year, let’s look at the how, when and why of pruning. The following are the words of Janet Carson of the U. of A. Cooperative Extension service.

- **Why?**
  1. To improve flowering or fruiting.
  2. The plant had damage or has grown too large.
  3. The plant needs shaping.

- **When?**
  1. For the plants that bloom in summer or fall, prune in February: roses, Rose of Sharon, butterfly bush, clethra and crape myrtles.
  2. For the plants that bloom in the spring, prune later this year.

Note a few plants that don’t follow the rules. Refer to note 1 at the end of this article.

- **How?** There are so many kinds of plants: those with a dominant trunk or cane producing plants or small-leaved plants. Again, refer to note 1 below.

Note 1: Visit the office of your county extension agent for some helpful publications. Guidelines for pruning can also be found on the U. of A. website, division of Agriculture’s Cooperative Extension Service. A search at uaex.edu for fruit trees will refer to guide #FSA-6042 and for grapes #FSA-6108.

Finally, let’s all remember to take time to soak up the cool air and colorful sunrises of this magnificent spring in the Ozark Mountains.

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**All-Purpose Garlic Pepper Spray**

This recipe is flexible—use what you have around the house! Don’t have any cayenne powder? Any hot pepper will work; the Marshall School Garden used dried Trinidad scorpion peppers from last fall’s harvest. You could even try hot sauce. Have fun experimenting, and share! What works in your garden?

- 3-4 bulbs garlic
- 3 tablespoons cayenne powder
- 1 tablespoon liquid dish soap
- 2 cups water

Grind or chop garlic. Add garlic and hot pepper powder to water and steep, covered, for one hour. Strain out the solid matter. Add liquid dish soap to solution immediately before use and shake well. Store in the refrigerator for up to several days. Apply directly to plants every 7-10 days for prevention, and as needed when pests appear.

Note: fumes can be irritating to nose and eyes.
To start the new garden find a location that will have sunlight eight hours a day. Watch the path of the sun around buildings. The south side of a building will have sun all day. East side will have morning sun during the cool part of the day. West side of a building will have shade in the A.M. and hot sun noon to night. Depending on how the building sits the north side may have shade early morning close to the building. Depending on the plants that are to be raised and the sun they require that will determine the location of the garden. Trees that shade during the planting time need to be considered too. Note the type of trees close by. Walnut trees will produce toxins that will kill plants or severely distort the plants. With location determined, let’s go to the soil.

Perfect soil is loamy, dark, weed rock and grass free. Good luck with finding that location! There are ways to fix problems of soil rocks and unwanted vegetation. If your plot is going to be large, plow with a tractor during the winter and turn roots to cold weather. Pick rocks that are large. These can be used in a border around the outside of the garden Amendments can be added while the dirt is still in large clods. Peat moss will lighten the heavy soil. One bag for a 16X16 area every year till the soil is easily turned and color changes darker. (NOTE: PH of peat moss is 6.)

Smaller gardens can be started above ground, using rocks, railroad ties, boards or just something that will raise the garden edges 8-12 in. Loamy soil can be added to this area after a barrier is placed over current ground. Barriers can be as simple as newspaper, feed bags that are opened and spread out with strings removed. (Plus these will not be on our beautiful roadside). It takes about 1-3 months for bags to break down, so use the shovel or potato fork shallow for the first season. The bags can also be used as week barriers between rows of plants.

Watering the garden is needed with our hot summers. Placement of the garden near a water source is very important. The garden close to the house is nice. Water is available and carrying the produce to the house made easy. If this is not an option, use an area that you travel past every day that has good water source like a creek or pond. Those of us that can no longer carry buckets of water will not find this an option.

The size of the garden will be determined by the tools you have available, (shovel, tiller, tractor) and the amount of vegetables you want to raise in the garden. Starting small 8X8 or 16X16 will make it easy to maintain by hand. Starting small makes for more success because it does not overwhelm the gardener. If it goes good the first year increase the garden to another 8X8 or 16X16. Each year the garden gets better. The compost of cow or horse manure added each year is great. *Adding to a 16X16 four-5ft front in loader or 15 wheel barrow loads is usually adequate. Remember to soil test yearly. *This gives information to what is needed for the garden in nutrients. If what is being taken in by the plant is not appropriate, you can’t blame the plant.

After planting the garden make a map or picture of the growing garden. Date the picture or map for future reference. This will be used to rotate the plants the next year. Some plants can be rotated in the same garden. Tomatoes only need to move to a different side of the garden. Squash, melons, and cucumbers need to be placed in a different garden especially if the garden is small. Squash bugs will be less of a problem if the plants are rotated from garden to garden.

Plants that like each other example: tomatoes and bell peppers, then corn and squash, green beans. Broccoli does not like green beans so rotate the crops appropriately.

Make the garden a family event. Incorporate grandparents, parents and children. Eating vegetables out of the garden, after the child picks the vegetable is great. Garden grazing “here taste this” is a nice game to play. Each generation adds to wonderful memories and knowledge. So like an old established garden spot these moments are “priceless.”
MASTER GARDENER CLUB OFFICERS

President-Sharon Joslin

WELCOME TO MEMBERS

John and Marilee Bachmann
Andie Hession
Lacy Cornell
David and Laura Timby
Laura Clark
Edna Mae Wells
Suzie McCormick
Gary Welchman

You are invited to be a guest at one of our Master Gardener meetings at the Searcy County Extension Office on the 3rd Thursday of each month at 10 a.m.