CAN YOU DIG IT?

Newsletter of the Piney Hills Louisiana Master Gardeners
Fall 2014 Issue Editor: Glenda Collums

President's Message

President, Evalyn Cabell

Greetings to all of you gardeners. As your new president I would like to say I am honored to represent this wonderful group of folks, and I want to say a big "Thank You" to all of you that have been so great to accept the Chairmanship positions for all of our committees. I appreciate you more than you know. Almost everyone I called was excited and eager to help. That's what makes for a great organization. It takes all of us to be successful and promote Horticulture in our area. It is so much fun to work together as a team.

We have entered a brand new Master Gardener year and we are making plans for a new project. As most of you know the membership voted to skip Trails and Trellises this year, so, instead, we are having a SPRING GARDEN FESTIVAL! We plan to have it at the Extension Office grounds, and we will have our plant sale at the festival. Also, in the works are vendors, hands on demonstrations, speakers and more. Since this is taking the place of Trails and Trellises this year, we need to make it a great event. Frankie Brand has graciously agreed to chair the Festival; when she asks for your help, please say "Yes", with a smile on your face. We will adopt the same policy for this event as we did with T and T. - it will be necessary for ALL of us to have a job on that day. Each one of us will be expected to help with the Festival in some capacity. There will be an opportunity for you to pick your job area later. We have lost several members this year, but we have gained 6 new and excited members that have just graduated and are ready to "Dig In". Let's be sure to welcome them and get them started right. We are so happy to have you.

So, WHAT IS A MASTER GARDENER???

- **We are Extension Volunteers**
- **We serve the community**
- **We extend horticulture research and practices to the residents and youth of our parishes**
- **We help people help themselves**
- **We bridge the gaps between research and everyday problems**

I think we will have a GREAT year. Who wouldn't want to be a part of such a great group of folks who love gardening and learning more about horticulture and have fun in the process? That's what it's all about - not just the title of Master Gardener, but making sure we earn that title by how we conduct ourselves and by passing along our passion for horticultural education and by teaching others. Enthusiasm is contagious. Let's pass it on.

Happy Gardening y'all.

Class of 2014 Graduation

Thursday, August 21, 2014 was the date of the Piney Hills Louisiana Master Gardener monthly meeting as well as the graduation of six new Master Gardeners.

The graduating class above, from left to right, included Larry Dean, George Dean, Melissa Caskey, Tiffany Fox, Pam Gruner and Janice Clark.

After an intense 10-week course, the class was awarded a completion certificate, member card and the coveted Master Gardener Volunteer pin.

Class Coordinator, Marjorie Thomas, also presented small gifts to each for bug boards completed during the class. Bug boards were graded on the point system with 132 points being the highest score.

A wonderful meal was served by the August Food Committee and table decorations were provided by several other Master Gardeners.

A warm welcome is extended to these new enthusiastic PHLMG members !!!

To-Do List for the Fall Garden

A flower garden can tell you a lot at the end of the growing season. You'll want to assess the results of all your spring and summer work, and prepare the garden for next spring.

- **First, take a walk around your garden and look at how all the plants did over the summer.**
- **Track successes and failures of individual plants.**
- **Identify which plants have outgrown their space and need to be divided.**
- **Determine which bare areas could use soil amendment and new plants.**
- **Add mulch where necessary.**
- **Check the overall health of plants — look for diseases and damage.**
- **Replace summer annuals in window boxes and garden beds with cool-weather flowers.**
- **Dig up any bulb plants that aren't hardy in your zone.**

<u>Chores</u>

You'll want to weed, deadhead faded blooms, divide overgrown plants, dig up nonhardy bulbs for winter storage, remove spent annuals, amend soil and add needed mulch. Replace ties with jute twine. Natural fibers make the best ties because they're more flexible. They'll break down over time, but at that point, it will be time to retie the plants anyway.

Here's what to do for your perennials and roses:

Roses: Fall isn't the ideal time to prune roses. Pruning stimulates new growth that may not be able to survive the winter, especially in colder zones. Don't even cut off any dead wood.

Yarrow: Remove faded blooms and dried stems and foliage. This sends energy back into the

foliage and roots and encourages new growth. Yarrow flowers can be used fresh or dried in flower arrangements.

Phlox: Cut faded blossoms. If powdery mildew is present, remove most of the stem that has the worst of the problem. Discard any affected debris — do not compost.

Gladiolus: It's important to get these out of the ground before the first killing frost; it doesn't harm the plants to do this while their foliage is still green. Dig out the bulbs and gently shake excess dirt from their roots. Cut off the stalks. Allow bulbs to "cure" (dry) for a couple of days. Shake any remaining soil from bulbs. Put bulbs in a cardboard box with some peat moss and store in a cool, dry place for the winter.

Siberian iris: To divide, dig out the entire clump and then cut it into sections. Replace one section into the original hole and save the remaining sections for other bare areas in the garden.

Clematis: Cut the vine back to the ground. New shoots will form from the base next spring.

Astilbe: This moisture-loving plant prefers to be divided every three to four years. This will help the plant to continue to grow in the following years.

Coral bells: To divide overgrown plants, dig out the entire clump. Try to keep as much of the root ball intact with as much soil around the root as possible. Cut the clump into sections with a spade.

Liatrus: Completely remove the top growth. Once the foliage has died, you must cut it back to the ground to reduce the risk of plant diseases that are harbored there during winter.

Remove all annuals from the garden. You can save seeds from most annuals and plant them next year. Zinnias are an easy plant to collect seeds from and to grow from seed. For window boxes, simply remove summer annuals, add more potting mix and plant cool-weather bloomers like ornamental kale and pansies.

More fall maintenance tips to help keep your garden healthy and happy:

- Disinfect pruners before using them on other plants as you remove spent blooms and foliage throughout the garden.
- Don't put any diseased plants into your compost pile.
- Amend soil where there are bare spots or where you've removed annuals. Add compost and peat garden or to share with neighbors and friends moss to replace nutrients lost during summer growth and to better prepare the soils for spring planting. Turn the amendments into the soil with a garden fork to distribute it evenly.
- Brush off any mulch that's sitting on branches of shrubs because it can cause leaves and needles to yellow.
- Dividing perennials reinvigorates plants and gives you new plants to add to other areas of your garden or to share with neighbors and friends.

"But I remember more dearly autumn afternoons in bottoms that lay intensely silent under old great trees"
- C. S. Lewis

News from Lee Faulk

LSU MG Coordinator

To winterize your lawn or not, that is the question.

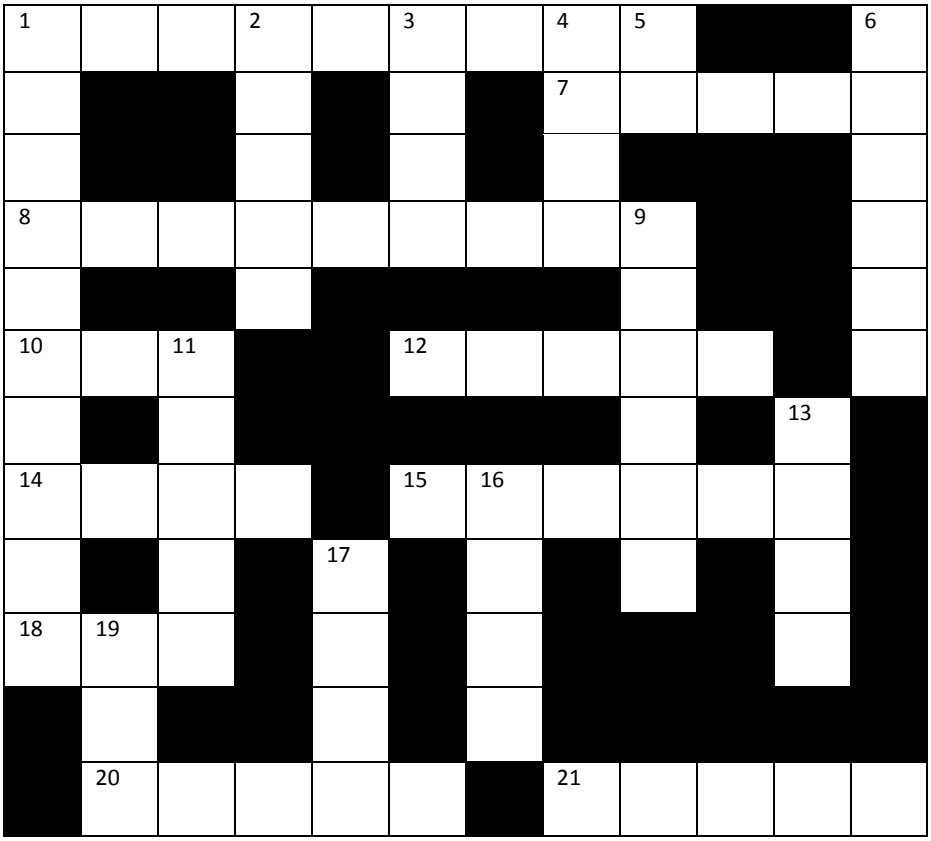
As this relatively mild summer winds down and fall quickly approaches, many homeowners are faced with the question of whether or not to "winterize" their lawn. Most lawn, garden, feed, and seed stores carry "lawn winterizing fertilizer". More likely than not, it comes in a flashy bag, with a hefty price tag. The question I'm asked periodically by homeowners is do I really need to winterize my lawn? The answer is usually no. To understand what winterizing a lawn is, and if you need to do it, we need to understand what our lawn needs nutritionally going into and during the dormant winter months.

During dormancy, turfgrasses such as St. Augustine and Centipede require little to no nitrogen. Nitrogen is something plants need the most of when they're actively growing. Excessive fall or winter nitrogen levels may cause the plants to resist going dormant, in other words, the grass keeps trying to grow, instead of going dormant for the winter. Cold temperatures and actively growing plants don't go too well together as those of us who have planted tomatoes a little too early in the spring have found out. Phosphate is important, but as long as you are soil sampling regularly (once every year or two), and maintaining good phosphate levels through spring fertilizing, you shouldn't need added phosphate in the fall or winter. Unnecessary phosphate levels during the winter may actually encourage more weed seeds to germinate in your lawn. Potassium levels in our soils during winter should be high. Potassium helps grow strong root systems that are needed for the turfgrass to remain viable through the winter. Once again, if you follow a regular soil sampling schedule, and fertilize regularly, Potassium levels shouldn't be an issue.

Be wary of lawn and garden products that come in flashy packaging and make too good to be true promises. A simple examination of the fertilizer analysis on the winterizer bag, which they are required by law to have, will tell you exact nutrient levels in the winterizer. Many winterizing fertilizers are actually intended for northern lawns such as Kentucky Bluegrass. The only time a homeowner in our area would really need to consider winterizing their lawn is if they were over seeding with ryegrass, or other winter annual grasses intended to give a lawn some green color during winter months. Remember, these fertilizer companies that make lawn winterizers would like to sell fertilizer year round, not just in the growing season. For more information on lawn fertilization or any other question you may have; please feel free to contact me.

The Teaching Garden Flourishes!

QUARTERLY CROSSWORD FOR YOUR ENJOYMENT—
PROVIDED BY LINDA CHRISTY



ACROSS:

1. Small sour apple (usually red): makes a tart jelly
7. Small oval fruit, important food & source of oil
8. Bearing foliage throughout the year, continuously shedding & replacing leaves
10. Having little height
12. A structure that serves to enclose an area.
14. A job, employment, trade, or other means of livelihood
15. A starchy, oval tuber
18. Color of holly berries
20. An herb having narrow, aromatic leaves, used for seasoning
21. Protection for the hands during gardening

DOWN:

1. Plant related to the rudbeckia, having colorful petal ray flowers
2. Small, juicy, fleshy fruit
3. Sweet, gritty-textured juicy fruit
4. A deep, tender, ineffable feeling of affection
5. Abbreviation for elevation
6. Small tree, having flat pods & pinkish flowers that bloom before the leaves appear
9. A sweet liquid secreted by flowers of various plants, consumed by pollinators
11. The earth & inhabitants
13. Any of various invertebrates, having a long, flexible, rounded body
16. Edible pods of plant, used in soups & as a vegetable
17. Round, fleshy fruit (usually red or black); makes a tart jelly
19. To take into the body by mouth for digestion

Answers can be found on page 11, but don't cheat!

Louisiana Department of Wildlife & Fisheries
http://www.deq.louisiana.gov/portal/
Urban Wildlife Program Series:
Wildflower Meadows for Wildlife

ADVANTAGES OF WILDFLOWER MEADOWS

- **Natural Beauty with Low Maintenance**

Have you ever seen black-eyed Susans or coreopsis blooming on the side of the road in the summer when it hasn't rained in weeks? Do you wonder how they manage to survive in the intense heat and dry conditions? To some those are weeds, to others, wildflowers. Did you know there are plenty of wildflowers you can grow in your yard that are just as tolerant of harsh conditions? Growing wildflowers can add a tremendous burst of color to your yard and be quite maintenance free. You can have native flowers blooming from spring right through to early fall.

- **Reduce Lawns, Reduce Mowing**

Planting a wildflower meadow is a great way to reduce the size of a lawn that requires constant upkeep. By reducing the size of the lawn, you will spend less time mowing, use less fertilizers and lawn chemicals, and water less in the summer. If your yard gets a minimum of six to eight hours of sunlight a day, you can plant wildflowers. When done properly, you can transform a portion of your yard into a meadow that will last for years with very little annual maintenance.

- **Wildlife Habitat**

Wildflowers provide habitat for a host of insects and other small critters. Bees and butterflies, hummingbirds and lizards will all find something to their liking in a wildflower meadow. Many recommended wildflower species are highly sought after by butterflies and hummingbirds. Most will provide nectar and some are host plants for the larval stage of certain butterflies. The flowers themselves make excellent arrangements when cut and the colors they provide can be stunning.

CREATING A WILDFLOWER MEADOW

- **Take Time for Planning**

Establishing a wildflower meadow takes some planning and patience. You could run down to the nearest discount store and pick up a bag of wildflower seeds (complete with mulch and fertilizer), read the directions and BAM! instant meadow. This would give you some flowers, but more than likely, you would be disappointed with the end result. Many of these wildflower "kits" contain species that are not adapted to this climate or region and won't perform as advertised.

- **Use Native Species**

What you want is a mix of seeds that is tailored specifically to the region you are in. Most of Louisiana is in the U.S.D.A. plant hardiness zone 8. The coastal parishes are in zone 9. Look for this on seed packages. You also want seeds that are recommended for the southeastern United States. Seeds and seed mixes for other areas will not perform well here. You can find prepared seed mixes in catalogues that specialize in wildflowers. You can also create your own mix by selecting seeds for those flowers you like. Selecting natives ensures that the plants are adapted to the region and should perform well, although many of the exotic species have naturalized and also do well in this climate. The exotic species listed in Appendix I are naturalized species.

Things to Consider

- **Species Height and Blooming Season**

When choosing seeds to plant, there are several things to think about. Some plants bloom in early spring, others in late summer, and some bloom for several months. There are short wildflowers and some that reach four or five feet tall. You don't want to plant tall varieties that may obstruct your view of other areas. On the other hand, you can use tall varieties to screen off areas you wish to hide. You can create a mix of plants that bloom from early spring all the way into the fall. Selecting species that bloom at different times can ensure that you have flowers throughout the growing season. This can be done with only two or three species, or with many. The more species in the mix, the more variety you will have in flowers.
Be aware that some wildflowers are annuals, some perennials and a few are biennials. Annuals complete their life cycle in one season and die. They are only replaced if they reseed themselves. Perennials will come back from the roots each year, and may also reseed, producing more plants. Biennials require two growing seasons to complete their life cycle and then die, but may reseed themselves.

- **Location, Location, Location!**

Selecting a location is as important as anything else. The most important consideration is sunlight. The more sun, the better. Wildflowers perform best in full sun, but can grow with six to eight hours of direct sunlight per day.
Choose a well-drained site. Avoid areas that stay wet for prolonged periods. You might think that moist soil would be good for the plants, however, wildflowers prefer drier sites and require little water. Wildflowers would be out-competed by weeds on moist, rich soil. This is one of the benefits of meadows. Unlike a lawn, wildflowers do well during dry periods without watering. The only time wildflowers need supplemental water is during prolonged droughts when the plants start to show stress.

- **Size of the Meadow**

The size of the meadow is up to you. You can do an entire acre if you have the space, or just a small corner of the yard. Wildflowers make great borders along fences. They are also good for filling in areas that are difficult to mow such as a hillside or slope. Most wildflowers do well in poor soil. In fact, it is not recommended that wildflowers be fertilized. If a soil test indicates that the soil is depleted of nutrients, you can add a low nitrogen fertilizer. Fertilizing plants after they are established, though, tends to make the plants put on thick foliage, few flowers, and it encourages weed growth.

PREPARING THE SITE

In order to plant a wildflower meadow, the site must be prepared properly to avoid having problems with weeds and other grasses. Any existing grass and weeds must be removed. The easiest way to do this is to treat the site with a systemic, broad spectrum herbicide such as Roundup ©. After the grass is dead, rake and remove the dead vegetation. Lightly till the site to a depth of not more than one inch. Don't till deeper than one inch! You don't want to release dormant weed seeds that are buried in the soil. Scraping the ground with an iron rake is sufficient.

Once the site is prepared, mix the seeds with some inert material such as sand or loose potting soil and broadcast the mixture over the area. The

seeds must be pressed into the soil by rolling or by pressing a board down onto the seedbed. You can just walk over the entire area to pack down the soil. The objective is to have good contact between the soil and seeds. Some seeds will still be visible when you are done.

Keep the area moist for four to six weeks to ensure germination and allow the plants to establish themselves. Do not allow the area to dry out while the seeds are germinating. Do not saturate the soil either as this can drown the seedlings. Once the plants are established (one to two inches), you can gradually reduce watering to only when the plants begin to show stress.

As mentioned earlier, wildflowers prefer dry sites so resist the temptation to keep watering to make them grow. At this stage, some unwanted weeds and grasses may appear. Remove these as they appear to avoid problems later. If you are not sure what you are looking for, plant some of your seed mix in a container and use that to compare to what grows in the seedbed. There are herbicides available that kill only grasses and are safe to apply over the top of the wildflower plants (which are broadleaf plants).

WHEN TO PLANT

In Louisiana, the best time to plant wildflowers is in the fall. This gives the plants time to germinate and become established before winter. It is also easier to kill the existing grass before it goes dormant in the winter. When spring arrives, the plants will be ready to take off and bloom at the proper time. Wildflower seedlings are hardy enough to survive our mild winters, but if a prolonged cold period is expected, or a hard freeze, lightly mulch the area with pine straw. Avoid using a mulch that contains other seeds such as hay. You don't want to introduce weeds. Lightly rake the mulch aside when it warms up. If you wait until spring to plant, the temperature may get too hot too soon for the plants to germinate and grow well.

WHAT NEXT?

By now you have selected a suitable location, prepared the soil, planted the seeds and kept them moist until they germinated. You now have a bed of wildflower seedlings that are only a few inches wide and low to the ground. It is early March and the temperature is on the rise. If you have selected spring blooming varieties, you should expect to see flowers soon. The summer and fall bloomers are still small plants waiting their turn. A few weeds will inevitably find their way into the area, so remove them as they appear. Other than enjoying the view and the many visitors that the area will attract, an occasional sprinkling during extremely dry times is all that is required.

Once the blooming season draws to a close, it's time to prepare the area for next year. About two weeks after the final blooms lose their color and turn brown, it's time to mow. Cutting the plants down to four to six inches will scatter the seeds of the flowers, and clean up the look of the area. You may want to mow over it twice to fully break up the stems and pieces. This allows sunlight to reach the ground and start the germination process all over again. It also helps to reduce competition from other weeds. Many seeds will begin germinating soon after mowing if they get enough moisture.

Both annuals and perennials will come back next year. The annuals will reseed and the perennials will re-sprout. The second year should be more spectacular than the first.

With a little luck, some patience, and the right weather and soil conditions, you will have a beautiful flower display for years to come. It is a great way to reduce the size of the lawn you currently maintain. Put out a little work in the fall when the weather is cool and mow once or twice a year. Sounds better than mowing every weekend from March through October!

COMMON REASONS FOR POOR RESULTS

1. **Several factors contribute to problems with wildflower gardens. One mistake is planting on an improper site. Remember, lots of sun and good drainage is a must. Wildflowers do not like wet or shady ground.**
2. **Another problem you may encounter is too much competition from weeds. This can be a result of not properly removing the existing vegetation prior to preparing the site. It can also be a result of tilling the soil too deep. Most soils contain thousands of dormant weed seeds that are released when the soil is disturbed. Tilling too deep will result in many of these seeds being released.**
3. **Planting the seeds too deeply will give poor results. When the seeds germinate, the seedling must reach the soil surface to survive. If planted too deep, the seedlings never reach the surface. Walking over or rolling the seedbed will give proper seed/soil contact for germination.**
4. **Trying to cover a large area with too few seeds will give poor results. Pay close attention to seeding rates, especially when mixing seeds of different species.**
5. **Planting at the wrong time of year can cause complete failure of a wildflower meadow. October, November and December are good times to plant seeds in Louisiana. The seeds that do not germinate right away will sprout early in the spring when the soil temperature rises.**

APPENDIX I

WILDFLOWERS SUITABLE FOR GROWING IN LOUISIANA

Common Name	Scientific Name	Type of Species	Origin
African Daisy	*Dimorphotheca aurantiaca*	A	D
Baby's Breath	*Gypsophila muralis*	A	D
Bird's Eyes	*Gilia Tricolor*	A	N
Bishop's Flower	*Ammi majus*	A	D
Black-eyed Susan	*Rudbeckia hirta*	A*	N
Blanket Flower	*Gaillardia aristata*	P	N
Blazing Star	*Liatris spicata*	P	N
Butterfly Weed	*Asclepias tuberosa*	P	N
California Poppy	*Eschscholzia californica*	A*	N
Catchfly	*Silene armeria*	A*	D
Chicory	*Chicorium intybus*	P	E
Clasping Coneflower	*Rudbeckia amplexicaulis*	A	N
Cornflower	*Centaurea cyanus*	A	D
Cosmos	*Cosmos bipinata*	A	D
Crimson	*Trifolium*	A	E

Clover	*incarnatum*		
Dame's Rocket	*Hesperis matronalis*	P	E
Drummond Phlox	*Phlox drummondii*	A	N
Dwarf Red Coreopsis	*Coreopsis sp.*	A	D
Evening Primrose	*Oenothera lamarckiana*	A	N
Five Spot	*Nemophila maculata*	A	N
Gay Feather	*Liatris pycnostachya*	P	N
Indian Blanket	*Gaillardia pulchella*	A	N
Gold Yarrow	*Achillea filipendulina*	P	E
Johnny-Jump Up	*Viola cornuta*	A*	D
Lemon Mint	*Monarda citriodora*	A*	N
Mealy Blue Sage	*Salvia farinacea*	P	N
Mexican Hat	*Ratibida columnaris*	A*	N
Moss Verbena	*Verbena tenuisecta*	P	E
Ox-eyed Daisy	*Chrysanthemum leucanthemum*	P	E
Plains Coreopsis	*Coreopsis tinctoria*	A	N
Purple Coneflower	*Echinacea purpurea*	P	N
Red Corn Poppy	*Papaver rhoeas*	A	D
Rocket Larkspur	*Delphinium ajacis*	A	D
Rose Angel	*Viscaria oculata*	A	D
Rose Mallow	*Lavatera trimestris*	A	E
Scarlet Flax	*Linum rubrum*	A	D
Scarlet Sage	*Salvia coccinea*	A*	N
Shasta Daisy	*Chrysanthemum maximum*	P	D
Showy Primrose	*Oenothera speciosa*	P	N

Standing Cypress	*Ipomopsis rubra*	P	N
Sweet Alyssum	*Lobularia maritima*	A	D
Sweet William	*Dianthus barbatus*	A*	D
Tahoka Daisy	*Machaeranthera tanacetifolia*	A	N
Tickseed	*Coreopsis lanceolata*	P	N
Toadflax	*Linaria maroccana*	A	D
Tuber Vervain	*Verbena rigida*	P	E
Yellow Cosmos	*Cosmos sulphureus*	A	D
Yarrow	*Achillea millefolium*	P	E

A Annual
P Perennial
A* Frequently and annual, occasionally a short term perennial
A Annual, not to be mixed with other species. Will crowd out other flowers.

N Native to North America
E Exotic, not native to North America
D Domesticated; genetically altered species (usually exotics) that do not reproduce. Must be replanted each year

DECORATING TIPS

▪ Begin gathering pinecones, ornamental grasses, wildflower seeds, magnolia seed pods, acorns, gourds, okra pods and ears of corn for decorating your home for fall.

▪ Gather green muscadine vines and bend them into wreaths before drying.

▪ Use pumpkins to make a lovely topiary, accenting with pine cones, fall leaves and vines.

▪ Croton leaves contain full fall color and do well with a few hours of direct sun every morning. Keep the soil moist, as dryness causes leaf drop. Remember, plants in small pots dry out quickly and require more attention than larger ones.

From the Home Gardener—Fall 2009

Make gorgeous wreaths that last from Halloween through Christmas, like this brown-and-gold arrangement. Wire dried artichokes, lotus pods, and pinecones to the bottom of a grapevine wreath. Tuck brown and gold leaves between the wreath's twigs, securing with hot glue if needed.

From Glenda, the editor:

I, for one, and simply ecstatic that Fall is upon us! Crisp days, beautiful foliage, and winter to look forward to (no yard work for a couple of months!).

Our new President, Evalyn Cabell, asked me to take on the task of our newsletter. I am giving it a try, but truly need your help.

If you have anything to contribute, and I mean anything, please send it to me. Photos of plants in your garden, reminiscing about a summer trip to a botanical garden, or a beautiful garden of a friend, a well-loved recipe, a favorite gardening tip or tool…well, you get the picture. If I can find space for it, it will be used!

Oh, and some of the stuff you submit may make it to the new State Master Gardener Newsletter that is in the works!!! No pressure!!

I am also open to any suggestions on format and content to make this a great newsletter for our organization.

UPCOMING EVENTS:

October 16, 2014
PHLMG Board Meeting
5:00 PM
PHLMG General Meeting
6:00 PM
Webster Parish Extension Office

October 21-24, 2014
Southern Region Master Gardener Conference, Crowne Plaza Hotel, Baton Rouge

November 1, 2014
Fall Heirloom Bulb & Plant Sale
8:00am – Noon
Randle T. Moore Center
3101 Fairfield Ave.
Shreveport, LA

November 20, 2014
PHLMG Board Meeting
5:00 PM
PHLMG General Meeting
6:00 PM
Webster Parish Extension Office

December 4, 2014
PHLMG Christmas Party
1st United Methodist Church
6:00 PM

Crossword Answers….Did you look??

Across: 1.Crabapple 7.Olive 8.Evergreen 10.Low 12.Fence 14.Work 15.Potato 18.Red 20.Thyme 21.Gloves
Down: 1.Coneflower 2.Olive 3.Pear 4.Love 5.EL 6.Redbud 9.Nectar 11.World 13.Worm 16.Okra 17.Plum 19.Eat