



December 2023

**Office  
Holiday Schedule**

The Miller County Extension  
Office will be closed from  
December 22 thru January 1

# Master Memos

*A Newsletter for Red Dirt Master Gardeners*

If you have any questions about anything in this newsletter, please call me at 870-779-3609, email [jcaraway@uada.edu](mailto:jcaraway@uada.edu) or visit our office, located at 1007 Jefferson Avenue, Texarkana, Arkansas.

Sincerely,

*Jennifer Caraway*

County Extension Agent  
Agriculture/Staff Chair

JAC:jds

**Don't forget that December 15<sup>th</sup> at 4:30 p.m. is the deadline for entering your hours for 2023. Be sure to print out your reported hours so you have a record.**

**Photo Above:**  
Pollinator Garden  
Workday. See more  
photos on page 3.



## New Officers for 2024

It was pouring down rain and quite chilly, but several brave souls showed up to vote at our last MG meeting. We just had enough to continue with the officer elections. Everyone that the nominating committee chose was elected: Rita Lamb – President; Ralph Robertson – Vice President; Delita Lusk – Treasurer; and Sondra Bedwell – Secretary. Our Members at Large are Gayle Renfro and Bettie Nix (New Class).

## Christmas Party/December Catered Meeting

Come and enjoy an evening of good food, catered by JR's, fellowship with a promise of some laughter, possibly some singing, and a few door prizes.

Each MG is allowed to bring one person for free: spouse, friend, child, etc. Any over the one extra will be charged \$20 each.

There will not be a silent auction at this year's Christmas party. Contact James Lamb with question. Also, if you have questions about the party, contact Betty Nix at 903-908-3662.

## MONTHLY MEETING

**Thurs., Dec. 14 –  
6:00 PM – REA**

Good Food, Fellowship  
and Door Prizes

**We wish you all a very  
Merry Christmas!**

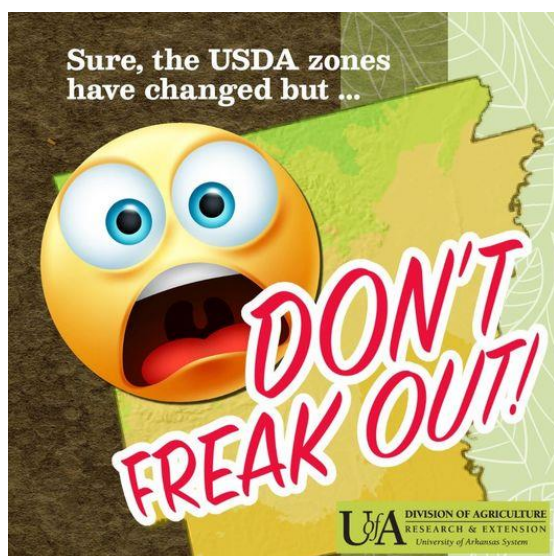
## President's Corner

The old "2023" is coming to an end. Some of us are happy, some sad. I guess you can't please us all. I have mixed emotions. I'm glad that I made another year, not so proud with my accomplishments. Hopefully, the good Lord will let me have another chance to do better.

Our catered meeting will be December 14<sup>th</sup> and I am looking forward to once again having good fellowship as well as a good meal. The caterer will be the same one that we had year before last and it was one of the best meals we have had since I have been a member.

My hopes and prayers are that Rita Lamb and the rest of the newly elected officers will have a banner year and the Miller County Red Dirt Master Gardeners will have the best year ever. I LOVE EVERY ONE OF YOUR DIRT DIGGERS. I meant to say "soil".

*Chead Blue*



USDA's plant hardiness zones have shifted in Arkansas, but there's no cause for alarm.

Extension horticulture specialist Anthony Bowden says the differences are "completely marginal" and he doesn't see a huge effect on Arkansas gardens.

"Don't go ripping up the plants in your landscape just because of the zone change," he said. "What was good two months ago is still going to be OK now." This is due to available data more than an overall warming of the state. Read more here:

<https://www.uaex.uada.edu/media-resources/news/2023/november2023/11-21-2023-ark-usda-hardiness-zones.aspx>

## Volunteer Time – Online Reporting System

*By Andrea Thomas*

Currently 69 members have placed hours in: Sanctioned hours-4889.5, Non sanctioned hours-316.5 and Education hours-1988.5. 53 have enough hours to be recertified; 16 still need hours for recertification. Then there are 27 with zero hours. The **DEADLINE** for reporting your hours is **Dec 15<sup>th</sup>**. Do not get caught needing hours at the last minute! Please enter any hours you have.

Our top 3 on volunteer hours (sanctioned and non-sanctioned combined) are Clyde Davis-593 hours, Chead Blue-548.5 hours, and Doug McBride with 343.5 hours. **Great Job!**

Remember ALL your hours are important & needed to keep MG programs going. Your hours help get grants for MG programs. State does reports during the year that show how many hours MGs have worked, so don't wait; get your hours in.

If you have questions or need help reporting your hours contact Rita or me. Call/text me at 972-322-9866, or email [at7550@yahoo.com](mailto:at7550@yahoo.com) or call /text Rita at 903-748-5601 or email [eaglepts2@gmail.com](mailto:eaglepts2@gmail.com). We will do our best to help.

Please contact Rita or I first for help and not State.

## 4-H Awards Banquet Needs Volunteers

The 4-H Awards Banquet is a time for us to honor the work of our 4-H youth for their accomplishments. It will be held February 15, 2024, at the REA building.

Like last year, we will have an auction as a fundraiser and could use help with food service as well as other needs. Also, if you would like to donate items for the auction, it would be greatly appreciated. More information to come in the new year.



# Pollinator Garden Workday

*Article by Annette Lachowsky with Photos by Clyde Davis*

We had a great crew turnout at the Pollinator Garden on Tuesday 11-28-2023 with Chelsea Claybrook, Cindy Ford, Larry Ford, Samuel Jefferson, Marianne Mason, Maxine Royston, Johnathon Thompson, Ralph Robertson, Doug McBride, Chead Blue, Carmen Maulden, Clyde Davis, and Annette Lachowsky.

We had a great crew and got things cleaned up for winter while leaving plenty for habitat for overwintering pollinators.



## **U of A** DIVISION OF AGRICULTURE RESEARCH & EXTENSION University of Arkansas System

### **Grow Your Own Groceries: Setting Up a Drip Irrigation System**

A Live Zoom Presentation  
January 18, Noon (CST)

Learn how to grow healthy, nutritious food in your own backyard and get some tips for new ways to cook and prepare your harvest. This presentation will be held January 18<sup>th</sup> at noon and will teach you how to set up a drip irrigation system.

Register at the link below and you will receive an invitation to join the zoom:

[https://uada.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlqdOivri0tG9cf2DEXjwQ1\\_pvZM8Eu4M9J#/registration](https://uada.zoom.us/meeting/register/tJlqdOivri0tG9cf2DEXjwQ1_pvZM8Eu4M9J#/registration)



# Polyface Farm Tour

By Sheryl Grieve, MCRDMG Online Trainee

On August 12<sup>th</sup>, my husband and I visited Polyface Farms for a “God’s Good Table” event. We learned critics have branded Joel Salatin, “The Lunatic Farmer,” because of his non-traditional farming methods (which work very well and have proven more productive).

We took a 2-hour hay wagon tour with Joel driving the tractor and explaining his unique farming methods with poultry, hog, beef cattle and turkeys.



These animals are free ranged on grassland that is free of chemicals. The cows are fed luscious grass in “paddocks” and moved daily. This way cows will eat in the enclosed paddock instead of the entire pasture at one time, moseying here and there, leaving all lengths of grass. Then, each day at 4:00 PM they are moved to another paddock. The cows are always ready to move to a new “salad bar”.

Chickens have egg mobiles and an “A” shaped domicile. This way birds are protected from predators plus it makes gathering eggs daily easier. The housing for turkeys is similar using enclosed 3-4-foot portable electric fencing. Someone asked him about the turkeys jumping the fence to which he replied that “the turkeys don’t know they can fly”. Meat birds, such as chickens, have portable broiler shelters that are moved daily at sunrise.

The Salatins use their hills to build ponds and let gravity flow do the work, sending water through tubing to various areas for irrigation and watering the animals, at up to 80 psi.

We have enjoyed many of Salatin’s YouTube videos and books, most recently “Homesteading Tsunami” and “Beyond Labels”.

For more information on attending one of these tours, visit <https://polyfacefarms.com> or <https://greerfarm.com> (in Daingerfield TX)



## Starting Seeds That Need Cold

Many plants that are native to temperate regions of the world have seeds that require a moist, cold period before they sprout. You can grow these seeds by sowing them in pots and setting the pots outdoors in winter. Known as stratification, this treatment replicates the natural conditioning the seeds would undergo in their natural habitat, breaking down the internal mechanisms that inhibit their ability to germinate. The seeds will germinate when temperatures rise in the spring. This rather low-tech method, which is also called moist chilling, works well for starting seeds of many perennials, including bleeding heart, columbine, globeflower, masterwort, and garden phlox. It is also very useful for starting seeds of many fall-ripening trees and shrubs, such as barberries, dogwoods, lilacs, species roses, and viburnums. Learn more about this here:

[https://www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/white/news/horticulture/201810\\_Starting\\_Seeds\\_that\\_need\\_Cold.aspx](https://www.uaex.uada.edu/counties/white/news/horticulture/201810_Starting_Seeds_that_need_Cold.aspx)

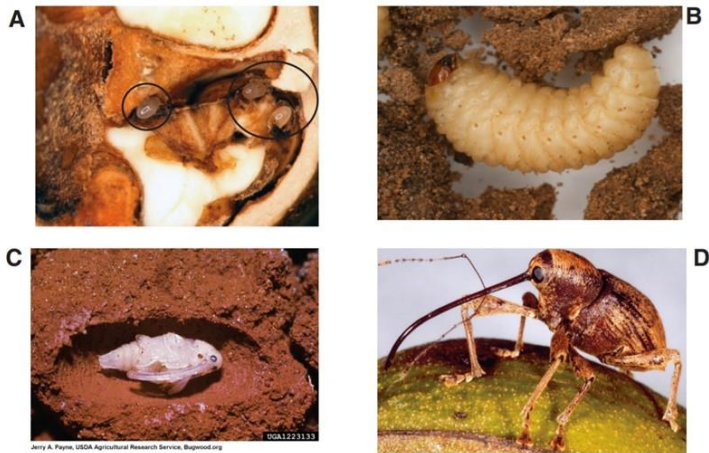
# Pecan Weevils

By Andrea Thomas

Have you ever gone pecan picking and found the nuts with a hole bored in them and wondered what did that? It is the work of the female pecan weevil.



The pecan weevil is the major pecan insect pest in the United States. The pecan weevil exhibits four life stages: egg (A), larva (B), pupa (C) and adult (D) and it requires two to three years to complete one generation.



When fully grown, pecan weevil grubs have a creamy white body that is about  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch long with a reddish-brown head capsule.

The pupal stage of the pecan weevil is a whitish, mummified-looking version of the adult. The adult pecan weevil is a light brown to grayish snout beetle, measuring about  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch in body length.

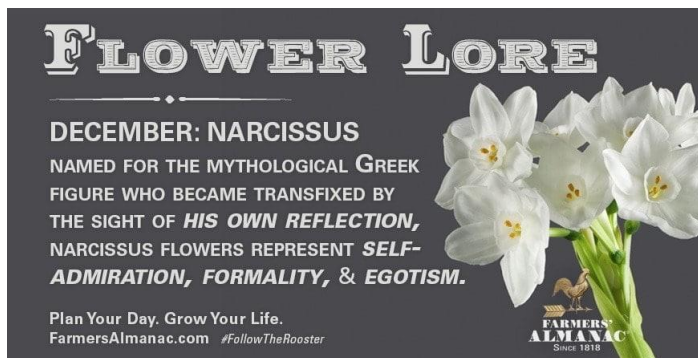
Pecan weevils usually lay eggs in pecan when the fruit is nearly hardened and contains well-developed kernels. Using her chewing mouthparts (at the end of the long proboscis), the female weevil chews a hole through the pecan shuck. After penetrating the shuck, she withdraws her snout, turns around & probes through the hole with her ovipositor until she reaches the shell. The tiny eggs (usually 3 to 4 in each nut attacked) are generally deposited on the distal end of maturing pecan, where development of the seed embryo and cotyledon begin. Egg hatch occurs within 6 to 14 days after deposition. After hatching the larvae will feed within a nut, larvae will chew exit holes about  $\frac{1}{8}$  of an inch in diameter in the shell, emerge from the nuts, and drop to the ground. Larvae will burrow into the soil to various depths depending on the soil type and condition of the soil where they landed. Most larvae penetrate the soil to a depth of six to nine inches. Once they have reached their final resting depth, larvae will construct a hard, almost impenetrable earthen cell, where they will remain in diapause until they pupate, molt to the adult stage, and ultimately emerge. After transformation from the pupal stage, adults will remain inactive within the earthen cell and do not attempt to emerge from the soil until August of the following year. This makes the total time from first entering the soil as larvae to exiting as adults approximately two (90%) or three (10%) years.

## Make An Edible Wreath for Your Feathered Friends

While cheering up your home with holiday décor, why not create a little cheer for our feathered friends. This birdseed and cranberry wreath is entirely edible. Just whip it up and mold in a Bundt pan. Let it rest for 24 hours before adding a bow and hanging it on a tree branch. Be sure to hang it where it can be easily seen and enjoyed from inside your home.

You'll need nonstick cooking spray, dried fruits (cranberries, cherries, blueberries), 1 cup warm water, 2 packets plain gelatin, 5 Tbsp. light corn syrup,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup flour,  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup creamy peanut butter, 5 cups birdseed, & Bundt or fluted tube pan. Spray pan with nonstick spray. Arrange dried fruit in pan. Place warm water in large mixing bowl. Sprinkle in gelatin over water. Mix until gelatin dissolves. Add corn syrup, flour & peanut butter; mix well. Add birdseed and stir. Press mixture into pan and let sit for 24 hours. Gently flip pan to release wreath. Loop ribbon through center. Hang outside.





## December Birth Flower – Narcissus Flower

By Jaime McLeod, *Farmers' Almanac*  
Submitted by Rita Nichols

The official December birth flower is the **narcissus flower**, a genus that includes daffodils and their smaller, paler cousins, paperwhites.

All varieties of narcissus have similar structure, with a bell-shaped center surrounded by six large petals. Native to the Mediterranean region, as well as parts of Asia, narcissus is among the earliest flowers to bloom each year, and often seen as harbingers of spring. Paperwhites, however, have long been associated with Christmas, because they are easy to grow indoors, and can be brought to bloom at this time of year.

Narcissus takes its name from the mythological Greek figure, Narcissus, a handsome youth who was so vain that he became transfixed by the sight of his own reflection in a pool of water and stood gazing at himself until the gods eventually turned him into a flower. For that reason, narcissus flowers represent self-admiration, formality, and egotism. When given to someone

else, the flowers mean that the recipient is sweet. The flowers are reminiscent of the myth not only because they like to grow at the edges of ponds, but also because the hardy, upright stems bend dramatically near the top, so that their blooms lean over toward the ground.

**TO GROW:** For an attractive indoor display, plant daffodils and narcissus in containers of bulb fibre and position them in a cool garage or other well ventilated, dark position at a maximum temperature of 10°C (50°F). Water sparingly when necessary to keep the compost moist. When the growing shoots reach a height of 10cm (4") move the containers to a cool bright position indoors (approximately 16°C or 60°F).

**USES:** Traditionally, herbalists used narcissus plants as a cleansing agent, to remove impurities from the body. Modern medicine has also found the plant useful, as galantamine, a drug used to combat Alzheimer's disease, is produced by daffodils.



*Dec. birth flower – paperwhite (narcissus) in field*



Try this unique mix to your next holiday gathering. This recipe comes from <https://dinnertonight.tamu.edu/recipe/everything-spiced-nut-mix>.

Preheat oven to 325°F. In large bowl, combine 1 cup raw, whole cashews, ¾ cup raw, unsalted almonds, ¼ cup raw pistachios, ¼ cup sunflower seed kernels, & 40 unsalted fat-free mini pretzels (about 2 cups). In small bowl, lightly whisk 1 large egg white, 1 tsp. light brown sugar, 1 Tbsp. sesame seeds, 1 Tbsp. poppy seeds, 1 Tbsp. coarse kosher salt & 1 tsp. dehydrated onion flakes. Pour egg mixture over nut mixture and stir to evenly coat the nuts. Line baking sheet with parchment paper and spread nut mixture evenly over the top. Bake 15 minutes. Cool.