

Central Missouri Master Gardener Newsletter



The Latest Dirt

APR 2026

Newsletter of the Central Missouri Master Gardeners

Vol. 179 No. 01

Note from the Chair

APR 2026

Welcome to spring everyone! It is going to be a beautiful and busy month. With the first spring sale over we now set our sights on our big sale coming up the first weekend of May. Thanks for everyone who helped with our first spring sale and hope you were not overwhelmed by the experience if this was your first one. It was a success selling the cold crops and small number of flowers. Final dollar amounts will be given at the April Members meeting. Speaking of which, remember that our April member's meeting will be at the greenhouse on April the 28th. Our guest speaker will be Elizabeth Anderson with the MU Extension office. As we finish with the spring sale, we will be working with the parks department and other organizations on our other projects throughout the summer and fall. We are looking for a secretary for the Board to start in May. Chris Bowles, the current secretary is stepping away from the position for personal reasons. The secretary takes the Board and member's meeting minutes. The position is open to anyone with an interest. Another position open on our board will be the chairman and vice chairman. Jim Quinn will be leaving the CMMG and will be joining the Boone County Master Gardeners in September. I am going to over to the Outreach chair position and help with the chairs of the different programs as well as working with the Parks Department in helping to promote the CMMG as a whole. We will need several board members this coming term. So please, if you would like to help shape the future of the CMMG we could use your support. We are also looking for someone to take over working with the Callaway gardening program. Yolanda would like for someone to take over working with the kids for the coming seasons. Our May BBQ will be coming up soon and we will be starting to plan this event. Stay tuned for further information about this event. Have a great April and look forward to seeing everyone out volunteering at the greenhouse and the big Spring sale in May.

CMMG Chair, Edward Vitela
2025-2026

NEW

History Corner

***NEW**

MG officers from 1999
Co-Presidents: Dick Crader and Peggy Davis
Treasurer: Judy Rizner
Secretary: Brenda Kennedy

Co-Presidents appointed and they listed all mg projects for the year. Two main projects were the Demo Gardens and Extension Center. Also featured a program at the "open gardens" this was at the old Demo Gardens. A call in committee took care of the Hot Line and Speakers Bureau or informed mg's about work parties at: Heisinger, Special Learning Center, Thomas Jefferson Middle School (with students), Villa Marie, helped with Blueberry Research. Plants were donated mainly by mg's or grown in Ray and Carole Evans greenhouse. The feature item that year was exotic plants. The sale took place on April 24 at the Extension Center.

First Plant Sale

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The 1 Native Tree to Add to Your Garden If You Want to See More Cardinals

They're one of the USA's most beloved birds – and you can attract plenty more to your backyard if you plant this native tree...



By [Kayleigh Dray](#); published in [Features](#)

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(Image credit: H .H. Fox Photography/Getty Images)

Want to bring more songbirds into your garden? Specifically, cardinals? The secret isn't just in feeders or birdbaths: it's in the plants you choose, and there's one native tree in particular that can work some serious magic.

We all know that [birds](#) are drawn to spaces that offer both food and safety, so creating a garden with the right mix of shelter and sustenance is a must for anyone hoping to welcome feathered visitors. Even small changes can have a big impact, attracting more birds and giving them reasons to stay.

And if it's [cardinals](#) you're hoping to see, the answer is simple: plant a [hawthorn](#) (*Crataegus spp.*). With its spring blossoms, fall berries, and dense branches, it offers food, shelter, *and* perfect nesting spots, turning your garden into a hotspot for these iconic red songbirds season after season. And, best of all, now is the best time to get planting.

Why Cardinals Love Hawthorn



(Image credit: Susan B Sheldon / Shutterstock)

Just as robins are the darlings of the UK, so, too, are cardinals a favorite in the States. How could they not be, with their striking red plumage and cheerful songs?

While they're adaptable and will feed on a variety of seeds, fruits, and insects, they much prefer areas that provide safe perches and cover, and the not-so-humble hawthorn tree delivers on all fronts.

Think about it: those thorny branches make a natural fortress against predators, while that dense foliage gives birds a quiet place to build nests. By planting a hawthorn, you're essentially rolling out the red carpet for cardinals – especially males, who are drawn to bright [berries](#) and berries-rich shrubs to feed their mates during breeding season.

Planting Hawthorn Trees

Hawthorns are versatile trees that thrive in [USDA zones](#) 4 through 8, making them suitable for a wide range of gardens. Most varieties reach between 15 and 30 feet at maturity, so they're perfect for medium-sized yards, mixed borders, or even a dedicated wildlife corner.

Timing is key, and bare-root trees (like this [bare-root Washington hawthorn from Arbor Day](#)) are the way to go during late winter or very early spring.

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(Image credit: Orest Iyzhechka / Shutterstock)

For those with blank faces at the back, remember: bare-root trees are sold without soil around their roots, which allows them to establish more quickly once planted. Early-year planting helps the roots settle before the stresses of hot summer weather, giving your hawthorn a head start.

It's easy enough to do; just dig a hole twice as wide as the root spread, water generously after planting, and [mulch](#) lightly to retain moisture. And opt for as sunny a spot as you can muster, as more light makes for more flowers and berries, which in turn attract more wildlife.

Well-drained soil is ideal, but many hawthorns are surprisingly resilient and can handle clay or sandy soils with a little extra compost at planting time.

Of course, it's important to point out that hawthorns don't *just* attract cardinals – they also support pollinators and other beneficial garden visitors, too.

In spring, their clusters of white or pink flowers draw bees, butterflies, and other insects, creating a buzzing, vibrant garden ecosystem. By late summer and fall, the trees bear small red berries, known as haws, that provide essential nutrition for birds, including cardinals, finches, and robins. And, even in winter, the berries often remain on the branches, offering food when resources are scarce.

Try pairing yours with some complementary [perennial](#) plants in beds and borders, such as [purple coneflower](#).



(Image credit: Dennis W Donohue / Shutterstock)

Watching cardinals' flit through the branches of a hawthorn tree is endlessly rewarding, not least of all because these beloved birds are so lively, colorful, and surprisingly personable.

By opting for a hawthorn, you won't just be adding a native tree to your landscape; you're cultivating a small sanctuary for cardinals and other wildlife, creating a garden that's alive year-round.

So, commit, we say, and plant a bare-root this season. Come spring, you'll likely be greeted by a chorus of birdsong – with cardinals leading the way.

Other plants to attract Cardinals: dill, fennel, hollyhock, mustard greens and snapdragon.

Key Plants to Attract Cardinals:

- **Shrubs:** Viburnum, Dogwood (Red Osier, Gray), Sumac (Staghorn), Northern Bayberry, Winterberry, and Rose bushes.
- **Trees:** Dogwood (Flowering), Serviceberry, Mulberry, Hackberry, Crabapple, Eastern Red Cedar, and Spruce.
- **Vines & Other:** Wild grapevines (for nesting).
- **Flowers:** Sunflower, Cosmos, Purple Coneflower, and Millet.

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Beginners Guide to Panicle Hydrangea Pruning

Panicle hydrangeas are one of the easiest-going hydrangea types you'll meet. Strictly speaking, they don't *need* pruning, they just benefit from it. So, if you're feeling overwhelmed, you can close this browser after reading and come back to the task when it's late winter. If you'd like to move forward and prune to give your hydrangea a boost, let's go step by step through the process.

General Tips

1. Only take off 1/3 of the height and width of the plant. Pruning too much will cause the plant to overproduce new growth, which is often weak and incapable of supporting heavy flowers.
2. Focus on removing damaged, crossing, thin, or misdirected stems.

STEP ONE: Timing

When to Prune Panicle Hydrangeas

All panicle hydrangeas bloom on new wood, which means you can prune before they flower without risk of losing the show. So long as it is timed correctly. While they do benefit from a yearly trim, they will ultimately not be harmed by missing a year here or there.

There are two general times to prune:



1. While the plant is dormant, in early winter or late winter.
2. In early spring, when the buds are starting to swell and turn green, as shown in the photo.

Don't prune panicle hydrangeas in the summer or fall.

STEP TWO: Tools

What Tools to Use for Pruning a Panicle Hydrangea



Bypass Pruners

This type of pruner creates crisp cuts. Sharpen them before use. Dull pruners will rip the plant tissue.

Loppers

Think of this tool as a long-handled version of pruners. Those long handles give you better leverage when cutting branches in tricky spots or those thicker than a thumb.

Hand Saw

For the thickest branches, cut a straight line as close as possible to another branch or the ground.

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STEP THREE: Cuts

Where and How to Make Cuts



Trimming Back-Most of your cuts will be made midway down a branch to shorten it. Select a set of healthy buds and cut 1/4 to 1/8 of an inch above them.



Cutting Completely-If you need to remove a stem entirely, make the cut directly to the ground or up to the next largest branch, as cleanly and evenly as possible.

STEP FOUR: Priority Removal

What to Prune Out First

Long-lived plants benefit from a little help here and there. A detail on a young plant can become a huge defect if left unchecked over years.



Crossed

If there are two branches rubbing against each other, remove one. Keep the branch that's growing in the best place to give the plant a rounded habit. If both are fine, choose the thicker branch.



Forks and Tridents

A shrub that has been pruned in the past usually has stems that end by splitting into two or three branches. For as many branches as possible, try to choose one branch to keep.

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Misdirected

Identify stems that are growing in the wrong places. They may be growing inward or growing toward other main branches. Correct this by total removal or by cutting back to a bud that will encourage growth in the correct direction.

STEP FIVE: Thinning

What to Prune Out Second



Stems Crowding Interior

Remove thin, wimpy branches, especially those crowding the interior. They sap the plant's energy and reduce airflow.

The photos are an example of what type of stems to remove.

STEP SIX: Shaping

What to Prune Last



Now that you see what you're left with, reduce the height of the plant by roughly 1/3. Be sure to leave a sturdy framework behind to set the plant up for success in the growing season ahead.

Err on the side of cutting off less. Plants that have been cut back hard may flop over at some point during the growing season.

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Before Pruning

After Pruning

If you'd like to see a how-to video on pruning Proven Winners ColorChoice panicle hydrangeas, click <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mtNZgXEReI4>

Written by



Kristina Howley -I am all in when it comes to gardening. Almost every part of the experience delights me – new leaves emerging in spring, pollinators buzzing in summer, birds devouring berries in fall, and the somber beauty of seed heads in winter. Thanks to a background in horticulture and gardening my own clay-filled, flowery USDA zone 5b plot, I've learned plenty of practical things as well. I like sharing these joys and lessons with my fellow gardeners and soon-to-be gardeners any way I can.



Courtesy Jennifer Maloney

[Home Gardening Top 10 Lists for Gardeners](#)

[Top 10 Hummingbird Plants for Full Sun](#)



By [Peggy Riccio](#)

[Birds & Blooms Editorial Policies](#)

Published on Feb. 24, 2026

Hummingbirds love these full sun plants in the garden and will visit them frequently for nectar from summer to fall.

Full Sun Plants That Attract Hummingbirds

Attract hummingbirds to your garden with these beautiful full sun [flowering annuals](#) and [perennials](#). Plant several in a group to increase their chance of finding your garden. Think too of different heights – a few in the garden bed and a few in containers — to ensure daily visits from your favorite pollinators!

Here are 10 hummingbird favorites plants that prefer full sun.

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Courtesy Lori Davidson

Hummingbird Mint

Agastache spp., Zones 5 to 9

[Hummingbird mints](#) are well-behaved full sun perennial plants in the mint family with aromatic foliage that deer detest. In the summer, they bloom spires of small tubular flowers available in purple, orange, rose, coral, or white colors. Heat and drought tolerant, many of these are native to North America.

Why we love it: In addition to attracting hummingbirds, these natural bird feeders are loved by songbirds who flock to the seeds in the fall.



Courtesy Nancy MacDonald Uggl

Egyptian Star Flower

Pentas lanceolata, Zones 10 to 11 or annual

Often sold as flowering annuals, these small shrubs bloom clusters of five-petaled, star shaped flowers. Varieties are available in pink, yellow, purple, or white flower colors. About 2 feet high, [pentas flowers](#) can be used in containers, in the garden bed, or as small foundation or border type plants.

Why we love it: Unfazed by high heat and humidity, these tropical hummingbird favorite plants bloom all summer long in full sun. They also attract butterflies.



Courtesy Liz TabbBlack & Blue salvia

Salvia *Salvia* spp.

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With such a wide variety of [salvia plants](#), there is one for every garden. A well-behaved member of the mint family, salvias have tubular florets in almost every color. Salvias can be summer annuals or perennials, from short to tall, and all have that aromatic foliage that deer don't like.

Why we love it: Salvias are plentiful and versatile. You can plant annuals in containers and perennials in the garden bed to ensure that hummingbirds find your garden.



Courtesy Keith Clemens

Cuphea

Cuphea spp., Zones 9 to 10 or annual

Often purchased as summer annuals, cupheas are heat loving [tropical plants](#) with flower colors ranging from warm reds and oranges to cool pinks and purples. Some have [tubular flowers](#) while others have flatter faces. Fairly small, they do well in containers and do not have to be deadheaded.

Why we love it: Nothing bothers cupheas. They bloom non-stop from summer to fall, ensuring daily hummingbird visits.



Courtesy Susan Grove

Spider Flower

Cleome spp., Zones 9 to 10 or annual

An old-fashioned [cottage garden plant](#), cleome blooms large flower heads of pink, lavender, or white colors on 3 feet tall plants. Although [cleome](#) doesn't need deadheading, gardeners can remove spent flower heads to minimize self-seeding. Drought and heat tolerant, cleomes are perfect for hot summers.

Why we love it: You can tone down the height and self-seeding by planting Senorita Rosalita, which does not produce seed and remains compact at 2 feet tall.



Courtesy Marc Fahringer

Trumpet Honeysuckle

Lonicera sempervirens, Zones 4 to 9- A native, deciduous vine, [trumpet honeysuckle](#) blooms red and orange trumpet-shaped flowers from spring to summer which the hummingbirds love. Birds flock to the fall berries. In warm states, these [vines for hummingbirds](#) can remain evergreen.

Why we love it: This lightweight vine adds vertical interest as it climbs up trellises, fences, and arbors.

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Courtesy Terry Martin

Lily of the Nile

Agapanthus spp., Zones 7 to 11

Great for vertical accent, lily of the Nile blooms large flower heads comprised of tubular florets high above the strap-like foliage. Flowers can be white, purple, pink, blue, or bicolor. The plant can be a foot tall with flower scapes 3 feet tall but there are shorter cultivars suitable for containers.

Why we love it: The summer flowers can be cut for indoor arrangements or left to evolve into interesting seed heads for winter interest.



Paul Starosta/Getty Images

Hummingbird Trumpet

Epilobium canum (formerly *Zauschneria*), Zones 8 to 10

Native to the western states, hummingbird trumpet is a drought tolerant perennial. Enjoy tubular [orange flowers](#) from summer to fall. About 2 feet high, this deer resistant plant has small gray/green foliage and thrives in hot arid climates. There are also varieties with white, peach, orange, red, and pink flowers for a wider color range.

Why we love it: Fairly versatile, the low maintenance, shrub-like full sun hummingbird plants can be used in [rock gardens](#) or as a groundcover for erosion control.



Courtesy Mary Ahearn

Foxglove Beardtongue

Penstemon digitalis, Zones 3 to 8

Foxglove beardtongue is a [native perennial](#) with spikes of summer blooming, white tubular flowers. Plants are several feet tall, so a group of them can be quite showy. They tolerate clay soil and are deer and drought resistant. **Why we love it:** Although their [white flowers](#) do light up a garden, they also can be used for a fresh flower arrangement.

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Courtesy Amy Phillips

Red Hot Poker

Kniphofia uvaria, Zones 5 to 9

These hardy South African natives last for many years in the garden. [Red hot pokers](#) produce grass-like foliage and 2 feet tall stalks of red, yellow, and orange bottlebrush-like flower heads. Although the flowers add vertical interest in the garden, they also can be cut for floral arrangements.

Why we love it: The unusual looking flowers thrive full sun and hummingbirds love them. They work well in tropical themed gardens as well as arid, rock gardens.

Author

Peggy Riccio For the past 30 years, horticulturist Peggy Riccio has written more than 100 articles for national gardening magazines. In 2014, she started her website, pegplant.com, an online resource for gardeners in the Washington DC metro area and in 2018, she initiated a monthly gardening newsletter. Although Peggy grows and writes about many types of plants...

RECIPE TIME

Homemade Replacement for Vanilla Pudding

By Mrs. Brown's Kitchen

Ingredients:

1 ½ Cups of Powdered Milk
2 cups of Granulated Sugar
2 cups of Cornstarch
1 Tbls of Vanilla Powder (if you have it) Recipe below

Directions:

Combine the first 3 ingredients together well
Mix in the vanilla powder

If you are going to use the recipe for making actual vanilla pudding, it will have to be cooked on the stove as it has cornstarch in it, so it needs to be activated

If you don't have the powder, you can cook the pudding and use the liquid vanilla extract.

Vanilla Pudding

½ cup of the mix
2 cups of milk

1 tsp of vanilla extract

On the stove top, bring it to a boil, then simmer to your Desired thickness. Approximately 8-10 minutes

Until you use this mixture store in an airtight container at room temperature.

If you use a box of pudding to a cake mix as a moisture enhancer, in place of that box

You could use ½ cup of the mixture

Author's favorite way to use the mixture is for a Cool Whip kind of a substitute.

2 cups of whipping cream

½ cup of the mixture

Whip with wire whisk and get a perfect whipped topping.

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SPRING PLANT SALE



April member's meeting will be at the greenhouse on April the 28th. Our guest speaker will be Elizabeth Anderson with the MU Extension office.
HAPPY BIRTHDAY!



April born are **loyal and generous** – the most desirable qualities in a friend. Because of their empathetic nature, April born make wonderful friends, but more than that, they value friendships. They give a lot of importance to their friends, sometimes even more than family.

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Meetings are held at the Missouri River Regional Library, 214 Adams St, Jefferson City, MO
We hope to see you there!

Online Reporting Site: Hours must be entered at https://vms.momg.org/sec_Login/ please remember you need to enter hours on a computer, not a tablet or a phone. Again, all hours must be entered on line.

Enter your hours again starting in January.

Any emails that need to be distributed to ALL MG's should be sent to **CMMG Cole County Master Gardener <cmmg@missouri.edu>**— please don't call in messages

CMMG Official WEBSITE-- <https://extension.missouri.edu/counties/cole/extension-master->

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