

Central Missouri Master Gardener Newsletter



The Latest Dirt

SEP 2026

Newsletter of the Central Missouri Master Gardeners

Vol. 185 No. 01

Note from the Chair

SEP 2026

Happy September fellow master gardeners. It is going to get hot to start this month off. Stay cool and don't stay out for very long.

Things are starting to wind down for the summer gardens. Most of us are getting ready for the fall garden season and maybe planting a fall crop. Then we get our areas ready for the winter. Planting cover crops and mending the beds for next year and plant your garlic for the winter.

Along with prepping the garden we are also in the process of yard maintenance for another season. Pulling out the bird feeders and get them ready for migrating birds and to let the birds know that you have winter food for them.

We have been asked to help the Parks Department with a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new River Market on September the 3rd. At 3 o'clock that afternoon. If you plan on attending it is requested to wear your master gardener's shirt or cap to show our support.

We will also be at the MU Extension Fall Festival this year on Saturday September the 12th starting at 8 in the morning and going to 3 that same afternoon. I plan on being there all day handing out information about the master gardeners as well as other information from the extension office. Anyone looking to get in a couple of volunteer hours helping talk about the Master Gardeners as well as pass out information, please let me know. My cell number is 573-418-0494. Let me know if you can help in the morning or the afternoon. I am looking for a couple of volunteers for each shift. From 8 until 12, and 12 to 3 to help breakdown the booth.

It was brought to the club's attention from Yolanda that the Callaway Hills Garden Club will be looking for someone to run the garden plots. They have an instructor for the course. They are looking for someone to run the garden plots and the volunteers to oversee the area. For more information let me know and I will get you in touch with the right people.

We are going to have a work party coming up here in a couple of weeks to remove the shade cloth and get the two greenhouses ready to receive new plastic on the roofs.

We are going to have to move our November members meeting to the Extension office again this year as the November meeting will again fall on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving and we are going to move it the third Tuesday in November 17th at 6:00 p.m.

Before closing this month's newsletter. I want to Thank the former board members that have helped the Master Gardeners program grow and keep it strong and knowing that our future is strong and helping to make our program one for others to follow.

Thank you,

Ed Vitela

CMMG Chair, Edward Vitela

2025-2026

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NEW

History Corner
June 1998 Meeting

***NEW**

Central Missouri Master Gardeners' Open & Gardens Mini-workshops

**June 14
2-6 p.m.**

North Jefferson City (formerly Cedar City). Watch for the signs.

DIRECTIONS
From Highway 54/63 just east of the Missouri River Bridge, take the Airport Exit on Route W and go north. Turn east on Fourth Street until you reach the pavilion.

Bring a lawnchair

FREE WORKSHOPS
2 p.m.: Controlling pesky insects
2:30: Raised bed vegetable gardening
3:00: Growing wildflowers
3:30: Creating a living wreath
4:00: Landscaping with trees and shrubs
4:30: Landscaping your yard — room by room
5:00: Creating butterfly gardens

DAYLONG HELP DESK: Bring your gardening questions and get them answered for free by Master Gardeners and gardening experts from University Outreach and Extension, local nurseries, state agencies and universities. There also will be other displays throughout the day on how to control moles, compost, prune, and how to create bonsai.

HELD RAIN OR SHINE

HELD IN CONJUNCTION WITH THE JEFFERSON CITY DEPARTMENT OF PARKS & RECREATION

Dhruba Dhakal has asked to share these upcoming webinars:

The State Extension Master Gardener program has scheduled three additional continuing education webinars for EMG volunteers.

Registration is required and is free. Each webinar will begin at 6:30 pm. Upon registering, you will receive the zoom link to attend the webinar. If you are unable to attend the webinar live but are interested in the topic, please register. An email will be sent after the event when the recording is available for viewing. For any questions, please reach out to [Debi Kelly](#).

Sept 8 – Forcing Bulbs for Indoor Winter Bloom - [registration](#)

Nov 3 – Sustainable Landscape Design – [registration](#)

Subscribe to the [Garden Spade newsletter](#) for home gardeners.

Subscribe to the [Commercial Horticulture video newsletter](#).

Subscribe to the [MU IPM YouTube Channel](#).

The next article is about the Panicle Hydrangea and how to clip it. Seeing as these are the types of Hydrangeas that are at the Extension Center, would hope you copy and paste so you will have the instructions if you are ever out there for maintenance on them.

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How and When to Prune Panicle Hydrangeas – Plus, the Common Mistake Most Gardeners Make

A plant expert reveals how to prune panicle hydrangeas the right way for the biggest blooms and healthiest plants. Plus, one common mistake that ruins blooms!



By [Teo Spengler](#); published 2 weeks ago in [Features](#)



Hydrangeas are the rock stars of the flowering shrub world and panicle hydrangeas are among the most popular varieties. You may know them as pee-gee hydrangeas, but there are dozens of panicle hydrangeas and more new cultivars almost every year.

These beautiful shrubs are beloved because they are some of the easiest hydrangeas to grow and are perfect for beginners. And with so many cultivars available, there is a [panicle hydrangea](#) that's perfect for every garden.

But the question becomes, with so many different types, how and when do you prune them for the best results? Improper pruning can reduce the number of flowers, so you'll want to learn [how and when to prune hydrangeas](#) before picking up your clippers. The following expert advice cover everything you need to know to safely prune your panicles.

Panicle Hydrangea Basics

Panicle hydrangea (*Hydrangea paniculata*) are sometimes called the “black thumb” hydrangeas because anyone – even a beginner – will have an easy time growing these shrubs.

Other [types of hydrangeas](#) require dappled sun or even light shade, but not panicles. They are by far the [best hydrangeas for full sun](#) gardens. Plus, panicles are some of the hardiest of hydrangeas around and thrive in a wide range of winter climates, including [USDA growing zones](#) 3-9.

They are so ornamental, too! The huge flowers grow in white, but as summer wanes and fall approaches, they take on pink to red tones. Blossom color varies in some cultivars. For example, ‘[Limelight](#)’ hydrangea blossoms grow in green before turning red or burgundy.

Though pruning panicle hydrangeas is not mandatory, many gardeners decide to cut back shrubs to encourage thicker stems, bigger blooms from buds on the lower parts of the stems, and a more attractive shape.



(Image credit: elenaleonova / Getty Images)

When to Prune Panicle Hydrangeas

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Hydrangea pruning can feel complicated since some species bloom on new wood and others bloom on old wood. The timing of pruning is critical for species that bloom on old wood and even a simple [hydrangea care mistake](#) can eliminate the next season's blooms.

Panicle hydrangeas bloom on new wood. That means that you don't have to be quite as stressed about the timing of the pruning. The two best times to prune panicle hydrangeas are late fall, once the [plant is dormant](#), and late winter or early spring, when new growth begins. I prefer early spring because then I get to spend the winter looking at the [dried flower heads](#) rather than cut-off branches. When not to prune panicle hydrangea? Summer, hands down. The very worst time to prune panicle hydrangeas is in early summer before flowers emerge. Panicles bloom in late summer and – if you prune before then – you'll cut off all the flower buds. This is a common mistake when pruning panicle hydrangeas as well as many other shrubs in the landscape. But thankfully, it's easy to avoid.



(Image credit: Galina Zhigalova / Getty Images)

How to Prune Panicle Hydrangeas

A panicle hydrangea looks best when it is regularly refreshed. You'll want to take off about one-third of the shrub every year. For example, if your panicle is 6 feet (2 m) tall, prune off about 2 feet (.6 m) at the top.

Alternatively, you can try a simple [rejuvenation pruning](#) technique. Take out about one-third of the branches, selecting the oldest branches first. Continue this over the course of three years, taking out a different one-third each year until the entire shrub has been refreshed.

In addition, take a close look at the shrub. Are there any thin, spindly stems? Trim out these to create a more pleasing shape. Also, trim out any thin side branches, remove any crossing branches, and prune away any dead or diseased stems. Always use a pair of sharp, clean [pruners, like these ones from Fiskars](#) that our team of experts love. Or splurge on the [Felco pruners pro gardeners swear by](#).



(Image credit: Getty Images)

Pruning Panicle Hydrangeas Into Trees

Do you want a hydrangea into the form of a small tree? Pick a panicle. It's the only hydrangea species that can be pruned into a tree.

The pruning process to create a [tree hydrangea](#) starts early by identifying and encouraging a central trunk. If you are buying a panicle tree from the nursery, they will have done the initial shaping work for you.

But you'll still need to [prune your tree hydrangea](#) regularly to hold that shape. This is mandatory. If you skip even one year, tree top growth can become out of control and ruin the shape. If this happens, it is very difficult to restore the tree form.

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Meghan Markle's Flower Sprinkles Are a Beautiful Way to Bring Winter Blooms to the Table – and They're So Easy to DIY

Inspired by Meghan Markle's flower sprinkles, learn how to grow, dry, and use edible winter flowers to add color and flavor to cold-season dishes.



By [Sarah Veldman](#)

published 3 hours ago in Features



(Image credit: Getty Images)

Meghan Markle has always been obsessed with flower sprinkles, as we've seen from her recent hit show on Netflix, *With Love, Meghan*. She puts them on every kind of food – from scrambled eggs to donuts to crêpes – and sells them through her lifestyle brand, [As Ever](#). It's a reminder that even in winter, flowers can delight more than just the eyes.

At the Time100 Summit last spring, Meghan was interviewed by *Time* CEO Jessica Sibley and spoke about the infamous flower sprinkles ([via Newsweek](#)). She said, "It's like a little fairy, if I could just be tossing them around all the time. The obsession that has come with flower sprinkles I was not expecting."

She continued, "Of all the things to be talking about for Time100, let's talk about flower sprinkles. But let's, because I think it speaks to the tiny moments of joy that are so effortless and just create a little bit of magic that we are all craving in our everyday."

In winter, it may feel like everything is dormant and gray – especially in the garden. But, with a little forethought (and creativity), you can grow, preserve, and enjoy [edible flowers](#) all season long. Here's how to bring blooms from your garden to your table with color and flavor that goes far beyond decoration.

Grow or Source Cold-Hardy Edible Flowers

While many [summer-blooming annual flowers](#) won't survive frost, some edible flowers and petals actually love cooler weather, or you can harvest and preserve the flowers before winter.

The best cold-hardy options are [pansies](#) and [violas](#). These tiny little flowers pack a punch when it comes to color in winter, and they can even handle light frost – perfect for winter containers.

Alternatively, these flowers can be started in late winter for harvesting in spring:

- [Calendula](#) (pot marigold): These bright orange and yellow petals will add a sunny pop of color to your dishes; they will look especially nice on eggs, toast, or another breakfast dish.
- [Chamomile](#): These are small daisy-like flowers that can be dried for tea.
- [Borage](#): Flowers and young leaves of this herb have a cucumber-like flavor.
- [Bachelor buttons](#): Beautiful, true blue flowers with a mild clove taste.
- [Bee balm](#): The flowers of this hardy perennial have a fresh minty/citrusy flavor.



(Image credit: Jana Milin / Shutterstock)

If you have limited space, container plants make it easier to control soil and warmth. [These grow](#)

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[bags from Amazon](#) give your plants room to expand while also allowing good drainage and airflow; ideal for cold-season herbs and edible flowers.

You can even [start your edible flowers from seeds indoors](#) and move them outside when the weather allows. To do this, you can use a small indoor grow light to avoid leggy seedlings. [This one from Walmart is great, Witsanlex Smart LED Grow Lamp for Indoor Plants, Full Spectrum, Sun Mode, Auto Dimming & Timer, Adjustable Height - Walmart.com](#)

Summer Flowers to Grow for Sprinkles

Collect and dry these summer flowers before cold weather arrives and preserve the petals to use throughout the season. Drying the petals locks in the color and flavor, turning summer's harvest into a winter garnish.

In addition to the early-season flowers above, these summer flowers can be dried for sprinkles:

- [Lavender](#)
- [Rose petals](#)
- [Nasturtiums](#)
- [Hibiscus](#)
- [Elderflower](#)



(Image credit: Ganna Zelinska / Getty Images)

How to Dry Petals

- Harvest in the morning (after the dew is dried up but before the heat sets in)
- Rinse gently and gently pat them dry
- Spread petals on a baking sheet with parchment paper
- Dry in the oven on a low temperature (about 100–120°F) or use a dehydrator until they're fully dry

If you want to regularly dry flowers, herbs, vegetables, and fruits, then it's worth investing in a dehydrator. The [Magic Mill Food Dehydrator Machine, available on Amazon](#), is a popular, budget-friendly choice.

Once your flowers have completely dried and they're nice and crisp, you'll need to store them. Use in an airtight jar and place that in a cool, dark place like a pantry or garage. Your edible flower sprinkles will stay vibrant, in color and flavor, for several months.

Using Edible Flower Petals in Winter Foods and Drinks

Once the work is done, then starts the fun! Meghan Markle told the Time100 Summit, "The level of charm that you find people have when they see these tiny little dried petals is something I can't wrap my head around, but I appreciate that there is a love for the detail and the small level of delight that can be added."

Try edible petals in:

- Winter salads: Throw in some pansies or calendula with greens like kale and endive.
- Baked goods: On *With Love, Meghan*, the Duchess throws flower sprinkles on donuts with white icing, which looks simply lovely. But you can also add it on lemon bread, scones, or even muffins before baking them.
- Teas and infusions: Chamomile and lavender petals make for very [soothing winter teas](#), especially before bedtime.
- [Cocktails](#): Cocktail glasses look seriously beautiful with flower sprinkles used as a garnish.
- Yogurt and oatmeal bowls: Add beauty and a hint of floral nuance with flower sprinkles on your yogurt and oatmeal bowls, or even a smoothie bowl.

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(Image credit: HandmadePictures / Shutterstock)

Like Meghan's flower sprinkles, these petals are meant to be playful yet delicious. Just be sure to use flowers that were grown *without* chemical pesticides and are actually edible (not all flowers are!)

A Garden That Feeds the Senses Year-Round

Meghan Markle's flower sprinkles are a reminder that you should think beyond flowers as decor, seeing edible blooms as not only for looks but function. With a handful of flower sprinkles, a simple way to preserve the petals and a bit of culinary creativity, you can bring a beautiful addition to every meal.

RECIPE TIME

Bacon Wrapped Pickle Chips

[*Ninjacue*](#)



These Bacon Wrapped Pickle Chips are wrapped in bacon, seasoned with BBQ rub, smoked at 275°F until crispy, and served with ranch. An easy three-ingredient smoker appetizer that's perfect for game day, cookouts, and tailgating.

- **Total Time:** 1 hour 15 minutes
- **Yield:** 6

Ingredients

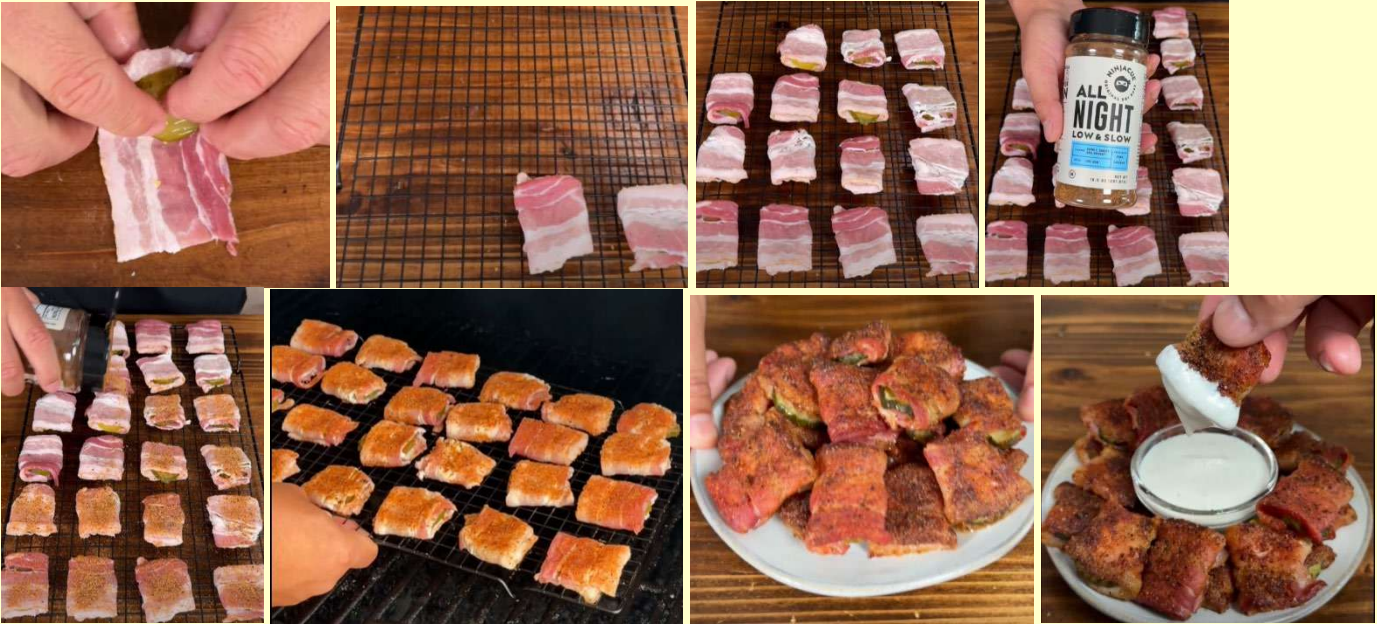
- 24 dill pickle chips, patted dry
- 12 slices regular bacon, cut in half lengthwise or trimmed as needed
- 2 tablespoons BBQ seasoning
- Ranch dressing, for serving

Instructions

1. Preheat your smoker to 275°F.
2. Pat the pickle chips dry with paper towels to remove excess moisture.
3. Wrap each pickle chip with one slice of bacon, trimming or cutting the bacon so it overlaps on only one side of the pickle.
4. Arrange the wrapped pickle chips seam-side down on a wire baking rack.
5. Season both sides of each pickle chip generously with BBQ seasoning.
6. Place the wire rack directly onto the smoker grates.
7. Smoke for 1 hour, or until the bacon is cooked through and lightly crisp around the edges.
8. Remove from the smoker and let cool for 3-5 minutes.

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9. Serve immediately with ranch dressing for dipping.
Can be baked in the oven 400°F until done (I baked mine in the oven)



Bread and butter ones are way better. I do mine in an air fryer. 15 mins at 375 degrees. Flip them half way thru cooking. I also use Kinders Maple Brown Sugar seasoning and Hot Honey seasoning

I did make these with a suggested Bread and Butter Pickle. I loved them. I am going to try them with dill pickle slice. I have some fermented pickles that I purchased on line and they are really good. Going to do them.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!
SEPTEMBER



Morning Glory
SEPTEMBER ~ ASTER & MORNING GLORY

The September birth flowers are the [aster](#) and the [morning glory](#). [Asters](#) are mainly symbols of powerful love. Perhaps because of their positive symbolism, according to folklore they were once burned to ward off serpents. The other September flower is the [morning glory](#). Morning glories are simple symbols of affection.

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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/](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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