



Official Publication

# Master Gardener Thymes

Volume 18, Issue 1 Jan-Feb 2021

## 2021 Has Arrived!

2020 was a very trying year for all. Many of us either got sick from the Covid-19 virus or had family members who did. And, unfortunately, some have lost friends and/or family to this horrible virus.

But, finally, 2021 has arrived; vaccines are becoming available, and things are looking up. So, to celebrate, let's start studying our seed catalogs and planning our gardens. Growing season will be here soon.

If you want to further your knowledge there are opportunities to learn via Zoom, and other online resources. Check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for possibilities.



## NETMGA FEBRUARY 2021 MEMBERSHIP MEETING

The **February 1** General Membership Meeting will be via Zoom at 6:30pm, and will include presentations by Project Leaders to let everyone know what is going on at their site, when they meet, etc. Stay tuned for news about this meeting.

## WHAT'S INSIDE:

- SAPS January Program via Zoom
- SAPS February Program via Zoom
- Personal Favorites From 2020's Garden by Sue Stanley
- CEU Opportunities

## Chris' Corner

Chris's Corner will return in the next edition of MG Thymes.

If you have any questions, call Chris at 423-646-9043.

## **SAPS January Program via Zoom: Epic Tomatoes from YOUR Garden - Some stories, history, tips and tricks for success**

Author, tomato expert and avid gardener Craig LeHoullier will present “Epic Tomatoes from YOUR Garden - Some stories, history, tips and tricks for success” on Thursday, **January 21**, at 7 p.m. This is a free Zoom presentation sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). To register, please email your request to [margaret.woolery@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.woolery@gmail.com) and she will send you a link to view the presentation on your desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile phone.



In this information-packed program, Craig will take us on a colorful journey through his 40-year love affair with tomatoes. Beginning with some historical background that will highlight how lucky we current tomato growers and lovers are, the first half will guide us through the process of choosing which varieties will work best in our gardens. Following a break for questions, Craig will delve into cultural tips - from seed starting, care and feeding, troubleshooting, to harvest and seed saving. Craig will share techniques that work for traditional in-ground growing, as well as ways to bring your plants to the sun in containers or straw bales. Craig will linger on line to answer your questions.

Craig LeHoullier lives and gardens in Hendersonville, North Carolina as of January 2020; prior to that, he and his wife and pets resided in Raleigh, NC, for 28 years. A Rhode Island native, he caught the gardening passion from his father and grandfather. Craig earned his PhD in chemistry at Dartmouth College and had a 25 year career in pharmaceuticals.

Craig's gardening obsession, which started the year he and Susan were married and had their first garden in 1981, is passing through several stages. His love of heirloom tomatoes began in 1986 with his joining the Seed Savers Exchange, an organization for which he continues to serve as adviser for tomatoes. He is responsible for naming and popularizing many well known tomatoes, such as Cherokee Purple. In 2005 he added amateur tomato breeding to his garden resume and continues to co-lead the Dwarf Tomato Breeding project, responsible for creating 125 (and counting) new compact growing varieties for space-challenged gardeners.

Craig's writing career kicked off with a 2012 request from Storey Publishing to write a book on tomatoes, resulting in *Epic Tomatoes* (2015). His second book, *Growing Vegetables in Straw bales*, soon followed in 2016. Book 3, focusing on the Dwarf Tomato Breeding Project, is in progress and should be completed during 2020.

Craig is a popular lecturer across the country at major gardening events, as well as a frequent guest on podcasts and radio shows. His current and upcoming projects include a garden cook book, a weekly Instagram Live each Friday at 3 PM Eastern from his garden, and additional podcasts, webinars and speaking opportunities as they arise. [craiglehoullier.com](http://craiglehoullier.com)

## **SAPS February Program via Zoom: Chris Smith to Discuss the Utopian Seed Project**

Writer, seed saver and food visionary Chris Smith, will discuss The Utopian Seed Project on Thursday, **February 18**, at 7 p.m. in a free Zoom program sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). Master Gardeners are invited to attend. To register, please email your request to [margaret.woolery@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.woolery@gmail.com) and she will send you a link so you can view the presentation on your desktop, laptop, tablet or mobile phone.

The Utopian Seed Project is a hands-in-the-earth non-profit committed to trialing crops and varieties in the Southeast to support diversity in food and farming. Its Utopian vision is to create an engaged network of growers, gardeners, farmers, foodies, cooks and chefs to help educate and celebrate this diversity.

Based in Asheville, NC, The Utopian Seed Project is working towards an overarching mission to create food security in the face of climate change through diverse and regenerative agriculture. The goal is to develop a regional seed hub that can support and encourage a diverse food system of regionally adapted crops that is grounded in research.

Chris Smith is the founder and Executive Director of The Utopian Seed Project and Communications Manager for Sow True Seed in Asheville, NC. He serves on the boards of The People's Seed and Slow Food Asheville. A native of the UK, Smith has a master's degree in creative writing from the University of Manchester. His short stories have been published in Nashville Review, Mid-American Review, and The Manchester Review.

Chris writes regularly for The Heirloom Gardener, the Mother Earth News blog, and the Farmers' Almanac blog. His presentations on the value of growing regionally adapted crops and the versatility of okra have delighted audiences at food and farming festivals and fairs throughout the Southeast. Three years of research, trials and early morning writing sessions have netted Chris Smith the prestigious James Beard Award for 2020 in the category of Reference, History, and Scholarship for his book *The Whole Okra: A Seed to Stem Celebration* (2019). Chris is passionate about sustainable food systems, heritage seed saving, and surviving a warming planet.



## Personal Favorites From 2020's Garden

For many of us, 2020 will be a year to remember. Not only was it an election year, but it was also the beginning of a pandemic. As gardeners, we are fortunate to be able to step outdoors, smell the fresh air and indulge in a creative hobby that keeps our minds from focusing on the constant news of Covid-19. I knew that this would require a new garden project for the new year.

My solution was to sow the seeds of several new annual and perennial plant varieties for my partial-shade gardens. I needed more vibrant color plus plants that could stand up to the hard rains we experienced during the previous summer. After studying my seed catalogs, I chose several new varieties. I knew this would keep me busy!

I decided to plant Vinca Cora XDR Hotgenta that has a vivid magenta flower and Vinca Cora Polka Dot, a white vinca with a pink dot in the center. I sowed the seeds on March 1<sup>st</sup> and grew them under lights in my grow room. They were quick to germinate and grew strong and sturdy. In May, I transplanted both into two partial- shade raised beds. These colorful vincas thrived all summer and into fall, blooming nonstop. Both plants had no pest or disease issues and received lots of compliments! I would recommend both for any partial-shade location (*see picture*).



For the cutting garden, I chose a perennial Rudbeckia 'Cherokee Sunset'. This beautiful gloriosa daisy grows two feet tall with striking five-inch flowers. Each one is a mix of yellow and brown with a brown center. I sowed the seeds March 1<sup>st</sup> and grew them under lights in the grow room until planting outside in May. These long-stemmed blooms were outstanding cut flowers. Because of their sturdy stems, they last over 10 days in a vase. We enjoyed them all summer and right into late fall in the garden. I would also recommend this variety (*see picture*). All seeds were purchased from Park Seed ([www.parkseed.com](http://www.parkseed.com)).

These flowers were easy to grow, pest resistant and beautiful. I could not have asked for a better spring/summer project. Now it is time to dream up another project for the coming year. Happy healthy gardening!!

Sue Stanley, MG since 2006 – Gardening in Knoxville TN

## Projects List

**Boundless Playground at Warriors' Path State Park** Kingsport  
Gwyn Duncan 423-239-0460 [geduncan@charter.net](mailto:geduncan@charter.net)

**Branch House Family Center** Blountville  
Margaret Woolery [margaret.woolery@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.woolery@gmail.com)

**Carver Peace Gardens** Johnson City  
Nancy Shilling 423-833-1420 [nancysilling@gmail.com](mailto:nancysilling@gmail.com)

**Church Hill Senior Citizens Center Garden**  
Marcia Vandermause [mmvdvm@charter.net](mailto:mmvdvm@charter.net)  
Christine Barger [chscgarden@yahoo.com](mailto:chscgarden@yahoo.com)

**Discovery Garden at Gray Fossil Museum**  
Barbara Radice [bradice@charter.net](mailto:bradice@charter.net)

**Exchange Place Living History Farm** Kingsport  
Earl Hockin [ehockin@yahoo.com](mailto:ehockin@yahoo.com)

**Harvest of Hope Community Garden** Kingsport  
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Dave Rogers 423-502-2459 [dave\\_carla@chartertn.net](mailto:dave_carla@chartertn.net)

**Johnson City Medical Center Woodridge Hospital** Johnson City  
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**Rocky Mount Living History Site** Piney Flats  
Don Davis home 423-854-0152, cell 423-943-2392  
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**Steele Creek Park** Bristol, TN  
Robin Feirabend [Feierabe@ETSU.edu](mailto:Feierabe@ETSU.edu)

**Sycamore Shoals State Historic Site** Elizabethton  
Carol Ludiker 423-707-0026 [jaxlud26@gmail.com](mailto:jaxlud26@gmail.com)

**Tipton Haynes Historic Site** Johnson City  
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Betts Leach [BettsL@aol.com](mailto:BettsL@aol.com)

**Unicoi County Hospital** Erwin  
Gina Clark [gclarkx4@gmail.com](mailto:gclarkx4@gmail.com)

### NETMGA Yearly Projects List:

**Johnson City Home Show and Women's Expo**  
Penny Rutledge 423-612-4785 [pennyrutledge2@aol.com](mailto:pennyrutledge2@aol.com)

**Farm Expo**  
Doug Hilton 423-239-9433 [howlathmoon1775@gmail.com](mailto:howlathmoon1775@gmail.com)

**Kingsport Pepper Festival**  
Doug Hilton 423-239-9433 [howlathmoon1775@gmail.com](mailto:howlathmoon1775@gmail.com)

**Kingsport Tomato Festival**  
Dennis Marshall 423-288-3675 [dmarshall@chartertn.net](mailto:dmarshall@chartertn.net)

**Master Gardeners:  
Report your hours each month!!**



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## Monthly Gardening Tasks – January & February

<https://ag.tennessee.edu/utg/Pages/monthlytasks.aspx>

### Feed the birds!



## JANUARY & FEBRUARY 2021 Calendar of Events

**Covid-19 has had an effect on events. Please note that some programs, events and tours may require masks for participants. Before going you might want to confirm that event has not been cancelled.**

Melody's Monday Musings with Melody Rose, Greene County TN Extension

Information and Registration: <https://www.bsmga.com/home-gardening-classes.html>

North Carolina Arboretum Online Classes Schedule:

<https://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/adult-education-classes/>

JAN 21 Epic Tomatoes from YOUR Garden - Some stories, history, tips and tricks for success  
7:00pm; Zoom presentation by Craig LeHoullier. To register, email your request to [margaret.woolery@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.woolery@gmail.com). Sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS).

FEB 1 NETMGA General Membership Meeting via ZOOM  
6:30pm. Save the date...details will be announced.

FEB 18 Utopian Seed Project Discussion with Chris Smith  
7:00pm; Zoom presentation. To register, email your request to [margaret.woolery@gmail.com](mailto:margaret.woolery@gmail.com).  
Sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS).



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Master Gardener Association  
c/o  
UT Extension Sullivan County  
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Blountville, TN 37617

<http://netmga.net>

<https://extension.tennessee.edu/mastergardener>



## UT Extension

Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Endowment

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Spouse \_\_\_\_\_  
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The Institute of Agriculture

Questions: Please contact Tom Looney at 865-974-8622 or [tom.looney@tennessee.edu](mailto:tom.looney@tennessee.edu)

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