

Official Publication



Master Gardener Thymes

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MG'S DREAM COMES TRUE!

Dreams **do** come true! For six years Master Gardener Liz Bushong dreamed of decorating the White House for Christmas. On Sept. 12, 2009 she received a letter inviting her to be part of a team of volunteers who will prepare "The Peoples' House" for the upcoming holidays. Liz will leave for Washington on Thanksgiving Day and report to the White House at 7:30 AM on Nov. 27th. The decorating must be completed by Dec. 2.

Liz Bushong at right.

White House photo
www.mlewallpapers.com



When asked about her inspiration to become a White House Decorator, Liz says "a little voice from within" told her to apply. For six years she wrote to senators, representatives and anyone else she thought might help her reach her dream. During that time contacts she made frequently moved on and she had to write more letters and seek more recommendations. One very helpful contact is a relative of Doug Hilton who worked in the Usher's office at the White House.

Liz says, "I didn't give up because I knew that God had planted that idea and desire in my spirit....It was just a matter of time and my persistence as well as planting the seed to keep the dream alive."

Liz has been a Master Gardener since 2003. She was born in Indiana and lived in New York and Dallas before settling in Tennessee with her husband (also an MG.) She describes herself as a "lifestyle specialist" and has recently published a cookbook called Just Desserts. Liz appears regularly on the TV show "Daytime Tri-Cities" for a cooking and decorating segment. For more information, visit Liz's website www.lizbushong.com.

Forty-four Students Enter Fall MG Class



Forty-four students have been busy every Tuesday and Thursday morning this fall attending Master Gardener Classes in Gray. The students range in age from the early twenties to retirement age. There are ten men and thirty-four women in the class this year. Extension Agent Chris Ramsey notes that the class is very engaging in terms of questions and discussions.

“To Bark or Not To Bark”

By Hugh Conlon, UT Extension Area Specialist

The bark of many crape myrtle cultivars frequently seems to be underappreciated. Often, gardeners purchase crape myrtles in the spring as small shrubs or trees, never realizing that the bark on the main trunk and large branches may mature into something special.

Dr. Gary Knox at the North Florida Research Station in Quincy, Florida, lists among his favorites for outstanding bark:

- Lipan- white (pure white with age)
- Natchez- cinnamon
- Osage- orange
- Apalachee- cinnamon orange
- Biloxi- dark brown
- Acoma- creamy
- Caddo- cinnamon
- Pecos- dark brown

Lipan's mature bark is grayish white. This 15-foot multi-trunked crape myrtle may substitute for the paper and European white birches, which don't grow well in east Tennessee.

Most *Lagerstroemia indica* cultivars don't offer an attractive bark. The Whitcomb (“Whit”) cultivars, such as the popular ‘Dynamite’ and ‘Burgundy Cotton’ are *L. indica* types which don't possess attractive bark. In contrast, the *L. fauriei* cultivars exhibit awesome brown/red/chocolate bark, but their summer flowers are smaller than the *L. indica* and hybrids. *L. fauriei* cultivars like ‘Kiowa’, ‘Townhouse’ and ‘Fantasy’ display exquisite bark color in the winter garden.





Chris' Corner

CHRIS RAMSEY
SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT
(423) 279-2723
chris.ramsey@utk.edu

This has been a great gardening year thanks to the rain! With all of the hours submitted, you've obviously been busy this year. We've also been encouraging more timely entry of hours and use of the online entry option. In case you didn't hear, we did move the deadline for hours entry to October 31. If you haven't been able to get your hours entered, please call me as there is an option for you to enter late hours.

Thank you for your continued membership and participation in the NETMGA. The existence of this group is essential to the success and growth of the North East TN Master Gardener Program. The group brings everyone together as an identifiable group.

We challenged our group this past year to work with community groups and organizations. Several projects across the area have involved boy and Girl Scout groups and high school vocational agriculture classrooms. Keep up the great work!

All of your volunteer hours occurring before December 31, 2009 will count toward the current year. We will not be able to count these hours for the Annual Master Gardener Recognition Dinner. With the completion of this year, the Tennessee Master Gardener Program will be on a calendar year. I will continue to enlist your hours entry prior to October 31, 2009. This will allow me to complete a report by December 1 and for you to be recognized for those hours.

Keep in mind that the MG Hours Report form is available at my website, sullivan.tennessee.edu or by mail upon request by calling 279-2723.
THANK YOU!

Give me a call if you have any questions.

NEW E-MAIL "CLEARINGHOUSE" ESTABLISHED FOR MGs

In an effort to have better communication within Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners Association, the Board has created a central email that members should send inquiries through. The new email is **netmga2009@yahoo.com**. This will give everyone one email address that the Board can access and address questions from and also send Association news from. Please be looking for further email communications from NETMGA in the future. We will now send all Association mailings from this mailbox to all members and any correspondence from them will be handled by the Board as a whole. This will include project updates, news from Chris and answers to your questions.

YOU'RE INVITED.....

Dear Master Gardener,
Congratulations on your continued involvement in the UT Extension Master Gardener Program. Thanks to you and the many Master Gardener volunteers, our program continues to grow. I hope **you and your family** will be able to attend the **Annual Master Gardener Recognition Dinner**. We will recognize our Master Gardeners that have remained active this year. This event will be held on Monday, November 30, 2009 at 6:00 P.M. in Building #1 at the Appalachian Fairgrounds in Gray. The covered dish meal will begin at 6:30 P.M. Please bring enough food for you and your guests. The drinks, cups, plates, napkins, and plastic ware will be provided. We will be offering a coffee bar this year, so come and check it out!

This meeting is also the December membership meeting for the Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Association. We will elect the 2010 officers for the association, conduct the business meeting, and share other important information.

Again, please bring your family and enjoy fellowship with other Master Gardeners. You may call my cell phone at 646-9043 if you have trouble locating the fairgrounds. I look forward to seeing you on Monday, November 30.

Sincerely,
Chris Ramsey
Extension Agent and Master Gardener Coordinator

Directions to the Appalachian Fairgrounds: Coming from either Kingsport or Johnson City on I-26 take Exit 13 (Gray/Bobby Hicks Hwy.) Go past McDonalds on your your right. Continue .4 mile and get in left turn lane at traffic light. Turn left at traffic light on Old Gray Station Road and continue slowly .4 mile where at a very small intersection you turn left. (After turning, on your immediate left is Sit-n-Bull Family Restaurant in a small shopping center) Turn right on Chapel Street just before the Gray Elementary School. The road will curve to the left and then to the right. Immediately enter Gate 1 of the fairgrounds. Building #1 is located to the left at the top of the fairgrounds.

Plant a Winter Garden

Don't be a victim of the mid-winter blues. Design your garden for year-round enjoyment. Learn how at the Nov. 12th SAPS meeting to be held at the Farm Bureau Building in Jonesborough. The guest speaker is UT Extension Agent and Master Gardener Hugh Conlon. He will discuss many of the great plants that continue to shine through the cold dreary days of winter. Hugh will place particular emphasis on plants that bloom during the winter season. The talk begins at 7:00 PM and will last until 8:30. It is free and open to the public.



www.gardening-solution.com

Location: Farm Bureau Building at 1103 Boones Creek Rd. (Hwy 354) in Jonesborough. From Kingsport or Johnson City: take I- 26 to exit 17 (Boones Creek/Jonesborough), travel 3 ½ miles and the Farm Bureau building is on your right). Alternate route is 11-E to Jonesborough and take Hwy 354 north 1 mile.



Christmas is Coming to Exchange Place

Christmas In the Country will be held Saturday, December 5 from 10 am - 4:00 pm, at Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport. The celebration features fresh greenery and trees, handcrafted wreaths and roping, traditional foods and their related folk arts, unique decorations, and creativity sessions for all ages. The traditional Yule Log Ceremony is at 4:00 p.m. Saturday. Admission is free. For more information or to preregister for workshops, please call 423-288-6071.

MAKE A WREATH AT EXCHANGE PLACE

Exchange Place Living History Farm, 4812 Orebank Road in Kingsport, will hold its annual Wreath Making Workshop on Thursday, December 10, from 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m. With inspiration and guidance from Christy Shivell of Shy Valley Native Habitat Nursery and Herbarry, participants will create an ever-green wreath and kissing ball to take home. Christy will also demonstrate how to design a holiday arrangement. All materials - fresh greenery (holly, magnolia, cedar berries, pine, yew, etc.), cones, dried flowers, wreath form, and wire - will be provided.

The cost for the day is \$30 (\$25 for SAPS members) and includes all materials and a soup lunch. To reserve a place, mail check, payable to "Exchange Place", to: Joy Moore, P.O. Box 87, Fall Branch, TN 37656. Please include a phone and/or e-mail for confirmation. Registration is limited to 15 participants. Registration deadline is December 4. Sorry no cancellations or refunds (though we will save materials if someone has to cancel.) Proceeds from the workshop go to Exchange Place's restoration efforts. For more information call Joy Moore at 423-348-6572 or e-mail at ijnmoore@embarqmail.com.

WREATH MAKING TOOL AND SUPPLY LIST

A limited number of tools will be available, but, if possible, please bring:

pruning shears

wire cutters

needle-nose pliers

scissors

"findings" (any special objects, special greenery, etc. that you wish to include in your wreath You are encouraged to bring plant material from your yard to use and share for even more variety.

3-5 yards of 2" ribbon

WATER-WISE PROJECT CROSSES STATE LINES



Joy Stewart, Jean Lusardi, and Karen Clark at the first meeting of the Water-Wise Landscaping project.

Eight Master Gardeners and Interns from Sullivan County, Tennessee and Washington County, Virginia have joined forces to create a sustainable landscaping project.

Following the leadership of MG Joy Stewart, Chairperson, the group defines its mission as “to showcase a variety of sustainable landscaping techniques that people can use around their homes to help manage stormwater runoff. These techniques are designed to demonstrate that by the use of gardens and landscapes, landowners can take responsibility for the environment and at the same time enhance the beauty and value of their homes.”

Goals of the project are to help educate the public about water quality problems created

by stormwater runoff, to show people how they can keep stormwater on their property by changing their home’s landscaping, and to motivate people to make these changes by providing beautiful and effective examples.

Currently group members are visiting sites in Bristol, Johnson City and Kingsport to determine the best place to locate the project.

Members of the group include Joy Stewart, Jim Phillips, Tammy Fletcher, Karen Clark, Naomi Neiss and Jean Green from Sullivan County and Ann Harrison and Jean Lusardi from Washington County. Chris Ramsey and Hugh Conlon serve as advisors. Anyone interested in joining this project is invited to contact Joy Stewart at watertisedemo@gmail.com or (423) 573-2376.



(Photo) Some members of the Water Wise Landscaping Project visited Winged Deer Park in Johnson City to determine its suitability as a site. Pictured are Ann Harrison, Naomi Neiss, Joy Stewart, Jim Phillips, Tammy Fletcher, and Jean Lusardi.



ADOPT A TREE AT WARRIORS' PATH

Saturday, December 5 is "Adopt a Tree" day at Warrior's Path State Park in Kingsport. The event begins at 10:00 and ends at Noon. Participants are asked to come dressed to dig and to bring some tools. For every seedling that is planted gardeners may take one home one for themselves. This event is designed for children but adults are welcome, too. Come early before all the seedlings are gone!



ATTEND A LECTURE AT THE NC ARBORETUM

Gardening in the Mountains is a free lecture and demonstration on a gardening topic appropriate to the time of year. The Programs are held at the NC Arboretum in Asheville and run between 45 to 75 minutes in length. They are presented by one or two Buncombe County Master Gardeners. Depending upon the topic and weather conditions, the programs may include a garden walk. Lectures begin in the Education Center at 10 a.m. and are free. The remaining lectures for this year are *Heathers* on November 10 and *Trees in the Landscape* on December 8.

CONTRIBUTORS WANTED

Do you yearn to write? The MG Thymes is always looking for articles about local projects or creative pieces on the joys - or challenges - of gardening. Pictures are welcome, too! Send your information to Jean Green at gardenergreen@gmail.com.



The Joyful Gardener: The Joy of Curiosity in the Garden

The following article was submitted by Master Gardener Jeanne Cope.

There is an old saying stating, "Curiosity killed a cat." However, curiosity brings a unique joy to the gardener who dares plant something new and exciting. Following snippets of information regarding natural cotton growing in colors, I learned the ancient Aztec and Inca Indians in the high mountains of South America grew, harvested, and wove textiles in colors with no dye used in the cotton they grew. This short-fiber cotton grew in natural colors of brown, tan, cream, green, grey and yellow.

The special cotton was outlawed long ago in the countries where it grew, because white cotton was a long-fiber product, producing a smoother, stronger fabric. The isolated Indians continued growing their special cotton. Information, documented from textiles found in museums of those ancient Indians dating back hundreds of years, confirms the Indians grew cotton in natural colors. Textiles showed no evidence of dye. Thus, this is a natural, organic, cotton variety producing bolls in colors.

This past April, attending the Annual Herb Festival at the Farmer's market in Asheville, walking the booths, pulling my red wagon with purchases, and enjoying the herb smells in the damp morning air, a new booth appeared before me. Some plants had signs "brown cotton" or "green cotton"! It was exciting when my eyes spotted these plants. Having tried to find seed for this special type cotton to no avail, this was a great discovery. Although (there were) no yellow plants, I immediately purchased three each of brown and green.

Planted into a pot to come inside in the event of a freeze, the cotton thrives. Some plants are about 4' tall, and one plant has several bolls of cotton in a creamy brown color. The green cotton may produce bolls of green cotton.

The brown cotton has a bright pink bloom rather like hibiscus or okra, while the green has a yellow bloom. The plants are attractive with brown stems and bright green leaves shaped rather like maple or small sycamore leaves, looking much like white cotton plants.

Many countries, as Russia, have grown this cotton for years; India, just getting involved; and Israel, very involved; are seriously growing natural cotton in colors. Genetic work is underway to develop blue cotton. Someday we may find garments and linens made from this special cotton with zero chemicals used.

Why not cultivate curiosity as a wonderful habit in the garden, encouraging children to try new plants and new uses for them and their produce. Happy Gardening Everyone!



Brown cotton photo courtesy of farm.westinmoreland.com/pics/copper-cotton.jpg

Identify Your Spouse!

If you are a lucky MG or MG Intern whose spouse likes to help with your projects, we have a deal for you! Just call Chris Ramsey and he will have a special orange name tag made identifying your spouse as an official MG helper. This is for folks who are regular helpers. It's a nice way to let them know we appreciate their work. Chris' number is 423-279-2723.



The Patient Heart of a Gardener

This article was submitted by Helga Denton

As the garden changes from season to season, it also transforms the gardener. Years in the garden creates a garden in his soul. He reaps the harvest of a powerful antidote that neutralizes irritation, stress and worry. It is patience gathered from the garden that cultivates his heart steeped in the world of nature and becomes a source of joy.

A tour of his garden magically rains a mesmerizing spell over the gardener and captures him again, and again. His adoring heart beats wildly with anticipation of seeing what is next around the bend on the path. It is then that it is natural to talk to plants; they surely answer, swaying and dancing in delight, ever patient, ever poised. Here and there a new arrival greets him like an old perennial friend he hadn't seen in a year. If plants had arms he would embrace them; however, they know that dreams and imagination are the gardener's tools, that the arms of his consciousness hold them close.

It is from his heart that joy, beauty and love reach his mind. It seems like an echo from a higher world that visits the senses in tender reunion. Who can say it isn't reciprocated from a consciousness of a far-off-world? It is through patience that recognition of this higher realm is entered and brings light to the darkest hour. He chooses stillness over haste to gather the experience of the moment. His plants, his friends, have taught him countless powerful lessons of patience, a quality honed by years of practice.

It is the patient heart that unites all gardeners. When rough hands meet in recognition introductions aren't necessary.

2009 NORTHEAST TENNESSEE MASTER GARDENER ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

PRESIDENT

Johnny Suthers
4416 Fieldstone Drive
Kingsport, TN 37664
423-229-3263
jchemie@aol.com

VICE PRESIDENT

Karen Drought
129 Shepherd Road
Johnson City, TN 37601
423-928-0225
mommypurr@aol.com

SECRETARY

Gail Shaver
1404 Big Hollow Road
Blountville, TN 37617
423-323-1817
westwindangustwo@charter.net

TREASURER

Pat Mazurkiewicz
232 Cherry Street
Blountville, TN 37617
423-323-1644
robmazur@chartertn.net

CERTIFICATION OFFICER

Angie Droke
908 Spring Valley Drive
Kingsport, TN 37660
423-578-8281
adroke@chartertn.net

PAST PRESIDENT

Valerya Hyrne
492 Tilson Mountain Road
Flag Pond, TN 37657
(423) 743-9093
catsmeow24@embarqmail.com

2008 NETMGA COMMITTEE CHAIRS

MEMBERSHIP

Sally Richard
(423) 341-6166
sdr37615@comcast.net

PROJECT

Dennis Marshall
(423) 288-3675
marshalls3@embarqmail.com

WEBSITE

Belinda Bridwell
belindagb@comcast.net

HOSPITALITY

Kathy & Larry Wagner
423 Wine Circle
Blountville, TN 37617

PUBLICITY

Teresa Tittle
(423) 967-3695
teresa5937@hotmail.com

PROGRAM

Sandee Cook
3660 West Pines Road
Greeneville, TN 37745

NEWSLETTER

Jean Green (Editor)
(423) 652-1756
gardenergreen@gmail.com

Teresa Tittle (Assistant Editor)
(423) 967-3695
teresa5937@hotmail.com

Junella McClellan (Layout Design)
(423) 764-0736
j_mcclellan@hotmail.com



Northeast Tennessee
Master Gardener Association
c/o
UT Extension Sullivan County
3258 Highway 126, Suite 104
Blountville, TN 37617

<http://netmga.net>

<http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

DATES TO WATCH

2009

- November 10 *Heathers*, NC Arboretum 10:00 AM
- November 12 Winter Garden Talk, Hugh Conlon Jonesborough
- Nov 17 - Jan 3 Holiday Express at UT Gardens (Check website for more info.)
- November 30 MG Recognition Dinner, Appy Fair Grounds Bldng. #1, 6:00 PM
- December 5 *Christmas in the Country*, Exchange Place, Kingsport 10:00 - 4:00
- December 5 *Adopt a Tree Day*, Warrior's Path State Park, n Kingsport. 10:00
- December 8 *Trees in the Landscape*, NC Arboretum 10:00 AM
- December 10 Wreath Making Workshop, Exchange Place 9:30 - 2:30

2010

- January 3 *Chipping of the Greens*, Sycamore Shoals State Park 10:00 to 2:00