

Thirteen New Master Gardeners Recognized!



2007 MG class members who were certified at the November MG Recognition Dinner

North East Tennessee continues to expand its Master Gardener program. At the annual recognition dinner in November 2008 thirteen new MGs

received their certification for having completed the required hours of service and class work. Congratulations to these new MGs.



JP Barrett & Richard Shadden

Also at the November dinner Richard Shadden was honored as an Honorary Master Gardener for his many hours of help and service.

PLAN TO ATTEND A WINTER WORKSHOP

Master gardener Martin Litz has planned some terrific winter workshops at the Mize Garden Centers in Johnson City and Gray. These classes cover some very interesting topics and count for CEU credits for MGs. Be sure to call ahead to reserve a spot if you plan to attend – seating will be limited. The classes run from 10:00 AM to 12:00 noon.

The classes offered at Mize Garden Center in Gray, 251 Old Gray Station Road, are:

- Jan 17 **Composting** with Ben Hunter
 - Feb 21 **Roses** with George Poe
Herbs with Joy Moore
 - Mar 21 **Planting by the Moon** with Valerya Hyrne
Perennials with Betty Truman
- Call 467-2300 to reserve a spot at Gray.

Classes offered at Mize in Johnson City, 929 West Watauga Avenue, are:

- Jan 10 **Composting** with Ben Hunter
 - Feb 7 **Herbs** with Joy Moore
Frugal Gardening with Jean Cope
 - Mar 7 **Roses** with George Poe
Container Gardening with Samantha Loftin
- Call 434-1800 to reserve a spot in Johnson City.



NEW NETMGA OFFICERS ELECTED

Congratulations to the new officers for NETMGA. They will start their duties on January 1, 2009.

The officers are:

President—Johnny Suthers
Vice President—Karen Drought
Secretary—Gail Shaver

Treasurer—Pat Mazurkiewicz
Certification Officer—Angie Droke

Many thanks to the out-going officers for their hard work and years of service. We appreciate their commitment to NETMGA.

THIS SPRING THINK “WINTER SCHOOL”

By Blenda Anderson

Are you searching for the perfect training opportunity (CEU hours)? I found the one stop shop to get in all your hours is the 2009 Winter School! I attended last year and enjoyed a wonderful time of meeting and greeting with the other Master Gardeners across the state in addition to the learning opportunities. The Tennessee Master Gardeners Advocacy Board worked really hard to provide an interesting and fun time for all of us. In particular, I loved the class about setting up a schematic of your yard to help keep up with what you've planted where, even in the winter. I'm using the most elementary schematic for my daughter's yard. It's so easy and fun.

The 2009 Winter School will be held in Lebanon, TN at the Wilson County Fairgrounds. The Winter School offers encouragement and adds fun to the learning experience for the Master Gardener. The classes are varied from year to year so if you came last year, don't hold back this year. I can't wait for the class about creating water barrels to recycle water! This could also make a great Valentine gift for the Master Gardener in your life!

Editor's Note:

This year's Winter School will be held from Feb.19 – Feb.21 in Lebanon, TN. Those interested in attending should contact Doug Helton or Chris Ramsey for information about car-pooling. Registration is available on line at the MG Web site - <http://mastergardener.tennessee.edu/>

Rooms are available at two local hotels, the Comfort Inn and Comfort Suite. You may gather more information by visiting their web sites: www.comfortinn.com/hotel-lebanon-tennessee-tn109?

www.comfortsuite.com/hotel-lebanon-tennessee-tn316?

WARRIOR'S PATH PLANS WINTER GARDEN SEMINAR

Another opportunity to learn (and earn CEUs) occurs on Saturday, January 10, 2009 when Warrior's Path presents its annual Winter Garden Seminar. This year the speaker is Katie Stenhoff from Callaway Gardens. The topic is "Sustainable landscapes – Low Input Gardening with High Impact Plants." Katie earned a Master of Science degree in ornamental Horticulture and Landscape design from UT. In her talk she will share some of the secrets of plant placement and selection to help listeners make the most of their home gardens.

The seminar will be held from 10:00 AM to 12:00 at the recreation Building on Duck Island at Warrior's Path State Park. Please pre-register by calling Marty Silver at 423-239-6786 or email: Marty.Silver@state.tn.us.



Liz Blakley at Exchange Place
Christmas in the Country
in December 2008



Chris' Corner

CHRIS RAMSEY
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2008 was another exciting year for the Northeast TN Master Gardener Program. Local MGs reported 10,462 "ACT" hours. These hours represent Master Gardener impact in the Northeast Tennessee area. Impact is the reason that the MG program continues to get funding in these economically difficult times. Keep reporting those hours. I would like to encourage you to report those hours monthly, especially if you are a person who exceeds the minimum requirement. The new certification officer is Angie Droke. You'll find her contact information where the officers and leaders

are listed in the newsletter. If you haven't looked at the website recently, take time to visit. There are some improved features, especially for reporting hours. As I explained in earlier communication, you'll only see the hours that you have contributed since January 1, 2009. If you have any questions about your hours, please contact me at 279-2723 or chris.ramsey@utk.edu.

Take note of the MG Winter School coming up February 19-21. This is a great opportunity to meet other MGs from across Tennessee. There will be a group from Northeast Tennessee going to this program if you are interested. There will be a group traveling together from Northeast Tennessee.

The Master Gardener certificates, pins, and name badges were presented at the 2008 MG Recognition Dinner. If you were unable to attend, these will be available at upcoming MG meetings.

NETMGA MEETINGS SCHEDULED FOR 2009

The NETMGA Board of Directors meetings will be on the second Monday of January, March, May, July, September, and November at the Appalachian Fair Grounds in the conference room at Fair Grounds office area. The first board meeting of the year will be January 12, 2009 from 6:00 PM to 8:00 PM at the conference room at the Appalachian Fair Grounds.

The General Meetings, open to all NETMGA members, will be on the first Monday of February, April, June, August and October. The first general meeting will be held February 2, 2009 from 6 PM to 8 PM at the Gray Community Center. Doug will review the Master Gardener Projects. This meeting will count for 1 CEU credit.

LEARN HOW TO GROW CONTAINER VEGGIES

Dr. Annette Wszelaki, UT Vegetable Extension Specialist, will speak on **Vegetable Gardening in Containers** on Thursday, February 19 at 7 pm at the Washington County Farm Bureau Building on Hwy. 354 in Jonesborough.

Dr. Wszelaki received her PhD from the University of California-Davis, with an emphasis in postharvest physiology and her bachelor degree from Ohio State University, with an emphasis in ecology. She has a special interest in organic gardening.

This program is sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). For more information contact Joy Moore at jonmoore@tricon.net or 348-6572. This program counts for 1.5 CEUs for Master Gardeners.

DISCOVER DWARF CONIFERS



Michael Balogh will speak on *Dwarf Conifers for the Southeast, Color, Texture, Form* on January 15th at 7 p.m. at ETSU. Michael is the owner of Mountain Meadows Nursey in Weaverville, N.C. and is past president of the American Confer Society, Southeast Region. Balogh's nursery features one of the largest collections of dwarf conifers in the southeast, most of which he propagates.

His presentation will illustrate how these tough, easy care plants offer a multitude of dramatic shapes, colors, and textures for year round visual in-

terest that add an architectural element to highlight any landscape.

The presentation will be held in the Forum Room (on the top floor) of the DP Culp Student Center on the ETSU campus. This program is sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS) and ETSU Arboretum. For more information contact Joy Moore at 348-6572 or jonmoore@tricon.net. The program will count for 1.5 CEUs for Master gardeners.

2009 DATES TO WATCH

Sat. Jan. 3	Chipping of the Greens - Sycamore Shoals
Sat. Jan. 10	Composting at Mize in Johnson City
Sat. Jan. 10	Warrior's Path Winter Garden Seminar
Mon. Jan. 12	NETMGA Board of Directors meeting, Appalachian Fairgrounds 6-8PM
Thurs. Jan. 15	Talk on Conifers at ETSU 7PM
Sat. Jan. 17	Composting at Mize in Gray
Mon. Feb. 2	NETMGA General Meeting Gray Community Center 6-8PM
Sat. Feb. 7	Herbs and Frugal Gardening at Mize in JC
Wed-Sat Feb. 19-21	Winter School in Lebanon, TN
Thurs. Feb. 19	Vegetable Gardening in Containers , Jonesborough
Sat Feb. 21	Roses and Herbs at Mize in Gray
Sat Mar. 7	Roses & Container Gardening at Mize in Johnson City
Sat. Mar. 21	Planting by the Moon and Perennials at Mize in Gray

HOW DO YOU GARDEN IN THE WINTER?

Several NETMGA members shared their winter gardening activities for this edition of the Thymes. If you can't wait for spring, take a few hints from these year-round gardeners.

Dena Bolton tries some traditional bulb-forcing during the winter. She writes: " Right now I have some hyacinths and paperwhites growing. I also give my houseplants a lot of TLC, especially those that will be going outside in the spring. I take cuttings, so I will have even more. (Usually I wind up giving them away, since I always wind up with too many. LOL) I do have quite a few herbs that keep going through the winter months, including parsley, which freezes then perks back up and freezes and perks back up. Also, my sage is doing just fine. Of course, I spend way too much time going through gardening magazines and catalogs planning for the spring."

Jasmine Chervil also forces paper whites & hyacinths during the cold winter months.

Sue Stanley has a different winter project. Sue says: "This year, I am experimenting with cuttings I took from my favorite petunias. I rooted them in pots in a very small portable greenhouse kept in my basement. I lost about 20 of them to whiteflies that I neglected to notice at the outset. After treating with Safer Soap the rest are doing fine. This has been a fun experiment! Last year I ordered seeds online and grew some white balloon flower plants, bacopa, and miscellaneous annuals for the first time. I had to give many away because they all germinated.

Judy Penley operates on a larger scale. Judy tells the Thymes: "I have 300 potted plants in 2 greenhouses. They are in full bloom and I go out to look at them when the snow is flying. It is a job to keep them all watered and waiting to get back outside in the spring. It is beautiful to see the geraniums in full bloom. I have oranges on my tree and a Christmas cactus in full bloom."

(By the way, Judy invites anyone interested in visiting her greenhouses to drop by her home in Church Hill. Call first at 423-357-3312.)

Valerya Hyrne spends the cold months pruning trees, "so that they don't get in the way when I am mowing!! I also check for frost heaving, and do cleanup of the yard on warm days (yes, I have even "weed-eated" in January - think it was a couple of years ago when we had so much warm weather and the fence row was looking shaggy!!). I also took an on-line gardening course through the BBC (bbc.co.uk/gardening). It was called 'How to be a Gardener'. No, these courses do not count for CEUs with the TN MG Program. But it is interesting to learn what the Brits do in gardening practice! And yes, I look and dream over gardening catalogs and magazine - and plan for the next year.

2008

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SPARE SPECIES LIST

The Thymes is renewing a service that we have provided in the past. We would like to use the newsletter as an opportunity for people to share extra seeds and plants that they do not need. So we are adding a new section called the "Spare Species List." We are also trying to streamline the process to make it easier and quicker for people to give and get plant materials.

Joy Stewart will be our coordinator. You can contact her at any time to offer free plant materials or to request a specific plant item in the event that one becomes available. You can reach Joy at joylarry@btes.tv or call her at (423) 573-2376. Donations and requests will be published in the next available newsletter after they are received. Plant materials will be given out on a first-come, first-serve basis.

Since the newsletter is published bi-monthly and people often need to get or give plant material sooner than that, Joy will track requests and, wherever possible, facilitate transfers as soon as they are received, provided someone has already requested a specific species being donated. This arrangement will minimize waiting time.

We are going to initiate the new list with some water garden plants. Joy will be dividing 1 and 3 gallon pots around March 1. At that time, she will need takers for the following plants:

Blue Pickeral Rush, *Pontederia cordata*

Arrowhead, *Sagittaria latifolia*

Graceful cattail (dwarf), *Typha laxmannii*

Lemon bacopa, *Bacopa caroliniana*

Hardy white waterlily "Denver" with double cream blossoms

Blue flag iris, *Iris versicolor* (This plant was brought from Wisconsin where it is native; not native to the TN region.)

Also currently available is approximately 2 ounces of clean Catnip seed (*Nepeta cataria*) that was collected in the wild in Wisconsin this past fall. This amount can be divided into smaller quantities as needed.

So keep an eye on the Spare Species List in future editions!



Keep That Christmas Poinsettia All Year

By Hugh Conlon

Editor's Note: Do you dread the end of the holiday season because you don't know what to do with your Poinsettias? Are they too healthy to throw away, but too "dated" to keep? Extension Agent Hugh Conlon has some tips on how to keep those plants growing

Poinsettias are striking plants with colorful bracts (modified leaves) surrounding small yellow flowers in the center. With care poinsettia should retain its beauty for weeks. Some newer varieties stay attractive for many months.

Poinsettias are sensitive to sudden drops in temperature. Any temperature below 50 degrees F causes leaves or bracts to wilt or drop. Be careful when transporting it to your home. Excessive water floods the soil, causing roots to die from lack of oxygen. If the pot is covered with foil, puncture the bottom of the foil to allow good drain-

age. When using a saucer to protect furniture, elevate the pot to provide free water drainage. Never leave poinsettia sitting in a basin of water. Correct watering is important, as with all plants in the home. Yellowing of leaves and dropping of bracts can occur when the roots become dry for even a short period of time.

Once a poinsettia is past the flowering stage, gradually dry down the plant by not watering as often. The leaves will fall with a dormant stem left. Water just enough to keep the stem from shriveling. In April, transplant to a larger pot, cut back the whole plant to 4 to 6 inches from the top of the pot, increase the watering frequency. Within a few weeks new shoots will emerge.

After danger of frost is past, plant your poinsettia outdoors, burying the pot up to the rim in the ground. To keep the plant low and compact, pinch back the growing shoots, leaving 4-5 true leaves per stem every 3-4 weeks. The pinched shoots then branch out and create a bushier plant. To initiate flowers before Christmas, stop pinching plant shoots after Labor Day.

Fertilization of the poinsettia during its growing season differs little from any other plant. A good house plant fertilizer recommended for foliage plants will work fine. Feed weekly at half strength. The poinsettia will grow in a soil pH of 4.5 to 7.5, provided the proper key nutrients are supplied. A pH of 6.5 is ideal.

The poinsettia sets flowers when nights are long. Without long nights, this plant will continue to produce leaves, will grow and never flower. Bring your poinsettia into the house before frost, usually around mid-September, and keep it in an unlighted room during the night after October 1 to induce flowering. If such a room is not available, cover the plants with a cardboard box from 5 p.m. to 8 a.m. from October 1 until bracts appear and are well formed, usually within six weeks.

Give the plant as much light as possible during the day. Maintain a night temperature between 65 to 70 degrees F. Poinsettia does best in a sunny location away from heat outlets or drafts.



Photo courtesy of www.theseattletraveler.com



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<http://netmga.net>

<http://mastergardeners.tennessee.edu>

TIME TO PAY DUES!!

It's time to pay Master Gardener Yearly Dues. These dues entitle you to continue to receive the MG Thymes. Interns from the fall 2008 class have already paid dues for the 2009 year. Thanks for paying promptly so we don't have to end your subscription.

2009 NETMGA Membership Form

Membership dues are \$15.00 per year and are due by January 31, 2009.

Please make your check out to NETMGA and mail to: Sally Richard
137 Bentwood Lane
Gray, TN 37615

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

County _____ Phone _____

E-mail address _____

Please check if you **cannot** receive the newsletter via e-mail