



Official Publication

Master Gardener Thymes

Volume 20, Issue 1 Jan-Feb 2023

Winter Let Us Know It Is Here!

I hope everyone has had a wonderful holiday season! I also hope no one experienced problems in the sub-zero temperatures. So many had water issues, burst water pipes, and power outages! In spite of that, we in NETN fared better than northern states.

Have you started receiving 2023 plant and seed catalogs, as I have? I am already planning what to grow and what new things to try.

It's not too early to think about getting in your 2023 continuing education hours. There are opportunities to learn in-person, via Zoom, and other online resources. Check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for possibilities.



NETMGA BOARD MEETING

NETMGA Board meeting will be on **January 9**, 6:30pm, at Ron Ramsey Ag Center, 140 Spurgeon Lane in Blountville.

NETMGA FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MEETING & AWARDS

February 6. Details about this event will be provided at a later time.

WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Upcoming SAPS Programs
- Is Your Soil Ready for a New Garden?
- January/February Calendar of Events

Mark Your Calendar!

SAPS January Program - "Results of the Latest UT Vegetable Trials."

Dr. Natalie Bumgarner, Assistant Professor of Residential and Consumer Horticulture at the University of Tennessee and Tennessee Extension Master Gardener Coordinator, will discuss the "Results of the Latest UT Vegetable Trials" on Thursday, **January 19, 2023**, at 7 pm. Dr. Bumgarner will share the findings of the latest UT Extension vegetable garden cultivar trials that include not only evaluating garden performance but taste tests as well. She will also highlight some of the recent introductions that might be of interest for your garden this year. This is a free Zoom presentation sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). To register, see the SAPS website: <http://saps.us/>. Registration deadline is noon on Thursday, January 19. For more information, call 423-348-6572 or e-mail sapsnews@gmail.com .



Natalie Bumgarner is the UT Residential and Consumer Extension Specialist with responsibilities for educational content development and programming across Tennessee. She is also the coordinator for the Tennessee Master Gardener Program. Natalie is a West Virginia native with a background in agriculture and has been active in various facets of horticulture for over 15 years. She completed her bachelor's degree in Horticulture from West Virginia University in 2005 with a focus in ornamental greenhouse production. In 2007, she received a M.S. degree from WVU in Horticulture with research focusing on growing practices for small scale organic vegetable producers.

In 2012, she completed a Ph.D. in Horticulture and Crop Science from The Ohio State University. At OSU, Natalie's research focused on vegetable production systems, specifically growing environment impacts on yield and crop composition in leafy vegetables. Following completion of her graduate work, Natalie undertook postdoctoral work in the areas of vegetable grafting and cropping to target international nutrition needs at the Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, OH. Prior to joining the UT Department of Plant Sciences, Natalie was the Horticulturist and Research Director for CropKing, Inc. in Lodi, OH where her work focused on research and education in the area of small to medium scale greenhouse vegetable production.

February SAPS Program – “Vines, Scramblers and Climbers – Going Up Is Next Level Gardening!”

Plantsman, lecturer, and author Mark Weathington, Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum, will present “Vines, Scramblers and Climbers – Going Up Is Next Level Gardening!” on Thursday, **February 16**, at 7 p.m. at the Kingsport Center for Higher Education, 300 W. Market Street, Kingsport, TN 37660. In this illustrated talk, Weathington will show us why vines are some of his favorite plants and why he likes to use them throughout his garden on structures and climbing on other plants. Mark will discuss some of his favorite vines that would make a wonderful addition to any garden. Sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS) the program is free and the public is invited. For more information phone 423-348-6572 or email sapsnews@gmail.com, <http://saps.us/>.



Mark Weathington is the Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum at North Carolina State University where he is passionate in his work to connect people with plants. His career in public horticulture has also included the Norfolk Botanical Garden where he served as Director of Horticulture and the Atlanta Botanical Garden as a horticulturist.

Mark travels extensively searching for new plants to diversify the American landscape and lecturing on a variety of topics in horticulture to further the JC Raulston Arboretum’s vision of “Planning and Planting a Better World.” His explorations and speaking engagements have taken him to China, Taiwan, Japan, Ecuador, Europe, Mexico, New Zealand, and throughout the US.

Mark has recently completed **Gardening in the South: The Complete Homeowner's Guide** for Timber Press and writes a column for the Raleigh based News & Observer newspaper. He has also recently revised and updated the Propagation Guide for Woody Plants at the JC Raulston Arboretum and has been published in *Horticulture*, *Carolina Gardener*, *American Nurseryman*, *VA Gardener*, and *HortScience* magazines as well as The Mid-Atlantic Gardener’s Book of Lists.

Mark lives and gardens in the shade in Raleigh, NC, the city of oaks, with his wife and 2 children.

Is Your Soil Ready for a New Garden?

Healthy soil is the foundation for a successful garden. Thriving, lush plants aren't possible without good soil to support them. A lot of times we get distracted by other tasks and our soil is often overlooked, even though it's more important than most other factors in the garden. When you're preparing for a new garden, the first thing you need to do is to make sure that your soil is ready.

The Role Soil Plays



The soil is the source for everything that the plant needs, except for sunlight and carbon dioxide. Plants take up all of their nutrients from the soil. Water is also absorbed through the soil, even though the top of the plant gets wet during a rain shower or watering. For many years, gardeners simply added the nutrients that they knew the plants needed back to the soil in the form of fertilizer. Fertilizer is a quick fix for a larger problem. The soil itself should be healthy so that it can support your plants properly.

What does it mean to have healthy soil?

Healthy soil is more than just nutrient-rich. Nutrients are a key factor in your garden soil, but they aren't the only thing that you should pay attention to. Your soil should be able to hold water without becoming soggy or saturated. The water should remain in place long enough for the plant to get water absorbed, but not too long that it causes root rot.

The soil should also support life other than the plants you put into it. Soil that supports healthy plant growth has all sorts of insects and microorganisms growing in it. Many of these microorganisms are necessary for healthy plants. One such microorganism is mycorrhizae, a fungus that helps roots to absorb nutrients from the soil. Mycorrhizae forms a symbiotic relationship with the roots of plants. Healthy garden soil shouldn't just support your plants, but the entire ecosystem that lives within that soil.

How to ensure that your soil is healthy and ready for a new garden.

Nutrients

You know that your soil needs to have all of the right nutrients for your plants to grow properly. You've probably also heard that 'dark soil equals healthy soil'. This isn't always true. Soil that looks 'stripped' can still have nutrients in it to support plant growth. Dark soil isn't always nutrient rich as there are many minerals and substances that can cause soil to be dark in color.

The best way to understand what nutrients are in your soil is to perform a soil test. You can purchase a soil testing kit to do this or you can collect a soil sample and mail it off for a detailed test. A soil test will give you an idea of the major/macro nutrients in your soil – nitrogen, phosphorus and potassium. All three of these nutrients are critical for plant growth. You'll also learn about the micronutrient levels in your soil if you use a detailed test kit or mail samples off to have them tested.

In addition to the nutrients, you should also test the soil's pH level. The ideal pH level for your garden will vary depending on the plants you're planning to grow. However, most plants thrive in slightly acidic soil, with a pH of around 6.0-7.0. In some areas of the country, the soil is naturally acidic and you'll need to amend your soil with lime. Other areas of the country have soil that is naturally alkaline and you'll need to add sulfur or peat to bring the pH back down. A typical soil test kit will include a test for pH.

One of the best ways to add nutrients to the soil and to adjust the pH is with compost or manure. These additives have the ideal nutrient profile and are usually at the proper pH. Adding manure or compost to the soil will add nutrients that will last longer than water-soluble fertilizers.

Texture

Soil texture is important because it will determine your soil's water holding capacity. Remember, you want healthy garden soil that will hold water without it draining out quickly, but you also don't want the soil to hold so much water that your plants drown. Plants need air pockets around their roots to stay healthy. If there's too much water in the soil, those air pockets are filled with water, which causes root rot and plant death.

An ideal soil is loose and spongy in your hands. It's nearly an equal mix of all three soil particles—sand, silt and clay. When you have an equal amount of sand, silt and clay, it's referred to as a loam. Soil that has too much sand will have trouble holding water and nutrients. When water drains through the soil too quickly, it pulls nutrients down with it. Soil that has too much clay is often sticky and holds too much water.



You might be able to amend your soil by adding some of the soil particles that your soil lacks, but that's not as easy to do as you'd think. The easiest way to fix the soil's texture is by adding compost. Compost is a miracle-worker in the soil as it can fix water issues, whether your soil is holding too much water or not enough. Compost will help the soil to hold just the right amount of water and add nutrients at the same time.

Crop Planning


Keep a journal of how you lay out your garden each year and make note of where certain plants are planted. Some plants will pull certain nutrients out of the soil more than others. This can create an area of soil that lacks certain nutrients. For example, tomatoes will pull large amounts of nitrogen out of your soil. If you plant tomatoes in the same space year after year, you'll strip that area of your garden of nitrogen unless you do some serious soil amending between tomato plants. Use a gardening planning app like From Seed to Spoon to monitor crop, planting and germination time, consult growing guides, and efficiently manage your vegetables garden.

Crops that pull a lot of nutrients from the soil should be rotated yearly to give the soil time to recover. You can also plant cover crops in between heavy-feeding plants to help the soil recover faster.

Legumes, like beans, will actually add nitrogen back to the soil. These can be planted in between growing seasons to help your soil stay healthy.

The easiest way to keep your garden soil healthy enough for new plants is to keep it amended. Compost and manure are ideal go-to additives. Use fertilizer as a secondary option since it won't support long term soil health the way compost and manure will. With a little planning ahead and careful soil management, you'll be growing lush, productive plants in no time.

- Official Blog of Park Seed
<https://blog.parkseed.com/>

Chris' Corner		CHRIS RAMSEY SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT (423) 574-1919 cwramsey@utk.edu
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Chris's Corner will resume soon! Stay tuned!

Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners

<https://www.uthort.com/>

Projects List

Boundless Playground at Warriors' Path State Park Kingsport
Gwyn Duncan 423-239-0460 geduncan@charter.net

Branch House Family Center Blountville
Margaret Woolery margaret.woolery@gmail.com

Carver Peace Gardens Johnson City
Nancy Shilling 423-833-1420 nancyshilling@gmail.com

Church Hill Senior Citizens Center Garden
Marcia Vandermause mmvdvm@charter.net
Christine Barger chscgarden@yahoo.com

Discovery Garden at Gray Fossil Museum
Barbara Radice bradice@charter.net
John Hitchcock jhitchcock@comcast.net

Exchange Place Living History Farm Kingsport
Earl Hockin ehockin@yahoo.com

Harvest of Hope Community Garden Kingsport
Dave Rogers 423-502-2459 dave_carla@chartertn.net

Johnson City Medical Center Woodridge Hospital Johnson City
Barbara Voigt 423-467-2013 voigt7b@comcast.net

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Steele Creek Park Bristol, TN
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Tipton Haynes Historic Site Johnson City
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Unicoi County Hospital Erwin
Gina Clark gclarkx4@gmail.com

NETMGA Yearly Projects List:

Johnson City Home Show and Women's Expo
Penny Rutledge 423-612-4785 pennyrutledge2@aol.com

Farm Expo
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 wes.walker@me.com

Kingsport MeadowView Home Show
Doug Hilton 423-239-9433 dh535651@gmail.com

Kingsport Pepper Festival
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 wes.walker@me.com

Kingsport Tomato Festival
Dennis Marshall 423-288-3675 dmarshall@chartertn.net

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



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Feed the birds!



JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2023 Calendar of Events

Covid-19 is still affecting 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.

CHECK THE SITES BELOW MONTHLY FOR CLASSES, SEMINARS, WORKSHOPS:
Melody's Monday Musings with Melody Rose, Greene County TN Extension
Information and Registration: <https://sites.google.com/utk.edu/mondaymusings/home>

Knoxville Botanical Garden and Arboretum Classes/Workshops: <http://knoxgarden.org/classes-events/workshops/>

North Carolina Arboretum Classes Schedule:
<https://www.ncarboretum.org/education-programs/adult-education-classes/>

Asheville Botanical Gardens: <https://ashevillebotanicalgardens.org/events-classes/adult-classes/>

Tennessee Native Plant Society Seminars: <https://www.tnps.org/tnps-speakers/>

Appalachian Highlands Chapter of Wild Ones:
<https://www.facebook.com/groups/783213076410695/about>

Tennessee Valley Chapter of Wild Ones/Programs and Events:
<https://tnvalleywildones.org/programs-events/public-programs/>

Wild Ones Webinars: <https://wildones.org/webinars/>

JAN 8 Orchid Society of East Tennessee – 2 pm Gray Community Center.

JAN 9 NETMGA Board Meeting
6:30pm. Ron Ramsey Ag Center, 140 Spurgeon Lane, Blountville

JAN 12 Master Gardener/Frontline Garden/AgrAbility Project Training Event
12:00-1:30pm This training is a follow up to our 2022 FrontLine Garden/AgrAbility Project. We will be discussing the monthly Lunch and Learn series. Via Zoom. Information:
<https://utgardens.wildapricot.org/event-5062265>

JAN 17 Tennessee Native Plant Society Seminar
7:30pm Dennis Bishop, *Designing in Nature: Transforming Lawns to Native Plants*.
Information: <https://www.tnps.org/event/seminar-dennis-bishop-designing-in-nature-transforming-lawns-to-native-plants/> . Zoom link:
<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81711016032?pwd=NjQ1OFhnanVnaCt0aVhWd1h1alpIQT09>

- JAN 19 SAPS January Program - "Results of the Latest UT Vegetable Trials"
7:00pm; Zoom presentation by Dr. Natalie Bumgarner. To register, see the SAPS website: <http://saps.us/>. Registration deadline is noon on Thursday, January 19. For more information, call 423-348-6572 or e-mail sapsnews@gmail.com.
- JAN 21 Winter Garden Seminar: Wild Edibles & Medicinals at Warriors' Path State Park
10:00am – 12:00pm. Designed as an introduction to wildcrafting - learning how to make nature's pantry and medicine cabinet our own, Guest Speaker Ila Hatter will teach us traditional uses of the common plants of our yards, gardens, and nearby woodlands. She will combine her knowledge of the flora with folklore, telling interesting stories that go with the botany of wildcrafting. Cost: \$5. Meet at Recreation Building. Information: https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/warriors-path/#/?event=33rd-annual-winter-garden-seminar-WPSP-2023
- FEB 4-5 2023 Farm Expo at Bristol Motor Speedway-South Building
9:00am-6:00pm on Saturday; 10:00am-4:00pm on Sunday. Information: www.farmexpotn.com
- FEB 5 Orchid Society of East Tennessee – 2 pm Gray Community Center.
- FEB 6 NETMGA Membership Meeting/Awards
Details to be announced.
- FEB 13 Tennessee Valley Chapter of WildOnes
6:00pm Plan(t)ing for the Future with Scotty Smith and Dylan Hackett from The Rewilding Collective. Location to be Announced. Information: <https://tnvalleywildones.org/programs-events/public-programs/>
- FEB 16 SAPS February Program - "Vines, Scramblers and Climbers – Going Up Is Next Level Gardening!"
7:00pm; Presentation by Mark Weathington, Director of the JC Raulston Arboretum, at the Kingsport Center for Higher Education, 300 W. Market Street, Kingsport. Program is free and the public is invited. For more information phone 423-348-6572 or email sapsnews@gmail.com, <http://saps.us/>.
- FEB 21 Tennessee Native Plant Society Seminar
7:30pm Erin Manzitto-Tripp, *Lichens of Tennessee*. Information: <https://www.tnps.org/event/seminar-erin-tripp-lichens-of-tennessee/> . Zoom link: <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/81711016032?pwd=NjQ1OFhnanVnaCt0aVhWd1h1alpIQT09>
- FEB 25 Adopt a Tree at Warriors' Path State Park
10:00am – 12:00pm. Help plant hundreds of new trees at Warriors' Path State Park. For every tree seedling you plant, you will also get one to take home, to plant in your own neighborhood. Be sure to come early because supplies of trees are limited! Follow signs from the park entrance to the tree distribution location. Information: https://tnstateparks.com/parks/event_details/warriors-path/#/?event=adopt-a-tree-feb-2023



Northeast Tennessee
Master Gardener Association
c/o
UT Extension Sullivan County
140 Spurgeon Lane
Blountville, TN 37617

<http://netmga.net>
<https://mastergardener.tennessee.edu>



UT Extension

Northeast Tennessee Master Gardener Endowment

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The Institute of Agriculture
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