



Official Publication

# Master Gardener Thymes

Volume 21, Issue 1 Jan-Feb 2024

## Winter Has Arrived

Winter is here...we've had a few occasional snow flurries to tell us so! The holidays are past and now we settle in until time to plant. It's a good time to plan your gardens, review the seeds you have collected, and study catalogs. Planting time will be here before we know it!

It's also a good time to get a jump on 2024 continuing education hours. Check out the calendar at the end of this newsletter for learning opportunities.



### NETMGA JANUARY BOARD MEETING

The next NETMGA Board meeting will be in **January 2024**, Time and Place to be announced.

### NETMGA FEBRUARY MEMBERSHIP MTG & AWARDS DINNER

**February 2024**. Watch your email for details about this event.

### WHAT'S INSIDE:

- Mark Your Calendar - Upcoming Events
- Chris's Corner
- Article: Starting Seeds in Winter
- January/February 2024 Calendar of Events

## Mark Your Calendar!

### January SAPS Program: The Secret Role of Insects and Spiders in the Garden

Writer, photographer, and conservation educator Danae Wolfe will discuss "The Secret Role of Insects and Spiders in the Garden" on Thursday, **January 18**, 2024, at 7 pm in a free Zoom presentation. This program is sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). To join, go to the SAPS website: <http://saps.us>. For more information, call 423-348-6572 or e-mail [sapsnews@gmail.com](mailto:sapsnews@gmail.com). Registration deadline is noon on January 18.



From bees and butterflies to moths and spiders, we'll uncover the intricate web of interactions that keep our gardens thriving. This talk will reveal how insects and spiders promote pollination, predation, decomposition, and more, while highlighting the many benefits of creating a healthy garden ecosystem. You'll learn about some of the different types of beneficial arthropods, their habits and behaviors, and how to attract and support them in your own backyard. This talk will change the way you think about insects and spiders and their role in the garden, and will offer practical tips for creating a healthy and thriving ecosystem for a variety of wildlife.

Danae Wolfe is a writer, photographer, and content creator focused on fostering appreciation and stewardship of backyard bugs. Through her website, social media, children's books, public speaking, and column in The American Gardener magazine, she has reached global audiences with science-based education about the importance of gardening for wildlife. Her community conservation initiative, Chasing Bugs, reaches millions of people monthly through Facebook and TikTok and has inspired people to think differently about bugs. She is currently working on a book with Timber Press about homegrown conservation that highlights how to create more wildlife- and climate-friendly home landscapes. Learn more about Danae and her mission on her website <https://www.chasingbugs.com>.

### NEW MASTER GARDENER CLASSES 2024

Know someone who wants to be a Master Gardener? The Sullivan County Extension Office will be offering Master Gardener classes on Thursday mornings beginning **January 30** and ending on April 30. Sessions will begin at 10:00 and end at noon. There will be a few afternoon, hands-on sessions, with dates to be announced. Cost is \$200.00.

Please pass this information along to anyone you think would be interested. A link to the registration form is below. Contact the Extension Office at 423-574-1919 for additional information.

<https://www.netmga.net/app/download/7127348991/MG+APPLICATION.pdf>

## February Herb Saplings Meeting

Herb Saplings meeting will be held **February 1, 2024**, 7 pm at Exchange Place. "Herbs for Mental Health" with Guest Speaker Seth McLaughlin, Family Nurse Practitioner, Advance Practice Holistic Nurse.

## February SAPS Program: Growing Strawberries, Blueberries and Brambles

Dr. David Lockwood, known as the go-to expert on tree fruit, small fruit, and tree nut crops across Tennessee and throughout the Southeast, will discuss "Strawberries, Blueberries and Brambles" on Thursday, **February 15**, at 7 p.m. in an online program sponsored by Southern Appalachian Plant Society (SAPS). This program is free via Zoom, but preregistration is required. To register, see the SAPS web page: <http://saps.us>. Registration deadline is noon February 15.



A popular speaker with professionals, Master Gardener classes and home gardeners alike, Dr. Lockwood will provide guidance on selecting varieties well suited to our area, preparing the bed, and best practices for cultivation and maintenance. Dr. Lockwood is considered one of the top specialists in the country when it comes to fruit and nut production, and he enjoys sharing his research. So join us to learn how to make an edible landscape a reality.

David Lockwood was raised and worked on a fruit farm in Upstate New York near the south shore of Lake Ontario where his family grew apples, cherries, pears and prunes. He received his PhD from the University of Georgia and joined the faculty of the UT Department of Plant and Soil Sciences in 1973. At UT Dave has been responsible for developing and maintaining educational programs in tree fruit, small fruit, tree nut and fruit tree nurseries. Included in this effort are publication development, newsletters, meetings, mass media, personal communication and personal visits, as he advises Tennessee's hobby and commercial fruit growers, who produce an ever growing list of crops, including apples, peaches, grapes, strawberries, blueberries, blackberries, elderberries, pawpaws and persimmons. He serves as a resource person for the county Extension staffs. He also is involved in applied research on fruit and nut crops on Research and Education Centers in Tennessee and Georgia. In addition, he has traveled and lectured extensively throughout the United States as well as in many foreign

countries, including France, Italy, and Spain. Dr Lockwood is recognized as a grape specialist and wine connoisseur.

Lockwood officially retired on June 30, 2022 after 50 years of service at UT. He returned on a part-time basis the next day. He has been honored with the Tennessee Association of Agricultural Agents and Specialists Achievement Award, the Cavender Award for the best Extension publication, the Tennessee Fruit and Vegetable Association Outstanding Service Award, and the UT Institute of Agriculture's Webster Pendergrass Distinguished Service Award for his contributions to Master Gardeners and small-fruit and nut-tree and tree-fruit industries. In March, he received Gamma Sigma Delta's Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award.

## **Appalachian Habitat Alliance (AHA)**

### **Restoring Appalachian habitats one landscape at a time**

Appalachian Habitat Alliance (AHA), is launching in the Northeast Tennessee / Southwest Virginia area to help home gardeners and community groups find regionally appropriate guidance to help transform any landscape into a beautiful, vigorous, and sustainable habitat where pollinators, birds, fireflies, and other creatures can thrive. Previously active in Johnson City as "What's the Buzz?," AHA's new name reflects its expanded mission and regional focus.

AHA is a 501(c)(3) non profit organization whose vision is to provide education, support, and inspiration to communities and individuals seeking to restore habitat in the Appalachian Highlands. AHA works with our community partners to develop a patchwork of high quality habitat that will preserve the unique natural beauty and biodiversity of our region for future generations.

AHA's mission is to disseminate accurate, regionally appropriate information on restorative gardening through its website and a newsletter, encouraging use of native plants and sustainable practices in home gardens and in public spaces. AHA also offers financial support and mentoring through a grant program for garden projects in community settings, including schools, libraries, churches, community centers, and more.

To learn more about AHA, subscribe to the newsletter and see how you might want to be involved, go to <https://www.apphabitatalliance.org/>

# Chris' Corner



**CHRIS RAMSEY**

**SULLIVAN COUNTY EXTENSION AGENT**

**(423) 574-1919    cwr Ramsey@utk.edu**

Hello MGs,

It's amazing 2024 is here already! Gardening season is just a few weeks away – especially for those cool-weather gardeners. Our new Master Gardener class will begin on Tuesday, January 30. If you know of any friends or neighbors that may be interested, please tell them to call our office at 423-574-1919 for more information. The Master Gardener training series will be full of great learning opportunities with great speakers, hands-on learning, and field trips.

I really appreciate you taking the opportunity to report your volunteer hours each year. Please get started early this year and keep track of those hours on something that is easy for you. A wall calendar or personal calendar is a great option and offers you the convenience to quickly making a note of your volunteer and CEU hours.

Happy New Year!

Chris

#### Editor's Note:

A few years ago we (Master Gardeners) had a guest speaker who talked about Winter Seed Sowing. Lately I have been seeing many, many articles on Facebook and other sources about Winter Seed Starting. Most of the sources are unfamiliar to me so I looked for one that I know is a good, trusted, source for information. I decided on the following article from Penn State Extension. Hope you enjoy it!

# Starting Seeds in Winter

Many annual and perennial seeds require a cold period to germinate. You can provide a controlled cold environment for seedlings with these instructions.

Updated: July 13, 2021



Photo credit: Lori Voll-Wallace

## What Is Winter Sowing?

When you consider how seeds germinate in nature, it makes sense to sow seeds the same way. In late summer, left to their own devices, seeds fall to the ground. They slowly get covered with leaves and other natural materials to begin their long winter in the soil. Exposure to cold temperatures and moist conditions breaks dormancy and the seeds germinate when temperatures increase in the spring.

Winter sowing is the process of planting seeds outdoors in a container during the winter months. The container remains outdoors until the seedlings emerge in the spring. The container protects the seeds from animals and harsh weather, but the exposure to colder temperatures breaks dormancy and the seeds germinate. The container also provides an ideal environment for germination in the spring.

## What to Winter Sow?

Winter sowing is ideal for some annuals, perennials, and wildflowers. Check out a seed catalogue: most will have some sort of notation about a seed's germination requirements. Look for seeds that are described with the following terms: reseeds; colonizes; self-sows; hardy seeds; seedlings can withstand frost; sow outdoors in late autumn or early winter; sow outdoors in early spring while frosts may still occur; needs pre-chilling; requires stratification.

## When to Winter Sow?

The best time to winter sow perennials and hardy annuals is generally December to March depending on the weather conditions in your area. These seeds require a consistent period of moist, cold temperatures before germination occurs in spring. Tender plants including annuals and vegetables can be sown later in spring (March or April) as they do not require a cold period in order to germinate.

## What Are the Benefits of Winter Sowing?

When you direct sow in the ground, the seeds are at the mercy of Mother Nature. They can be washed out in downpours; eaten by critters, bugs, and birds; desiccate in the wind; or rot in the soil.

Containerized seedlings stay more compact and do not need to be hardened off before planting in the garden.

Winter sowing is ideal for those with limited indoor space for seed starting. No special lighting or equipment is required for germination.



Photos: George Schreck

## How To

1. Clean container — Wash a milk jug or suitable container in warm, soapy water and rinse. Discard the top. The opening allows rain and melting snow to keep the soil moist.
2. Cut container — If not using a container with a hinged lid, insert a serrated knife or box cutter into the side of the jug, lay it on its side and cut all the way round, leaving about 1.5 inches (under the handle, if using a jug with a handle) so that the top hinges open. Tip: use coffee mug with marker placed on top. Twirl jug around to mark a perfect cutting line.



3. Create air holes — Use a knife, screwdriver or nail to poke holes for drainage in the bottom of the container. This is important--if you don't make drainage holes, your seeds will drown! If using a container with a hinged lid, poke a few air holes in the top of the lid.
4. Add soil — Fill the container with 2 to 4" of a soilless seed starting medium. Avoid garden soil which may contain pathogens and weed seeds.



5. Water the soil — Lightly moisten growing medium and allow excess to drain.
6. Sow the seeds — Follow the directions on the seed package and sow seeds on the surface of the soil. Cover the seeds with a layer of soil and gently pat down.
7. Seal the container – Seal the cut edges of the container with light-colored duct tape. Leave the top open. Tip: rather than using tape, make holes for pipe cleaners or twist ties for easy opening and closing without the stickiness of the tape.
8. Label container – use a laundry marker (better than permanent marker) to label the type of seed and date of sowing. Place the label in the bottom of the container.
9. Set outdoors and leave! – Site the container in an area that receives winter sun. Do not place the container on a covered porch as the seeds require the moisture from the rain and snow. They should experience all the weather conditions they would in nature. Consider placing containers in a milk crate if conditions are windy. Forget about your containers until the spring when the seedlings germinate.

## Authors

Lori Voll-Wallace

Master Gardener Area E Coordinator

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## 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  
Pat Mazurkiewicz 423-323-1644  
[robmazur@chartertn.net](mailto:robmazur@chartertn.net)

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

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

**Discovery Garden at Gray Fossil Museum**  
John Hitchcock 423-525-8587 [jghitchcock25@gmail.com](mailto:jghitchcock25@gmail.com)

**Exchange Place Living History Farm** Kingsport  
Earl Hockin 423-817-5473 [ehockin@yahoo.com](mailto:ehockin@yahoo.com)

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

**Johnson City Hospitals** 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 423-764-3336 [Feierabe@ETSU.edu](mailto:Feierabe@ETSU.edu)

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Carol Ludiker 423-707-0026 [jaxlud26@gmail.com](mailto:jaxlud26@gmail.com)

**Tipton Haynes Historic Site** Johnson City  
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Betts Leach 423-571-8662 [BettsL@aol.com](mailto:BettsL@aol.com)

**Unicoi County Hospital** Erwin  
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### 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**  
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 [wes.walker@me.com](mailto:wes.walker@me.com)

**Kingsport MeadowView Home Show**  
Doug Hilton 423-239-9433 [dh535651@gmail.com](mailto:dh535651@gmail.com)

**Bristol PepperFest**  
Wes Walker 804-824-5308 [wes.walker@me.com](mailto:wes.walker@me.com)

**Kingsport Tomato Festival-TBD**

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



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**Feed the birds!**



## JANUARY and FEBRUARY 2024 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/>

**Orchid Society of East Tennessee** meets first Sunday of every other month (Feb. through December), 2 pm Gray Community Center.  
<https://www.facebook.com/OrchidSocietyOfEastTennessee/>

JAN 11 Native Plant Propagation - Part 1 sponsored by Wild Ones Appalachian Chapter.

7 pm. Ben Casteel, Horti-culture Instructor and Program Coordinator at Virginia Highlands Community College will present a 2 part program from the campus greenhouse in Abingdon. Ben will cover both Sexual Propagation (seed prep – including processing, stratification, and scarification) and Asexual Propagation (division/separation, cuttings, layering, and grafting) of native plant species. In person at VHCC Greenhouse, 100 VHCC Dr, Abingdon, VA, 24210 and via Zoom; Zoom link: <https://vccs.zoom.us/j/4710139607> .The 2nd class is scheduled for March 14.

JAN 13 Winter Garden Seminar: Backyard Ecology at Warriors' Path State Park  
10:00am – 12:00pm. Do you dream of having a beautiful garden or other area full of pollinators and wildlife? Somewhere that you can sit and relax with friends and family while you enjoy the abundance of life surrounding you? "Become a Backyard Ecologist: Create your Personal Pollinator and Wildlife Oasis". Guest Speaker: Shannon Trimboli, is a wildlife biologist and educator. Her passion for helping others explore nature and improve their local pollinator and wildlife habitat led her to create Backyard Ecology. Cost: \$5. Meet at Recreation Building on Duck Island. Information: [Tennessee State Parks — Tennessee State Parks \(tnstateparks.com\)](https://www.tnstateparks.com)

JAN 18 SAPS Program – Danae Wolfe via Zoom  
7:00pm Presentation: "The Secret Role of Insects and Spiders in the Garden" See details on page 2 in this newsletter.

FEB 1 Herb Saplings meeting.  
7 pm at Exchange Place. Herbs for Mental Health with Seth McLaughlin, Family Nurse Practitioner, Advance Practice Holistic Nurse.

FEB 15 SAPS Program – Dr. David Lockwood via Zoom  
7:00pm Presentation: "Growing Strawberries, Blueberries and Brambles." See details on page 3 in this newsletter.

FEB 24 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: [Tennessee State Parks — Tennessee State Parks \(tnstateparks.com\)](https://www.tnstateparks.com)

**Horticultural information and resources for Tennessee gardeners**

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