

Start Thinking About Your Next Gardening Project

By John Hitchcock, Master Gardener

At the end of each of our articles, we tell readers how to ask us questions. Here are some that we've had that may be helpful for planning your next garden project.

Q: *Where can I find information to help me landscape around my house?*

A: The University of Tennessee has a great library full of articles to help beginner and experienced gardeners at <https://utextension.tennessee.edu/publications/> It is very easy to search topics and the articles can be downloaded for your convenience.

You can also go to: <https://www.uthort.com/> to find groups of articles about topics.

Some examples of helpful articles are listed here.

Annual and Perennial Flower Shade Gardening in Tennessee PB1585,
<https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/pb1585.pdf>

Evergreen Trees for Screens and Hedges in the Landscape SP517,
<https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/SP517.pdf>

Twelve Common Landscape Mistakes and How to Avoid Them W175,
<https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/W175.pdf>

Plants for Tennessee Landscapes Perennials W874-B, <https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/W874-B.pdf>

Q: *We have a fairly steep slope in our backyard - it has some haphazardly planted bushes, azalea, crepe myrtle and mostly mulch from the previous owners. I would like to plant with a low maintenance ground cover. It receives full sun. Any suggestions?*

A: The University of Tennessee Extension/Tennessee State University Publication W874-B has information for you. We searched the document for the words "ground cover" and found several listings. This is a useful document as it lists the many landscape plants that do well in Tennessee as well as specific plant information to fit your garden needs.

As with any garden, groundcover or otherwise, there is some maintenance involved in keeping your gardens looking nice (weed-free). Once your ground cover plants are established, keep an eye out for weeds and tree sprouts that can get out of hand if this area is neglected. And always follow the planting directions that that are (hopefully) included with your plants.

Here is a link to the website for the above publication: <https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/W874-B.pdf>. This site has many other publications specific to whatever gardening information you may need. Here is also a link to the Clemson University Extension website on you groundcover

subject: <https://hgic.clemson.edu/factsheet/groundcovers/>. This site also has general planting and care instructions for groundcover plantings.

Q: *We need a consultation regarding a place in our front yard that wish to develop into a wildflower/natural area.*

A: There are some great pollinator gardens in the area you could visit. One is a relatively small butterfly garden and wildflower area at the Tipton Haynes State Historic Site on South Roan St. The gardens are located near the entrance to the Welcome Center. The wildflower garden is located in the parking lot.

Another pollinator garden is located at the Hands On! Discovery Museum/Gray Fossil Site in Gray. Ask the person at the front desk if you can just visit the garden unless you want visit the museum. There may be a small charge for this but the garden is relatively large and has many varieties of butterfly attracting native plants. The museum/fossil site is interesting as well. Visiting these gardens may give you some ideas on what you would like to see in your garden.

Both gardens are certified monarch butterfly waystations.

There are also quite a few articles about transforming areas into wildflower gardens. Here are several to help you:

“Pollinator Basics,” <https://extension.umd.edu/resource/pollination-basics>

“Landscaping to Attract Butterflies and Moths,” <https://extension.okstate.edu/fact-sheets/print-publications/hla/landscaping-to-attract-butterflies-and-moths-hla-6430.pdf>

“Managing Wildlife Around Your Home,” <https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/PB1868.pdf>

“Planting for Pollinators in East Tennessee,” <https://utia.tennessee.edu/publications/wp-content/uploads/sites/269/2023/10/W1095.pdf>

“Gardening for pollinators: Smart plants to support pollinators,” https://www.canr.msu.edu/uploads/resources/pdfs/plants_for_pollinators.pdf

Now that you are armed with loads of information, get those garden catalogs out, draw up the area you want to transform, and get growing!

STILL TIME TO ENROLL: NEW CLASS: The next University of Tennessee Master Gardener class at the Sullivan County Extension Office located at 140 Spurgeon Ln, Blountville, TN. starts on **January 30, 2024** and continues every Tuesday for 14 weeks from **10AM – 12noon.**

Call the Extension Office for information and application form.

423-574-1919

How do I ask a question?

If you have a question for the Master Gardeners, submit them to us on our website at www.netmga.net. Click the link at the top of the page, "ASK A MASTER GARDENER" to send in your question. Questions that are not answered in this column will receive a response from a Master Gardener to the contact information you provide.