

## **Master Gardner Classes, Ordering Trees, and a Seed Swap!**

By Kate O'Lenic, NETMGA Master Gardener

### **Why become a master gardener?**

It's a fair-question. What can you gain personally from the time and effort required to become a Master Gardener? Well, you will learn the best practices for gardening, meet new people, get out in the fresh air, and help others by sharing your knowledge.

Here are some things attendees have said about the program.

“We learned a lot about growing in Northeast Tennessee, in our zone and our microclimate up here, and how to help other people grow” plants

“There's different types of service projects for everybody,” ... “You'll find something that you will just fall in love with and that will be where you want to be forever.”

“...bridge, Tai Chi, ... workshops, ...I've tried all these activities in my retirement. But the master gardener course tops my list for the most worthwhile...”

From my personal perspective, the classes were excellent, science-based lectures. They were taught by university professors and county extension agents, experts in their fields. I learned far more than I ever dreamed I needed to know about growing plants. Classes taught us about the life in the soil, how plants deal with their environment, and how to improve your gardens while understanding the impact on animals, insects, and microorganisms. Every week, for me, was exciting and interesting, and sometimes jaw-droppingly amazing, like the lecture on bees. I learned about food webs, permaculture, and plant guilds. I enjoyed the camaraderie of others who love gardening, met some fascinating people, and became a member of teams volunteering on several projects.

The projects themselves are rewarding in how good it feels to use the knowledge gained to design new gardens and teach others how to grow vegetables and beautiful flowers. A few examples of the Northeast Tennessee Master Gardeners Association (NETMGA) projects include gardens at Branch House Family Center, Carver Peace Gardens, and Church Hill Senior Center gardens. I volunteer at Steele Creek in the Native Plant Garden, at Rocky Mount Living History Site, and I get to write articles for this newspaper.

For continuing education, the association provides links to University of Tennessee videos and meetings, both live and via Zoom. Trust me, you will be delighted to tap into all those resources. On top of that, the videos and meetings often lead you to even more resources and discoveries.

The county extension in Sullivan County is beginning new classes at the end of January. If you want to wake up those little gray cells, continue to learn new things, and help others, here's a great opportunity.

For more information about classes in Sullivan County, contact Chris Ramsey, Master Gardener Coordinator/UT Agricultural Extension Agent, at (423) 574-1919 to request an application.

Classes begin Tuesday, January 31, 2023, and continue through May 2, 2023. The sessions will be held on Tuesday mornings from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at UT-TSU Sullivan County Extension Office, located in the Ron Ramsey Ag Center, 140 Spurgeon Lane, Blountville, TN. Hands-on workshops are also provided after some classroom sessions and several field trips are included in the program. Additional information is available at: <https://mastergardener.tennessee.edu/>

Classes are also being offered in Greene County through Big Spring Master Gardener Association 1/31/2023 thru 5/23/2023. You'll find details and the registration form at: <https://www.bsmga.com/2023-master-gardener-training.html>

### **Order Trees Now!**

Tennessee Tree Day is coming in March. It is a statewide tree planting event. You can **order bareroot trees now** from [www.tectn.org/tennesseetreeday](http://www.tectn.org/tennesseetreeday) then pick them up at a location you select on Friday, March 17 or Saturday, March 18. Statewide planting takes place on Saturday, March 18.

### **Seed Swap!**

Saturday, February 11<sup>th</sup> from 9AM to 12 noon, folks will gather at 510 Bert Street, Johnson City to exchange seeds and check out exhibits. Johnson City Parks and Recreation is hosting this FREE event. If you do not have seeds to swap you can find information at exhibits including what pollinators need, listen to speakers, and let the children participate in activities. It's a great way to get ready for spring planting.

### **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](http://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.

*The Master Gardener Program is offered by the University of Tennessee Extension. The purpose of the Master Gardener program is to train people as horticultural-educated volunteers. These volunteers work in partnership with the local Extension office in their counties to expand educational outreach, providing home gardeners with researched-based information.*